

## JULIUS TOBIAS: CAPTURING SPACE

Paintings from the 50s & 60s

May 10-June 2, 2018

Hollis Taggart Galleries presents its first exhibition of paintings by Julius Tobias (1915-1999), *Julius Tobias: Capturing Space, Paintings from the 50s & 60s*. During this period, Tobias became a fixture in the growing art world in New York, where he returned after his education at Paris' Académie Fernand Léger. The city became fodder for his grand compositions as his commitment to abstract form encompassed his deep sympathies for the found abstractions of urban life. Indeed, he claimed that "there is no such thing as abstraction as differentiated from reality--all abstraction is based on reality and is reality." (1) This is first time in over 50 years that Tobias' monumental paintings have been publicly exhibited.

Julius Tobias explored the fluid border between abstraction and reality in both painting and sculpture, pushing the boundaries of the two media in size and form. Though he spent a significant portion of his career creating groundbreaking Minimalist sculptural environments, he always considered himself a painter first and foremost. His canvases integrate expressionist brushwork with broad areas of color or, in his most subtle works, vast fields of white. These works insist on the materiality of paint, creating an emphasis on surface that speaks to Tobias' interest in probing the "reality" of abstraction.

Always in tune with the art movements of his time but never stylistically dogmatic, Tobias has remained somewhat of an enigma within the art world. His paintings from the 1950s and 1960s have a poetic, minimalist tone similar to that of his contemporary Mark Rothko, although Tobias' paintings have a strong sense of action as well as a feeling of spare landscape. Tobias, a humanist at heart, saw the realities of urban existence and of the world at large as abstract pictorial elements to be manipulated at will and integrated into his work. Gradually, over the course of a decade, he moved from pure expressionist abstractions to incorporate the more hard-edge aspects of Neo-plasticism.

This exhibition includes examples from Tobias' series of wall-sized white paintings, executed around 1960. These laid the formal foundations for his sculptural work of the mid-1960s, in which concrete, steel, or wood created contained, often stubborn environments that blocked or corralled the viewer. Like his contemporary Richard Serra, Tobias filled and sometimes even barricaded galleries with vast sculptural materials, and eventually moved into outdoor spaces in order to work on a more monumental scale.

A traveling retrospective of Tobias' work was organized by the State University of New York, Stony Brook in 1992. Examples of his work can be found in the collections of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University, Ithaca. Over the course of his career he was the recipient of two Guggenheim Fellowships, two Pollock-Krasner awards, and multiple National Endowment for the Arts grants. He passed away in Manhattan in 1999.

1. Julius Tobias, "Several thoughts to consider in reference to art."

PRESS CONTACT

Ginx Hudgins, [ginx@hollistaggart.com](mailto:ginx@hollistaggart.com) or 212.628.4000

HOLLIS TAGGART GALLERIES specializes in Contemporary, Abstract Expressionist, Pop, and American Post-War art. Established 1979. The gallery is open Monday through Saturday from 11 am to 5 pm. For more information, images, or to arrange a viewing, please call 212.628.4000 or email [info@hollistaggart.com](mailto:info@hollistaggart.com).