



Provincetown
Art Association
and Museum

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Fisherman's Family, 1931

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JACK TWORKOV

(1900–1982)

Against Extremes: Five Decades of Painting

A MAJOR RETROSPECTIVE

of the artist's most
celebrated work

curated by
Jason Andrew



ACD#3, 1962

July 9–August 22, 2010

JACK TWORKOV (1900–1982)

Against Extremes: Five Decades of Painting

July 9—August 22, 2010

1. *Self Portrait*, c. 1925
graphite on paper, 12 x 9"
Provincetown Art Association and Museum Collection
Gift of Shelby Shackelford, 1984

2. untitled (still life with peaches and magazine), 1929
oil on canvas, 20.25 x 24"

3. *Fisherman's Family*, 1931
oil on canvas, 31.5 x 26.5"

4. untitled (Provincetown: Pilgrim Monument), c. 1931
watercolor and pencil on paper, 12 x 17"

5. *View of Bay, Provincetown*, 1931
oil on canvas, 20 x 30.5"

6. *Portrait of a Boy*, c. 1931
oil on canvas, 30 x 25"

7. *Seated Woman (Wally)*, 1934–36
oil on canvas, 36 x 28"

8. untitled (still life with melon and bread), c. 1946
watercolor and graphite on paper, 9 x 12"

9. untitled (still life with blue pitcher and grapes), 1946
oil on canvas, 24 x 32"

I turned to still life as a release from subject and spectacular composition. I turned against melancholy and self-pity in the earlier painting. I strived for simple statement, direct, spontaneous, enthusiastic.

Journal Entry, January 27, 1947

10. *Geneva*, 1948
oil on canvas, 30 x 27"

11. untitled (seated figure), c. 1948–50
oil on board, 15.5 x 13.5"
Courtesy of Julie Heller Gallery, Provincetown

The crisis in my painting now is a crisis of subject. A painting must be handled with a considerable amount of dominating force—the subject must not sap the energy of the painting—you must make no sacrifices for the subject—which subtracts from the energy of the painting.

Journal Entry, January 27, 1947

12. untitled (study for *Athena*), c. 1949
oil and graphite on paper, 12.25 x 6"

13. *Abstract Figure at a Table*, 1949
oil on canvas, 24 x 32"

What is space in painting? The canvas is a surface not a space. The physical procedure in painting is to articulate the surface as a musician articulates sound. The result of this articulation is a group of two-dimensional shapes not "spaces." In fact space does not exist as a physical property of the painted surface. Space is an expression.

Journal Entry, February 20, 1949

14. *The Sirens*, 1950–1952
oil on canvas, 44.25 x 36.5"
Collection of the Walker Art Center,
Minneapolis, MN
Gift of the T.B. Walker Foundation, 1953, 1953.52

15. *One Turning*, 1951
oil on canvas, 38 x 42"
Collection of Mrs. David Prager, New York

16. *Figure*, 1954
oil on canvas with nails, 40 x 25"

17. *Games III*, 1956
oil on canvas, 38.25 x 44"
Collection of Mrs. David Prager, New York

My hope is to confront the picture without a ready technique or a prepared attitude—a condition which is nevertheless never completely attainable; to have no program and, necessarily then, no pre-conceived style. To paint no Tworkovs.

Statement, Stable Gallery Exhibition, April 1957

18. **MARVIN P. LAZARUS** (1918–1982)
Portrait of Jack Tworkov, Provincetown, 1959

19. **IRVING PENN** (1917–2009)
8 New York Painters with International Influence
published in *Vogue*, October 15, 1959
Bottom row from left to right:
Jack Tworkov, Barnett Newman, Sam Francis
Middle row:

Theodoros Stamos, James Brooks, Dorothy Miller,
Franz Kline
Top row:
Philip Guston, William Baziotis

20. *Crest*, 1957–1958
oil on canvas, 75 x 59"
Collection of The Cleveland Museum of Art,
Contemporary Collection of
The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1962.33

The central image of these paintings [is] an action brought near by a telescope but out of earshot, silent and meaningless. In a thicket the actors might be lovers, or a murderer and his victim—the anxiety is that of silence of an action without sound, without meaning.

Journal Entry, February 2, 1959

21. *Five Spot*, 1960
oil on canvas, 52.25 x 40"
Courtesy of Adelson Galleries, Inc, New York

I want to make paintings more noble, more real, more truthful than myself. The pictures should transcend me. I don't want my picture to speak of the world, or represent it or interpret it or reject it or hate it or judge it. I only want to bring something into the world that could attract to itself the scrutiny of imagining eyes.

