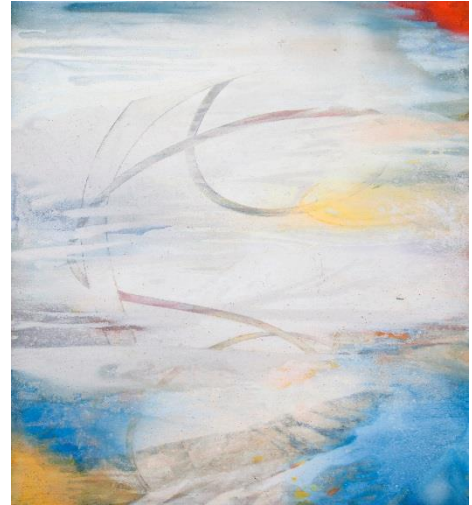


Bendel Hydes & Luminescent Abstraction



Bendel Hydes, *Untitled (Reef Revisited Series)*, 2005



Bendel Hydes, *Belief*, 2006



Bendel Hydes, *Resonance*, 2008



Bendel Hydes, *Paradox of Dreams*, 2010

“My work has clarified itself in terms of a kind of search for order in space...the general principle is to understand, feel and grasp that art is really a process” (Bendel Hydes)

The Artist

Bendel Hydes is known as Cayman's foremost contemporary artist. He was born in West Bay, Grand Cayman in 1952. Hydes studied art at Liverpool College of Art and Canterbury College in the UK and finished his studies at Clark University in the US, where he completed a degree in philosophy and political science.

Hydes has lived and worked in New York City since 1982 and participated in several important exhibitions there and in France, Brazil, London and Washington, D.C. His art is found in the collection of HRH Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh and several other public and private collections, including the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands and the Cayman Islands National Archive.



Bendel Hydes, *Anemone I*, 1996

Luminescent Abstraction

Abstract art refers to the non-representational style of visual depiction that is less concerned with accurate rendering of visual reality and more so with colour and composition in their own right. Bendel Hydes uses the term 'Luminescent Abstraction' to describe the style of painting he developed in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This technique has now become the artist's signature style and involves the layering of multiple washes of paint to create a sense of depth and textural variety in his work.

The artist is able to convey the quality of light and shadow or the flow of water by slowly building up the surface of his canvases in successive layers. Hydes achieves this process by diluting his oils before applying these washes to the surface of his paintings, which he then thins even further with the aid of a cloth. The resulting images have a luminous, radiant quality that is reminiscent of the sky at sunrise or sunset. Some examples of Hydes' luminescent abstractions include *Belief* (2006) and *Transmuted Sky V* (2008).



Bendel Hydes, *Transmuted Sky V*, 2008

The Artwork

Hydes' experiments with technique culminated with his *Circumnavigating the Globe* paintings (2008-2010), which are the best examples of the artist's style of luminescent abstraction. *Desert Kabuki* is one of a dozen large canvases that form part of the series, which represents a metaphorical journey around the world (each of the paintings represent a 30-degree section of longitude spanning the entire earth's surface). Speaking of *Desert Kabuki*, Hydes remarks that he was 'toying with the idea of Japanese Kabuki in the Australian desert' as a way of merging these two opposing cultures.



Bendel Hydes, *Desert Kabuki*, 2009

Discussion

- What do you feel is the benefit of creating abstract imagery versus traditional subject matter, such as landscapes and still lifes?
- Do you think realism requires more skill and technique than abstract art? What are the main differences between these two forms of artistic expression, and which do you most relate to?
- How do you feel Hydes' technique helps him depict difficult subject matter like moving water or rays of light? Do you think building up layers of paint helps the artist create a sense of depth and texture in his works?

Follow Up Activities

- Visit the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands and view the Bendel Hydes works in the middle room of the lower exhibition hall. How do they differ from his earlier paintings of the 1980s?
- Try and imitate Bendel Hydes' Luminescent Abstraction painting technique. What are some of the difficulties in working with multiple layers of paint and can you find a successful solution for this problem?
- Think of a sunset, a sunrise or an image from nature that you can remember clearly. Try and capture the feeling or sensation of that memory and convey your impressions through your artwork.