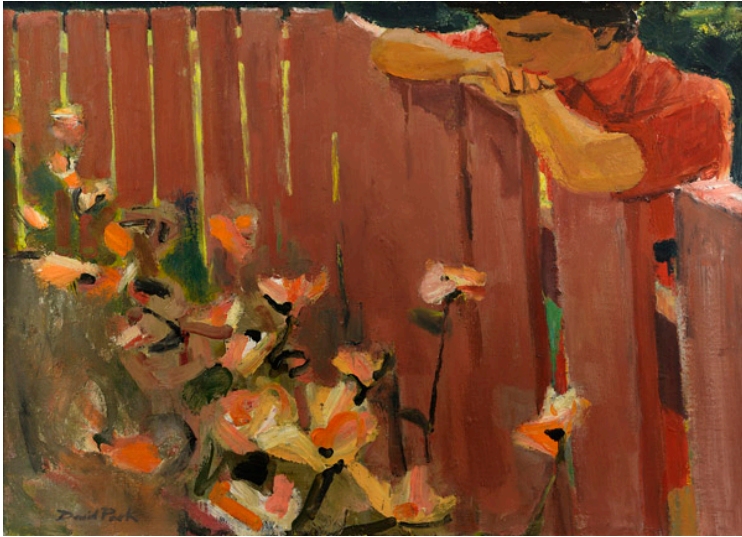


HACKETT | MILL

As I Am Painting the Figure in Post-War San Francisco

Curated by Francis Mill and Michael Hackett



David Park, *Figure with Fence*, 1953, oil on canvas, 35 x 49 inches

OPENING RECEPTION April 7, 2016, 5-7pm

EXHIBITION DATES April 7 - May 27, 2016

Hackett | Mill presents *As I Am: Painting the Figure in Post-War San Francisco* as it travels to our gallery from the New York Studio School. This special exhibition is a major survey of artwork by the founding members of the Bay Area Figurative Movement. Artists included are David Park, Elmer Bischoff and Richard Diebenkorn, as well as Joan Brown, William Theophilus Brown, Frank Lobdell, Manuel Neri, Nathan Oliveira, James Weeks and Paul Wonner. This exhibition examines the time period of 1950-1965, when a group of artists in the San Francisco Bay Area decided to pursue figurative painting during the height of Abstract Expressionism.

San Francisco was the regional center for a group of artists who were working in a style sufficiently independent from the New York School, and can be credited with having forged a distinct variant on what was the first American style to have international importance. The Bay Area Figurative movement, which grew out of and was in reaction to both West Coast and East Coast varieties of Abstract Expressionism, was a local phenomenon and yet was responsive to the most topical national tendencies. Many artists on both coasts, distressed by the rapid degeneration of Abstract Expressionism in the 1950s, sought to infuse fresh meaning into their work by exploring an alternative trajectory from abstraction back to figuration. But it was only in San Francisco that this enterprise took on the characteristics of a coherent movement, most notably led by the work of artist David Park, who in the words of Roberta Smith, art critic for the *New York Times*, "could do with another New York retrospective. He's the kind of artist who can light a fire under a young artist and also teach the public a great deal about looking at painting, a skill we seem to be in danger of losing." Upon Smith's recent viewing of *As I Am* at the New York Studio School, she stated "Park [is] a master of illuminating people in moments of stillness."

The new figurative works created by the Bay Area artists were neither reactionary nor merely illustrational—instead they were rooted in the affectionate scenes of everyday life. Returning to recognizable subject matter after a period of abstraction allowed these artists to celebrate the simple, everyday activities and objects of human life, and to restore a level of intimacy to American painting. The paintings in *As I Am* show the artists idealizing the beauty of the familiar while incorporating aspects of Abstract Expressionism, including strong gesture and visceral paint application.

In *As I Am* we invite you to visit and participate in looking at a sophisticated dialogue between abstraction and representation—images oscillating between recognizable subjects and boldly colored, abstract arrangements of paint.

Park will be the subject of a forthcoming career retrospective at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art for the first time since his retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1989, with the exact dates to be announced.