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PETER BRADLEY

by Lisa Yin Zhang



Peter Bradley, *Coravilas*, 2021. Acrylic on canvas, 77 × 131 inches.

“The object is to bring first-rate art to people who don’t usually attend shows,” Peter Bradley appealed to artists while organizing “The De Luxe show” (1971) in Houston, touted by many as the first racially integrated exhibition in the U.S. “It will be of easy access to housewives, children, laborers; the people.” Bradley was a pioneer in more ways than this. He was pre-scient in using acrylic gel paint in the sixties, then a new medium. In his second exhibition at Karma, he continues to employ the material within recent microbial and watery paintings.

In these large-scale works, which bear lines of different media, including acrylic, sand and glass, Bradley employs a wet-canvas technique wherein he pours pigments onto unstretched, damp canvas. His images describe depths, delineating phantom, watery spaces flecked with movement and collisions. *Scrapple From The Apple* (2021) mushrooms out from twin nexuses, with a texture both glassy and deep, like the iris of an eye. This is offset by splatters of what looks like wax or encaustic, interrupting the seep of paint. Elsewhere, washes both liquid and thick are interrupted by clusters of fluorescent roe or globs of earwax-like material that have slipped from their original locations, threatening to fall off the canvases entirely.

The work’s titles provide insight into the universe of the mind that created these works. Many titles are influenced by jazz and allude, perhaps, to the irregularly rhythmic gestures within these paintings. *Catch It Willie* (2015) references Major League Baseball player Willie Mays’s infamous over-the-shoulder catch from nearly a half century before. The plane of the canvas captures the moment of impact: a shadowy, violet form in the background meets an explosion of neon green-and-orange splinters of paint.