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Norris Embry

(American, 1921-1981)

Norris Embry was an American artist born in Louisville, Kentucky. He grew up in East Orange, New Jersey outside New York City and Evanston, Illinois in the Chicago area, attending public schools through high school. Later, he studied at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland and the Art Institute in Chicago. In the late 1940s, he attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence, Italy; his teacher, the expressionist painter Oskar Kokoschka,[citation needed] was to have a lasting influence on Embry's work.

During his adolescent years in the Chicago area, Embry developed a keen interest in avant-garde literature, music and art. In 1947 Embry decided to devote his life to painting and, for the next 15 years until the early 1960s, embarked on a nomadic artistic career which would take him from San Francisco to New York, to post-war Europe, as well as Turkey and North Africa.

Amongst the countries in Europe where he took up temporary residence were Italy, France, Germany, Spain, England and Sweden. It was the Mediterranean culture and climate that struck a chord with his heart and his artistic imagination, and in particular, Greece where he returned frequently.

Throughout much of his life, Embry suffered from severe bouts of mental illness. In the mid-1960s, after having sought medical treatment at the Shepphard Pratt Institute in Baltimore, Maryland, he made that city his permanent residence. He continued to live and paint in Baltimore until the last weeks of his life.

After a series of strokes, he died February 17, 1981 and was buried at Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville.

Embry's work is in collections of a number of fine institutions, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, NY and the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC.