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MADE IN THE HAMPTONS



Brush with Fate

Gustavo Bonevardi's new works take an unexpected turn



Rather than cry over spilled paint, East Hampton-based artist Gustavo Bonevardi (gustavo-bonevardi.com) has learned how to “embrace the accident,” incorporating and even encouraging natural drips and dribbles into his recent watercolors on paper. “It’s very exciting when I see something that is not what I had intended or that seems wrong when it first happens,” says Bonevardi. “In a way, I learn from the works. They are telling me how they want to be.”

Trained as an architect, the native New Yorker is known for public sculptures and light commissions that embody austerity and precision (most notably *Tribute in Light*, the annual 9/11 memorial that he designed in collaboration with John Bennett). But his new work evokes light from within. “Something in me manifested optimistic joy during a dark time,” Bonevardi says of the output he created within the past two years, some of which was recently on view at the Drawing Room gallery in East Hampton. “The joyousness is what I needed to help myself, and hopefully others.” The



Studio Session
(THIS IMAGE) Gustavo Bonevardi and his dog, Homer, in the artist's studio in East Hampton. (INSET) Bonevardi uses a variety of ersatz weights to keep his works on paper from curling.

DOUG YOUNG

"By the time the paper dries, I end up with something completely different"



Good To The Last Drip

Using a "set of tricks," Bonevardi applies pigment to the paper in multiple ways, then rotates it to make abstractions of various drips and splatters.

Drawing Room's co-owner, Emily Goldstein, describes the watercolors as a "product of the therapeutic process that evolved during two years of isolation and pushed the form to new depths. I consider them abstractions, but with a certain buoyancy."

Bonevardi's technique is controlled, but not premeditated. He begins each piece with gouache and watercolor pigments released from a brush held above the paper, creating spattered "blossom" bursts and celestial orbs of diffused color. Lifting and turning the paper coaxes single strands into elements resembling stems or rocket trails, though neither hand nor brush ever touches the paper itself. "The application of the pigment feels spontaneous, but the whole process is quite slow," the artist says. "By the time it dries, I end up with something completely different from what I thought it might be, and then suddenly I have something new to deal with. Incorporating the unexpected is part of the process." Among the "set of tricks" he uses to "give each piece an environment it can inhabit" are sprayed water, flicked-brush pigment splatters, and an assortment of various "drip" devices. The works are "born of the place where they are made," he adds, looking out at the fields surrounding his light-filled studio. "They are local. I don't think they would look like this if I were living somewhere else." —*Doug Young*