

THE DRAWING ROOM 66 Newtown Lane East Hampton New York 11937 T 631 324 5016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HECTOR LEONARDI Chromatic Journey

June 15 – July 15, 2018



Inverno, 2009, acrylic on canvas over wood, 48 x 60 in



Finestra, 2018 acrylic on canvas over wood, 24 x 24 in

Opening June 15 and on view through July 15, 2018, The Drawing Room in East Hampton is pleased to present **HECTOR LEONARDI Chromatic Journey**. An illustrated catalog published to accompany the exhibition includes a conversation between Janet Goleas and Hector Leonardi held earlier this year in his Bridgehampton studio.

Highlighting developments in Leonardi's work over the past decade, the exhibition features paintings that reveal the breadth of abstract imagery the artist achieves through a unique process that combines a sophisticated understanding of color theory with an intuitive approach to composition. The distinctive technique Leonardi developed nearly forty years ago is an additive process that begins when he "harvests" thin strips of dried acrylic paint that accrue from a spectrum of splatters on the surfaces of his large studio tables. Peeled off in varied shapes and segments – some monochromatic and others multicolored – these pigment modules become the building blocks for kaleidoscopic layered paintings. Whether intimate or large in scale, latticed or mosaic-like, each painting has a commanding and mysterious physical presence that invites the viewer to peer into the flickering surface, and then step back to experience its broader expanse.

Leonardi's approach to color theory was informed largely by his graduate studies with Josef Albers at Yale University in the early 1950s. Prior to that, his classical training in drawing and painting landscape, still life and the figure at the Rhode Island School of Design instilled a critical understanding of composition that underpins the precise structure of each painting. In square compositions such as *Mercier* (2005), *Timor* (2006) and *Ibiza* (2005), an underlying order derives from the use of grids and a subtle palette of greys with hints of blue and violet. In these paintings, compressed layers of collaged pigments create ambiguous spatial relationships and a tactile surface tension. By contrast, the dominant rhythm of verticals that reach across *Prato* (2018) and other paintings, suggest a foreground and deeper space akin to a wooded landscape.

(over)

In some of the larger paintings from 2008 and 2009, thinner layers of calligraphic marks provide a loose topographical atmosphere over which multiple bands of paint create a curtain-like scrim. Finally, a group of recent paintings push the radiant and pulsing energy of the spectrum towards otherworldly chimeras. The brilliant tropical palette and swirling arrangement of forms that animate *Finestra* (2018) invite the viewer to enter a dizzying space of their own imagination.

Leonardi's structuring of color evokes the unlikely and even startling confluence of Gustave Klimt, Claude Monet, Paul Signac, Josef Albers (with whom he studied at Yale), Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko. Clearly he is interested in the relationship between structure and light, the structuring of light. But only a strong artist would welcome such a diverse set of influences and ultimately have his work come to resemble only itself. This is the case with Leonardi, who not only untethers color from the burden of description, but who also sets it in a direction very different from those chosen by both his predecessors and his peers. **John Yau, 2003**

For the past 25 years, Hector Leonardi (American, b. 1930) has lived in Bridgehampton, New York where his studio in a renovated potato barn is flooded by natural light and surrounded by fields and beautiful gardens. The artist began spending time on Long Island's East End in 1970s, renting a house on the cliffs of Montauk with 360° views of the ocean. While teaching for 20 years at the Parsons School of Design, Leonardi maintained a studio practice in Manhattan's flower district. His paintings have been widely exhibited both in the United States and internationally and are included in numerous private and museum collections.

www.drawingroom-gallery.com

Gallery Hours: Thursday through Monday 11-5, and by appointment

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