

The Museum of Modern Art

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MEMORIAL EXHIBITION OF ADOLPH GOTTLIEB AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

As a memorial to Adolph Gottlieb, who died March 4, 1974, a small group of his paintings from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art will be on view in a special exhibition in the Museum's Main Hall through April 15. The four paintings span various phases of the artist's career. They are Voyager's Return (1946), the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Roy R. Neuberger and three gifts from the artist, Man Looking at Woman (1949), Composition (1955), and Descending Arrow (1956). One of the earliest of his "Burst" paintings, Blast I of 1957, is on view in painting and sculpture galleries on the third floor.

Born in 1903 in New York City, Gottlieb studied with John Sloan and Robert Henri at the Art Students' League and, except for a few, relatively brief periods, worked in and around New York City all his life. By the late forties Gottlieb was recognized as a major figure of the Abstract-Expressionist movement. Among the exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art in which his work was shown were "The New American Painting and Sculpture" (1958-59), and "The New American Painting and Sculpture: The First Generation" (1969). His work was also included in a number of exhibitions sent abroad under the sponsorship of the Museum's International Council; among these was "Two Decades of American Painting" (1966-67).

In the wall label for the exhibition, William Rubin, Director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, writes: "In a generation that boasted many great painters, Gottlieb's work was notable for its consistent quality -- derived from the assurance with which he explored, over a period of almost 40

(more)

years, the unfolding of his own private vision.

"That vision began with a series of pictures often referred to as 'pictographs,' configurations which combine the abstract structuring of the canvas with the delineation of hieroglyphs of a mythological, psychological order. These symbols never constitute a rational, decipherable iconography but rather stand as poetic signals whose meaning can be grasped by intuition only. In the 1950s Gottlieb gradually distilled his imagery into simpler configurations on larger fields. Here in the opposition of often no more than two basic forms, Gottlieb managed to express the various polarities (such as light and dark, good and evil, rough and smooth, male and female, etc.) that he had previously represented more intricately. At the same time, Gottlieb's color grew bolder and, as his formats were now much larger, the visual impact of the pictures was intensified. Until his death Gottlieb continued to explore the possibilities of this balance of poetry and abstraction with a world of symbols he had made entirely on his own. He painted at the peak of his form to the end and had one of the longest and most undeviating careers in the history of American painting."

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