

RYAN LEE

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artnet® news

On View

From Gordon Parks to LaToya Ruby Frazier, Here Are 35 Must-See Gallery Shows in New York City This January

Plus, Mark di Suvero, Channa Horwitz, Robert Indiana, and much more.

Sarah Cascone, January 5, 2018



Paul Henry Ramirez, *Pour Paintings* (2017). Courtesy of the artist and Ryan Lee Gallery.

The editors at artnet News searched New York City high and low for the most exciting, bizarre, and thought-provoking gallery exhibitions this January.

“Paul Henry Ramirez: Fun in the Color” at Ryan Lee Gallery

Paul Henry Ramirez’s “PaintPour” paintings produce an explosion of color, while a second room will showcase the artist’s black-and-white drawings and sculptures.

January 6–February 10; 515 West 26th Street, opening reception, 4 p.m.–6 p.m.

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artdaily.org

RYAN LEE opens an exhibition of new paintings, drawings and sculpture by Paul Henry Ramirez

JANUARY 5, 2018



Paul Henry Ramirez, PaintPour Paintings, 2017. © Paul Henry Ramirez; Courtesy of the artist and RYAN LEE, New York.

NEW YORK, NY. - RYAN LEE presents *Fun in the Color*, an exhibition of new paintings, drawings and sculpture by Paul Henry Ramirez. *Fun in the Color* continues Ramirez's exploration of corporeal forms and processes via biogeomorphic abstraction—a term he coined to describe his particular mix of hard-edged and figurative abstraction.

Ramirez composes his immersive installations as he would a painting, using architecture and color to guide the viewer through space. The exhibition begins with an explosion of color produced by Ramirez's ebullient clusters of nearly 100 PaintPour paintings. Ranging in size from 8 to 40 inches in diameter, these convex round canvases present slick rings of saturated color that appear to be poured one into the next. While each is a discrete object, recalling the cellular, ocular or mammary, together they form radiating constellations that suggest the full range of infinitude from the microscopic to the galactic. The PaintPour has been an essential component of Ramirez's installations since it was introduced as part of the solo exhibition *Space*

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Addiction at the Whitney Museum at Phillip Morris in 2002. In his first site-specific installation at Ryan Lee, Ramirez combines his PaintPours with a 24-by-10-foot black and green mural. The bold, minimal wall painting evokes playful figural forms that seem to simultaneously caress and disperse the circular paintings.

A second gallery space is dedicated to a dialogic installation of black and white drawings and sculpture. Ramirez's rich, velvety, black line drawings present linear looping shapes punctuated by round nodules, mimicking the formal vocabulary of the ceramic sculptures they are paired with. Though hard and solid, Ramirez's unglazed bisque-fired clay sculptures provide a soft, fleshy counterpart to the meandering yet graphic works on paper. Both series emerge organically, through a process of automatic drawing or sculpting; each is a direct product of the artist's hand realized without prior planning or sketching.

Like the biological systems they reference, Ramirez's work across media remains interconnected through its fluidity and dynamism. Each component offers a complementary exploration of dimensionality, sensuality, form and space, while maintaining a spirit of playful provocation. *Fun in the Color* provides a respite from the cold uncertainty of both the current seasonal and political climates, offering a pulsating escape into exuberance, sensation and hue.

Paul Henry Ramirez (b. 1963 El Paso, TX) was recently the subject of a major site-specific solo exhibition, *RATTLE*, commissioned by Grounds For Sculpture in Hamilton, New Jersey and on view from February 2016 to January 2017. Ramirez was also recently included in the Smithsonian American Art Museum's *Our America: The Latino Presence in American Art* exhibition, which traveled to eight additional American art museums through 2017, including the Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum at Florida International University in Miami, Florida; Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, California; Utah Museum of Fine Arts in Salt Lake City, Utah; Arkansas Art Center in Little Rock, Arkansas; Delaware Art Museum in Wilmington, Delaware; Allentown Art Museum in Allentown, Pennsylvania; Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg in St. Petersburg, Florida; and Hunter Museum of American Art in Chattanooga, Tennessee. His work has been exhibited at Akron Art Museum; Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield; Contemporary Arts Center Cincinnati; Corcoran Gallery, Washington, DC; McNay Art Museum, San Antonio; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; and Whitney Museum, New York, among others. Ramirez's work is held in the permanent collections of the Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others.

