

## **“MAKING IT MODERN” EXHIBITION**

### **Docent Summary Notes on SPIRITUALITY**

These mostly non-representational works are part of a movement of the twentieth century that includes various smaller art movements such as: De Stijl and the short-lived Dynaton, and Synchromism. These pieces differ from what we think of as religious art as they may not relate a specific story or mythology; rather they are meant to be a reflection of the metaphysical plane. Since they are non-objective they can only relate a feeling, as one might experience in reflection or meditation. They are drawn from the artist's subconscious. These images are ethereal, and otherworldly. They invite the viewer to have her or his own experience through their shapes and colors.

**Marc Chagall** was born in 1887 in what is now Belarus. He studied art in St. Petersburg. In 1910 he moved to Paris to continue his studies, before moving to New York in 1941. His work tells stories of his heritage, relating allegories and folklore of the Jews of Russia, as in this ceramic mural, ***The Village***, painted in 1952.

**Agnes Pelton** moved to Cathedral City in 1931. She was one of the artists who made up the Transcendental Painting Group, which was founded in New Mexico in 1938. The group promoted abstract painting and intended to bring the spiritual experience into abstract images. Her ethereal images, like that of ***Future*** from 1941, combined the colors and shapes of the nature that surrounded her combined with abstract symbolism.

**Wolfgang Paalen** was born in Vienna in 1905. He studied in Paris in the mid-1920s and became one of the Surrealists in 1936. He moved to the United States in 1939. In 1949 he started the Dynaton group with Gordon Onslow Ford and Lee Mullican. Paalen created a technique known as fumage. In this technique the artist applies a flame, perhaps from a candle, to create a pattern on the surface. The shapes or image created by the smoke are used as a starting point for the final image. ***Untitled Abstract***, 1946, is an example of this technique.

Born in Germany in 1889, **Rudolf Bauer** studied in Berlin. In 1938 Bauer was arrested by the Gestapo for selling “degenerate art.” Solomon Guggenheim worked for his release, after which he moved to the United States. Bauer's work, like ***Blue Center***, from 1934, is reminiscent of the geometric compositions of Wassily Kandinsky, Laszlo Maholy-Nagy, and other artists of the Bauhaus.

Russian artist, **Ilya Bolotowsky** moved to New York in 1923, and co-founded the American Abstract Artists in 1936, a co-operative to promote pure abstraction in art. Bolotowsky was influenced by Piet Mondrian and De Stijl, an art and design movement of simple lines and primary colors, that began in the Netherlands. Mondrian's influence is evidenced by the rectangular division of spaces in ***Opalescent Oval*** from 1955.

**Lee Mullican** was a founding member of a group of painters in California that called themselves Dynaton. Their goal was to explore the unimagined and the possible. **He** developed a technique called striation. Using a printer's knife he applied paint to the canvas to build up the surface with textured, fine lines that appear to sit on the surface. He merged abstraction and representation to illustrate the underlying order of the universe. He was influenced by Surrealism and Native American heritage geometries, which can be seen in ***Peaceable Kingdom***, from 1964.