

Jan Matulka (Czech-born American Painter and Printmaker, 1890-1972) The Global Modernist

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Peyton Wright Gallery is pleased to announce “**Jan Matulka: The Global Modernist,**” an exhibition of artworks mostly from his estate. The exhibition opens on **Friday September 7, 2007 and continues through October 1, 2007** in our main floor galleries.

In 1907 when Jan Matulka was 17, he immigrated to New York with his family from South Bohemia. He had studied in Prague for a few years and was determined to continue his education in his adopted country. He enrolled at the National Academy of Design in 1908 and attended classes there until 1917. This experience grounded Matulka in a classical style and subject matter.

After he left the Academy, he was awarded a Joseph Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship. Matulka’s first desire was to return to Europe but World War I made it difficult to obtain a visa for a foreign citizen. Not to be deterred, Matulka traveled to the southwest where the expansive landscapes and striking Native American ceremonies inspired him to experiment with color and composition. A looser style became evident in his sketches and small paintings, which functioned as field notes for his larger paintings when he returned to New York.

His artistic voyages also led him to Florida which furthered his introduction to early twentieth-century modern artists. These influences encouraged Matulka to break free of academic constraints. He became very active in the New York art scene during 1920’s and 1930’s. Concurrently, Matulka was a member of a tight-knit Czech immigrant community. Through his association with this group, he was around intellectuals and found patrons for his art. His friendships with American colorist painters led to the inclusion of some of his abstract paintings at Katherine Dreier’s Société Anonyme in 1920. In 1926, Matulka was invited to participate in Dreier’s 1926-27 *International Exhibition of Modern Art* at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

He continued to exhibit at major museums and galleries, including submissions to the newly founded Whitney Museum’s first three biennial exhibitions of contemporary American painting from 1932 to 1936. Although he was a resident of New York, Matulka lived for months at time in both France and Czechoslovakia. In the early 1930’s, he participated in the Surrealist movement in New York and Paris, and that involvement had a profound effect on his artistic development. This style can be clearly seen in some of the paintings in this exhibition. Matulka was the “Global Modernist” and although in his later years, he had a less intense involvement in the various art movements, he is remembered for his remarkable and singularly modernist perspective.

For more information, please contact:

John Wright Schaefer, owner
Thérèse Marie O’Gorman, director