
Press Release

PAINTINGS BY RICHARD POUSETTE-DART ON VIEW AT THE SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, NEW YORK

Exhibition Title: *Richard Pousette-Dart*
Venue: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York
Dates: August 17 – September 25, 2007
Press Preview: Friday, August 17, 10 AM – 12 PM

(NEW YORK, NY–June 1, 2007) The work of Richard Pousette-Dart, youngest of the first generation Abstract Expressionists, will be on view at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum from August 17, through September 25, 2007. The exhibition, with approximately 40 paintings representing the artist's entire career, premiered earlier this year at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. *Richard Pousette-Dart* was curated by Philip Rylands, Director of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, with Luca Massimo Barbero, Associate Curator of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. The exhibition is organized in collaboration with the Estate of the Artist, and the artist's widow Evelyn Pousette-Dart, and with the support of the American Contemporary Art Gallery, Munich.

Richard Pousette-Dart (1916-1992) was a founding member of the New York School which included Willem de Kooning, Adolph Gottlieb, Hans Hofmann, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko. Active in New York from the early 1940s, Pousette-Dart made essential contributions to the Abstract Expressionist movement. He was among the first of the Abstract Expressionists to be given a solo exhibition (at the Artists Gallery, New York), in 1941. Between 1941 and 1942 he was the first to paint large-scale canvases, including *Undulation* (1941-42), which anticipated Jackson Pollock's break-through to mural-scale work in 1943. During this period Pousette-Dart's technique began to emphasize gesture, layers of paint, and evocative subject matter that were the first pictorial statements of what came to be known as 'action painting,' as seen in *Crucifixion Comprehension of the Atom* (1944). In 1947, Peggy Guggenheim gave him a solo exhibition at her New York gallery, Art of This Century, where the artist's best-known masterpiece and the first large-scale Abstract Expressionist painting, *Symphony Number 1, The Transcendental* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, ca. 1941-42), was shown for the first time. In 1950 he was included in an historic photograph entitled *The Irascibles*, depicting fifteen New York School abstract painters, which is part of the exhibition.

Pousette-Dart drew inspiration from Native American, African, and Oceanic art, as well as European and American artistic trends and the writings of Freud and Jung. He was influenced by Oriental philosophy and American Transcendentalism and held to the conviction that the abstract symbols of painting could reveal universal truths by suggesting the mysterious realm of

the spirit. In 1947 he wrote “I strive to express the spiritual nature of the universe. Painting for me is a dynamic balance and wholeness of life; it is mysterious and transcending, yet solid and real.”

In 1951, the solitude he needed for his life’s work required him to move out of New York. In 1958 he and his wife, the poet Evelyn Gracey Pousette-Dart, moved to the countryside near Suffern, New York, where his studio is still preserved today. Glowing and mysterious “white” paintings, ca. 1950-51, include the masterpiece *Descending Bird Forms*, ca. 1950-51, Pousette-Dart’s work in the 1960s contributed to the color field and lyrical abstraction that were an important evolution of Abstract Expressionism, with the added charge of a spiritual quest that runs like a continuous thread through all Pousette-Dart’s work from the time he decided definitively to become a painter in 1939. His later works transpose the bright light and brushwork of Impressionism into abstract inscapes, thereby suggesting the great frontier of the unconscious Jung described. They have titles evoking the magic of their radiant, pulsating and subtly colored surfaces such as *Amaranth Garden*, *Night Landscape*, *Golden Presence*, *Byzantine Cathedral*, and *Lost in the Beginnings of Infinity*, which are included in the exhibition.

Richard Pousette-Dart’s paintings and drawings have been exhibited nationally and internationally in solo exhibitions organized by The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1969-70), the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1963, 1974, 1998), the Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale, Florida (1986), the Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indiana (1990), the Detroit Institute of Arts (1991), the Columbus Museum, Columbus, Ohio (1991-1992), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1997) and the Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2001), the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2006), the Fine Arts Museum, San Francisco (2006) and the Cincinnati Art Museum (2007).

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, published by Skira, and includes essays by Philip Rylands, Kirstin Hübner and Lowery S. Sims, Director of the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, with a chronological biography by Enda Horgan.

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