

Basic Detail Report



Title: Omen for a Hunter

Date: 1947

Primary Maker: com.gallerysystems.emuseum.core.entities.RecordXPerson@28530

Medium: Oil on canvas

Description: "Omen for a Hunter" Gottlieb painted "Omen for a Hunter" in 1947 at the height of the Pictograph period. As in all the Pictographs, nontraditional imagery and an intuitive arrangement engage the viewer in a dialogue with the painting. Gottlieb believed in a visual language that preceded narrative and spoken language, and he sought to involve the viewer at an unconscious level by presenting a set of images rich in allusion. The colors and images in the painting were entirely Gottlieb's creation, but they did draw on his familiarity with African and Oceanic art. The face just to the left of center recalls a mask of the Lega people; the arrow above concentric circles (that may or may not be a target) looks as if it might have been drawn by a Plains Indian artist. Gottlieb's presentation of ideas that were common to various cultures confirmed his belief in a common visual language, as well as his belief in the emotional power of that language. His Pictographs were the first

Basic Detail Report

successful attempt to bring emotional content to modern abstract painting. Elements of modernism were also part of the Pictographs. The flat images are a hallmark of twentieth century painting, but they are also common to pre-Renaissance art. Gottlieb used the grid as a modern convention, yet he cited thirteenth and fourteenth century predella painting as his model. In any event, he turned the modernist concept of the grid as organizing device on its head, by using it to present intuitively derived images. Formally and conceptually, "Omen for a Hunter" defies what Gottlieb called the traps of modern art. It utilizes emotion in an abstract composition. It is flat and structured with a grid but avoids the organization of narrative. It uses color and surface as vehicles for eliciting feelings of anxiety and displacement. In all these things, "Omen for a Hunter", like many of Gottlieb's Pictographs, introduces concepts that would become central to later Abstract Expressionist painting. SH
Dimensions: 30 x 38 in.