

Herb Jackson | Firestorm in the Teahouse February 17 - March 26, 2011

Opening Reception:
Thursday | February 17 from 6-8 p.m.

Claire Oliver Gallery is proud to announce Firestorm in the Teahouse, a solo exhibition of new paintings by acclaimed American Artist Herb Jackson.

Although his roots are in abstract expressionism, one sees immediately the artist is not an action painter but rather one who paints intuitively. Jackson states that his studio practice involves decisions that are non verbal and made in an emotional response to the emerging painting. He can work for several hours in an intuitive state, without a verbal thought, conferring a meditative nature to the completed work. Yet Jackson's works engage and excite; there is a dynamic force to his compositions and a haunting musicality to his themes that rewards repeated viewings and is not static.



Reaching Out
Acrylic on canvas | 40 x 30 inches

Herb Jackson's paintings are built up by the addition of thin layers of pigment, which are scraped off as they are being applied. Shapes and marks come and go as the artist engages the paint; gouging, scraping and excavating each consecutive stratum with whatever tool is dictated: artist's knife, fingernail or even dental tools. Adding volcanic ash, sand, and ground mica to the paint, inch by inch the artist's process forms and explores; the finished canvas will be between 100 and 200 layers in depth. For Jackson, the work is a process not dissimilar to the life experience itself. Much in the same way that nature changes over time, Jackson has created his own language of space and the natural world.

While referencing the poetic beauty of nature, there is none of its sentimentality; a nod to myth and mystery balances with a very physical presence creating a contemplative work with the undying rumble of the tectonic plates. "To require that an image, to be a bearer of content, must be recognizable is to suggest that there is no form to the unknowable," states the artist. "My personal journey (through art) confirms that it is not necessary to rob life of its mystery in order to understand it".

One may recall the gestural, calligraphic nature of Franz Klein and the materiality of the surfaces created by Antoni Tàpies, yet the experience of viewing a work by Herb Jackson is singular. The frequently jagged forms and broken surfaces somehow juxtapose quiet shape and flow to speak of relationship rather than destruction. Influenced in his formative years by late Byzantine icons as well as the abstract expressionists, we see that Jackson's canvases pit gesture against iconic surface and speak of organic relationship rather than forced and artificial perspective.

During his long and storied career, Herb Jackson has had over 150 one-person exhibitions, among them the first exhibition of American art in the former Soviet Union. His work is in over 125 museum collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, the British Museum, London and the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, Washington, DC. In 1999, Herb Jackson was awarded the North Carolina Award, the highest honor bestowed by the state. A new monograph on the artist, a 50 year retrospective of the artist's oeuvre, is available at the exhibition.