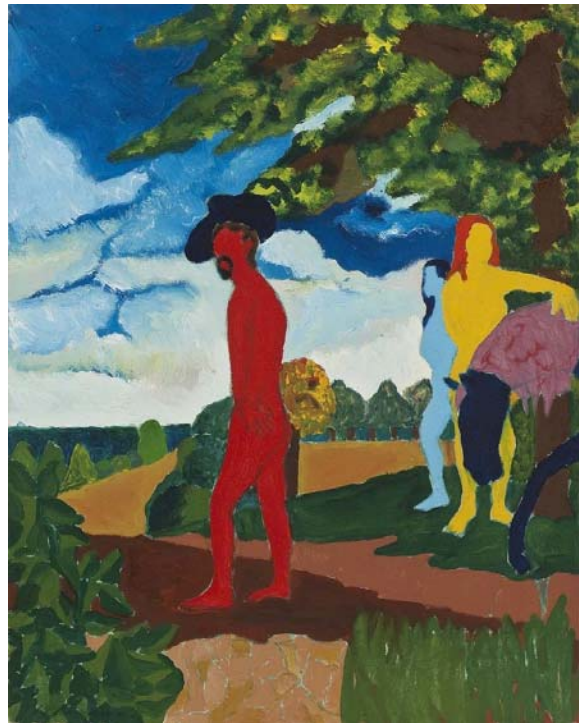


Michael Rosenfeld Gallery Gives American Painters Bob Thompson and Louis Eilshemius Their Due

ARTSY EDITORIAL
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SEP 10TH, 2015 9:48 PM



Louis Michel Eilshemius
Rose-Marie, 1917
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery



Bob Thompson
Charles I, 1965
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

For its inaugural show of the fall season, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery is bringing together paintings by two great American artists from different generations, Bob Thompson and Louis Eilshemius. Operating outside the mainstream in both art and life during their respective eras, they each made imaginative nudes that broke with convention. “Naked at the Edge: Louis Eilshemius / Bob Thompson” is the fitting title of an exhibition that celebrates—and resurfaces—the trend-bucking yet underexposed work of the two painters.



Bob Thompson
Untitled (Nativity), 1961
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery



Bob Thompson
Adam and Eve, 1964
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

Thompson and Eilshemius both garnered critical acclaim for their work, particularly posthumously, but they nevertheless remained relatively marginalized and practically unknown outside the art world. Thompson, a prolific African-American artist, painted for only eight years but in this short period bypassed the dominance of abstraction in midcentury America and developed his own symbolic language. Had his life not been so short—he died just shy of his 29th birthday of a heroin overdose in Rome in 1966—he may have established a firmer place both within and outside of his field. Through a combination of figuration, color, and form, he transformed scenes inspired by the the *Old Masters* into abstracted, allegorical images of modern American life. Figures rendered in greens, blues, and oranges blend together across lush, blocky backdrops that pulsate with bright color and implied movement.



Louis Michel Eilshemius
Untitled (Figures in a Moonlit Landscape)
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery



Louis Michel Eilshemius
Untitled (Girl With Pitcher)
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

Eilshemius' longer life was marked by the relatively late discovery of his work, in 1917, by Marcel Duchamp, who invited him to exhibit in Paris. Recognized by the New York avant-garde and a favorite of the collector and critic Duncan Phillips (of the Phillips Collection) in the 1930s, Eilshemius nonetheless never achieved the kind of success he wanted during his own lifetime.

For his expressive paintings, which are characterized by figures at rest or play in the center of verdant landscapes, he drew inspiration from the Impressionists. By using soft palettes and dauby edges, Eilshemius crafted harmonious compositions that convey a sense of introspection and quietude. In the 1910s, before his discovery by Duchamp at the 1917 Society of Independent Artists at the Grand Central Palace in New York, Eilshemius became increasingly frustrated by his lack of success and turned to moodier scenes of moonlit cityscapes and mystical visions. In an act of eccentricity and defiance during the time, he began handing out business cards declaring himself an educator, ex-actor, mesmerist-prophet, and mystic. He left off “master artist,” a designation applicable both to him and Thompson, which the show at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery will only help to prove.

—Karen Kedmey

“Naked at the Edge: Louis Eilshemius / Bob Thompson” is on view at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, New York, Sep. 8–Oct. 31, 2015.

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