

# Marlborough

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## CLAUDIO BRAVO: RECENT WORK

### MARLBOROUGH GALLERY

May 6 – June 7, 2008

The Directors of Marlborough Gallery are pleased to present an exhibition of new work by the preeminent realist painter, Claudio Bravo. The show will consist of thirty-six oils on canvas and one pastel triptych.

In the last few years, using a realist style that recalls the delicacy, formality, and craftsmanship of old master technique, Bravo has concentrated on what some may consider the supreme achievement of his career: studies of colored papers. This exhibition will be devoted exclusively to this theme and will be represented either by paintings of packages wrapped in paper or by works whose sole subject is colored papers. The papers have been creased or crumpled, folded or twisted, ripped or torn and assembled to create compositional structure. In some cases the papers are suspended by string to a wall to form an odd, supernatural still life. In all the works one is mesmerized by Bravo's command and use of the effects of light. Over his career of more than fifty years Bravo has proven that he can paint any subject he chooses, and his *oeuvre* has been marked by consummate treatments of the human figure, both nude and clothed, still lifes, portraits, interiors, religious and mythological subjects, drapery as a subject in itself, and to a lesser extent landscapes and cityscapes. In all his work "he consistently pushes boundaries, periodically referencing elements from Surrealism, abstraction, minimalism, Pop art, and even photorealism, though he works from life, not photographs." The high achievement of his series of paintings of colored papers is in the nature of their seeming simplicity, a simplicity which belies their complexity and which arrives at clarifying painting's formal values of line, form, and color. They are classic and modern, detailed and reductive, imaginative and inventive.

Along with Bravo's dazzling technique and the refined beauty of his paintings his work manifests a "transcendental spirituality that pervades even his most humble scenes." The late Gerrit Henry described Bravo's work in *Art in America* as "astonishing and riveting" and said his "paintings are praiseworthy in their fidelity to both the homely and the rare and for their rapt declamation of technical values that somehow bespeak the spiritual." In Bravo's last show of drapery paintings at Marlborough, Ken Johnson in *The New York Times* spoke of their "transcendental grace" and called his work "a tantalizing mix of the spiritual and the sensual." One could surmise that it is Bravo's uncanny control of space and light that is central to his work and that gives his paintings their "evocative calmness" and their "hallucinatory reality of a dream." In this connection Bravo said, "The objects I paint transcend and magnify reality. I use light somewhat in the way Francisco de Zurbarán did. He was one of the few painters that gave true transcendent meanings to objects. This treatment of light makes them appear more as they are. Their essence is greater." In his book *Claudio Bravo* (Rizzoli, 1985) the author and teacher Edward J. Sullivan wrote, "Bravo's art in many instances seems to straddle two worlds, that in which we exist and another slightly beyond our comprehension: Bravo has taken the real to another plane of perception."

Bravo was born in 1936 in Valparaíso, Chile. He was the second of seven children. He attended a Jesuit school in Santiago and briefly studied art in the studio of a local painter. Largely self-taught, at the age of 18 he had his first exhibition in Santiago and became a sought-after portrait painter. He left Chile in 1961 for Europe and eventually settled in Madrid where his portrait painting met with great success. In 1972 he moved to Tangier where he stopped portrait painting and devoted himself to art. He had his first show in New York in 1970 at the Staempfli Gallery. This will be his ninth show at Marlborough since joining the gallery in 1981. Today, Bravo continues to live and work in Morocco: in Tangier and Taroudant.

Bravo represented Chile in the 2007 Venice Biennale at the Museo Diocesano. Also in 2007 he had museum shows at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterey, Mexico and Espace Bellevue, Biarritz, France. In 2004 he had an exhibition at the Musée du Monde Arabe in Paris. The show was devoted to subjects Bravo has painted relating to the Arab world. Previously, he had been given two retrospectives: the first in 1987-88 at the Elvehjem Museum of Art, Madison, Wisconsin, which traveled to the Meadows Museum, Dallas, Texas and Duke University Museum of Art, Durham, North Carolina; and the second in 1994 at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile. In 1997 an exhibition of his "package" paintings was shown at the Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach, Florida.

His works may be found in the collections of museums around the world among which are the following: Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland; Ludwig Museum, Cologne, Germany; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile; Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, the Netherlands; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania; and the Rufino Tamayo Museum of International Contemporary Art, Mexico.

In 1996 Bravo received the prestigious Gold Medal of Honor from Casita Maria settlement house of New York, in 2000 he received the "Art Miami International Distinguished Artist award," and in 2005 he was inducted into the Pastel Society of America's Hall of Fame.

An illustrated color catalogue will be available at the time of the exhibition.

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