

Adolph Gottlieb

Classic Paintings

510 West 25th Street
March 1 – April 13, 2019

Opening Reception:
Thursday, February 28, 6 – 8 PM

New York—Pace Gallery is honored to present an exhibition of paintings by Adolph Gottlieb (1903 – 1974), a leader of the New York School and seminal force in abstraction. Drawing together works from the Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation alongside a number of paintings on loan from major institutions—including The Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, Jewish Museum, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Walker Art Center, and Princeton University Art Museum, among others—*Adolph Gottlieb: Classic Paintings* features over 20 large-scale paintings created by Gottlieb from the mid-1950s until his death in 1974. The exhibition will be on view at 510 West 25th Street from March 1 – April 13, 2019, with an opening reception on Thursday, February 28 from 6 – 8 PM. A full-color catalogue with a new essay by Dr. Kent Minturn accompanies the exhibition.



The exhibition focuses on two major images from Gottlieb's later work: Bursts and Imaginary Landscapes. In the early 1950s, Gottlieb began to further pare down his compositions resulting in horizontally-oriented Imaginary Landscape paintings, such as the 7-by-12-foot work *Groundscape* (1956) included in this exhibition. Observing that the "all-over" motif that he had begun to utilize in 1941 had become a common element of American abstract painting, Gottlieb radically compressed his image to the mutually-opposing dual registers of the Imaginary Landscape. In these paintings, the composition is divided into an upper and lower horizontal area, each one characterized by different painting techniques to yield seemingly opposing emotional material, while the paintings ultimately balance as a complex single image.

By 1956, Gottlieb began to evolve these landscapes from a horizontal to a vertical format, culminating in the creation of the image that has come to be known as the Burst. These atmospheric grounds of color on which a contained, ovoid shape at the upper half hovers above an opposing, expansive shape painted in the lower half remained an active element of Gottlieb's art until his death in 1974. In early Burst paintings, such as *Exclamation* (1958) and *Cadmium Red Above Black* (1959), Gottlieb began to move the painterly fields at the bottom of his Imaginary Landscapes away from the edges of the canvas—reducing their size but maintaining their dynamic, gestural treatment. Echoing one another, the two forms exist in a universe of color, encompassing subtle variations in hue and density that engage the viewer.

While at first seemingly simple, the motifs served as vibrant territory for Gottlieb to experiment in color theory, asymmetrical compositions, and innovative painting techniques, and to extend the emotional impact of abstraction that he and his friend Mark Rothko had claimed as a focus of their work in the early 1940s. Following their first exhibition in January 1957 at the Martha Jackson Gallery, the Bursts inspired a broad range of interpretations—from allusions to threats of the Cold War to the vastness and majesty of the universe. Never prescriptive and always dedicated to the individualized, experiential power of art, Gottlieb observed in 1962: “It’s really...an attempt to express abstractly almost all my experience which is emotional. And, at the same time, I attach a great deal of importance to the thought process and a kind of intellectual approach to painting; and I can’t separate them. I can’t compartmentalize and break down...because the whole effort of my work is to make a synthesis of all these things. In other words, to get a totality of my experience, which is emotional, irrational and also thoughtful.”

Adolph Gottlieb (b. 1903, New York; d. 1974, New York) is recognized as a key figure of the New York School. Initially informed by Italian Renaissance painting, Impressionism, and the European avant-garde, Gottlieb, in 1935, became a founding member of “The Ten,” a group of artists devoted to expressionist and abstract painting. Eight years later, he would become a founding member of another group of abstract painters, “The New York Artist Painters,” that included Mark Rothko, John Graham, and George L. K. Morris. In 1943, Gottlieb co-authored and published a letter with Rothko in *The New York Times*, expressing what is now considered to be the first formal statement of the concerns of the Abstract Expressionist artists, and in 1950, he organized the protest of an exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, for which he and a group of fellow artists became known as the Irascibles. Producing paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture, and tapestries, Gottlieb developed an aesthetic vocabulary from Jungian theory, underpinned by aspects of automatism, primitivism, and Surrealism. He continued to refine these stylistic means throughout his career, pursuing images that evoke an immediate and visceral impact on the viewer, through his series of Pictographs, Imaginary Landscapes, and Bursts.

Gottlieb has been the subject of over 130 monographic exhibitions, including a presentation jointly organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (1968), which traveled to Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., and Rose Art Museum of Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts. A retrospective of Gottlieb’s work was held at Peggy Guggenheim Museum, Venice, in 2010. A monographic exhibition of his late sculpture and paintings was organized by the Akron Art Museum, Ohio (2013), and subsequently traveled to the Philbrook Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma, and the University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor. An exhibition of Gottlieb’s monotypes was organized by the Hunter Museum of American Art, Chattanooga, Tennessee (2016), and traveled to The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque, Mobile Museum of Art, Alabama, and The Fralin Museum of Art, University of Virginia, Richmond. In 2018, *Adolph Gottlieb in Provincetown* was organized by Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Massachusetts.

Adolph Gottlieb’s works are held in over seventy public collections worldwide, including the Art Institute of Chicago; Detroit Institute of Arts; Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Institut Valencià d’Art Modern, Spain; Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Jewish Museum, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; National Museum of

American Art, Washington, D.C.; Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin; Tate, London; Tel Aviv Museum, Israel; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Pace Gallery has represented the Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation since 2001.

Pace is a leading contemporary art gallery representing many of the most significant international artists and estates of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Under the leadership of President and CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace is a vital force within the art world and plays a critical role in shaping the history, creation, and engagement with modern and contemporary art. Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy for vibrant and dedicated relationships with renowned artists. As the gallery approaches the start of its seventh decade, Pace's mission continues to be inspired by our drive to support the world's most influential and innovative artists and to share their visionary work with people around the world.

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Image: Adolph Gottlieb, *Exclamation*, 1958. Oil on canvas. 90" x 72" (228.6 cm x 182.9 cm) © Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation /Licensed by ARS, New York, NY

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