

Celebrating the Jewish Contribution to Twentieth-Century American Art,

November 12, 2004-March 5, 2005

Fifty years ago, The RISD Museum celebrated the 300th anniversary of Jewish life in America. This year we are pleased and proud to recognize the 350th year. The current installation of the permanent collection concentrates on post-1945 American art. This period saw the rise of Abstract Expressionism, a movement that made New York the center of the international art world for the first time. The Museum's holdings are particularly strong for this vital era, which was enriched enormously by the concentration of Jewish artists who participated in the movement's development. Jewish artists also played a central role in the development of American photography. Many of the photographers represented here are among the most influential of the 20th century.

What circumstances define a "Jewish" artist? Many of the people whose work is on view pointedly refused to define their art as Jewish. Some did not perceive Judaism to be a particularly formative influence; indeed, for artists whose families came to America in the early 20th century, cultural assimilation rather than maintaining a minority identity may well have been a goal. Some felt that their artwork flowed equally from all conditions of their being and experience and that to think of their work as Jewish was limiting. Artists attempting to address the universal human condition may have perceived that a specifically Jewish frame of reference was detrimental to their intent. At various periods, being identified as a member of an ethnic, cultural, or religious minority might also have had a decidedly negative effect on one's career.

At the same time, most of these artists worked and lived within the orbit of the New York art world. Here they had access to an intellectual, socially active, urban Jewish community with leftist leanings, in addition to the larger population of avant-garde artists of other backgrounds who inhabited the city (such as Jackson Pollock, who is included in this exhibition). It is perhaps this situation, more than any religious characteristic of Judaism, that links these artists together in their pursuit of new and often revolutionary modes of expression.

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CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Ad Reinhardt, American, 1913-1967
No. 18, 1956
Oil on canvas
Gift of Richard Brown Baker 1996.11.43



Weegee, American, 1899-1968
Untitled, ca. 1950
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Kenner 82.187.7

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Elie Nadelman, American, b. Poland, 1882-1946
Head, ca. 1920
Marble
Bequest of Mrs. Jesse H. Metcalf 59.134



Jules Aarons, American, 1921-2008
North End, Boston, 1955
Gelatin silver print
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2004.32.2



Lisette Model, American, 1906-1983
Running Feet, 5th Avenue, 1940
Gelatin silver print
Museum purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts 80.229



Morris Engel, American, 1918-2005
Coney Island, 1939
Gelatin silver print
Jesse Metcalf Fund 2001.65.1



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Helen Levitt, American, b. 1913

New York City (Girl with Lily), ca. 1942

Gelatin silver print

Museum purchase with the aid of the National Endowment for the Arts 79.062



Garry Winogrand, American, 1928-1984

Cape Kennedy, Florida, Garry Winogrand 1969

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Mr. Frederick J. Myerson 82.303.1



Diane Arbus, American, 1923-1971

A Family One Evening in a Nudist Camp, Pennsylvania, 1965

Gelatin silver print

Mary B. Jackson Fund 1987.057



Lee Friedlander, American, b. 1934

Atlantic City, 1971

Gelatin silver print

Museum purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts 79.092



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Robert Frank, American, b. 1924
Mein Kampf, Times Square, 1961
Gelatin silver print

Museum purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts 81.002



Seymour Lipton, American, 1903 - 1986
Beacon, 1966

Nickel silver; monel metal

The Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection of 20th Century American Art
69.095

Louise Nevelson, American, 1899-1988
Untitled, ca. 1955-1958

Painted wood

The Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection of 20th Century American Art
73.124

Aaron Siskind, American, 1903-1991, (RISD Faculty 1971-1976,
Photography)

NYC (man sleeping on street, sitting up), 1932

Gelatin silver print

Jesse Metcalf Fund 2000.37.1



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Jackson Pollock, American, 1912-1956
Magic Lantern, 1947
Oil, enamel, and carpet tacks on canvas
Gift of Mrs. Peggy Guggenheim 54.005



Pablo Picasso, Spanish, 1881-1973
Seated Woman with a Book (Femme assise au livre), ca. 1910
Oil on canvas
Museum Works of Art Fund 51.094



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Mark Rothko, American, 1903-1970

Untitled, 1954

Oil on canvas

Museum purchase in honor of Daniel Robbins: The Chace Fund, The Collectors' Acquisition Fund, Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund, Mary B. Jackson Fund, Walter H. Kimball Fund, Jesse Metcalf Fund, Museum Gift Fund, and gifts of Mrs. George Harding, Mrs. Lewis Madeira, Mrs. Malcolm Farmer, Mrs. Frank Mauran, George H. Waterman III, Mrs. Murray S. Danforth, Mrs. Russell Field, Mrs. Albert Pilavin, Mr. and Mrs. Bayard Ewing, Mr. and Mrs. Tracy Barnes, Mr. and Mrs. William Boardman, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Neuberger, Mrs. Lee Day Gillespie, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Haffenreffer, and Richard Brown Baker 71.091



George Segal, American, 1924-2000

Girl on a Chair, 1970

Plaster; wood, paint, polyurethane

Gift of Richard Roth 78.160

Larry Rivers, American, 1923-2002

Portrait of Berdie, 1953

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Reis 54.129



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Philip Guston, American, 1913-1980
Winter Forms, 1963
Gouache on paper
Gift of the Estate of Musa Guston 1992.059.1



Nancy Spero, American, 1926-2009
Les Anges - La Bombe, from the series "The War Series" 1966
Gouache and ink on paper
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2004.6



Florine Stettheimer, American, 1871-1944
Bouquet for Ettie, 1927
Oil on canvas
Gift of the Estate of Ettie Stettheimer 58.089



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Helen Frankenthaler, American, 1928 - 2011

Holocaust, 1955

Enamel, oil, and turpentine on canvas

The Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection of 20th-Century American Art
72.108



Henri Matisse, French, 1869-1954

The Green Pumpkin, ca. 1916

Oil on canvas

Anonymous gift 57.037

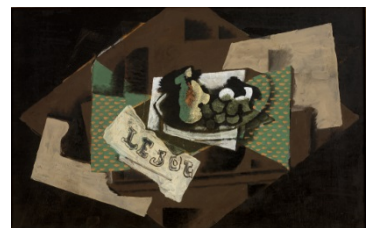


Georges Braque, French, 1882-1963

Still Life, 1918

Oil on canvas

Mary B. Jackson Fund 48.248



RISD MUSEUM

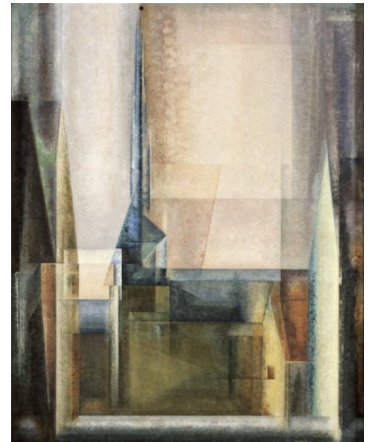
Henri Matisse, French, 1869-1954
Still Life with Lemons, 1914
Oil on canvas
Gift of Miss Edith Wetmore 39.093



Fernand Léger, French, 1881-1955
Flowers, 1926
Oil on canvas
Anonymous gift 81.097



Lyonel Feininger, American, b. Germany, 1871-1956
Church at Gelmeroda XII, 1929
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 38.059



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Roy Lichtenstein, American, 1923-1997

Pyramids II, 1969

Oil on canvas

Museum purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts 69.081