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ArtNexus

Paul Henry Ramirez The Newark Museum

The arches and balustrades of the Beaux-Arts courtyard at the Newark Museum—where Paul Henry Ramirez recently created an installation entitled *Blackout*—acts as the perfect foil for the exuberant confrontations between rectilinear and biomorphic forms that the artist stages in his paintings. A large, airy space that evokes the ambitions of public buildings of an earlier era, only Ramirez's bold use of color, especially bright neon and matte black, could intervene in this grand architectural setting to such transformative affect.

Essentially a painting one can inhabit, with *Blackout* Ramirez shows us that we can perceive architecture and abstract painting in essentially the same way: as sensorial experience. Whatever meanings we associate with the abstract syntax of his paintings—Ramirez's forms suggest female and male, joy and sadness, action and repose, among other pairings—his transformation of the Newark Museum's courtyard into a large-scale, three-dimensional painting shows how color radically changes our experience of architecture. By applying bright colors and matte black paint to the arches and interior walls of the courtyard, Ramirez proves that we perceive volume, space, and color in architecture and paintings in ways that are surprisingly similar.

Blackout becomes visible as views accumulated in the process of approaching and occupying the museum's courtyard, which is encircled by galleries displaying mid-twentieth century abstract paintings from the collection. The visual punch of the sunflower yellow, baby blue, and neon pink Ramirez has painted the arches and balconies draw us into the courtyard's interior. There we find that the brightly colored arches frame walls Ramirez has painted with a horizontal band of black. We also see that Ramirez has vertically intersected the sections of wall between each arch with a stripe of black paint, which look like drips, pooling into rectangles at varying heights around the courtyard. Because these black rectangles are made of painted plywood laid flush onto the walls, they project ever so slightly. The resulting effect is that these forms, which echo the rounded rectangles that have been present in Ramirez's paintings for a decade or so, slip between positive and negative readings. Depending on where you are standing, they recede and project into space, as do the white walls above them.

On the one solid wall of the courtyard, where arches form a series of niches, are paintings created especially for this installation. Turning the historical function of these niches on its head in a way—the niches look like they are meant to display portraits of civic leaders—Ramirez has installed three abstract paintings that both constitute a triptych and are integral parts of the installation. Each human in its scale, measuring six by six feet square, and each featuring his signature bulbous forms being squished by large black or brown rectangles, these paintings pit small, soft forms against large, hard ones. Like much of Ramirez's imagery, these forms are sexually charged. However, this series of paintings feels different because he juxtaposes the lyricism and humor of his biomorphic forms against the heaviness of the hard-edged geometric ones. Ramirez's juxtapositioning of these two brands of abstraction endows these paintings with a sense of struggle and psychological heaviness that is new to his work, especially in the painting hung in the central niche, the left half of which is entirely painted black.

The forms in Ramirez's *Chunk* paintings also, of course, relate to the curved and rectilinear shapes of the courtyard's Beaux-Arts architecture. The curves of the brightly colored arches echo the bulbous forms in his paintings, and black rectangles are visible on both paintings and walls. The comparison that *Blackout* compels us to make between these elements speaks to paintings' desire to escape the confines of two-dimensional space, and transform architecture (for the emphasis is the effect of Ramirez's painting

onto the architecture, and not vice versa). This desire—which reiterates the utopian ambitions of many of the artists in the concurrent exhibition of abstract painting from the 1920s to the 1950s, *Constructive Spirit*—makes Ramirez's paintings look historical, another marked difference from previous work.

Blackout also speaks to the centrality of aesthetic experience in so much contemporary art these days, and testifies to the fact that issues of identity continue to play a significant role in installation and painting. Even though the paintings incorporated into this installation are less scatological than Ramirez's previous work, they nonetheless show that subjectivity still motivates his painting, as it does many of his peers who, like him, emerged during the mid-1990s (including Arturo Herrera, Carroll Dunham, and others). Above all else, however, *Blackout* reminds us that the best painting strives to be a sensorial experience.

Harper Montgomery

Paul Henry Ramirez. *BLACKOUT: A Centennial Commission* by Paul Henry Ramirez, 2010. Mural painting, lighting and furniture. Photo: Raymond Adams.