Journal Entry, March 6, 1960

22. *RWB #3*, 1961
oil on canvas, 64 x 80"
Courtesy of the Michael Rosenfeld Gallery
LLC, New York

*As if revolting against the soggy of my feelings I've been trying to make a series of very light, very trivial, almost facetious paintings. They are all in red, white and blue, and perhaps unconsciously an ironic comment on my growing patriotism. . . . They are quite different from the group of paintings called *Barrier series*, so different that I have Leo [Castelli] quite worried.*

Letter to Janice Biala, January 19, 1962

23. *ACD#3*, 1962
charcoal on paper, 26 x 20"
Provincetown Art Association and Museum Collection
Gift of Nat Halper and Marjorie Windust

24. **ARNOLD NEWMAN** (1918–2006)
Jack Tworkov in his Provincetown Studio, 1960

25. *Spring Weather No. 1*, 1962
oil on canvas, 50.5 x 37.5"
Collection of the Walker Art Center,
Minneapolis, MN
Gift of the T.B. Walker Foundation, 1964, 1964.12

26. *Plain*, 1966
oil on canvas, 80 x 62"
Collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art,
Cleveland, OH
Gift of David E and Sadie H. Rose, 1991.54

27. *Crossfield I*, 1968
oil on canvas, 80 x 70"
Collection of Ms. Beatrice Perry, New York

28. *Idling II*, 1970
oil on canvas, 80 x 70"

The subject of my recent paintings is the contrast between the measured and the random activity [. . .] The measured activity refers to the measuring of the rectangle on which I am to paint. The measuring points to simple proportional relationships in the rectangle. [. . .] The painting activity stands in ironic contrast to the measuring activity. The brushing represents a purely random activity [. . .]

Journal Entry, January 23, 1970

29. *Knight Series OC #1 (Q3-75 #2)*, 1975
oil on canvas, 90 x 75"
Collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art
Purchased with a grant from the NEA and
matched by gifts from members of The Cleveland
Society for Contemporary Art, 1976.102

[. . .] The best way to work is to empty out your head, to aim at nothing, to become the medium of a process that is almost outside of one-self. I now use the word medium in another sense: I mean the painter is the medium—his desire his imagination lets the process take place: he unblocks the channels thru which the process flows.

Journal Entry, July 15, 1975

30. *Q4-78 #1*, 1978
oil on canvas, 72 x 72"

31. *Q1-75 S #2*, 1975
oil on canvas, 25 x 25"

32. *Q3-77 #5*, 1977
oil on canvas, 25 x 25"
Collection of Marty Davis & Alix Ritchie,
Provincetown, MA

33. *Q3-78 OC#1*, 1978
oil on canvas, 25 x 25"
Collection of Mira Schor, Provincetown / New York

34. *Q2-78 S #2*, 1978
oil on canvas, 25 x 25"

35. *Indian Red Series #1*, 1979
oil on canvas, 72 x 72"

36. *The Exes (Q3-80 OC#3)*, 1980
oil on canvas, 57 x 84.5"

37. *X on Circle in the Square (Q4-81 #2)*, 1981
oil on canvas, 49 x 45"

So for me geometrics, however simple and elementary, is a connection with something that exists besides, outside, myself. It is a small comfort, perhaps, indeed; but it is less hypocritical at the moment than the apparent ecstatic self-expression that a more romantic art calls for. Geometrics or any systemic order gives me a space for meditation, adumbrates my alienation.

Letter to Andrew Forge, June 30, 1981

38. *Self Portrait (1-2-80)*, 1982
graphite on paper, 16.75 x 14"

39. *Compression and Expansion of the Square (Q3-82 #2)*, 1982
oil on canvas, 36 x 108"

*[. . .] I dreamed weird dreams. But one dream that seemed to last most of the night consisted in going over exactly the moves in the studio that I had to go thru today working on the *Expansion and Contraction of the Square*. Only the same moves repeated themselves again and again to the point of exhaustion.*

Journal Entry, Sunday, July 11, 1982

This is the last work painted by Jack Tworkov. The artist died at his home in Provincetown on September 4, 1982.

Also in the exhibition: An assortment of personal correspondence, photographs and memorabilia (in vitrine).

Unless noted otherwise, artworks are by Jack Tworkov and from the Estate of Jack Tworkov, courtesy of Mitchell–Innes & Nash Gallery, New York.