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# Abstract Mainstays, Dark Mixed Media

'American Abstraction' Exhibit in Chelsea and Kris Kuksi's 'Revival'

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By PETER PLAGENS

Dec. 20, 2013 6:45 p.m. ET

## *American Abstraction, 1930-1945*

Michael Rosenfeld

100 11th Ave., (212) 247-0082

Through Jan. 4

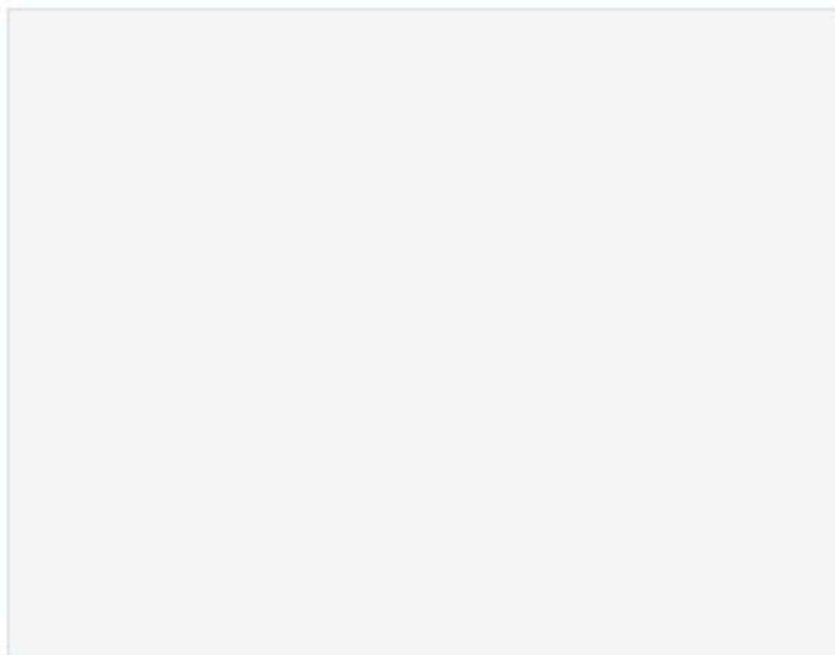


Dwinell Grant's 'Untitled' (1941) at Michael Rosenfeld. Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

During the years between the world wars, modern art in America was really no more than a pale reflection of that in Europe. But while the American abstractionists of the 1930s and 1940s seem in the standard textbooks to be hardly the equals of such continental giants as Pablo Picasso, Joan Miró, or Vasily Kandinsky (Emil Bistram, Werner Drewes, Agnes Pelton and Esphyr Slobdokina aren't exactly household names), their work looks better. It's more philosophically disciplined, graphically inventive and chromatically cheerful (even into the World War II years)—each time we have the chance to see it anew.

This exhibition of mostly paintings and a couple of sculptures by 22 such artists (those mentioned above, plus the more well-known Burgoyne Diller, Theodore Roszak, Jean Xceron and others) is the brightest show on view in Chelsea right

now. The visual power of pictures no bigger than the tops of end tables is astonishing. It's the optimism, the sincere belief that art can point to universal truths, that does it.



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