

NEWS

HAL BROMM GALLERY
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Luis Frangella: Paintings from the 1980's

18 September – 20 December 2019

Luis Frangella (1944-1990) was a figurative, postmodern Argentine painter and sculptor with a long-standing relationship with Hal Bromm Gallery. Frangella earned a master's degree in architecture at the University of Buenos Aires in 1972 before attending the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1973. In 1976, he moved to New York City where he originally settled on Elk Street near Manhattan's City Hall.



Pier Project Mural, Pier 34, New York, (L); Installation, Chicago, 1984, acrylic on construction site wall (R)

Nearby he painted massive “street” murals on construction site walls, abandoned Hudson River piers and on impromptu stage sets in the nightclubs of the East Village and Tribeca: among them Pyramid Club, Mudd Club and the Limbo Lounge. As a gay artist whose work was unapologetically queer, Frangella was a seminal figure in the subversive East Village art scene that developed in the early 1980s.



Luis Frangella photographed in front of "Katty" 1983, East Village night club

Frangella's rich educational background gave him a sense of self-assurance and confidence that he generously shared with other artists in his circle, among them David Wojnarowicz. Cynthia Carr, who authored a biography of Wojnarowicz, observed that Luis Frangella taught David how to paint. The two artists frequently collaborated on drawings, paintings and other works, along with artists like Kiki Smith and Mike Bidlo. Frangella, Bidlo and Wojnarowicz were instrumental in 'discovering' the iconic Pier 34, an abandoned Hudson River shipping terminal that quickly became an ad hoc 'artists' museum' with a growing cast of participants who used unconventional mediums to transform its floors and walls.



David Wojnarowicz and Mike Bidlo in front of Luis Frangella mural at Pier 34 (L); Luis Frangella in front of another of his murals at Pier 34 (R), photos by Andreas Sterzing

Known for constantly sketching and working on his pieces, Frangella's passion for art was perpetually vibrant and frequently inspired those around him. Equally at ease with painting and sculpture, Luis Frangella alternated between refined delicacy and robust muscularity. Frangella's initial September 1983 exhibition at Hal Bromm featured fourteen-foot tall figures painted on the gallery walls, forming a direct connection to Frangella's work at Pier 34 on the Hudson River.



*Luis Frangella with his painted gallery walls (L);
"Dreamer" installation in Luis Frangella's 1983 "Painting" exhibition at Hal Bromm (R)*

Art writer and critic Dan Cameron wrote of Frangella's focus on the "human spirit":

The art of Luis Frangella has always gone to the heart of the matter, in that he has been quite particular about declaring the human spirit as his primary subject. Such a stance sets him noticeably apart from the majority of his colleagues, to the degree that whereas Frangella states his aesthetic concerns with great conviction, he refuses to allow the technical demands required by his work to overwhelm his need to make a statement that is undeniably human in its fragility, its fallibility, and even its implausibility. It is in this manner that he is probably first and foremost a poet who happens to have chosen a visual rather than a linguistic form for his medium of self-expression, as opposed to a painter who takes on painting's battles as if they were his own. ... There is a universal quality of compassion, forgiveness even, permeating Frangella's view of that imperfect creature, man.



"Mickey Mouse" (view), 1984
acrylic on corrugated board, 103 x 136 x 52 in.



Luis Frangella, "Encounter" 1983, Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 50"

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For further information, photographs or details on the exhibition, please visit halbromm.com or contact the gallery via email: gallery@halbromm.com or call 212 732 6196.