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BOMB

artists on artists

ROBERTO JUAREZ on PAUL HENRY RAMIREZ

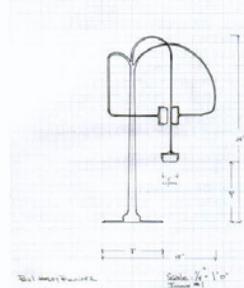
In preparation for my visit to his waterfront studio in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, Paul Henry Ramirez laid out years' worth of drawings: from early trippy watercolor portraits of his friends (real and imaginary) to recent Post-It-size pieces that are the kernels of the painting installations he's making now. Looking at his wide-ranging oeuvre, I asked Ramirez to talk about what is Hispanic in his work. His initial response was "Nothing." After pausing, he did tell me about how he helped to organize the first Hispanic exhibition in El Paso named *Juntos*. Even though he may not see it, I view his paintings and installations, with their vibrant and high-pitched colors, as very much influenced by the Hispanic spirit. Their hypersexual formal relationships dissect and disembody the charged sexual relationships you also see in popular pulp novels.

As a young artist of Hispanic descent in El Paso, Ramirez realized he could make a living painting "Indian" and Western-style landscapes. He soon rejected this option and instead came to New York to do window displays for Macy's in New Jersey and later Henri Bendel on Fifth Avenue. Like Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol before him, Ramirez used these experiences to inform his studio work and later his installation decisions. In a 1994 show at The Drawing Center, he pinned 64 drawings to the wall in wave patterns. Each drawing showed figure-based biomorphic abstractions that were like film frames of a larger strip that could be taken in up close and from afar. The installation indicated a careful attention to the viewer as well as the entire exhibition environment that I see stemming from his experience organizing window displays.

Ramirez showed me boxes of very small, doodle-like drawings that he is arranging into an installation of paintings, transforming spontaneous and gestural images into precise, tight paintings using a gridding system of enlargement. He explained to me that the shapes are about cause and effect relationships, and even at their minuscule size they are exploding, squirting, and engorging into each other. I must also mention the sly humor in all of his work, which keeps it out of the black hole of graphic art that poses as painting. The forms he uses become environmental elements of his frothy, flirty intercourses; there is even some foreplay, before and after and then again.

Ramirez's latest work is an installation mural in a local school. The imagery is laid out in enamel plates, jostling candy-colored discs resembling Marcel Duchamp's 1935 *Rotoreliefs*. Ramirez's discs move visually, not mechanically, and are full of personality and delight. But his most ecstatic work is his proposed street-lamp design for Battery Park. Taking his morphing, sensual, dance-like imagery off the walls and into the streets is a joyous response to working in these times of depraved indifference. It's a way to help us appreciate, through playfulness, what is truly human in our nature.

Roberto Juarez is an artist living in New York.



LAMPPOST SCULPTURE CONCEPT LABELS (ENLARGING AND SHOOTING) 2006.



In Fluent Form 2, 2004, acrylic on canvas, 78" x 78"

Going Up Up, 2005, aluminum, urethane paint, 24' x 9' x 3'. Installation view, P.S. 254, Queens. Courtesy of the artist, the City of New York, Dept of Cultural Affairs Percent for Art Program, and Caren Fine Art, New York. Going Up Up was commissioned by the New York City Dept of Cultural Affairs Percent For Art Program, and the New York City Dept of Education



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ArtNexus No. 67 Volume 6 Year 2007

Paul Henry Ramirez

Caren Golden Fine Art

For over a decade, Paul Henry Ramirez has made a name for himself as an abstract artist, producing paintings and installations with lively, energetic forms rendered in bright, bold colors. His imaginative compositions often combine squiggly lines with bulbous shapes that result in whimsical, often sexualized biomorphic imagery. For his fourth solo exhibition at Caren Golden Fine Art, Ramirez embraced a somewhat more austere set of forms, relying on a stricter sense of geometry to create a thriving, cohesive body of work.

Ramirez's exhibition consisted of ten paintings, each of them square in format, ranging from thirty-six square inches to sixty-six square inches. The title of the series, "CHUNK," although somewhat ambiguous as a term, has multiple references for the artist. Ramirez explained that over the last year he created this new body of work by drawing upon existing motifs, or chunks, from paintings and installations he had produced over the past ten years. One design element in particular seemed to dominate this series: two large circles set side-by-side, connected by a straight line to two smaller circles. This motif, which Ramirez refers to as cannon balls, first appeared in his *Liquid Squeeze* series of 1997, and in *CHUNK 1*, they were repeated several times, horizontally, vertically, and diagonally. They punched and protruded a larger red form, stretching and pulling it sometimes in opposing directions. As a result of the impact of these multiple forces, the malleable chunk of red seemed close to bursting in certain places.

