

**MILTON RESNICK (1917-2004)**

New York did not become the center of the art world overnight, nor did Paris lose its grip so easily. During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century the French artists hailed as kings of Modernism, Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Henri Matisse, and Joan Miró, watched their artistic empires crumble as they went from famed to revered within their lifetimes; a sign that their “demi-god” status lurked in their past instead of guiding their future. The future was, instead, the New York artists. Bored of the aesthetics which dominated the art market, these artists began creating a new “Modernist” art, one which combined the tenets of Cubism, Fauvism, Dadaism and Surrealism. With the birth of Abstract Expressionism, the Americans upstaged their French heroes.

Artists during the late 1940s and 1950s were notoriously known for their subconscious personal involvement with their art. By definition, it required them to purge their souls onto their canvases. It was hate. It was love. It was anger. It was passion. But above and beyond – it was electric. Milton Resnick was one of the many artists in this group, labeled the first-generation Abstract Expressionists.

Coming from a cultured and well-educated Russian-immigrant background, Resnick defied his family’s career expectations and instead began his life as a starving artist in New York City in the late 1930s; shortly thereafter he was drafted for war.

Upon his return from the service, Resnick returned to painting and began studying under renowned teacher and painter Hans Hofmann. Although Resnick refutes any influence Hofmann had on his work, historian Linda Cathart suggests that in Resnick’s and Hofmann’s later works they both begin to create monochromatic, heavily laden paintings, with just a glimpse or “key” of contrasting color.

The 1940s and 1950s allowed for the freedom of artistic license, resulting in the forming of the “Club.” Resnick, along with Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, Jackson Pollock, Phillip Pavia, Philip Guston and others, continued to develop their artistic sensibilities using the “Club” as a forum for dialogue, theory and philosophical critique. It was here where they hashed out their philosophical and aesthetic beliefs over a cup of coffee, resulting in daily heated arguments and, in the 1950s, drunken nights of brawling.

In 1950, *Life* magazine published an article on Jackson Pollock, crowning him as the King of modern art world, a battle which pitted him against de Kooning, and would divide artists into two camps. Resnick, refusing to pick sides, instead continued on his own personal search for honesty within his art. His work during the next decade represents tremendous growth; while the earlier works are more cheerful in color and expansive in form, his later works combine a darker, more complex color palette with significantly smaller and more repetitive brushstrokes.