

FABRICATIONS

Merce Cunningham's *Fabrications*, along with *Shards*, premiered in 1987 and marked a high water mark in the emotive and narrative potential of a choreographer so well known for his purely abstract approach. He famously denied any representational intention but conceded that perhaps it was there. "I don't put it in the piece. My choices are made in the *movement* ... movement is expressive. I've never denied that. I don't think there's such a thing as abstract dance." To the extent *Fabrications* is abstract, it's moving, but to the extent it is descriptive, there's no plot.

My choices are similarly focused on line, color and form. But I'm also interested in the expressive energy and even the narrative possibilities of pure abstraction. A "fabrication" alludes to a literal construction but also to a fictional invention, even a lie. Painting has become a way for me to construct a realm that feels both real and imaginary; a way to see the unseen. This exhibition spotlights the evolution of my paintings from a rigorous, process driven abstract language to a more open, forceful and physical dialect. The improvisational choreography of accident and intention generate unexpected relationships between line, plane and color. Several diptychs in this group reinforce these odd and unanticipated juxtapositions.

Patricia Lent, one of the original dancers, described *Fabrications* thusly, "In the beginning of the dance we seemed more separate, but as the dance goes on, there is more and more physical contact—partnering and touching. By the end we felt connected, a complex tribe, or herd, or team." My paintings have a similar arc from an accidental, almost random and plastic energy which proposes several directions to a more cohesive conclusion that still retains its open momentum.

The fabrication is like making sense of a confusing dream where the images and facts become tangible and plastic. As Lou Kahn might ask a brick what it wants to be, I try to unfold the expression each painting wants to convey. Traces of mark and edge become the equivalents of doubt, memory and time. Reoriented lines converge in energetic tangles while planes might define architectural or topographic form. The best results evoke an evolving abstract narrative that seems at once surprising and obvious.

Steve Hicks, Gowanus, 2019