

HOPKINS COMES FULL CIRCLE

AWESOME ABSTRACTION IN PTOWN

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."

— Henry David Thoreau

the age of two during the American pandemic in the 1930s. Homebound for over a year, he started collaging and creating shaped objects out of anything he could find around, in a way, "collaging his environment"

Hopkins was studying art history at Oberlin College when he met Robert Motherwell, who inspired him to move to New York. Abstract expressionism was taking hold as a serious art movement. The young artist met



Budd Hopkins (1931-2011) was a highly complex, remarkable artist. His unique vision, a melding of abstract expressionism and hard-edge abstraction, will be on view in two upcoming shows at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, curated by daughter Grace Hopkins, and at Berta Walker Gallery Provincetown. Both exhibits will bring the viewer from the artist's earlier years creating abstract expressionist works, through his collage-based hard-edge period, to the guardians and altars, and finally, to Hopkins' return to action painting with his series of "Dancing Guardians."

Born in Wheeling, West Virginia, Hopkins was struck with polio at

noted Berta Walker, adding, "his artistic inclinations had been awoken early on."

At the age of nine, Hopkins' father took him to the 1939-40 New York World's Fair in Queens. "On several occasions, I think because I was raised in Queens," observed Walker, "Budd would discuss his impressions and incredible experiences of the fair as a child. Throughout his life, he remained astounded by the huge shapes and odd colors in the New York World's Fair created by acres of fascinating new lighting, futuristic architecture, miles of varied patterns lit in unusual ways. Having seen the world of tomorrow, the seeds for Hopkins' future were firmly planted, leading to his life-long career utilizing unusual shapes and unusual color combinations."

Franz Kline and Mark Rothko, great influences in his life and art, and he had his first solo show in 1959 at Zabriskie Gallery in New York to growing acclaim. He would go on to receive a 1976 John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship for Painting and 1979 National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship for Painting.

In the PAAM show catalog, art critic, essayist and curator April Kingsley writes, "Sun Black I (1966) is a pivotal work in Hopkins' career. This is because it is the first major work to contain a prominent, centralizing circle. From this point on, the circle dominates most of his paintings. It is his personal image and it provides his work with hypnotic force — with a place in the painting where energy can be concentrated

PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM

460 COMMERCIAL STREET
PROVINCETOWN,
MASSACHUSETTS

JULY 21 THROUGH
SEPTEMBER 3

BERTA WALKER
GALLERY
PROVINCETOWN
208 BRADFORD
STREET
PROVINCETOWN,
MASSACHUSETTS

JULY 28 THROUGH
AUGUST 19

LEFT: *Dancing Guardian*,
1992, acrylic on canvas,
50" x 98", courtesy
Grace Hopkins.

RIGHT: *Sun Black I*, 1966,
oil on canvas, 40" x
52", courtesy of Grace
Hopkins.



and from which it may be dispersed. The circle brings everything together. It is the hierarchical equivalent of Mondrian's squares or Rothko's rectangles..." Kingsley understood the artist profoundly. She was also Hopkins' second wife and is Grace's mother.

Creating order in a disparate world was a constant throughout all stages of Hopkins' visual expression. His paintings went outside the rectangle with the Guardians and Temples, created with great spirit. They evoke a feeling of awe and protection that transcends man from his daily anxieties and makes him/her/them think of greater things. About the work, Hopkins said, "In 1966, I began to use the circle in my work as a centralizing theme, out of these more hierarchical paintings, the Guardian image slowly emerged. But after years of painting Guardians and Temples, I began to re-introduce abstract expressionist themes into otherwise fragmented Guardians."

Lilly Wei, in her 2014 catalog essay for the Budd Hopkins Exhibition at Levis Fine Art, New York, writes, "In the 1990s and through the first decade of the millennium, Hopkins retrieved the painterliness that characterized his early work, giving it more in his paintings than he had in some time, the honed architectural forms blurred, trailing glorious formations that suggested clouds, many offering a triumphal celestial vision. He had come full circle..."

Hopkins' relationship to the Outer Cape was important for himself, his family and the community. Most specifically, he was as an integral member of Long Point Gallery (1977-1998), a prominent artist collective. The first director of Long Point, Hopkins fearlessly invited Robert Motherwell, by then famous, to join them. This group of artists steered the course of American art both in Provincetown and New York.

A stunning and comprehensive catalog accompanying "Budd Hopkins: Full Circle" is published by Provincetown Arts and designed by Irene Lipton. Acknowledgements by PAAM executive director Chris McCarthy, curator's notes by Grace Hopkins, an essay by April Kingsley and writing by the artist himself create a sense of intimacy alongside monumental works.

On Tuesday, August 15, the Provincetown Art Association and Museum will present "Budd Hopkins: A Life in Art, A Conversation" with Grace Hopkins at 6 p.m. as part of the Fredi Schiff Levin Speaker Series. "My dad so admired the work of architect Charlie Zehnder that he built two of his houses – one in Truro with his first wife, Joan, and a second one in Wellfleet – all out of concrete. [They were] built with the Guggenheim Foundation grant money," Hopkins said. "Living in a Charlie Zehnder house is inspiring and makes you look at the world outside in a totally different way." She is working on a book about the architect.