

PAUL BRANCA

Totes

21.02.2016 _ 31.03.2016

Opening: Saturday 20 February at 6.30 p.m.

Giorgio Galotti gallery is pleased to announce Paul Branca's first solo exhibition in Italy and the gallery's first show devoted to one artist.

New York-based artist Paul Branca presents a selection of paintings made on readymade canvas tote bags that have been stretched on wooden stretchers and prepared as traditional supports.

Branca, known for his research on the social connectivity of food culture, paintings of meticulously rendered sausage links as well as slices of cold cuts and vegetables, and projects that often question painting's ability to mirror distribution strategies within historical languages of painting.

The art world, like those of the fashion and 'foodie' worlds, is inundated with tote bags resulting in a certain fetishistic desire to obtain them. From museums and galleries to boutique espresso bars, magazines and supermarkets, tote bags play a role that is functional, aesthetic and promotional.

An inherent property of the tote bag is its ability to be reused and Branca, by acknowledging the bag's material as canvas –sometimes muslin or jute - treats it as a support for painting. He inserts wooden stretchers into the bag and applies traditional grounds of gesso, rendering the once loose and baggy into something taut and articulated. The slogan of 'reuse' is taken literally and seriously allowing a second life to be granted to the bag as the act of painting can commence.

The artist maintains the integrity of the bag, allowing the handles or straps to dangle down, at times obfuscating the painting itself, articulating the idea of artwork's portability.

The current exhibition is a compendium of recent artworks that demonstrate his interest in various painting strategies: ranging from more abstract works such as the pressed palette paintings (a technique known as decalcomania), to rendered images such as Nose, where he takes deadpan one step further by clearly spelling out the word in stenciled letters.

Branca went through his personal inventory of canvas tote bags from various art institutions such as the Kunsthalle Berne, MACBA Barcelona, The Whitney Museum of American Art, to magazines such as The New Yorker, and on to boutique coffee shops such as New York's Everyman's Espresso and Bologna's historic bakery Atti.

A short essay by **Jesi Khadivi** will accompany the exhibition.