

PEYTON WRIGHT

237 East Palace Avenue
Santa Fe, NM 87501

800 879-8898
505 989-9888
505 989-9889 Fax
fineart@peytonwright.com

Jerry Walter (American, 1915 – 2007)

Jerry Walter was an abstract expressionist artist whose output of energetic and colorful paintings were the products of the rich artistic milieu of post-war New York City.

He was born Harold Frank Walter in Mount Pleasant, Iowa on November 25, 1915. After graduating from Colgate University in 1937, Walter moved to New York City, where he studied drawing and painting at the New School and the Art Students' League. Before concentrating seriously on his art, he spent several years as a successful copywriter and idea man for the advertising agencies of J. Walter Thompson, McCann Ericson, and BBDO. During this time, he also worked as a syndicated cartoonist. Collaborating with his wife, Linda, his best-known series was *Susie Q. Smith*, which first appeared in 1945 and described as a "female Archie type." Very popular, the cartoon was the subject of a series of comic books published from 1951 to 1954.

After serving in the United States Army for three years during World War II, Walter began to paint seriously. He ascribed his earliest artistic influence to Joan Miró, whose *Dog Barking at the Moon* (1926) he viewed when he was twelve, the year he published his first cartoon. Walter later wrote that jazz, "the first native expression of so-called modernism" was a strong influence on his work. The artist saw abstract painting as a "working-through [of the] self . . . an emotional square-search in paint for the truth." He further added that abstract art might become a cultural force to restore society's emotional stability, a place where "everyone and everything [was] part of a wild, sad, strange, beautiful dynamic dissonance."

During the later 1940s, Walters spent time at the Research Studio in Maitland, Florida. Founded in 1937 by artist and architect J. André Smith and supported by the philanthropist Mary Curtis Bok, the Research Studio was a lively colony that hosted prominent artists, including Milton Avery, Ralston Crawford, and Doris Lee. While at the Studio, Walter's work was purchased by Frank Crowninshield. A founding trustee of the Museum of Modern Art and editor of *Vanity Fair*, Crowninshield was a noted collector; his collection included important works by Picasso, Chagall, Matisse, Degas, Bellows, and Bonnard. Returning to New York after his time at the Studio, Walter became an active member of the New York school of the abstract expressionist movement, and in the summer of 1956, Walter exhibited 13 paintings and a selection of drawings at New York's Chase Gallery. The adroit manipulation of both color and composition evident in his work shows the influence of Willem de Kooning, Arshile Gorky, and Hans Hoffman.