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Michael Goldberg

(American Painter, 1924-2007)



Michael Goldberg, a second generation Abstract Expressionist painter known for his action-packed, gestural canvases, went through several phases that included monochromatic works of red and then black, bands of white on black, calligraphic images and bright bands of color hinting of architectural forms. Ever aligned with Abstract Expressionism which he described in 2001 as "still the primary visual challenge of our time", he later shrugged off the designation saying "labels come and go". (Glueck)

He was also an art educator who taught at the University of California, Berkeley from 1961 to 1962; Yale University in 1967; and the University of Minnesota in 1968. He and his artist wife, Lynn Umlauf, both taught at the School of Visual Arts in New York city.

Goldberg was born in 1924 in the Bronx of New York City. His studies at the Art Students League, 1938-1942, were interrupted by World War II where he served as a paratrooper in North Africa and Burma, making eighty jumps behind Japanese lines.

Returning to New York, he studied with Jose de Creeft and Hans Hofmann, and Hoffman remained a strong influence. He was also influenced by Roberto Matta and Arshile Gorky, but it was Willem de Kooning, and his use of fiery brush-work and explosive color, who would prove to be Goldberg's greatest influence. Beginning 1980, he spent five months of each year in Tuscany, Italy on an estate near Siena. In his studio there, he created many of his signature paintings done with oil sticks pressed directly onto canvas. He described these as quasi grids, "patchy squares of color intersected at random by strong diagonals." (Glueck)

Goldberg died on December 30, 2007 while working in his studio in the Bowery in New York City. His studio was one he took over from Mark Rothko in the 1950s.

Michael Goldberg's work is in the collections of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Baltimore Museum of Art; Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, Virginia; De Cordova and Dana Museum, Lincoln, Massachusetts; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Sources include

Grace Glueck, "Michael Goldberg, 83, Abstract Expressionist", *The New York Times*, Obituaries, Friday, January 4, 2008, A21

Michael David Zellman, *300 Years of American Art*

Peter Hastings Falk, Editor, *Who Was Who in American Art*