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## ART: TWO EXHIBITIONS OF LATE TWORKOV WORK

By JOHN RUSSELL

AT first glance the forms in Jack Tworkov's late paintings look like tinted wraiths held in place by lengths of high-tension cable. Structured but not regimented, they present themselves for the most part either as triangles or as irregular quadrilaterals. We sense that a preordained order dictates their size and shape, but we do not see that order as tyranny. These paintings can in fact be read as a metaphor for a society in which everyone gives up something and gets in return a great deal more in the way of mutual tenderness.

Thus read, they are the paintings of a moralist. In that capacity, Jack Tworkov has been among us as a benign and ruminative presence for a very long time. Born in 1900 in Biala, Poland, he came to this country in 1913. After graduating from Columbia in 1923, he almost immediately became a part of the American art world, summering in Provincetown, Mass. (as he does to this day), and spending the rest of the year in New York. He showed under very good auspices (Dudensing Brothers, the Societe Anonyme, the Charles Egan Gallery) from 1931 onward.

Like many another artist, he worked for the Work Projects Administration during the Depression. An archetypally concerned citizen and a man of conscience in all things, he gave up painting to work as a tool designer during World War II. Only in 1945 could he once again give all his time to painting. What to paint, and how to paint, were problems he had not quite resolved. Yet here he was, in his mid-40's, at a time when the whole future of American art was up in the air.

He had been making abstract paintings for some time, under Freudian impulses. But in 1945, when Charles Egan first gave him a show, Tworkov asked to begin with some paintings of still life that he had made several years earlier. In this way - as it now seems to him - he got out of step with himself, as far as the public was concerned. And although his was recognized as a touching and individual voice in the concert of Abstract Expressionism, it is in the last 15 years or so that he has perfected the idiom that best suits him.

So we may infer, at any rate, from "Jack Tworkov: 15 Years of Painting" (which can be seen at the Guggenheim Museum through June 10), and from "Jack Tworkov: Works on Paper 1933-82," at the Nancy Hoffman Gallery, 429 West Broadway (through April 28). The primary instrument in both exhibitions is the unmistakable Tworkov touch.

"Flamelike" is the universal adjective for his brush strokes in the Abstract Expressionist period, and they did indeed have both the momentum and the immateriality of flame - and something of its waywardness also. But in time it seemed to him (as Andrew Forge points out in the Guggenheim catalogue) that the canvas became "a mirror in which only one likeness was returned."

How he got out of that impasse is the subject of these two exhibitions. (The earlier period is merely adumbrated at the Nancy Hoffman Gallery, though in ways that everyone who enjoys Tworkov's work will be glad to see.) Put briefly, what he did was to start in every case from a given geometrical grid. That grid functioned as line, division and limit, but it also functioned half as trapeze and half as safety net.

By accepting a given structure and putting it up front, in other words, Jack Tworkov set feeling free. The exceptional subtlety of his shifting hues is maneuvered by a touch that is everywhere light but firm. The grid is not sensed as dryness, or as formula, but rather as a device that gives order and definition to color relationships. It is a tribute to the artist that as we walk from bay to bay at the Guggenheim, we should so often be surprised by the manifold radiance of late Tworkov. "The hope that art reveals the whole man is frustrated," he once wrote, but those tethered and weightless forms make us wonder if he was not mistaken.

Other exhibitions of interest: Frank Auerbach (Marlborough Gallery, 40 West 57th Street): It was in 1956 that Frank Auerbach first showed in London. He was 25 years old at the time. His paintings seemed to most people to be impenetrable - literally, historically and psychologically. Where did they come from? What possessed him to lay on the paint so thickly? How could they be read? There were portraits, reclining figures and views of a part of London that was usually thought of as dreary and dispossessed. But the effort of deciphering was too great for most visitors, and they went home with a memory of paint piled high, heaped upon itself, inch upon bulging inch.

Twenty-six years later, Frank Auerbach is still painting and drawing heads, reclining figures and the part of London that lies between Euston train station and Primrose Hill. The paint is still very thick, though the role of drawing in the paintings is now much more strongly defined. He paints all day, every day and most evenings, in the same studio that he has had since 1954. A world champion stay-at-home, he detests travel and never takes a vacation.

Two things have happened to the work, or rather to the work and to ourselves. It has evolved in the direction of clarity, openness and definition. His landscapes may not look as if they were organized in terms of traditional depth perspective, but we are pulled into them the way we are pulled into space by a roller coaster. (Auerbach compounds this by choosing subjects that have a strong up-and-down, in-and-out momentum - steep flights of steps, for instance, and the miniature mountaintop of Primrose Hill.)

The second thing that has happened is that the present wave of quasi- or pseudo-Expressionist painting has accustomed us to seeing figure and landscape alike in terms of a reckless slather of

paint. In weak hands this can look both vapid and opportunistic, but it makes us the more receptive to Auerbach's grand, stern, intransigent and yet deeply emotional procedures.

We sense that every time he goes to the studio, he has "All or nothing!" as the principle behind the day. If his work does not persuade us that painting is the most important thing there is, then he might as well give it up. Somewhere between the tumult of the paint and the stillness of the thing seen there is that point of maximum expression that he will search for to the end of his days. It is not a paltry ambition. (Through April 30.)

Charles Garabedian (Holly Solomon Gallery, 392 West Broadway): "As an artist," Charles Garabedian once said, "you have to be willing to do dumb things." This is borne out by the fact that he himself works from a vein of free-running antic humor. Autobiography goes in tandem with private symbolism, and an ever-active sense of the past mingles with the terrors of the present and almost but not quite chases them away. ("Man Tearing His Heart Out" is the strictly descriptive title of a painting he did in 1974.)

A Californian now in his late 50's, Garabedian tunnels away at the authorized version of life with parody, paradox, illogicality and a look of awkwardness as his henchmen. His new show is mainly of what he calls "Prehistoric Figures." They are male and female nudes, set in an Arcadian landscape and attended by symbolic properties of the kind familiar to us from Renaissance portraits. Something may also be owed to Matisse's early paintings of bathers on shore. Anyway, the final effect is wry and hedonistic at one and the same time. (Through April 28.)

Cy Twombly (Sperone Westwater Fischer Gallery, 142 Greene Street): When it comes to laying on color, whether with paint stick, flat paint, crayon or tempera, Cy Twombly has as luxurious a touch as anyone now working. Nor does anyone know better than he how to make a little go a very long way. He can hold our attention with a fragmented arch of red or a soft-centered commotion of red, pink, purple and blue. These could be "sweet nothings," but in point of fact they are sweet somethings, very prettily packaged. (Through May 1.)

Illustrations: photo of Jack Tworkov in Provincetown, MA

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