

AGAINST THE GRAIN

WORKS FROM THE 1960s & 1970s

HOWARD DAUM (1918 - 1988)
NORRIS EMBRY (1921 - 1981)
SAM GLANKOFF (1894 - 1982)
RALPH ROSENBERG (1913 - 1992)

January 28 - March 22, 1997

In the 1960s and 1970s, outside the prevailing culture of Pop Art, Minimalism and Conceptualism, four reclusive painters - Howard Daum, Norris Embry, Sam Glankoff and Ralph Rosenberg - created a body of extraordinary and passionate late-career work. Due to their reclusivity and eccentricity, it is doubtful whether or not any of these artists knew each other. However, they shared an expressionist sensibility which was at the core of their work, and made manifest in a diverse array of pictorial sensibilities.

Howard Daum (1918 -1988) was a member of the "Indian Space Painters" group that exhibited at the Galerie Neuf on East 79th Street in 1946. As noted by art critic Lawrence Campbell, "...the term "Indian Space" came to him [Daum] when examining the superb examples of Northwest Coast Indian art in New York's Museum of Natural History, and observing that without recourse to overlapping or spatial illusions the Indian artists had been successful in conveying the essential facts of existence of sacred, totemic animals." Daum married the Indian Space structure of his early work with the painterliness and spontaneity of Abstract Expressionism to create the body of work in this "Against the Grain" exhibition.

Norris Embry (1921 - 1981) began painting in the 1940s and traveled to Europe in 1948, where he met and studied with Oscar Kokoschka in Florence. He continued to paint and travel through the 1950s and achieved notoriety with his 1958 exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston. He showed regularly until his death at such galleries as Robert Elkton and Thomas Gruenbaum. He had a retrospective exhibition at the Baltimore Museum of Art in 1975, and a small one-man exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 1984.

Embry's work has most recently been explored in the context of "insider"/"outsider" art, and was included in the exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, "Parallel Visions: Modern Artists and Outsider Art". Although Embry is considered an insider by virtue of his art school training and art world involvement, there is a compulsive, visionary aspect to his work, evidenced by its diary-like character and highly charged

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psychological imagery (Embry was troubled with mental illness throughout his life and was diagnosed as schizophrenic). Embry occupies a place right on the edge of “insider” and “outsider” art and his work brings to the forefront the complex relationship between artistic genius and mental illness.

Sam Glankoff's (1894 - 1982) earliest works date to the 1920s (in fact Glankoff saw the 1913 Armory show) but he did not have his first one person show until 1981, when, at the age of 87, he showed at the Graham Gallery. Since that time, a retrospective exhibition with an accompanying 68 page catalogue was organized by the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum in New Brunswick, New Jersey. In that catalogue, Marilyn Kushner writes “his compositions, which became increasingly abstract, chart an artist's personal odyssey in search of an image that would represent, for Glankoff, man's primal essence.”

Ralph Rosenborg (1913 - 1992) was an early member of “The Ten” (along with Mark Rothko and Adolph Gottlieb) and a founding member of the American Abstract Artists in 1937. Rosenborg, who was best known for his early Klee-inspired abstractions and later for his abstract expressionist landscapes, had over 40 solo exhibitions and participated in more than 100 group exhibitions throughout his life. In the last number of years, his work has been featured in such museum exhibitions as “Abstract Expressionism: Other Dimensions”, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, NJ, and “Abstract Expressionist Watercolors”, Katonah Museum, NY.

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