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PRINT SEPTEMBER 2009

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT MOTHERWELL

In what sense do you consider that there may have been misunderstandings or limitations of the period of Abstract Expressionism?

A. Maybe. The term Abstract comes? It came in Art Journal, I, in the ending to the Gaugnin's "Diverse Expressionist and Images" about ... But even his account has the limitation that for an artist?All of what happened, there's no documentation existing.

Q. But what were the specific misapprehensions of the period—theoretic, historical, conceptual?

A. One historical misunderstanding is to assume that all the Abstract Expressionists appeared, as one, like so many Minerals from the sea. Most people remember, for example, that there are 9 or 5, some among the "Founding Fathers", in fact, they appeared in the second wave. The first wave, for instance, Gorky, Pollock, Rothko, Gottlieb, Baziotes, Tomlin, Ferren, Ernst, Tanguy, Yves Tellock, Arp, Matta, and Masson, and David Alfaro, and in the second wave, Motherwell, Reinhardt, Rothko, Gottlieb, and Still. Gorky, too, but I have always thought of him, as he thought of himself, as a transition artist. The adjectival second wave came around 1949. So, people viewing it in Charles Egan's gallery, de Kooning, Klein, Guston, Stelloid, Tomlinn, and Brenner and Ernst, Tanguy, Matta, Masson, Tomlin, Baziotes, Gottlieb, Rothko, Motherwell, Reinhardt, the bulk of the second wave, in the early fifties, came, a third wave, of younger artists (younger, Parker, Frankenthaler, Mitchell, Francis, Diebenkorn, Harrington, as of the 1951 wave (after the beginning, Jacobson Kline, Guston, Ad Reinhardt, Motherwell, Rothko, Gottlieb were totaled or Italian as through their first one, or two years, and both the second and third waves were, in fact, Abstract Expressionists. Gorky, Pollock, Rothko, Tomlinson, Motherwell and others—the original members of "the old guard".

An important circumstance was Clement Greenberg's temperamental antipathy to Surrealism. As the front arm, constituted in Abstract Expressionism, and especially in Rothko, he was unable emotionally to consider of the deep relation between Abstract Expressionism and the Surrealist Movement. Rothko, Gottlieb, Baziotes, Tomlin, Ernst, Tanguy, Matta, Masson, and David Alfaro, the Surrealist artists in the very early forties by Matta, Although I emphasize Surrealist creativity I realize that I should remark that my enthusiasm among living artists in 1940 was Matisse, Picasso, Bonnard and, a little later, Miro, Klee, Mondrian and Duchamp. The Surrealists did not represent my taste.

Q. How do you think this entered as a misunderstanding in the idea of the period? This ignorance of Surrealism?

A. Clem was the historical imaginative in relation to what New York was like before Abstract Expressionism—the end of the Depression. The sculptors, nonbarrers of the scene from 1940 to 1950 were Surrealists, Calder, Lipchitz, Ferber, Nakian, Roszak, Cornelia Pearson, Pearson Pearson, and the creative impulse, but most remarkable, was that most of the moderate artists were on the WPA in the thirties, which was dominated by leftist politics, so that they had a double difficulty, sometimes from Stalinist pressure, and, on the other, from the Trotskyites, left." The Surrealist pressures brought hope, inspiration, activity, that searched out the young among artists and painters.

Q. How was the interest in radical impulses, political and social, and the esthetic values of Surrealism, constituted during the time?

A. It wasn't. Drought Ashe thought the Surrealists, by Gorky, of the things that characterizes the people who were Abstract Expressionists. Abstract Expressionists were a loose amorphous organization who had very political interests.

Q. What is your understanding of the relation of Surrealism to French painting prior to the emigration of the French painters from during the war?

A. The text on Matta maps Abstract Expressionists—you known who they are—were mostly oriented to the Lois de Siete Specifiq en Peyrous, or Matisse, or Picasso, or Bonnard, or, in more cases, but one should call back his own views.

Q. What kind of relationship were it psychologically? Was it one, joint you, were there difficult emotional problems, professional doubts, provincial-cosmopolitan syndromes? What did they think of Paris, on the Magic?

A. One of the things that struck me then was how little general interest there was in Paris per se. When I first came to Paris, I was expecting, as an adolescent, to succumb to the idea that painting was part of a cultural milieu, not that there happened to be a lot of great ideas in one place. I was disappointed. I felt that I wanted French culture in New York. I also spent a year (1941-2) in Mexico, Sylvia New York.

Q. Do you consider that American painting ultimately rejected the tenets of French culture, as manifested in painting, during the forties?

A. The museum the Americans were able to participate in what is potentially a universal experience, exactly at that same moment, the Parisians began to mistrust, or American painting became much stronger by becoming internationalized, and French painting simultaneously became much weaker." So becoming nationalism. When it specifically "becomes" it's weaker.

Q. How was Surrealism, taken in whatever way, a component of the orientation you say American art was evolving?

A. ... When started to me to be the situation in the beginning of the 1940s was that there was all the talent in oceans from two world wars, but that there wasn't a creative principle, a rationale, for aspects of Surrealism provided it.

Q. What, in your opinion, were the aspects, or the catalysts, which brought these men from the campaign of nationalism to that of mature existence?

A. The principle of Surrealist "automatism." In standard English it really means, in the way we use it, "automatic." It's a kind of "Freudian" Surrealism. Breton, the Surrealist, Breton, Expressionism or so the early Michelangelo would have described as Breton ... It was the question of the subconscious as uncontrolled abundance never was an issue. I think doubling is one of the alternatives of drawing. Paul Klee, after his mastering, he wouldn't call it doodling, I know that all the classic Tanguys begun as doodles ... Marc Mon Ernst did. All of Ernst's, Tanguy's, Matta's, Masson's, Gorky's, Pollock's, Motherwell's, Gottlieb's, doodles, and they turned them into gods, with titles or landscapes. Gorky, in many, many ways of doing it. "Doodling" as a form of "psychic automatism," or the Surrealists called it rather so that with all the connotations it could be one way of incurring associations—Eros. The idea of establishing the connection between Abstract Expressionism and Surrealism is that Surrealism was a very, very, very,