

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

NO. 3

FOR RELEASE:

Wednesday, Jan. 18, 1961

PRESS PREVIEW:

Tuesday, Jan. 17, 1961

11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

A comprehensive exhibition of paintings by Mark Rothko will be on view at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York City, from January 18 through March 12.

Selected and installed by Peter Selz, Curator of the Department of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions, the exhibition consists of ⁵⁴~~fifty-five~~ works by the American artist dating from 1945 to the present. Included are eleven murals painted in 1958-59, exhibited for the first time.

Rothko's highly original style, characterized by large rectangles of color floating in undefined space, has made him a controversial artist in our time. His work shows no direct reflection of the past. He is largely self-taught. Although he has eliminated the figure as a symbol, his primary concern is with humanist values. As Mr. Selz writes in the exhibition catalog*:

These silent paintings with their enormous, beautiful, opaque surfaces are mirrors, reflecting what the viewer brings with him. In this sense, they can even be said to deal directly with human emotions, desires, relationships, for they are mirrors of our fantasy and serve as echoes of our experience.

The exhibition, the largest ever assembled, includes four early watercolors which indicate Rothko's relationship to surrealism during the mid-forties. The evolution of his present style is demonstrated by fifteen canvases dating from 1947 to 1949 in which he uses diffuse, flat areas of brilliant color--reds, yellows and greens predominating.

In the paintings of the fifties, which comprise a major part of the exhibition, Rothko achieved the simplification which Mr. Selz describes as follows:

Subject matter in the conventional sense had, as we know, been abandoned for some time. Now line and movement were also eliminated.

...texture is not important. Conventional recession into depth, as well as weight and gravity, has been eliminated, yet we cannot even speak of flatness when confronted with the surfaces which actually breathe and expand. Light has become an attribute of color. Few of the elements which are part of most paintings have remained. In fact, Rothko's constant stripping-down of his pictures to their barest essentials, to a simplicity beyond complexity, is intrinsic to their being. His paintings disturb and satisfy partly by the magnitude of his renunciation.

The rectangular areas always occupy the frontal plane of these pictures. Although the shapes appear very similar, they vary considerably. Seldom sharply outlined the areas sometimes merge; at other times they remain clearly separate. The spatial relationship of these constantly shifting shapes is never explicitly defined. Analyzing the tension created between the major fields Mr. Selz writes:

The spectator contemplates an atmosphere of alarm in which the contact of electrically charged and dangerous elements is held in check by the tense

more...

*MARK ROTHKO by Peter Selz. 44 pages, 29 photos (6 in color). Published by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Distributed by Doubleday and Co., Inc. \$2.25.

areas between them. In some pictures the vibrating areas are pulled apart by the outside frames.

In other paintings we feel that all movement has eased. These suggest the aftermath of once violent activity. Eventually as other images occur to the viewer the metaphor of the creation of some universe becomes paramount.

The brilliant color of these canvases--blazing reds and oranges, yellow-greens, veil-like blues and whites--has been largely subdued in the somber, ritualistic work of recent years.

The exhibition culminates in eleven murals, some fifteen feet long, from a series commissioned in 1958. In these dark red canvases, Rothko abandoned solid forms for open rectangles - usually black or red - suggesting entrances to tombs or rims of flame. After working on the project for eight months, during which he completed three separate series, Rothko decided the paintings were inappropriate for the setting and did not deliver them.

The four 1960 paintings shown combine the subdued palette of the murals with the figuration of previous canvases.

Born in Dvinsk, Russia in 1903, Rothko moved with his family to Portland, Oregon at the age of ten. During his youth he was not exposed to the visual arts. He attended Yale University for two years, but left because he was not interested in academic training. By 1925 he had settled in New York where, after studying briefly with Max ^{Weber} ~~Heber~~ at the Art Students League, he worked alone.

Since 1929, when a number of his paintings were selected for an exhibition at the Opportunity Gallery in New York City, Rothko has exhibited extensively in this country and abroad. His first important one-man show was an exhibition of mythological paintings at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century in 1945. He was represented by several works in two major group shows at the Museum of Modern Art: "Fifteen Americans" in 1952 and "The New American Painting" which toured eight European countries before its New York showing in 1959. He was one of four artists selected for the U.S. Representation at the XXIX Biennale, Venice, in 1958.

Lenders to the exhibition include the artist, who loaned the murals as well as several other canvases, American museums and galleries, and private collectors here and abroad.

For additional information and photographs contact Nancy Reed, Assistant Publicity Director, Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. CI 5-8900.

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MARK ROTHKO

January 18 - March 12, 1961

C H E C K L I S T

Baptismal Scene. 1945. Watercolor, 19 7/8 x 14". Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Untitled. 1946. Watercolor, 38 3/4 x 25 1/2". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Donald Blinken, New York.

Ancestral Imprint. 1946 Collection
John Ciampi, New York

No. 24, 1947. Oil on canvas, 33 1/2 x 50". Owned by the artist.

No. 32, 1947, Oil on canvas, 29 1/2 x 50 1/2". Owned by the artist

No. 5, 1948. Oil on canvas, 67 x 34". Collection Mrs. Josephine Kantor, Pacific Palisades, California

No. 12, 1948. Oil on canvas, 58 x 64". The Phillips Gallery, Washington, D. C.

No. 15, 1948. Oil on canvas, 52 1/4 x 29 1/2". Owned by the Artist.