Such imagery and terminology might recall another, perhaps less obvious use of the word "chunk." As a verb, "to chunk" means to make an explosive noise, much like protruding cannon balls might do. Yet this interpretation of "chunk" might be an overzealous reading of Ramirez's imagery. Although he was successfully able to produce a sense of tension with his forms in his compositions, Ramirez's imagery in his *CHUNK* series remained fairly controlled and balanced. Ramirez was quite clear and precise in rendering his shapes. In *CHUNK 1*, the blue was neatly delineated from its white ground; in the working process, the artist used tape to outline the form before he painted, and the edge of the shape appeared slightly raised as a result of the tape being removed. Ramirez also laboriously

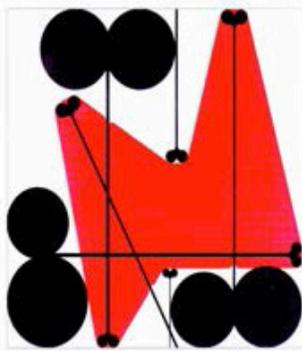
applied layer upon layer of various acrylic paints to produce distinctively shiny and matte surfaces. His technical prowess was readily apparent.

While Ramirez's *CHUNK* series celebrated a clean sense of geometry and was therefore less obviously biomorphic than his earlier work, the suggestion of the body was still apparent. His doubled cannon balls looked suspiciously like stylized testicles, and the protruding straight line almost appeared to be a single vas deferens. Such a reading seemed to make sense, given that Ramirez uses terms like "masculine," "bold," and "impactful" to describe his *CHUNK* paintings. In addition, some of other forms in his *CHUNK* series suggested different body parts, like breasts or buttocks, and Ramirez also relates his paint-

ings to the body in general, referring to his shapes of color as skins, calling them "chunky" in form.

In the past, Ramirez's work conjured up a variety of influences, most notably the biomorphic Surrealist forms of Jean Arp, the 1960s hard-edge painting of Ellsworth Kelly, and the animated imagery of Lari Pittman and Carroll Dunham. His new works, with their slick geometry, added to this list of references: the geometric abstraction found in the Russian Suprematist work of Kasimir Malevich and various Constructivist paintings by László Moholy-Nagy and Alexander Rodchenko, as well as other movements predating World War II including Abstraction-Création, de Stijl, and the Bauhaus. Ramirez's *CHUNK* series, composed of vigorous, dynamic forms, was therefore not only a reflection on his own past imagery but also a reworking of chunks of various geometric abstract ideals found in the larger canon of modern art.

Craig Houser



Paul Henry Ramirez: *Chunk 1*, 2007. Acrylic on canvas, 66 x 66 in. (167.5 x 167.5 cm.)

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Art in America

December 2007

Paul Henry Ramirez at Caren Golden

If previous figures of comparison for Paul Henry Ramirez included Aubrey Beardsley and Lari Pittman, his current work triangulates Carroll Dunham and Ellsworth Kelly. Buoyant, funny, sharp but not so it hurts, Ramirez's new paintings, individually and collectively called "Chunk," are as close to erotica as hard-edged abstraction gets. Bouncing across fields of bright color bound by smartly angled contours and tidy curves are paired balls of every size. Straight lines shoot out between them. Gone are the hairy, furry or cloudy (if always meticulous) passages of previous work, which sometimes spilled from canvas to wall; the crisp lines and fetishistically smooth acrylic surfaces of the paintings in "Chunk" speak of a certain belief in the perfectibility of form. But they are considerably too raunchy to suit abstraction's more resolute purists.

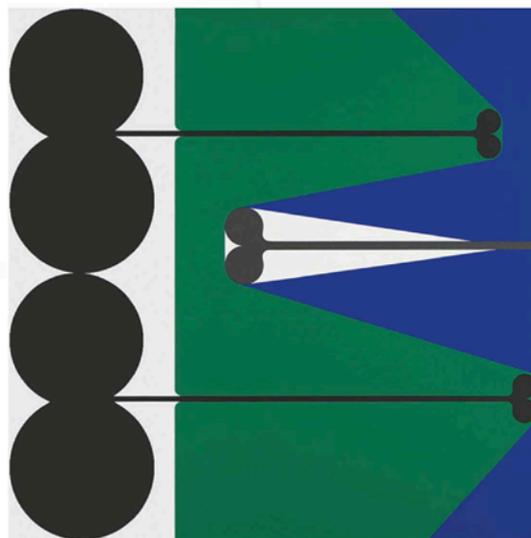
Ranging in size from 36 to 66 inches square, the numbered compositions (all 2007) include the bilaterally symmetrical 4, in which two pairs of testicular forms nestle against the ample curves of pendulous white lozenges set against a field of sunny green, the whole bisected by a big black bar.

