

# NO SHOW



Beginning in early 2000, Walter Hopps (a leading curator of 20th-century art and founding director of the Menil Collection in Houston) and art historian William C. Agee began kicking around ideas for a comprehensive exhibition of Abstract Expressionist work from the 1940s through the 1980s. Though generally critically lauded, the Ab Ex exhibition that recently closed at London's Royal Academy came under critical fire for too greatly expanding the canon. Had it taken place, Hopps (who died in 2005) and Agee's show would have done so earlier and even more extensively, including artists both famous and obscure and from America's heartland as well as from its coasts, men and women, sculptors and painters, precursors and descendants. Their dialogue is reproduced here, with comments by Agee.—Anne Doran



# THE SPRAWLING AB EX SURVEY THAT *WASN'T*



OPPOSITE William Agee at  
the Museum of Fine Arts,  
Houston. THIS PAGE Walter  
Hopps at the Menil  
Collection dedication  
ceremony, June 4, 1987.





“**H**ow it got going was when the Sam Francis exhibition traveled to the Menil. I did the show for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, and at first, Walter was the only one interested in taking it.

It's tricky when your exhibition goes to somebody else's museum. I went down, but I left it to Walter to hang the show. And I never thought about him being good at that—he was deified for a lot of things, but not for his installations—but it was amazing to watch him work. He hung the paintings at a particular height; he fussed with the lights; he obsessed over every detail. And in the end, I saw, the more you do, the less it's noticed.

For my catalogue essay for the show, I'd been looking into painters who were important to Sam Francis—painters like Ed Corbett (who later tried too hard to be like Rothko)—and it turns out he was looking as much at San Francisco as at Paris.

Walter and I started to talk about hardly known Abstract

Expressionists. The reach of the movement was so powerful, and there was such a multiplicity of talent.

So one New Year's Eve I get a call from Walter. He's on top of a mountain in Arizona, and he's been thinking. I came up with a bunch of artists, he says, and they'd all be pretty good. You could show any of them and not be embarrassed. I said I would start a list, and Walter said he would too, which is what we did.

Walter was working on a James Rosenquist retrospective, as I remember. But we kept it up, each of us adding more names, until we figured that we'd have to rent Madison Square Garden to show them all. And then Walter up and died on us, and the exhibition never happened.” —Bill Agee, as told to Anne Doran ■

LIST BY WALTER HOPPS

ABOVE Sam Francis installation view at the Menil, Houston, 1999.



notes 7/1/61 SW H

The New American Art 1940's + 1950's

DeKooning  
Kline  
David Smith  
Rothko  
Newman  
Pollock  
Tomas  
Mathewell  
Resnick  
Guy Reinhardt  
Twankov  
Lipton  
Lissow  
Ferber  
Haig  
Nakian  
John Mitchell  
Gottlieb  
Brecht  
H. Stern (C.D.S. Col.)  
Bourgeois  
Early Rauschenberg  
" Twombly  
" Leslie  
" Raymond Buter  
" Goldborg  
" Frankenthaler  
" Chamberlain  
" Schanmatt  
" DiNoro Steven Pace  
" S. Greene  
" Gorky

Still  
S. Francis  
Dichtenform  
Spaulin  
H. Smith (with Kline)  
Labdell  
A. Hart  
Jefferson  
De Leo  
J. Kelly  
Geckhoff  
Wasserstein  
Carbett  
Dugmore  
Briggs  
Toni and Diviner

Lee Mulligan  
Winterman Whelpton  
Craig Koppelman  
Ed. Moses  
B.A. Bengtson  
John Altom  
Ed. Kienholz  
Peter Voulkos  
John Mason  
Ken Price  
Richards Rubin  
Arthur Ribler  
Gilbert Henderson

Mark Tobey

Compton Booth (Minn.)  
Paul Wanner  
Philip Roeder  
Alvin Light  
Janet Kahan  
Marvin Lewis  
Howard Mehrling  
Richard Brodsky  
Robert Mackenzy  
Ben L. Culwell  
Forest Bass  
Joseph Glavin  
Piusant  
Norman Blum  
Mark Relli  
Grace Hartman  
Stamato  
Tomy Savitz

Chicago

8/1/61 + 9/1

The New American Art 1940's + 1950's

NYC 1945-1960

Norman Lewis  
Raul Halg  
David Smith  
Bradley W. Berlin  
Robert Mathewell  
Ad. Hirtzfeld (early)  
Jack Twankov  
William Bazukas  
Louise Bourgeois  
James Brooks  
George Curran  
Harold Foster  
Philip Guston  
Lee Krasner  
Hans Hofmann  
Israhm Lissow  
Seymour Chwast  
Heida Sterne  
Conrad Marca-Relli  
George McNeil  
Ruben Nakian  
Richard Pousette-Dart  
Milton Resnick  
David Hare  
T. Stamos  
Esteban Vicente

Enrico Duse (photo)  
Grace Hartman  
Elaine de Kooning  
Jack O'Hara (early)  
Twombly  
Leslie  
Mitchel  
Goldberg  
Frankenthaler  
Chamberlain  
Norman Lewis

Stephen Green

**STEPHEN GREEN** Painter.  
Taught at Princeton University, where his students included Frank Stella and Michael Fried. After WWII, said he wanted his work to reflect "the terrible things that are happening in a beautiful world."

