

HOLLIS TAGGART

Hollis Taggart to Present Norman Carton's Paintings from the 1940s-1960s in First Solo Show in NYC since 1980

Norman Carton: Chromatic Brilliance, Paintings from the 1940s-1960s On View November 16 - December 30, 2023

November 2, 2023 – Hollis Taggart is pleased to present a major exhibition of the Abstract Expressionist Ukrainian-born American painter Norman Carton (1908-1980). Carton's distinctive gestural style and mastery of color developed throughout a remarkable career that included being employed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), showing extensively in the Parisian salons of the early 1950s, and being a very engaged member of the Abstract Expressionist movement as it exploded in New York City in the 1950s – during which the gallerist Martha Jackson was a staunch advocate of his work. While Carton's vibrant and expressive paintings were exhibited extensively throughout his lifetime – most notably at the 1955 Whitney Biennial alongside works by peers such as Grace Hartigan, Hans Hofmann, Franz Kline, and Joan Mitchell – they have not been the subject of a solo show in New York City since 1980. Focusing on his paintings from the 1940s to 1960s, *Norman Carton: Chromatic Brilliance* will celebrate Carton's bold brushwork, visually arresting palette, and the palpable dynamism of his style. It is the first exhibition of the artist's work organized by Hollis Taggart since the gallery began representing his estate last year. *Norman Carton: Chromatic Brilliance, Paintings from the 1940s-1960s* will be on view from November 16 through December 30, 2023, with an opening reception on Thursday, November 16, from 5-8PM.

Norman Carton (1908-1980) was born in Ukraine in what was then part of the Russian Empire. He had a harrowing childhood, beginning with escaping a pogrom at age ten, being detained by the Red Army, and then living in Romania and subsequently the US as a refugee. After spending his late childhood in Philadelphia, Carton trained at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA) with painter Henry McCarter and at the Barnes Foundation with Arthur B. Carles, both of whom greatly influenced his artistic approach. From 1939 to 1942, Carton was employed as a muralist and easel artist by the WPA's Federal Art Project. While he was employed by the WPA, Carton was commissioned to create a mural for the Fleisher Vocational School for Girls in Philadelphia, the first mural in the U.S. to portray women's roles in American history. This marked the beginning of Carton's activism, advocating for artists' rights across gender, class, and race throughout his career.

During the 1940s, Carton began developing his Abstract Expressionist style, drawing from elements of Surrealism, Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism. In 1950, Carton – who had also been photographing paintings while employed by the WPA – was invited to Paris to take color photographs of the Louvre's collection. While there, he had invaluable experiences including closely examining the Mona Lisa out of its frame before photographing it, while also expanding his artistic circle and continuing to paint. He showed extensively in Parisian salons and the Sorbonne to rave reviews that highlighted his abilities as a master colorist, returning to New York City in 1953 ready to immerse himself in the exploding Abstract Expressionist community.

Chromatic Brilliance will showcase the artist's development from the 1940s to the 1960s, focusing on the period when Carton was mastering his visual language and began to produce his most expressive work. His paintings from this period have an almost tactile quality, with his unparalleled mastery of impasto, spirited use of color, and gestural brushstrokes resulting in sensual and explosive canvases that captivate the eye and invite prolonged looking. It was during

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this time that Carton began to achieve institutional recognition, with his works entering the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Baltimore Museum of Art, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, and the Yale University Art Gallery, among others.

Carton was deeply intertwined with the art scene in New York through his involvement with the Martha Jackson Gallery, the Artists Equity organization, and the New York School, whose other members including Willem de Kooning, Hans Hofmann, and Louise Nevelson. Alongside his painting practice, Carton was a committed arts educator, teaching at the New School of Social Research for decades. *Chromatic Brilliance* is accompanied by a catalogue with an extensive essay by curator and scholar Jillian Russo, whose research has resulted in a comprehensive study of Carton's career including his early years in Philadelphia, the three years the artist spent in Paris from 1950-53, and his subsequent immersion in the New York art scene as well as his engagement with education and activism.

"Chromatic Brilliance deepens our commitment to promoting new narratives and scholarship about postwar American artists," said Hollis Taggart. "Since we took on representation of Carton's estate a year ago, the gallery team has been working alongside the estate to conduct extensive archival research on the artist, engaging the expertise of various scholars of postwar American Art, including Jillian Russo. We're thrilled with the resulting museum-quality presentation of this important yet overlooked artist who belongs at the center of the Abstract Expressionist pantheon."

About Hollis Taggart

Founded in 1979, Hollis Taggart presents significant works of American art, showcasing the trajectory of American art movements from the Hudson River School to American Modernism and the Post-War and Contemporary eras. Its program is characterized by a deep commitment to scholarship and bringing to the fore the work of under-recognized artists. The gallery has sponsored several catalogue raisonné projects, most recently for the American Surrealist artist Kay Sage, and has been instrumental in advancing knowledge of such artists as Alfred Maurer, Arthur B. Carles, and more recently, Theodoros Stamos, Marjorie Strider, and Michael (Corinne) West. In the summer of 2019, the gallery announced the formal expansion of its primary market business and focus on the presentation of contemporary work. It continues to expand its roster of contemporary artists, focusing on emerging and mid-career talents. With more than 40 years of experience, Hollis Taggart is widely recognized by collectors and curators for its leadership, expertise, and openness, on matters of art history, market trends and opportunities.

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