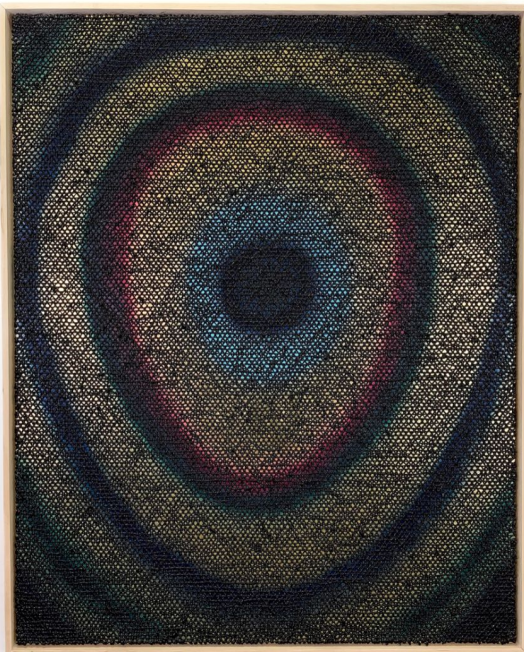


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MICHAEL BROWN

January 14 - March 28, 2021



Blue Peacock. 2020. Oil on 24k gold leaf on canvas.
60 x 50.25 x 2.75 inches (157.48 x 127 x 7.62)

Michael Brown (b. 1982, New York) opens our 2021 season with his second exhibition of oil paintings.

Michael Brown has continued his “gold-leaf” painting series inaugurated in his first exhibition in September, 2019. The paint application is sculptural, heavy threads of oil paint are squeezed and woven onto 24 ct. gold leaf on canvas. The symmetry of his previous white or blue paintings, which featured the oil paint radiating from the center with centrifugal force is now disjointed with more complex patterns emerging; two blue on gold-leaf have no center point. The uneven cords of oil are partly an homage to Agnes Martin’s early paintings with horizontal pencil marks.

In other paintings there are oblong concentric circles of different colors in a peacock palette. The gold base continues to provide an intangible radiance and glow. Here Brown has moved closer to traditional painting echoing Dan Christiansen early 70’s work with impastoed minimal white over subtle colors and Kenneth Noland’s “targets.”

An entirely different body of paintings is presented here - nearly monochromatic silhouettes of delicate flowers on vertical stems. The subtleties of these new paintings by Brown emerged from his history of sculpting banal objects out of incongruous materials. He called attention to the quiet beauty of forms and materials in his reimagining of humble lawn chairs, mops, buckets and cracked mirrors. The mop and bucket series resembled everyday objects, but were in fact made

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by casting poured vinyl records, giving them a loaded martial history. Thus titles like “Sinatra bucket.” In his best-known work he fractured plate glass and then meticulously reproduced the crack pattern in hand-cut welded stainless steel.

The flower paintings are quite unexpected. These are more gestural, irregular and reserved. Brown has veered towards drawing with its delicacy and nearly monochromatic red. Here the influence of Ellsworth Kelly’s flower drawings is undeniable, but Brown’s works are fully realized paintings.

Two new bronze sculptures complete the exhibition. Brown’s vessel-like forms align with Twombly’s simple wood and plaster series and perhaps aspects of Giacometti.

His work has garnered attention since the earliest days of his career. His work was shown in solo exhibitions at major galleries in Paris and New York when he was just out of school, as well as in key exhibitions at David Zwirner, Hauser and Wirth, several museums and other galleries. A booth was devoted to him at Art Basel in Switzerland. When he was only 26 years of age the New York Times wrote in 2008, the crack steel mirrors “freezes an act of anarchic rage into a lovely, spidery web.” After a multi-year pause in making work he returned to the studio in 2019.

I have closely watched Michael’s evolution as an artist beginning when he was an undergrad at SUNY New Paltz. What has been an unfailing constant in his evolving body of work is his incessant inquisitiveness, his need to explore to push his boundaries.

Marc Straus



Untitled. 2020. Oil and wax on arches paper mounted to panel.
50 x 38 x 2 inches (127 x 96.52 x 5.08 cm)