

# The Museum of Modern Art

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## YOUNGER ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISTS OF THE FIFTIES

Important works by nine painters and sculptors who matured during the later phases of Abstract Expressionism will be on view at The Museum of Modern Art through July 26, 1971. Selected from the Museum collection, YOUNGER ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISTS OF THE FIFTIES includes, from that decade, paintings by Helen Frankenthaler, Grace Hartigan and Alfred Leslie, Joan Mitchell, Raymond Parker and Larry Rivers, as well as a relief by Robert Mallary, three sculptures by Richard Stankiewicz and an immense construction of the wrecked parts of an old Essex automobile by John Chamberlain.

Alicia Legg, Associate Curator of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, who installed the works, says that while these artists have distinctly individual styles, they all came through the experience of living or working near the lively Tenth Street gallery scene of New York's Lower East Side in the climate set up by the non-figurative abstraction of Jackson Pollock, Hans Hofmann, Clyfford Still and the highly abstract works of Willem de Kooning in 1947-50. (By 1951 de Kooning's and Pollock's abstracts had begun to shift to figuration.)

Rivers' training with Hofmann brought diverse forces into his work. His Washington Crossing The Delaware (1953), freely based on the famous nineteenth-century painting by Emanuel Leutze was a conscious shift to realism in expressionist style and was also prophetic of "Pop" art attitudes toward subject matter of the American scene. (This painting, damaged in a fire in 1958 and only partially restored, is exhibited with the artist's approval.)

Although in 1959 Alfred Leslie moved toward a literal image in large works with fragments of figurative elements, and by 1963 had begun to approach his extreme Realist style, his and Joan Mitchell's works of the early 50's adhered to total abstraction. Miss Mitchell's networks of paint strokes were, however, derived from landscape and the semi-abstracts of Grace Hartigan reflected the vulgar poetry of the crowded city.

A radical change from geometric to organic abstraction occurred in the work of Raymond Parker about the time of his move from the University of Iowa to New York in 1951, when he became acquainted with the Abstract Expressionists. Miss Legg says that coming into direct contact with Pollock and de Kooning was also a formative element in the development of Helen Frankenthaler, whose own contribution was the technique of staining unprimed canvas with thinned paint (derived from Pollock's Black paintings of 1951-52). This method was adopted by such artists as Morris <sup>Louis</sup> Lewis and Kenneth Noland, from whom it extended widely.

Found objects and discarded materials form the substance of constructions by Chamberlain, Mallary and Stankiewicz. Mallary's pioneering experiments with plastics used to strengthen fragile materials have had international significance.

The current installations YOUNGER ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISTS OF THE FIFTIES and WATERCOLORS AND DRAWINGS FROM THE MUSEUM COLLECTION (through July 23), are part of a continuing series of temporary groupings of works from the Museum collections designed to place on view major holdings which, because of severely limited exhibition space, cannot be permanently displayed. Recent exhibitions of this nature were THIRTY DRAWINGS OF NUDES, ALEXANDER RODCHENKO, NATURALISM TO ABSTRACTION and SURREALIST ILLUSION. (over)

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Additional information and photographs available from Earl Hatleberg, Assistant and Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019. Phone: (212) 956-7501, -7501.  
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YOUNGER ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISTS OF THE FIFTIES

From the Museum Collection

April 26 - July 26, 1971

CHECKLIST

Note: Unless enclosed in parentheses, dates appear on the works themselves. In dimensions height is followed by width and depth. The last two figures of the accession number indicate the year of acquisition.

John CHAMBERLAIN. American, born 1927

Essex. (1960). Automobile body parts and other metal, relief, 9' x 80 x 43".  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Scull and Purchase. 282.61

Helen FRANKENTHALER American, born 1928

Jacob's Ladder. 1957. Oil on canvas, 9' 5 3/8" x 69 7/8".  
Gift of Hyman N. Glickstein. 82.60

Grace HARTIGAN. American, born 1922

River Bathers. 1953. Oil on canvas, 69 3/8 x 88 3/4".  
Given anonymously. 11.54

Shinnecock Canal. 1957. Oil on canvas, 7' 6 1/2" x 6' 4".  
Gift of James Thrall Soby. 6.60

Alfred LESLIE. American, born 1927

The Second Two-Panel Horizontal. 1958. Oil on canvas, each panel, 66 x 72".  
Larry Aldrich Foundation Fund. 718.59 a-b

Robert MALLARY. American, born 1917

In Flight. 1957. Relief of wood, dust, sand, synthetic polymer resin  
on painted plywood, 43 1/2 x 79 5/8 x 4 3/8".  
Larry Aldrich Foundation Fund. 15.59

Joan MITCHELL. American, born 1926

Ladybug. 1957. Oil on canvas, 77 7/8 x 9".  
Purchase. 385.61

Raymond PARKER. American, born 1922

Untitled. 1960. Oil on canvas, 71 7/8 x 86".  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel M. Kootz. 31.60

Larry RIVERS. American, born 1923

Washington Crossing the Delaware. (1953). Oil on canvas, 6' 11 5/8" x 9' 3 5/8".  
Given anonymously. 25.55. Note: damaged during fire, 1958: discolored by smoke,  
some charcoal drawing washed away by water, lower right-hand corner charred and  
partly restored. Exhibition approved by artist.

The Pool. (1956). Oil, charcoal and bronze paint on canvas, 8' 7 3/8" x  
7' 8 5/8".  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Weisberger. 139.58

Richard STANKIEWICZ. American, born 1922

Urchin in the Grass. 1956. Welded iron and steel, 23 5/8 x 16 1/2 x 13".  
Gift of Philip Johnson. 797.69

Instruction. (1957). Welded scrap iron and steel, 12 1/2 x 13 1/4 x 8 5/8".  
Philip Johnson Fund. 17.58

Natural History. (1959). Welded iron pipes, boiler within wire mesh, 14 3/4 x  
34 1/4 x 19 1/4".  
Elizabeth Bliss Parkinson Fund. 11.61