Numbers 2 and 3 are even more explicitly sexual, the latter a semaphore-like image of crossed phalluses in two shades of pinkish red, the former an elegantly bold icon in matte black that could serve as international signage for a certain kind of intimacy.

In other compositions, though, smaller circles and narrower lines, some in glittery graphite gray, carom across straight-edged declivities to less suggestive effect. Occasionally, stray gestures familiar from earlier work, including thin striped accents in day-glo pink and orange and little peaked dollops of candy-colored paint, sweeten the imagery. A three-lobed black form set at a jaunty angle in the nested white and yellow fields of 6 vaguely suggests Mickey Mouse—and, even more generally, childhood's innocent enthusiasms. And in all these paintings, the palette, dominated by bright primaries, as much as the squeaky-clean delineation of form, pulls against associations to flesh and its pleasures. Still, the point is made.

Discreetly but distinctly, "Chunk" also invokes a specific pop-cultural moment—roughly, the early '60s—when game theory was a favored way of looking at personal relations, jazz was represented on record covers with heavily abstracted bongo drums and the Pink Panther was the cat's meow. Covetable for their stylishness and formal satisfactions as well as their wholesome sexiness, these paintings are one more blow to geometric abstraction's foundations in spiritual quest and moral rigor. Myron Stout probably wouldn't be amused and Barnett Newman surely appalled, but, for more jaded—or more tolerant—21st-century eyes, "Chunk" is hard to resist.

—Nancy Princenthal



Paul Henry Ramirez, *Chunk 5*, 2007
acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48 inches

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ArtNexus

No. 56 Volume 3 Year 2005

Paul Henry Ramirez

Mary Boone Gallery

Paul Henry Ramirez presented his latest work in the solo exhibition "In Fluent Form" at the Mary Boone Gallery last October. The show consisted of eight large paintings in square formats populated with Ramirez's now signature forms — curving lines and amorphous planes of solid bright colors against a clean white background. These visually striking paintings blur the boundaries between abstraction and representation. They further collapse binaries of line and color, form and formlessness, and eye and body, contributing to long-standing debates within the history of art.

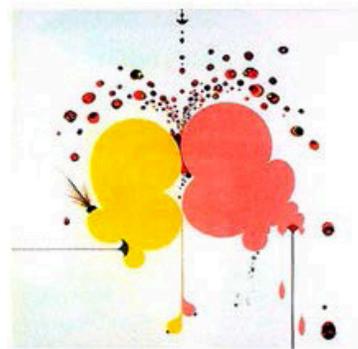
In previous exhibitions, Ramirez's paintings have not been bounded by the pictorial space; he has integrated them into their physical surroundings, creating a dynamic interplay between painting and architecture. Furthermore, as may be witnessed on the artist's website (paulhenryramirez.com), he has also included sculptural objects that reference the forms in his paintings. The exhibition at Mary Boone strictly consisted of easel paintings, leading one to wonder whether the choice was the artist's or the gallery's (in New York, Ramirez is traditionally represented by Caren Golden Fine Art). The end result was an interesting tension between the stark, gray architectural space and the colorful, playful forms that inhabit the paintings.

The paintings elicit multiple readings. *In Fluent Form 4* is composed of two flat planes of color, yellow and pink, that meet in the central axis of the painting. Above them is a cluster of acrylic splotches in motley colors; by contrast, the edges of the painting are inhabited by rectilinear forms. The central blobs, for lack of a better term, resemble nothing as much as two scoops of ice cream, vanilla and strawberry, coming together under a rain of melted candy. Despite its childlike references, the canvas emanates a strange sensuality. Allusions to body parts, particularly sexual organs, abound in this and other paintings by Ramirez. The bodily dimension of this work might be interpreted as an ironic commentary on the aspirations of spirituality in many abstract paintings. Indeed, the painting's flat planes would

seem to reference modernist painting in general and abstraction in particular. However, beyond pure paint, the smooth surface resembles taut skin; the multicolored spots, thick and shiny, become like scabs suspended on the canvas.

The work of Ramirez has often been compared to Surrealism, and his forms certainly do recall the biomorphic abstractions of the Surrealist painters Joan Miró and Jean Arp. However, Ramirez's paintings move beyond a purely formal resemblance to allude to the anti-humanist idea of the *informe* or formless first theorized by Georges Bataille in the 1920s, a concept that has been employed by the critic Rosalind Krauss to formulate a subversive counter-history of twentieth century art, reading key movements and particularly Surrealism against the grain of traditional formalist narratives. Bataille's notion, grounded on base materialism as opposed to the sublimated forms of high modernism, resonates with Ramirez's references to the body and bodily processes. *In In Fluent Form 5*, planar rectangular structures, the building blocks of geometric abstraction, are contrasted to amorphous shapes that spill, squirt, and ooze over the painting's surface as well as slight lines that coil around themselves like so much pubic hair.

