

# CLEVE GRAY

## AUGURIES

PAINTINGS 1963-1964

May 14 – June 20, 2015

Excerpt from *Cleve Gray: Auguries* by Karen Wilkin



Cleve Gray's paintings of the 1960s signal a significant shift in his direction, a clarification of approach that points ahead to his concerns over the next four decades of his long and productive life as a painter. These include a dedication to abstraction that also embraces rich, non-specific allusions; a celebration of the act of moving responsive paint across the surface of the canvas, so that we can mentally recapitulate the history of the work's coming into being; and an exploration of the

evocative qualities of color. The difference between Gray's paintings of the 1960s and those that immediately preceded them is striking. While his 1960s works are still elegantly disciplined – "classical," we might say — they are notably more sensuous and more insistently abstract than his earlier efforts; a wide range of chromatic hues and sinuous gestures dominates. The immediate trigger for these developments seems to have been trips to France, Italy, Greece and the Aegean. While Gray's paintings of the 1960s are never overtly referential, they seem informed, however obliquely, by his responses not only to the art and architecture of the sites he visited, but also to particular qualities of light, weather, and landscape formations.

In the end, Gray's paintings of the 1960s, whatever the stimulus for him, whatever associations they suggest to the viewer, are about the seductive qualities of paint on canvas and the inherent expressiveness of the gesture that transfers that paint to that canvas — which is not to suggest that they are devoid of feeling or empty of that problematic concept, "meaning;" it's simply that the emotion, like the "meaning," is communicated by purely visual means. Whether we choose to concentrate on the history of the painting's making manifest in Gray's vigorous gestures or allow his open-ended allusions to provoke our own reveries, we can read his subtle, ambiguous images many different ways. That's what keeps us looking.

**A full catalogue is available online at [Lorettahoward.com](http://Lorettahoward.com).**