

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

MILTON RESNICK (1917 – 2004)

Born in Bratslav, Ukraine in 1917, Resnick immigrated to the United States with his family in 1922. In 1933, he transferred from Pratt, where he studied commercial art, to the American Artists School in order to focus on painting; he graduated in 1937. A first generation New York School painter, Resnick maintained close friendships with Arshile Gorky and Willem de Kooning among others. While his early work reflected the tenets of Abstract Expressionism, Resnick ultimately eclipsed more traditional notions of the genre. His transition from explicitly Abstract Expressionist modes to the dense and heavily impastoed canvases of his later years resulted in an intensive exploration of paint's materiality, leading to the dissolution of line and contour into thick 'walls of paint.' In the late 1970s and 80s, Resnick realized his artistic project in which AbEx painting is slowed down and subsumed by the stuff of paint itself. Achieving a unique point of equilibrium between gesture and material, his work reached a limit of this quintessential American idiom. Resnick's allegiance to the physical properties of paint, its viscosity and "actuality," was in turn predictive of younger painters like Cy Twombly, Robert Ryman and Frank Stella, and anticipated artistic movements such as New Materialism today.

Resnick strived to distill abstraction to its essence, championing an "all-over" approach to the canvas and refusing prescribed "meaning." Though seemingly impenetrable, his work achieves visceral duality. Often characterized by their massive size, the paintings intentionally remain within the viewer's peripheral vision: they are meant to locate one in space and, more significantly, at a place. Unyielding surfaces become reflective, almost luminous. The effect of time, or rather the aspiration to timelessness, is apparent: the paintings seem to hover in a constant state of "becoming." For the patient viewer, Resnick's work is transcendent. He stated: "Art is not a learning process. It is the very reverse of learning. It is the unhinging of your soul from your sight."

In his later years, from about 1986 to 2004, Resnick devoted much of his energy to producing an extensive body of works on paper – mostly gouaches, but also pastels and oils – in which figures and things of all kinds seem to appear, or reappear, as if by miracle, from the deep 'wall structure' of his long established thick and contracted fields of color.

Milton Resnick (b. 1917, Braslav, Ukraine; d. 2004, New York) "might qualify as the last Abstract Expressionist painter," wrote Roberta Smit, for his New York Times obituary. Widely shown, his work is represented in many American and international collections, including: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio; the National Gallery, Ottawa, Canada; the Australian National Gallery, Canberra, Australia; the Malmö Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden; and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, Texas, among many others. Recent exhibitions include solo shows at Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York (2018), Cheim & Read, New York (2018), and The Milton Resnick and Pat Passlof Foundation, New York (2018), and group shows at GAMeC, Bergamo (2018); Museo Thyssen-Bornemisiz and Fundacion Caja, Madrid (2010), and the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow (2008), among others.