

San Francisco Chronicle

Kanevsky at Dolby Chadwick Gallery

by Kenneth Baker

Saturday, October 23, 2010

The Lithuanian-born Kanevsky cannot readily draw upon the American Scene background, and common ground with his viewers, available to Brown. Kanevsky's titles, with the exception of "New Hampshire Bather" (2010), reflect a European orientation. Imagery appears to flow from Kanevsky's hand with such ease that we never suspect him of using the camera, although perhaps he does.

He faces the unusual problem of making his work look contemporary, or at least modern; that is, troubled by the pretenses to truth that its gifted realism generates with seeming effortless. Kanevsky's interventions in his work's illusionary transparency consist of subtracting detail, or of flooding passages with brushwork and color that refuse to read figuratively.



Irish Cow (2010), oil on canvas, by Alex Kanevsky

This habit of slackening the grip of imagery on imagination so pervades his work that we quickly begin to see it as a device. Only occasionally, as in the masterly "Irish Cow" (2010), does Kanevsky keep marks perfectly poised on the cusp of description and abstraction. This painting recalls a couple of extraordinary early pictures by Francis Bacon (1909-1992), which makes me wonder whether Kanevsky also had the Dublin native in mind when he titled it.

Alex Kanevsky: Heroes and Animals: Paintings. Through Oct 30. Dolby Chadwick Gallery, 210 Post St., San Francisco. (415) 956-3560. www.dolbychadwickgallery.com.