9/1/61 SW H

The Legacy of Ab. Ex. 1970's - '90

Brice Marden  
Terry Winters  
Susan Rothenberg  
Renaud Davis  
Richard Serra  
Larry Bell  
Richard Jackson  
Sam Gilliam  
Virgil Gotsfeldt  
Susan Hartnett  
Dorville James  
Lee Bontkou (apt)  
Schubert  
Robert Rymann  
Louise Fishman  
Bill Jensen  
Nancy Gross - Schuman  
John Deane

George Humphreys  
WAC

**REUBEN NAKIAN**  
Sculptor.  
Commissioned to create portraits of FDR's cabinet in the 1930s.

10 or 11 or 12 - 14

DeKooning  
Kline  
David Smith  
Pollock  
Newman  
Rothko  
Nakian  
T. Roszak (ex)  
S. Lipton  
Lipfield (ex)  
Raul Hague  
Hofmann  
Bourgeois  
Twankov  
Nakian  
Tomas  
Gottlieb  
Rothko  
Kline  
S. Dugmore  
H. Davis  
E. Deis  
R.L. Culwell  
Gorky  
Resnick  
H. Stern  
" Ferber

The New American Art 1940's + 1950's

Early work by  
Rauschenberg  
Twombly  
John Mitchell  
A. Leslie  
Goldberg  
O'Hara  
Lee Krasner  
Frankenthaler  
John Chamberlain  
Joseph Gatto  
Tony Smith  
Raymond Buter  
Philip Guston  
Burt Foster  
George McNeil  
Norman Lewis

**BENJAMIN L. CULWELL** Painter. Robert Coates, who coined the term Abstract Expressionism, wrote that Culwell's work was "among the few really integrated interpretations of wartime experience that I have yet come across."



## LIST BY BILL AGEE

**JANET SOBEL** Painter. Self-taught. Born Jennie Lechovsky in Ukraine. Arrived U.S. 1908, age 14. Started painting at 43. Said to have influenced Jackson Pollock.

AM26-01  
To: Walter Hopps  
From: Bill Agee  
Date: June 28, 2001 15: 2001  
Re: List of Abstract Expressionist artists, for email  
Artists are listed in no particular order, for now. There are about 102 names.  
Cut off date is c. 1958

Painters:  
Hans Hofmann  
Arshile Gorky  
Jackson Pollock  
Janet Sobel  
William de Kooning  
William Basso  
James Brooks  
James Tworkin  
Jacob Kainen  
Robert Motherwell  
Robert Rauschenberg  
Richard Pousette-Dart  
Frank Kline  
Rudolph Centobelli  
Aldrich Kersick  
Milton Krasnik  
Ad Stachurski (1946-50)  
Mark Rothko  
Theodore Brown  
Barnett Newman  
Lee Krasner  
Helen Frankenthaler  
Conrad Hartman  
Gloria Katzschberg (early)  
Robert Rauschenberg (up to 1972) D.C.  
Ken Noland (up to 1972) D.C.  
Morris Louis (up to 1972) D.C.  
Howard Wadsworth (early)  
Robert Rauschenberg (early)  
Frank Stella (up to 1958)  
Al Leslie  
Mikala Dwyer  
Norman Bluhm - Paris

Possible? Should we consider, as forerunners?  
Arthur B. Carls (last works of 1938-40)  
John Mars (1944-54)  
Arthur Tappan (improvised music works)  
Boris Yeliseyev

Joan Mitchell  
Shirley Jaffe (early) - Paris  
Robert Muntford - Paris  
Wassily Kandinsky  
Kimber Smith  
Charlie Boggs  
Robert de Niro, Sr.  
Robert Goodenough  
Alfonso Ossorio  
John Ferren  
Louis Finkelstein  
Irving Petlin  
Cy Twombly  
Hale Woodruff  
Stephen Greene  
John Hultberg  
Alma Thomas  
Norman Lewis  
Beauford Delaney  
Elaine de Kooning  
Matsuzaki Kanemitsu  
Kenzo Okada  
Jon Schuster  
Frederick Drabias  
Ray Parker (before 1956)  
Esteban Vicente  
Paul Bruch  
Joe Steinhilber  
Harry Jackson  
Harry Kramer  
Jon Mueller  
Miles Fort  
Wolf Kallin  
Allan Kaprow  
Hedda Sterne  
Feliz Pissis  
Leatrice Rose  
Peter Grillo  
Rudy Burckhardt  
Al Field  
Angelo Ippolito  
William King  
Hyde Solomon  
Herman Cherry  
Charles Seliger

