

MODERNISM

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Gallery Exhibition Schedule

TONY HERNANDEZ: *Requiem of Mind and Wonder*

June 15–August 19, 2017

Tony Hernandez is haunted by photographs of children who perished in the Holocaust. He is also preoccupied with images of boys and girls who struggled through the Great Depression, especially in the ghettos of the Bronx where his grandparents lived. "Unlike adults, children are powerless," he says. "They're usually the ones to suffer the most from man's supreme ability to be ignorant throughout history." Imbued with a rich symbolism of his own creation, Hernandez's paintings of pre-adolescent boys and girls grapple with this powerlessness, as well as the "mind of wonder" that sustains children even in the darkest hours.

Over the past several decades, Hernandez has single-mindedly explored these themes, working exclusively on handmade birch wood panels using the technically-demanding process of encaustic painting. With a deceptively simple visual vocabulary, depicting children adrift in a featureless landscape, he creates vignettes of a subtle psychological power. His poignant compositions are distilled down to their emotional essence, granting viewers entry into a world of transcendence.

While there is a large measure of despair, abandonment and forlorn tenderness in these images, they are counterbalanced by emblems of hope: lonesome doves, with their dual connotations of solitude and mating, are standard emblems of impending peace. The doves sit at the children's feet, attentive and guardian-like, or perch playfully on their heads and fingertips. In one recent painting, a boy wears a dunce cap, the symbol of incompetence, yet his shadows show him wearing a crown. Another new painting depicts a girl playing a violin to a dunce-capped dove. The earnestness of her serenade suggests the ability of children to see past the glib judgments of grownups.

In his sensitivity to his subject matter, Hernandez has drawn comparisons to Christian Boltanski, while his deft communication of historical travesties through personal symbolism has been compared to the paintings of Anselm Kiefer. But above all Hernandez remains true to his own instincts, which he has developed since attending the Art Institute of Atlanta as a high school student and refined since devoting himself to painting full-time in 1988. "I paint for emotional connection," he explains. "I am not concerned with fads, what is hot in the art world, and I really have not paid much attention to it in almost 20 years."



Requiem, 2017, encaustic & oil on Baltic birch
48 x 48 inches

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That independence frees Hernandez to make images that are fully autonomous. As the art critic Jerry Cullum explains, "it's rare to find an artist whose work functions so totally on a level that gives the subjective sensation of intellectual satisfaction without providing anything like an obvious conceptual agenda. His approach to figuration delivers a definable psychological impact, and that he does this with rather more complexity than most painters."

Tony Hernandez exhibits internationally and his works are in numerous public collections throughout the U.S., notably the Fine Arts Museums Of San Francisco.

The public is invited to attend a reception for the artist on **Thursday, June 15th**, from 5:30-8PM.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CALL: 415/541-0461 / FAX: 415/541-0425 / INFO@MODERNISMINC.COM

CV & HI-RES IMAGES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.



Bonnie, 2017, encaustic & oil on Baltic birch, 60 x 60 inches