

Basic Detail Report



Title: Composition

Date: 1940

Primary Maker: com.gallerysystems.emuseum.core.entities.RecordXPerson@3de7d

Medium: Oil on canvas

Description: Although influenced by Piet Mondrian, Bolotowsky did not slavishly follow the Dutch artist's pure, formal style. For instance, the addition of hues such as those seen in "Composition"-- mustard yellows, greens, oranges, purples, and light browns--indicates that Bolotowsky departed from Mondrian's strict adherence to the primary colors of red, yellow, and blue. In 1974, at the time of his retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum, Bolotowsky stated "I'm not a purist like Mondrian. I'll go from medium blue to light, from purplish blue to light cerulean." (1) In his later works, Mondrian always placed his colors on a strict grid composed entirely of horizontal and vertical lines. Bolotowsky differed again from the Dutch artist when he allowed his lines to curve and to form shapes other than squares and rectangles. Bolotowsky overlapped his color planes and tilted them diagonally back into space in Composition. In the mid-1940s he developed his own personal version of Neo-Plasticism. "Composition" is an early example of his exploration. Bolotowsky explained why he became interested in Neo-Plastic art: "After I went through a lot of violent historical upheavals in my early life, I came to prefer a search for an ideal

Basic Detail Report

harmony and order which is still a free order, not militaristic, not symmetrical, not goose-stepping, not academic, you see."(2) Bolotowsky's art is thus devoid of subject matter and depends entirely on the tensions and rhythms produced by purely plastic elements, such as color and line. Of his work of the 1940s, Bolotowsky stated: "I had the intention of creating a counterpoint of colors, so that if you separated out each color in one painting of this period and had all the yellows on one canvas, reds on another, blues on another, each one would be a rhythmic design in its own right."(3) Bolotowsky believed strongly in the inner rhythm of a painting and felt there was a connection between abstract, or nonobjective, art and music: "I can talk to people when I am painting, but I cannot have any music played while I am painting because the rhythm in music gets in the way of the rhythm I am painting."(4) KK Bibliography: John Elderfield, "American Geometric Abstraction of the Late Thirties," "Artforum" 2 (December 1972): 37; Ilya Bolotowsky, "Ilya Bolotowsky", exhib. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1974): 12-32; Ilya Bolotowsky, "Homage to Bolotowsky, 1935-1981", exhib. cat. (Stony Brook, N.Y.: Fine Arts Center Art Gallery, Stony Brook College, 1985). Notes: 1 . Louise Averill Svendsen and Mimi Poser, "Interview with Ilya Bolotowsky," in Ilya Bolotowsky, Ilya Bolotowsky, exhib. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1974), p. 29. 2. Ibid., p. 32. 3. Ibid., p. 23. 4. Ibid. Dimensions: 17 x 24 in. (23 7/8 x 30 7/8 x 1 3/4 in.)