

Cleve Gray: Abstracted Calligraphies

March 31 – May 6, 2017

Opening Reception: March 31st 6 – 8 pm



Conjugation #199, 1976, Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 60 inches

Loretta Howard Gallery is pleased to present a selection of important paintings by Cleve Gray from the 1970's. Wrought in deeply saturated fields of color and marked with calligraphic brushwork, the paintings on display exemplify the artist's mature style. They highlight the artist's lifelong affinity for Japanese and Chinese art and philosophy. His familiarity with Asian cultures began at Princeton University where he studied Far Eastern Art under George Rowley and wrote his thesis on the landscape painting of the Yuan dynasty. The resulting paintings illustrate a synthesis of western and eastern art historical conventions as Gray infused the radical sensibilities of Abstract Expressionism with Zen quietude. Also on view are a selection of hanging scrolls collected by the artist during his visits to China and Japan. These scrolls, which highlight a meditative approach, also contain an intensity and immediacy of action that Gray sought in his own work.

In an essay written in the accompanying catalog, Luke Gray explains his father's views on Abstract Expressionism:

As he saw it, their work, unlike that of the Chinese tradition, posited a space of overly pronounced individuality, where, instead of the artist disappearing into the landscape, the landscape disappeared into the artist. He came to reconcile these early views in forging the marriage of traditions so evident in this exhibition's paintings. To facilitate entry into the "head space" required for this work, he developed a technique of releasing a scream at the moment the gesture was expelled, because, in his words, "I could not allow myself to continue to be dominated by Western civilization"

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