No. 16, 1948. Oil on canvas, 68 x 54", Collection Theodoros Stamos, New York

No. 18, 1948. Oil on canvas, 67 1/4 x 56". Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York

No. 19, 1948. Oil on canvas, 68 x 40". The Art Institute of Chicago, Anonymous Gift.

No. 11, 1949. Oil on canvas, 68 x 48". Owned by the artist.

No. 15, 1949. Oil on canvas, 68 x 42". Owned by the artist

No. 20, 1949. Oil on canvas, 8' 9 1/4" x 52 1/2". Owned by the Artist

No. 21, 1949. Oil on canvas, 7' 10" x 53 1/4". Owned by the artist

No. 24, 1949. Oil on canvas, 7' 4 1/2" x 57 1/2". Collection Miss Jeanne Reynal, New York

No. 20, 1950. Oil on canvas, 9' 8 1/4" x 8' 5 3/8". Sidney Janis Gallery, New York

No. 22, 1950. Oil on canvas, 9' 9 1/2" x 8' 10 3/4". Sidney Janis Gallery, New York.

No. 8, 1952. Oil on canvas, 6' 8 1/2" x 68". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Burton G. Tremaine, Meridan, Connecticut.

No. 18, 1952. Oil on canvas, 9' 8 1/4" x 7' 7 3/8". Sidney Janis Gallery, New York.

No. 8, 1953. Oil on canvas, 9' 9 1/2" x 7' 7 3/4". Sidney Janis Gallery, New York.

No. 10, 1953. Oil on canvas, 76 1/2 x 67 1/2". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Ben Heller, New York

No. 27, 1954. Oil on canvas, 6' 9" x 7' 3". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Ben Heller, New York

No. 13, 1949. Oil on canvas, 7' 1 1/2" x 64 1/2". Owned by the artist

Homage to Matisse. 1954. Oil on canvas, 8' 9" x 50 1/2". Owned by the artist

(More)

Light, Earth and Blue. 1954. Oil on canvas, 6' 3 3/4" x 67". Collection Lady D'Avigdor Goldsmid, London,

No. 2, 1954. Oil on Canvas, 9' 5 3/4" x 68 1/8". Sidney Janis Gallery, New York.

The Black and The White. 1956. Oil on canvas, 7' 10" x 53 3/4". Collection Dr. and Mrs. Frank Stanton, New York.

Orange and Yellow. 1956. Oil on canvas, 7' 7" x 71". Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, gift of Seymour H. Knox.

No. 3, 1956. Oil on canvas, 66 x 61". Sidney Janis Gallery, New York.

Tan and Black on Red. 1957. Oil on canvas, 69 3/8 x 53 3/8". Collection Mr. and Mrs. I. Donald Grossman, New York.

White and Greens in Blue. 1957. Oil on canvas, 8' 4" x 6' 10". Collection Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York.

Black over Reds. 1957. Oil on canvas, 7' 11" x 6' 9 1/2". Collection Dr. and Mrs. Edgar F. Berman, Baltimore,

No. 16, 1957. Oil on canvas, 8' 8 1/2" x 9' 6 1/2". Sidney Janis Gallery, New York

No. 47, 1957. Oil on paper, 27 3/4 x 24 3/4". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Bernard J. Reis, New York

Red, Brown, Black. 1958. Oil on canvas, 8' 10 5/8" x 9 1/2". The Museum of Modern Art, Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund.

No. 9, 1958. Oil on canvas, 8' 3" x 6' 10". Collection Mr. and Mrs. Donald Blinken, New York.

White and Black on Wine. 1958. Oil on canvas, 8' 9" x 14'. Collection Mr. and Mrs. William Rubin, New York

No. 19, 1958. Oil on canvas, 8' 9" x 7' 6". Sidney Janis Gallery, New York,

Sketch for Mural No. 1, 1958. Oil on canvas, 8' 9" x 10'. Owned by the Artist.

Sketch for Mural No. 4, 1958. Oil on canvas, 8' 9" x 12'. Owned by the Artist.

Sketch for Mural No. 6, 1958. Oil on canvas, 8' 9" x 12'. Owned by the artist.

Sketch for Mural No. 7, 1958-59. Oil on canvas, 8' 9" x 14'. Owned by the artist.

Mural, Section 2, 1959. Oil on canvas, 8' 9" x 15'. Owned by the Artist

Mural, Section 3, 1959. Oil on canvas, 8' 9" x 15'. Owned by the Artist.

Mural, Section 4, 1959. Oil on canvas, 8' 9" x 7' 10". Owned by the artist.

Mural, Section 5, 1959. Oil on canvas, 6' x 15'. Owned by the artist.

Mural, Section 7, 1959. Oil on canvas, 6' x 15'. Owned by the artist.

Mural for End Wall. 1959. Oil on canvas, 8' 9" x 9' 5". Owned by the artist.

No. 7, 1960. Oil on canvas, 8' 9" x 7' 9". Sidney Janis Gallery, New York.

No. 8, 1960. Oil on canvas, 7' 6" x 8' 6". Sidney Janis Gallery, New York.

No. 14, 1960. Oil on canvas, 9' 5" x 8' 9". Sidney Janis Gallery, New York.

No. 12, 1960. Oil on canvas, 10' x 8' 7". Collection Dr. Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, Milan.

No. 14, 1955. Oil on canvas, 7' 7" x 63 1/4". Owned by the artist.