Gerome Krawitzki  
Anne Ryan  
Richard Lytle  
Reginald Pollack  
George McVey  
Eitel Schwabacher  
Philip Guston  
Red Grooms  
Philip Pearlstein - early  
George Segal  
Al Jensen (to 1957)  
Jules Olitski  
Sally Hazlet Drummond  
Miriam Schapiro  
Charles Cajori  
Pat Passlof  
Michael West  
Gertrude Greene  
Fritz Kuhn  
Marlan Jackson  
Sonia Sekula  
Jeanne Miles  
Gertrude Barrer  
Ruth Abrams  
Paul Burlin  
Enrico Donati  
Tony Smith - early paintings  
Julius Chybsky (sp?)  
Stephen Pace

Sculptors:  
David Smith  
David Hare  
Herbert Ferber  
Ibram Lassaw  
Seymour Lipton  
Rachin Nakian  
Claire Falkenstein  
Theodore Roszak  
Louise Bourgeois  
Peter Grippie  
Richard Stankiewicz  
Jean Follet  
George Sugarman  
George Spavens

Other Sculptors, to consider?:  
Philip Pavia  
James Rosati  
Louise Nevelson  
Raoul Hague

**SEYMOUR LIPTON** Sculptor. Trained as a dentist. Technical innovations include brazing nickel-silver rods onto sheets of Monel for rust resistance.

**JACOB KAINEN** Painter. Became an expert in classics and an amateur prizefighter. Along with his wife, Ruth, donated collection of German Expressionist art to the National Gallery of Art in 1985.



**LARRY CALGANO** Painter. Raised on a homestead in California by his Italian immigrant parents. Became a marine and traveled to Asia during World War II. Studied under Mark Rothko and Clyfford Still after the war, and later showed abstract landscapes in Paris and New York.

John Chamberlin  
Mark di Sverio  
Gabe Kohn  
Mary Frank

Ab Ex Photography ??

Asam Sikind  
Barbara Morgan

Painterly/expressionist figuration: should we include a few, one, all ??

Milton Avery  
Larry Rivers  
Fairfield Porter  
Alex Katz - early  
Lester Johnson  
Leon Golub  
Neil Blaine  
Jan Muehler  
Jane Freilicher  
Jene Wilson  
Bob Thompson

#### WEST

##### San Francisco: Painters:

Clyfford Still  
Richard Diebenkorn  
Sam Francis  
Mark Tobey  
Alvin Light  
Clay Spohn  
Larry Calgano  
James Budd Dixon  
Ed Corbett  
Jack Jefferson  
Sonia Gschott  
Jay DeFeo  
Frank Lobdell  
James Kelly  
Julius Wasserstein  
Ernie Briggs  
Ed Dugmore  
Fred Mitchell  
George Stillman  
Ronald Bladen  
Robert McChesney  
John Sassano  
Stanley Hayter  
Elmer Bischoff - early  
Walter Kuhlman  
Deborah Remington  
Madeleine Dimon  
Lilly Fanzich  
Charles Strong  
Joan Brown - early  
Paul Weiner  
Lawrence Chompton  
Richard Brodney

Sculptors:  
Jeremy Anderson  
Adelaide Kent

#### Los Angeles

##### Painters:

John Alton  
Ed Moses  
Emerson Woelfer  
Leo Matlican  
Craig Kaufman  
Billy Al Bengtson  
Phillip Rootler  
Ed Kienholz  
Gilbert Henderson  
Arthur Richter  
Richard Rubin

##### Sculptors:

Pete Voulkos  
John Mason  
Ken Price

#### MIDWEST / SOUTH / SOUTHWEST / TEXAS

Cameron Booth - Minnesota  
Joseph Goto - sculptor, Chicago  
Lois Dodd - Georgia  
Forest Bess - Texas  
Dorothy Hood - "  
Ren Hollivell - "

##### Texas:

Earl Stryh  
Agnes Martin - in 1954  
Wolcott Ely  
Louis Catasco  
Ward Lockwood  
Louis Ribak

**JOSEPH GOTO** Sculptor. Born in Hilo, Hawaii. Became known for welded work; learned welding in the U.S. Army during WWII.