

JACK RUTBERG FINE ARTS

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September 20, 2008 – January 17, 2009

HANS BURKHARDT PAINTINGS OF THE 1960s

A DECADE OF REVOLUTION

"Wandering Souls," 1967, Oil on Canvas, 40 x 50 inches

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Los Angeles, CA. - A major exhibition, **“Hans Burkhardt - Paintings of the 1960s”** will be featured at Jack Rutberg Fine Arts. This survey exhibition, accompanied by a fully illustrated 88- page publication, will open with a reception, Saturday, September 20, and extends through January 17, 2009.

The exhibition will include paintings - some of monumental scale - spanning the entire decade of the 1960s, a critical period in the evolution of American art; particularly in Los Angeles, where Burkhardt resided since his arrival from N.Y. in 1937. Works in the exhibition, and its accompanying illustrated catalogue reveal the full range of Burkhardt’s paintings, reflecting both the excitement of a decade marked by the hopeful social revolution that was the 1960s, and works of unprecedented potency in their protest of the Vietnam War.

While the 1960s today represents a period of extensive popular focus, Burkhardt’s role takes on special importance since the reality of the history of the ‘60s - particularly in L.A. - is often obscured in a mythology informed by the emergence of pop art and minimalist tendencies.

Hans Burkhardt’s abstract expressionist works were well known to the artists of the ‘60s. He served as an example of constancy and artistic independence, as he was perhaps the most widely exhibited L.A. artist of that period and the decade that led up to it. In the 1950s, for example, Burkhardt was the subject of no less than 23 solo exhibitions and his works were also included in more than 30 museum exhibitions including a 10-Year Retrospective at the Pasadena Art Museum (now Norton Simon Museum). In the 1960s he continued to exhibit in astoundingly large numbers of major exhibitions including a 30-year Retrospective organized by the Santa Barbara Museum that traveled to San Francisco’s Palace of the Legion of Honor and the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, a 40-Year Retrospective at the San Diego Art Association, and an important exhibition at the San Diego Museum of Art (then the Fine Arts Gallery) of his provocative paintings responding to the Vietnam War. While Burkhardt was some 30 years older than many of the artists of the now mythologized Ferus Gallery, he was nevertheless an important inspiration to many of them, in spite of not being part of their ‘circle.’

“Hans Burkhardt - Paintings of the 1960s” includes early works of that decade which extended Burkhardt’s uniquely poignant abstract expressionist paintings of the 1950s. He was one of the few painters of that period who steadfastly flaunted, and indeed thrived in spite of, the political censorship

and hostility toward modern abstract painting that informed much of the 1950s and reached levels of hysteria in the McCarthy era in L.A. That political hostility may partly suggest why the younger generation of L.A. artists of the 1960s might have been inclined toward popular imagery and minimal art as their primary sensibility. Their artistic response was in stark contrast to this era of youthful social revolution that informed every aspect of the times; particularly in terms of political revolt against the escalation of the Vietnam War. Burkhardt, in contrast, extended abstract expressionism into astounding and revolutionary realms, reaching apotheosis in paintings that scholars have cited as masterpieces of 20th century painting; among them Burkhardt's skull painting, "My Lai," which will be included in this important exhibition.

Hans Burkhardt was born in Basel, Switzerland in 1904. He immigrated to New York in 1924, where he shared Arshile Gorky's studio for between the years 1927 and 1937. When he moved to Los Angeles in 1937, Burkhardt represented the most significant bridge between New York and Los Angeles, in that his paintings of the 1930s are part of the genesis of American Abstract Expressionism. In 1992, two years before his death, Burkhardt was honored for his lifetime achievement by the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

Burkhardt's works are included in major museums internationally. He is currently a significant component of the major exhibition at the British Museum entitled "The American Scene: Prints from Hopper to Pollock." Concurrent with the Rutberg gallery exhibition and publication, **"Hans Burkhardt - Paintings of the 1960s,"** California State University, Northridge (CSUN) is presenting an ambitious exhibition of Burkhardt works from its formidable permanent Burkhardt collection from August 25 through October 11. The CSUN exhibition is accompanied by a profusely illustrated 160-page book with essays by Betty Brown, Margarita Nieto, Jack Rutberg and Peter Selz.

"Hans Burkhardt - Paintings of the 1960s" opens with a reception from 6:00 until 9:00 p.m. Saturday, September 20. **Jack Rutberg Fine Arts Gallery** is located at 357 North La Brea Avenue in Los Angeles. Gallery hours are 10:00 am - 6:00 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and 10:00 am - 5:00 p.m. on Saturday. For further information please call (323) 938-5222. **A publication with 88 pages and 76 illustrations with a forward, text, biographical overview, and chronology accompanies this important exhibition.**

Related Educational Event October 23:

A Conversation with William Wilson: Former Chief Art Critic of the L.A. Times