

PRESS RELEASE

**DON ED HARDY: Paintings and Small Sculptures**



**October 20 – December 10, 2011**

**Reception: Thursday, November 3, 2011 5:30 – 7:30**

The paintings in Don Ed Hardy's upcoming show at Rena Bransten Gallery evolved from the monumental 4 x 500 foot work *2000 Dragons*, executed in the millennial year (a Dragon Year in the Asian zodiac). This was a decisive turning point for the artist in its scale and expansive gesture, as he had spent the previous four decades in near-daily practice with the obsessive precision of intaglio printmaking, lithography, tattooing, and careful watercolors. The mission goal of making two thousand dragons with no preplanned composition freed Hardy up to explore pure abstract elements along with recognizable forms. The spontaneous works since then continue to develop intuitively at the moment of painting.

The big scroll was executed with acrylic on archival synthetic paper, which was available in huge rolls. Featherweight and durable, it was the most practical solution for a work of immense scale. The saturation of pigment into paper as an instantaneous indelible record—with little or no over painting—continues and amplifies Hardy's works with metal plates, sumi ink, and skin. The current works further explore pure autographic expressive gesture.

Immersed in Western as well as Asian art history, aesthetics, and theories of brushwork, Hardy has a long relationship with living and working in Japan. Along with the paintings are a new series of small porcelain sculptures. Made in collaboration with ceramist Trevor Ewald, these extend Hardy's work done during several visits to Arita, Japan. There, at the invitation of a traditional kiln, he glazed production wares with unexpected themes, extending and subverting venerable tradition. The new ceramics are inspired by a series of his late '90s paintings featuring garment forms from 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century Northern European engravings (first studied in his undergraduate days at the San Francisco Art Institute) to which he added components of tattoo and pop themes.

Mr. Hardy graduated from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1967 with a BFA in printmaking. He retired from tattooing in 2006 and now divides his time between San Francisco and Honolulu with frequent trips to Japan to work in porcelain and study its visual culture.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Friday, 10:30 to 5:30; Saturdays 11:00 to 5:00. For more information, please visit our website at [www.renabranstengallery.com](http://www.renabranstengallery.com) or contact the gallery directly at (415-982-3292).