

Tworkev

JT's "Barrier" (1958) goes to auction Nov 16

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Among the 27 remarkable paintings, sculptures, and works on paper collected by Heinz and Ruthe Eppler, which will be auctioned at Christie's this week, is an important work by Jack Tworkev titled *Barrier* (1958). The painting will be included in the *Post-War & Contemporary Art Morning Session* on November 16 at Christie's, New York.

The Epplers began collecting just as Heinz's specialty retail business, the Miller-Wohl Co., was reporting outstanding profits. "One of the first paintings the couple bought, paying \$162,000, was Picasso's muted wartime portrait of Dora Maar," reported Katya Kazakina for Bloomberg.

In addition to the work by Jack Tworkev, the Eppler Collection also includes a 1960 painting by Franz Kline called *Light Mechanic*. This monumental black-and-white canvas greeted visitors in the collector's oceanfront condominium in Palm Beach, FL. In addition to Tworkev and Kline, The Eppler Collection also includes paintings by de Kooning (Tworkev's studio mate in the late 40s), William Bazotes, Adolph Gottlieb, Jackson Pollock, and Lee Krasner as well as sculpture by Alexander Calder, Isamu Noguchi, and David Smith among others.



Jack Tworkev (1900-1982) *Barrier*(1958), Oil and charcoal on canvas, 50 1/8 x 36 in. (127.3 x 91.4 cm)

"It's a time capsule," Brett Gorvy, Christie's former chairman and international head of postwar and contemporary art told Bloomberg. Gorvy has advised the family since Heinz's death in 2012. Rather than following the latest collecting fad, the Epplers "bought to live with the works and love them as part of their family home," Gorvy said.

In 1958, Tworkev and his peers were at last receiving major critical praise for their works. He was among a selected by Dorothy C. Miller to be included in "The New American Painting" exhibition, which was mounted by the International Program of the Museum of Modern Art and toured eight European countries. It is this exhibition that put American painting and Abstract Expressionism / The New York School on the map.

Additionally, in 1958, Tworkev's work was also included in the *International Art of the New Era: USA, Japan, Europe* in Osaka Japan, as well as in the *1958 Pittsburgh Bicentennial International Exhibition of Contemporary Art* at the Carnegie Institute.

A response by Tworkev to a questionnaire from The Whitney Museum of American Art in 1958 offers insight into his inspirations at the time:

My whole desire is to be as deeply in painting as possible without holding any prepared position, or maintaining any preconceived posture or attitude. To experience, not painting in general, but each particular picture as deeply as possible is my desire.

And a response to a later questionnaire from The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Tworokov further explains the Barrier series:

The Barrier Series as well as the new paintings which I have been engaged in since about 1965 derive from some dense and rather moody pencil and charcoal drawings which I began making as far back as 1954; I believe that the rather black conté drawings of Seurat had some influence on me. I came to appreciate these drawings not as sketches for paintings, but for the quality of monochromatic grey and black and for the role stroke played in building up masses. I conceived the desire to carry over these qualities into the material and scale of paintings. My recent paintings go much further in approaching this point of view.

When Tworokov did complete *Barrier* (1958), which is the first in a series of seven paintings, it was included the next year in his third solo exhibition at the Stable Gallery (April 6-25, 1959), and purchased directly from the Stable by Mr. and Mrs. H. Gates Lloyd. Heinz and Ruthe Eppler later purchased the painting from Mrs. Gates Lloyd.

Reviewing the exhibition for the April issue of *Arts Magazine*, Martica Sawin wrote:

A large amount of calculated precision and a substantial backlog of knowledge and experience enter into the making of these paintings [...] the poetic element here is as understated as the painting process, stirring the imagination with insinuated forms and situations but giving precedence to visual pleasure.



Stable Gallery exhibition announcement featuring *Barrier* (1958) (click to enlarge)

For Tworokov, the Barrier Series “stressed large, looming, perhaps threatening masses entering the canvas usually from the top and side. These masses or formations avoided hard outlines and were the

result of an accumulation of rather long strokes, which served as a basic structural element akin to the dot in a Seurat painting. The color in these paintings was more tonal, more naturalistic and tended towards the monochromatic.”

Other paintings in the series include ***East Barrier*** (Collection of The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY), ***West Barrier*** (Private Collection, New York) and ***Barrier Series #4*** (Collection of the Chazen Museum of Art, Madison, WI), which stretches over 151 inches in length over two canvases.

“The works in this series,” wrote Edward Bryant in an essay accompanying the artist’s retrospective at The Whitney Museum in 1964, “are more tonal, with a dense saturation of long brushstrokes, more recessive and atmospheric, with an air of tension. The colors, muted and complicated in mixture (blues, reddish browns, rich yellows, pinks, muted whites), veil the surface.”

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