

Philip Guston – Late Paintings

Peder Lund is proud to announce an exhibition of late paintings by the American painter Philip Guston (1913-80). Bringing works by Guston to Norway for the first time, Peder Lund will exhibit six paintings and two drawings made in the last decade of the painter's life, two of which are on loan from Louisiana Museum of Modern Art. Four of the paintings have been part of the travelling exhibition *Philip Guston: Late Works*, celebrating the centennial of the artist's birth, which opened in November, 2013, at Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, and travelled to Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, through August, 2014. The exhibition at Peder Lund opens September 20 and will be on display until November 8, 2014.

Philip Guston was born in Montreal in 1913 as the youngest son of Ukrainian-Jewish immigrants, who had fled the pogroms in Odessa, Ukraine. The family relocated to Los Angeles in 1919, and Guston began to draw at the age of 14. He earned a scholarship from the Otis Art Institute in 1930, but left the art school after three months and set out as an autodidactic painter, before travelling to Mexico in 1934, where he got involved with the Mexican Mural Movement. Returning to America, Guston left Los Angeles for New York in 1936 and joined the Work Progress Administration's Federal Art Project (WPA/ FAP) (1935-43), the visual arts initiative of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programme, for which Guston made a number of murals on public buildings. A fascination with Italian Medieval and Renaissance artists came to influence Guston's murals, and the painter further explored this interest when he travelled across Italy, Spain and France between 1948 and 1949. This fascination endured throughout Guston's oeuvre and came to play a significant part in his late, figurative works.

After leaving the WPA project, Guston began to frequent the vibrant circle of Abstract Expressionists, also known as the New York School that was forming in New York, and he developed close friendships with painters including Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman, as well as the minimalist composers John Cage and Morton Feldman. Guston almost exclusively produced non-figurative art between 1951 and -54, but the grand narratives about art that the New York School propagated did not interest Guston, and he refused the Formalist theories of Clement Greenberg that coloured the work of the New York School. The return to figuration in Guston's paintings in the decade that followed famously provoked the New York art scene, and Guston insisted that each of his paintings justified itself and that none of his paintings were part of an overall theoretical scheme. He also dismissed the Modernists' neglect of the tumultuous external affairs that coloured the political landscape at the time, and stated, "what kind of man am I, sitting at home, reading magazines, going into a frustrated fury about everything – and then going home into my studio to adjust a red to a blue [...]."

Guston relocated to the remote Woodstock in upstate New York in 1967, where he frequented other artists and poets and further developed his interest in Renaissance art, as well as the work of painters such as Pablo Picasso, Giorgio de Chirico and Max Beckmann. These influences now stood alongside an attraction to cartoons and comic strips – the work of the cartoonist George Herriman in particular. Cartoon-like figures and recurring themes such as soles or piles of shoes, people's heads, boxy cars, self-portraits of the artist smoking, and anthropomorphic figures that Guston called "Hoods" (a reference to Ku Klux Klansmen) began to appear in his work, and the blocky shapes and open brushwork seen in his non-figurative period had now become caricatured humans and objects. The paintings on display at Peder Lund show several of the recurring themes in Guston's late paintings – the "Hoods," shoes, books, amputated legs and heads with protruding eyes. Guston's late paintings have had an unprecedented impact on artists working from the 1980s and up until the present and have earned Guston the standing as one of the most important painters that reintroduced figuration into painting in the second half of the 20th Century.

Guston's work has been the subject of a vast number of exhibitions at some of the world's most prestigious public institutions. Recent solo exhibitions include *Philip Guston*, which ran through 2003-04, and travelled from the Modern Art Museum of Forth Worth, to San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; and the Royal Academy of Arts in London. Guston's work is featured in numerous public collections worldwide, including those of Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA; Tate Gallery, London; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.