

MARK LEONARD (b. 1954)

Palm Springs-based painter Mark Leonard trained as an artist before deciding to pursue a career as a paintings restorer. He earned a multi-disciplinary Bachelor's degree in Studio Art, Art History, and Chemistry from Oberlin College, and Master's degrees in both Art History and Art Conservation from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Leonard first worked as a restorer for The Metropolitan Museum of Art before spending twenty-six years at The J. Paul Getty Museum, with 12 of those years as the Head of Paintings Conservation. In 2012 he was invited to become the first Chief Conservator at the Dallas Museum of Art, where he built a new conservation studio and expanded the department. In 2017, he returned to working full-time as an independent artist.

Leonard's paintings are done in several stages. An underpaint of gouache first provides a foundation for the organic movement of the finished surface. A thin brush coat of a synthetic resin varnish is then applied, and many layers of translucent veils of glazing are applied with a synthetic resin paint (which Leonard helped to develop). The combination of these synthetic resin materials with the gouache underpainting results in a surface that in some aspects mimics the look of an aged oil paint surface but, because of the rigorous and idiosyncratic techniques required for its manipulation, is otherwise unique. Upon close inspection, the brushwork on the surface retains a delicate and meticulous sense of movement, and, when seen from a normal viewing distance, the result is a lush sense of vibrancy and textures.

At the crux of Leonard's work lies the interdependence of equal and opposite forces: order and chaos, logic and feeling, love and loss. This focus is apparent in the artist's *Weaving* works, in which delicately modeled warps and wefts intertwine, entrapped and made whole by each other in equal measure. Supported on a scaffolding of logical grids, they are given the space to breathe, unencumbered, with frank emotion and pure directional energy.

Leonard's *Constable Studies* are the product of his time spent as artist-in-residence at the Yale Center for British Art, where they were exhibited in 2012 alongside the works that inspired them. The essential geometries of John Constable's rich cloudscapes are laid bare, condensed into undulating, rope-like forms and stormy, enigmatic spheres. Leonard studies Constable just as Constable studied the skies, each endeavoring to perfect his ability to capture the sweeping spiritual effects of his chosen muse. Where Constable sought the sublime in nature, Leonard locates it in the logical order he finds at the heart of a chaotic world.

Louis Stern Fine Arts is the exclusive representative of Mark Leonard.