

**Yeshiva University Museum Presents *Hyman Bloom: A Spiritual Embrace*,
50 Paintings and Drawings by Mystical Expressionist
September 13, 2009 - January 24, 2010**



-- *Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock considered Hyman Bloom to be 'the first Abstract Expressionist in America'*

New York, NY—Hyman Bloom began his career by painting rabbis, cantors and Torah covers, using them as a metaphor for his own spiritual questioning. The nearly 50 paintings and drawings (and one print) by renowned Boston Expressionist painter Hyman Bloom will be on display at the Yeshiva University Museum as part of the new exhibit, entitled ***Hyman Bloom: A Spiritual Embrace***. Focusing on Bloom's exploration of the spiritual, the exhibit features paintings of rabbis, dating from 1938 through 2005, as well as works that explore the occult and alternative spirituality. The exhibit, which contains several works never before shown in public, will be on view from September 13 through January 24, 2010 at Yeshiva University Museum, located at 15 West 16th Street in New York City.

About the Exhibition

In his artwork, Hyman Bloom presents the viewer with an understanding of what it is to paint, scraping away at the surface, changing the placement of the figure and drawing over what seems to be finished work. To Bloom, portraits of rabbis holding the Torah epitomized his artistic belief that the Torah is the bridge between the Jew and his divine world. Bloom searches in his art for answers to his spiritual quest.

Throughout his career, Bloom never gave up representational art, Willem de Kooning once said that he and Jackson Pollock considered Bloom to be "the first Abstract Expressionist in America." If abstraction hadn't so completely engaged critics in the 1950's, Bloom might be considered differently today. That Bloom spent most of his career in Boston, away from the center of the art world, may have also lessened his critical attention.

Bloom, who, at 96, is still working, though at a reduced pace, believes in the power of art to triumph over death, a power derived from a spiritual embrace of memory and imagination. It is this imagination that refuses to let Bloom stop questioning the nature of things, that causes him to hold tightly onto painterly and religious tradition—and not let go. The works in this exhibit vividly convey Bloom's ideals, as well as the artist's utter lack of romanticism and sentimentality. These depictions of religious figures and objects derive their spiritual intensity from the energy, texture, color and power of Bloom's expressionist vocabulary and style.

About the Artist

Hyman Bloom was born in 1913 in Brunoviski, a Latvian village not far from what is now the Lithuanian border. In 1920, he and his parents immigrated to the United States. Enrolling in drawing classes at the West End Community Center, Bloom met Harold Zimmerman, an influential teacher, who encouraged drawing from the imagination. Bloom also studied drawing at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and, together with his friend and fellow artist Jack Levine, with Denman Ross at Harvard University.

In 1933, at the age of 20, Bloom, then living and working in Boston's South End, joined the Public Works of Art Project and, subsequently, the Massachusetts Works Progress Administration (WPA). When thirteen of his paintings were included in an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in NYC in 1942, he received immediate and broad critical acclaim. His work is in the permanent collections at MoMA, the Jewish Museum, the Whitney Museum of Art, Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, and numerous other museums.

Although he taught at Wellesley and Harvard University, Bloom has lived much of his life outside academia, free to pursue a wide range of interests, which include the study of theosophy and psychic research, Eastern religion and classical Indian music; psychology and psychedelic research and Jewish mysticism. He is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship (1949), a grant from the National Academy of Arts and Letters (1950) and a Ford Foundation Fellowship (1959). The artist now lives and works in Nashua, NH.

This exhibition was organized by the Danforth Museum of Art, Framingham, Massachusetts and was curated by its director Katherine French.

About Yeshiva University Museum

For 35 years, the Yeshiva University Museum has provided culturally diverse exhibitions and programming for the greater metropolitan area and beyond, as well as to Yeshiva University students, faculty, and alumni. Its permanent collection includes more than 9,000 objects spanning over 3,000 years of Jewish history. The Museum also emphasizes teaching schoolchildren and adults of diverse backgrounds about Jewish culture through many varieties of interdisciplinary programs. Located at the Center for Jewish History, the Museum occupies four spacious galleries, a children's workshop center, and an outdoor sculpture garden.

Museum Hours:

Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday: 11 am – 5 pm
FREE Mondays @ YUM 3:30 – 7:30 pm
New! FREE Fridays @ YUM 11 am – 2:30 pm

Museum Admission:

Adults: \$8 Seniors and Students: \$6
YU Museum Members and Children under 5: Free
Yeshiva University Faculty, Administration and Students: Free (with valid ID)

Location:

Yeshiva University Museum
at the Center for Jewish History
15 West 16th Street, NYC 10011
212-294-8330
www.yumuseum.org

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Image caption:

Materializing Medium, c.1955-57, oil on canvas, courtesy of Dan and Barbara Singer