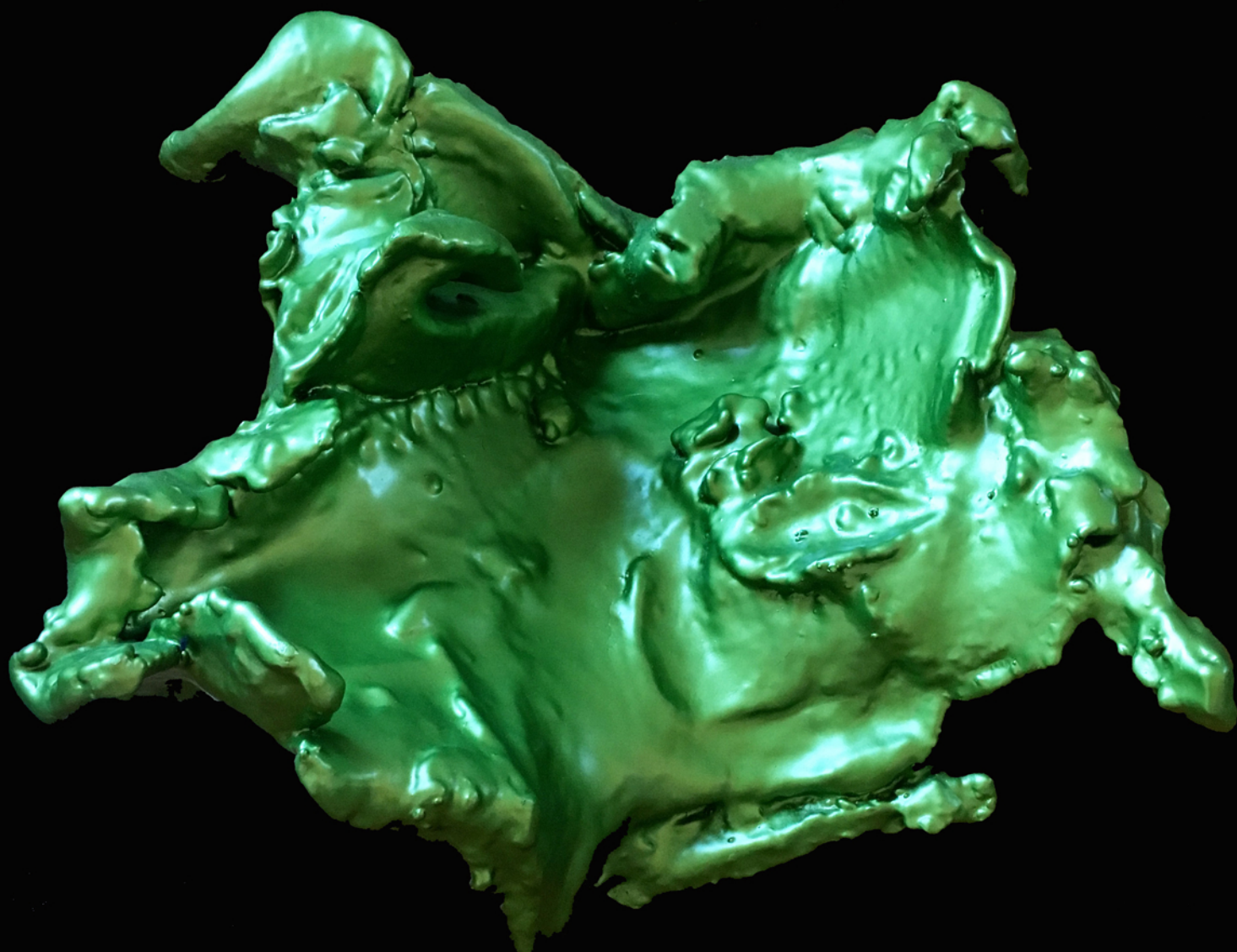


DOVE BRADSHAW

GALERIA MASCOTA
980 MADISON
NEW YORK
10075



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CONTINENCY PAINTINGS
&
SPENT BULLET SCULPTURES

2021

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Hers & His

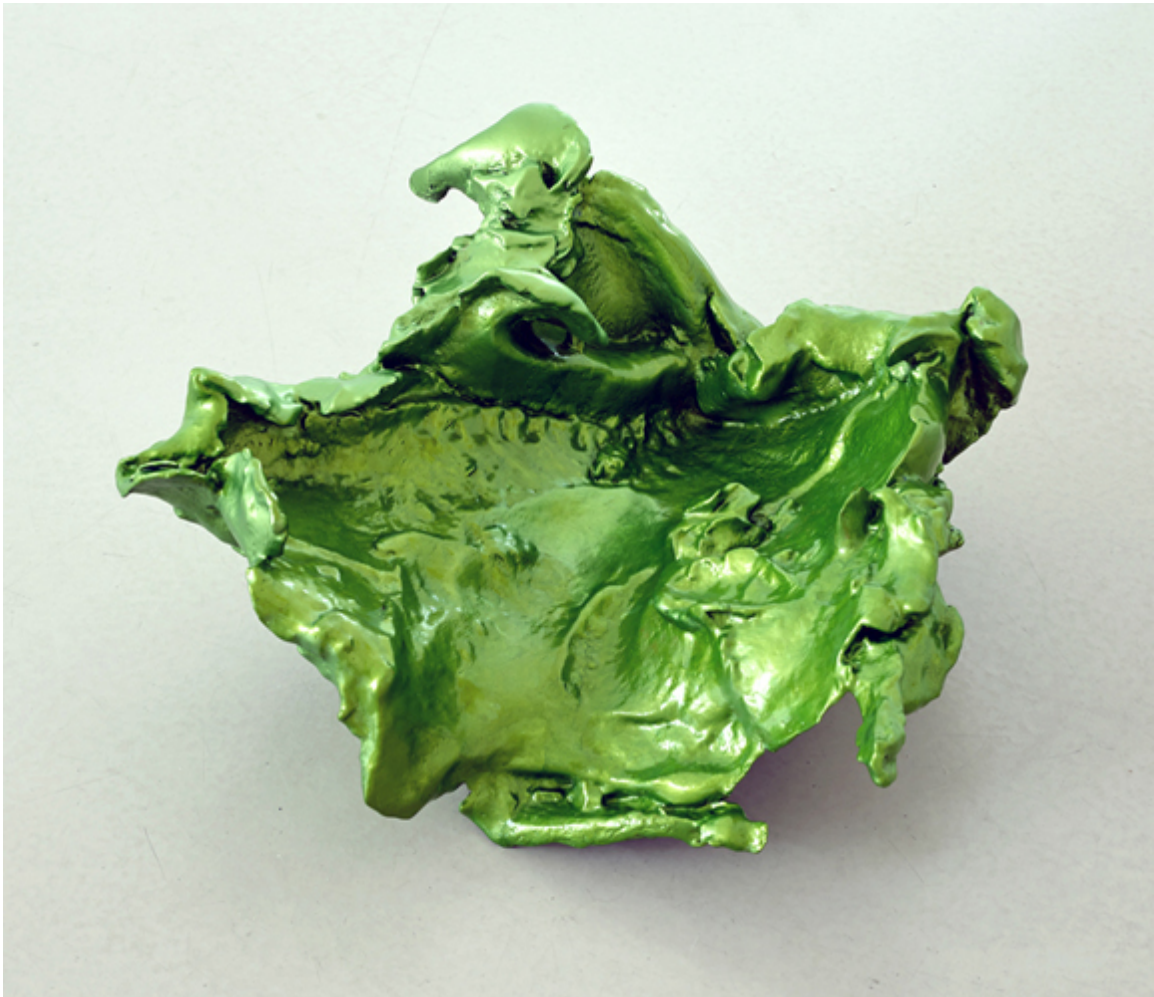
Charles Stuckey

Modern-minded young Mexico City gallerist Javier Estevez presented a selection of important works by the veteran New York artists Dove Bradshaw and William Anastasi at his satellite space for Galería Mascota at 980 Madison Avenue. It has been five years since major works by either of them have been exhibited in New York. Surrounded a few years ago by works like these installed in the Upper West Side apartment where Bradshaw and Anastasi have lived and worked since they became life partners nearly a half century ago, their friend, the late Robert Ryman, opined that together their works surpassed anything on view in any current New York gallery. While most married artists work independently of one another, Bradshaw and Anastasi (already an acclaimed conceptual art pioneer by 1974 when they met) both embrace the aesthetics of John Cage with its emphasis on chance methods. Beginning in 1984 they served jointly as Artistic Advisors for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