Could Ramirez's titles constitute a play on words to support such a claim? At first reading, the phrase "in fluent form" seems to reference the free-flowing forms that are the artist's trademark. "Fluency" also points to mastery of language, and certainly Ramirez's visual language has become instantly recognizable. Reading further, the first two words joined together create "influent," alluding to the notion of influence, one of the essential precepts of art history. Influence creates a linear narrative in which an artist builds upon the forms of the past to make his or her own contribution to the canon. As has been amply theorized by Harold Bloom and other literary critics, tradition is created through the interplay of influence. Just as Ramirez is "influenced" by certain Surrealist painters, so too could his forms inspire future artists. However, the union of the first and third words to create "in-



Paul Henry Ramirez. *In Fluent Form 4*, 2004. Acrylic on canvas. 60 x 60 in. (152.5 x 152.5 cm.).

form" subverts this notion, contrasting the traditional definition of information as enlightenment to the idea of a lack of form, anti-form, or Bataille's *informe*. Such a reading would transform the first word of the title into a prefix denoting negativity and destabilize the entire phrase. Thus, "In Fluent" would become not-fluent, just as "form" would indicate its own opposite. Ultimately, could Ramirez's paintings be proposing a similar against-the-grain reading of modernist art, refusing both sublimation and linear history, as do the texts of Rosalind Krauss?

Nothing is what it seems in the paintings of Paul Henry Ramirez. Forms that at first appear abstract court representation. The artist's lighthearted, playful tone and compositional clarity belie a complex thought process, rife with interpretive possibilities but refusing to fix meaning.

Tatiana Flores
ArtNexus 153 & 154

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Art in America

November 2004

Paul Henry Ramirez at Mary Boone

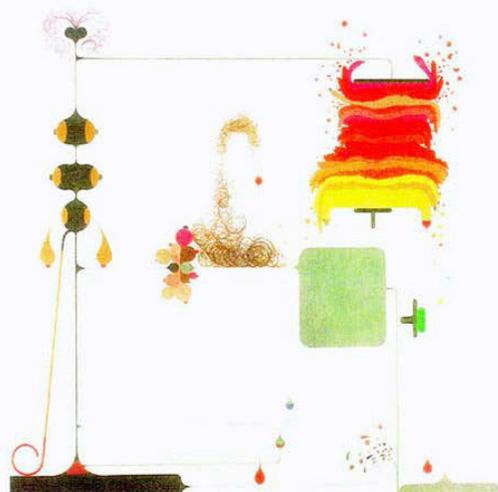
Funny, smart and extravagantly seductive abstractions wired into a circuit board that charts longing and desire, Paul Henry Ramirez's newest paintings, all of them dated 2004, romance the arabesques and curls of Aubrey Beardsley out of the loopy, tweaked dreamland of Lari Pittman. In these acrylic-on-canvas works, which range from 60 to 78 inches square, suggestive figures are often crowned by exuberant masses of curls, salaciously linked by less than innocent diagrams that smooch and hold hands, working out their monkey business on pristine white fields. Each field is built up of gesso, each layer sanded to a flawless finish, the last one airbrushed smoother than any shell.

Ramirez titles each painting *In Fluent Form*, followed by its series number. Two prominent forms occupy *In Fluent Form 5*. Conjoined ovals of smooth, pure green that overflow the upper left quadrant are held aloft by a black bracket supported like a flower on a wiry stem. A rectangular reservoir of scarlet occupying much of the lower right quadrant expresses a somewhat thicker column of red that suggestively penetrates the cloven green pillow above. At the site of contact, glistening, brightly colored blobs of eccentrically placed circles spew forth like drops of lubricant erupting from some moist encounter.

In Fluent Form 2 expresses

the controlled hysteria of Ramirez's answer to the tradition of familial portraiture. The artist presents a surrealist narrative involving the postcoital moments of improbable creatures and their hasty spawn. A whisper-thin and shining, purple-haired, arguably female figure stands a pace away from her fantastic opposite, a gesticulating abstraction of a caterpillar rendered in impasto; the creature is stretched out on a thoroughly rumped bed. As though sated, it casts off a shower of frantic blood-red drops, while the spouse, every inch a mammal, sports a heart in place of a head—a cunning Ramirez hallmark—and comes equipped with horizontally opposed breasts tipped with olive shapes painted in shining, foil-like acrylic. Their precipitate spawn, a gosling of slinky wires, rests between its parents on a bit of incomprehensible circuitry.