As if to go beyond conceptual art, around this same time each began to make monumental works that integrated abstract gestural painting with conceptual procedures outside their control. Orchestrating sense and

nonsense, the colors for the works in Anastasi's ongoing *Bababad* series are determined by chance, while the seemingly meaningless stenciled letters are excerpts from the one-hundred-letter thunderclap accompanying the bricklayer Finnegan falling to his death at the beginning of Joyce's classic tale. As for Bradshaw, whose striking materialistic sculptures starting already in the late 60s involve an expertise of metal elements, her dark mysterious "pigments" for the large scale *Contingency* paintings are silver and liver of sulfur, unstable together and so fated to change hue and shape long after the artist set them into motion. She has a special eye for exquisite accident, whether self-initiated or found at random, like the plastic exuberance of bullets shaped by chance on impact, each quite individual notwithstanding being part of a series. Greatly enlarged and cast in resin these found objects transform into festive *Spent Bullet* sculptures, coated with metallic automotive colors. No less dramatic, the graphic excitement in Anastasi's *Burst* drawings, repeating the simplest single gesture from here to there as a visualization of the magnificence of energy exhausted is in keeping with the visual power of the *Spent Bullets*. Both artists make the case that chance-based art has an impact and truth that rivals the most profound works of the last half-century.





Spent Bullet [Mercedes Chartreuse 2018], 2015/2018
ABS resin, car paint over copper and nickel plate
9 ½ x 18 ½ x 17 inches

Contingency [Fontana], 2018/2021 (opposite)
Silver, liver of sulfur, pigment, carpenter's glue,
pyrite crystals, varnish, gesso on linen, 32 x 24 inches

*A failed 2018 work from the Guilty Marks Series (opposite)
(titled because it does not have one-hundred percent chance composition)
for this exhibition was silvered over, with its blind throw of sticks preserved
in liver of sulfur. Becoming Contingency [Fontana], it celebrates his influence.*



Spent Bullet [Aluminum I], 2015/2016
Edition of 2, ABS resin, aluminum paint
9 ½ x 20 x 16 ½ inches
Edition Number 1: Judith Pizar, New York

*“Make Art, Not War:” was my 1979 corollary to John Lennon and Yoko Ono’s 1969 Bed In statement, “Make Love, Not War”– by making a sculpture out of a bullet removes one more round designed to use on humans.”**





Spent Bullet [Dum Dum], 2015/2016
ABS resin, rubber coating
8 x 26 ½ x 14 inches

Contingency [Riverroots], 2011 (opposite)
Silver, liver of sulfur, varnish on linen
82 x 66 inches

*Roots for the Contingency Riverroots that had swept loose
from the historic 2011 double hurricanes Irene and Lee were gathered
from the Loyalock stream at Haystacks, The Endless Mountains, Pennsylvania.*

Robert Rauschenberg told John Cage that it wasn't possible to make a painting using a hundred percent chance. I thought I'd give chance a try. The Contingencies began in 1984 as overall works using the chemical liver of sulfur that oxidizes a pure silver leaf ground and never stops changing it. Equally volatile, silver by itself tarnishes with light, air and humidity. Together the chemical and silver provoke an exponential variety of effects. My rough chemical mix, the time of year or whether the paintings were made indoors or out, all contribute to ongoing reactions. This unpredictability kept the activity lively.

A break through came by startling chance a decade and a half later. A bear had ripped off a branch from my peach tree prompting me to blindly throw it onto a silver leafed canvas prepared on the studio floor for my customary overall treatment. Capitalizing on the bear's destructive act I blindly threw other branches and garden clippings, preserving their lines with liver of sulfur and thus the first foreground and background was created in this series.

Contingency [Winter Light], 2011
Silver, liver of sulfur, varnish on linen
82 x 66 inches





Contingency [Sticks & Stones], 2013 in the Pennsylvania studio: the sticks had been gathered for kindling, but before being thrown into the fire were randomly tossed onto the linen in order to make a chance-based composition. (Detail opposite)





*Dog sticks gathered in New York City's Riverside Park were thrown onto a stretched silvered linen, their lines preserved with liver of sulfur. Waiting for snow that January, I left the painting outside for a day in the alley behind my building. Inside the snow melted. The resulting drips that barely showed, unexpectedly reappeared when months later the silver tarnished.**

Contingency [Snow Melt], 2015
Silver, liver of sulfur, varnish on canvas
89 ¼ x 74 inches

The fact that the world is always changing lends itself to work that changes.





Spent Bullet [Mercedes 2018], 2015

Contingency [Fontana], 2018/2021

Contingency [Riverroots], 2012



Contingency [Riverroots], 2012
Contingency [Winter Light], 2011

...dark mysterious "pigments" for the large-scale Contingency paintings are silver and liver of sulfur, unstable together and so fated to change hue and shape long after the artist set them into motion.