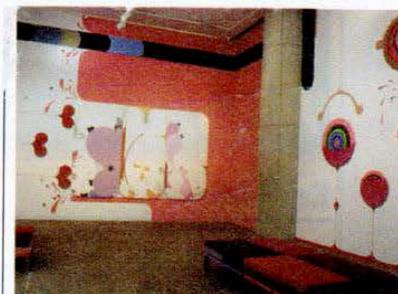
With a naughty Hello Kitty of an embrace, *In Fluent Form 4* joins two biomorphic cloudlike forms, one yellow, the other pink. They press against each other, seemingly in midair, spewing up a geyser of brightly colored disks and releasing tear-shaped drops, the immediate fruit of their joining. In celebration of the act, the yellow form sprouts tail feathers that quiver with forbidden joy. This is not perverse. Ramirez is serious about his painting. His draftsmanship is sure and fine, the palette cool and modern. First and last, each painting declares itself as an object, with occasional bands of color wrapped around the edge, as though to keep the painting from flying off the wall. —Edward Leffingwell



Paul Henry Ramirez: *In Fluent Form 2*, 2004, acrylic on canvas, 78 inches square; at Mary Boone. (Review on p. 178.)

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Paul Henry Ramirez, *Space Addiction*, 2002.

“Outer City, Inner Space” + “Paul Henry Ramirez: *Space Addiction*”

Whitney Museum of American Art
at Philip Morris, through Oct 11 +
Jan 3 (see Museums).

Summer sun beckons New Yorkers out of homes and offices and onto crowded streets, only to make them long for respite from the heat—and from each other. In midtown, relief comes in the form of two exhibits (one group, one solo) showcasing funky, contemporary fare at the “cigarette” Whitney’s wide-open digs. The works themselves impart a heightened appreciation for the space that surrounds both them and us. (Did we mention the deep-freeze air conditioning?)

In the solo slot, the painter Paul Henry Ramirez’s installation of stacked canvases and wall murals allows his ubiquitous menagerie of sexy biomorphic forms (something like teats and testicles in mid-orgy) to get more than a second wind: They drip down door jambs, reel off raised disks of color and squirt each other across vast expanses. Composer So Takahahi adds an electronic soundtrack made especially for the occasion, while furniture designer Stuart Basseches has created upholstered benches in color-coordinated pinks and purples, all of which affords the place the feel of a lounge/meditation zone. Ramirez calls the piece *Space Addiction*, but despite the title’s suggestion of wanton consumption, he’s really being quite economical: No element overpowers the other, no space is wasted. Yet there’s plenty of room to breathe. It’s ideal for New Yorkers: all that raucous, sexy fun giving us license to relax.—Sarah Schmerler

TimeOut
New York

August 1–8, 2002
Issue 357

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The New York Times

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2002

Paul Henry Ramirez

'Space Addiction'

Through Oct. 11

*Whitney Museum of American Art
at Philip Morris
120 Park Avenue, at 42nd Street*

If Austin Powers were an artist, he might do something like the work of Paul Henry Ramirez. In flat, hard-edged graphics reminiscent of the Pop and Color Field painting of the 1960's, Mr. Ramirez creates zany montages of semi-abstracted body parts — spurting breasts, delicately hair-fringed orifices, dangling genitalia — and fully abstract elements, like targets, polka-dots, stripes and single-hued planes. In shades of pink and other tones suggesting skin, as well as bright whites and suave, slightly toned-down decorator colors, Mr. Ramirez's fertile imagery proliferates all over the walls, turning a room into a visionary, wrap-around environment of erotic animation.

Here at the Whitney's Philip Morris gallery, he has expanded into aural space, providing a soundtrack of quirky, computerized sound effects. He has also gone into three dimensions with coolly modernistic cushioned benches upholstered in colors that match the wall painting.

For all its surface pizzazz, Mr. Ramirez's art has intriguing conceptual implications. It satirizes the utopian fantasies of mid-20th-century design and suggests, with all the lactating mammary imagery, that the impulse to create environments of holistic harmony may be driven less by formalist rationality than by infantile yearning for the ideally nurturing mother.

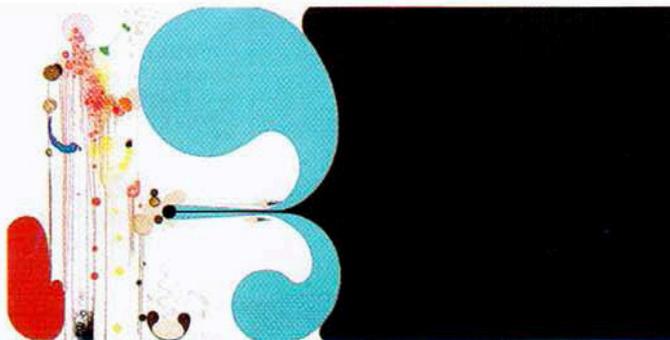
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Art in America

January 1999



Paul Henry Ramirez: Untitled, 1998, acrylic and enamel on canvas, diptych, 72 by 144 inches overall; at Caren Golden.

Paul Henry Ramirez at Caren Golden

In numerous group shows over the past few years, Paul Henry Ramirez has made a name for himself as a playful organic abstractionist. His colorful paintings seem spontaneous at first glance, but they're actually precisely rendered images that put a Pop or cartoonlike spin on the drips and splatters of abstract painting. His second solo show at Caren Golden was titled "Real Pretty Simple Innocent Paintings," a jokey denial of the sexual quality of his imagery.

Ramirez skillfully balances positive and negative spaces in five new large-scale canvases. Crisply drawn lines meander around the white canvas, looping, curving and sometimes clumping like a hairball in a shower drain. Engorged globules are tickled by arcing and coiling strands that often spurt from mole- or nipplelike forms. Bulbous shapes, sometimes sporting their own tufts, dangle pendulously from attenuated lines. There are also splashes and dancing drops of liquid. Poured dots of paint in dazzling, layered combinations of three or four colors recall sections of Chuck Close's recent works in

which each square is like a miniature Color-Field painting. The smooth, shiny dots seem to float on the surface and look as if they could be peeled off intact. Here and there are actual—yet planned—spills and stains that serve as a backdrop for the faux chaos around them.

Ramirez also uses areas of solid color to offset the isolated shapes cavorting about the surface. For example, the right half of one long rectangular work is completely black. A curving blue form abuts the mass and seems to hold it back from encroaching on the festivities on the left side of the canvas. In another work two round lavender testicle shapes at the top hover over the busyness below. The works so burst with energy that they sometimes spill onto the walls. One canvas seemed held in place, or contained, by geometric shapes painted on the wall on either side.

Ramirez's work could also be seen in the recent "Pop Surrealism" show at the Aldrich Museum in Ridgefield, Conn., for which he took over the wall and columns in the museum's foyer and portico with a burgeoning wall painting. Though he has been criticized for being too derivative (of Carroll Dunham, Amy Sillman, etc.), his fun and visually seductive works speak their own language.

—Stephanie Cash

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The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1998

'Biomorphic Abstraction'

*Curt Marcus Gallery
578 Broadway, near Prince Street
SoHo
Through Dec. 23*

It's fun, it's sexy, it's retro, it's everywhere. "Biomorphic Abstraction," a judiciously selected, six-artist show offers a useful occasion to ponder the popularity of biomorphic forms, shapes that mimic cellular, organic or bodily structures, in today's art.

Historical background is provided by an unusually good painting by Max Ernst, a small, creepy picture, dated 1933-34, of a bulbous, convoluted green mass vaguely suggestive of an embryonic bird. This reminds us that biomorphism came out of Surrealism and, as such, pitted weird biology against mechanized modernity.

The exhibition's best piece, a beautiful, orange-speckled lumpy blue blob with an orifice, by the veteran ceramicist Ken Price, has Surrealistic mystery, but it is balanced by Pop insouciance, an impulse to parody what had become by the 1950's a designer cliché.

Younger artists, with the exception of Kevin Larmon, whose stained, yellow-glazed canvases have a quality of Old Masterish romanticism, lean toward the ironic. Paul Henry Ramirez makes Pop-style paintings: antic, flat designs full of exactly abstracted spurting breasts, hairy testicles and loopy lines; Carl Ostendarp paints richly colored, near-abstract cartoons (landscapes or phallic-fingered hands), and Pae White produces cerebral work, in which a pink modernist chair with a feminine hourglass shape is juxtaposed with two 60's-era Vera scarves.

Each in its own way knowingly recycles biomorphic kitsch, yet each to a different degree is animated, too, by an infectious mood of playful eroticism.

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