Charles Stuckey



Contingency [Winter Light], 2011
Contingency [Snow Melt], 2015



Contingency [Snow Melt], 2015

Spent Bullet [Aluminum I], 2015/2017

Spent Bullet [Toyota Blue 2004], 2018



Spent Bullet [Toyota Blue 2004], 2015/2016
ABS resin, six carat white gold
9 1/2 x 20 1/2 x 16 1/2 inches



Dove Bradshaw wearing *Spent Bullet* earrings and clasp, 1979
Background: *Contingency [Snow Melt]*, 2015

In target practice the New York Police Department lead bullets flatten out paradoxically turning into flowers. Immediately they suggested jewelry. Earrings and pins were sequentially cast in silver, then silver gilt and finally solid gold. Their progression became “alchemically” more and more precious.

P. 8. *Spent Bullets* are 3D enlargements of .38 caliber New York City Police bullets. In 2002 they were recovered from a range on 20th Street off Fifth Avenue. The target pictures a cartoon image of a menacing man, an outline within the face and body indicating the *sweet zone*, with greasy slicked back hair, one hairy hand steadying the other holding a gun aimed directly at the police.

These bullets are designed to kill humans, not squirrels, nor deer, humans that police practice targeting. Sliced at the tip three times in order to make a larger hole in flesh to cause more collateral damage, the aim was to stop a suspect's escape; otherwise a bullet could more easily pass through the body without incapacitation. I first gathered shot bullets from a 100th Street range in 1979. Back then bullets were not sheathed in copper so after passing through targets the lead flattened when hitting two tilted steel plates set at 90 degrees one to the other, first striking the upper sheet, ricocheting onto the lower and sliding into sand where they are recovered, melted down and reused. Opening like flowers, in a Utopian gesture they were cast into jewelry to wear on the outside. On the eve of the Iraq War in a protest performance I had filled with slugs a red Fire Bucket that normally holds sand. Viewers invited to select one laid it to rest in a small black-velvet jewelry bag with the title *INFINITY* printed in white, upon which in mock hope, I numbered each: 1/Infinity, 2/Infinity and so on, signing it.

By 2002 the slugs had been clad in copper to protect the shooter from lead poisoning. It produced a twisted raw lead occasionally with copper scraps still attached evidencing their speed and impact. When the possibility of 3D printing became more commonly available it was possible to make large-scale sculptures. Various I covered them—first with white gold leaf, then aluminum and rubber spray paint from a hardware store and finally they were professionally painted in a body shop. The car paint introduced bright colors—2004 Toyota Blue and Mercedes Chartreuse, Mercedes Sakhir Orange and Porsche Formula all from 2018. Now that they are weather proof, they can be outdoors.

During the Pandemic in place of guests I hooked the bullets onto the back of our Eighteenth Century Chinese chairs since artists always have their work for company. That led to creating a ballet with a stage-set-replica of the table and chairs being discussed for the City of Boston Ballet under Artistic Director Tony Williams. Conceived as *A Pandemical Ballet*, Mr. Williams re-aimed the theme more directly at lethal police misconduct. In 2021 Antony Blinken, US Secretary of State acquired *Spent Bullet [Porsche Formula 2018]*, 2021 which he has presently placed in his State Department office. I offered: *Make Art, Not War*.

P. 16. *Contingency [Snow Melt], 2015:* The snow lasting all day was a perfect consistency—moist enough to cling to the minutely raised chemical etch—accumulating up to eight inches above even the tiniest splash as the canvas had been raked at a slight angle.

The film made during the storm looks far more ethereal than the finished painting. Curiously the drips have remained bright nearly seven years later though silver naturally tarnishes without favor or prejudice. How acidic is our New York City air? Could it somehow be bottled so that silver need not be polished?

Appreciation:

Javier Estevez, owner of Galerí Mascota, for joining Anastasi and myself for two solo exhibitions that served as a duet celebrating our near half-century together in such a beautiful space and in such an important location coupled with his generous support mounting Bill's drawings.

Norman Kleeblatt for his marvelous and meticulous editing.

Copy writes:

Hers & His, Charles Stuckey, 2021

In situ photographs, the *Contingency Paintings* and *Spent Bullet [Aluminum I]* and *Spent Bullet [Dum Dum]*, Josh Nefsky, 2021 and 2016 respectively

Contingency [Fontana], 2021, *Spent Bullet [Mercedes Chartreuse 2018]*, 2018, *Contingency [Sticks & Stones]* in progress, 2013, *Contingency [Snow Melt]* details during the storm, 2015, *Spent Bullet [Toyota Blue 2004]*, 2018, commentary about her works and catalogue design by Dove Bradshaw, 2021

Dove Bradshaw portrait, Joel Simpson, 2021

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