

BUDD HOPKINS





Catalogue Cover / Frontispiece - "Study for Mahler's Castle" (1972)

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Previous page: *Study for Mahler's Castle*, 1972, acrylic on canvas, 36 x 52 inches

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BUDD HOPKINS

Full Circle

July 21 - September 3, 2017

Provincetown Art Association and Museum



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Provincetown Art Association and Museum (PAAM) is pleased to feature *Full Circle*, works by Budd Hopkins from July 21-September 3, 2017. This exhibition marks a critical step in acknowledging Hopkins' stature and underlines the significant contributions he made to American mid-century art.

Budd Hopkins was an important member of Provincetown's illustrious art community for over five decades. Since his death in 2011, his contribution to American art history is notable, yet deserving of more recognition and exposure. As a painter, sculptor and writer, his career revealed, "a style imbued with the emotional dynamism of the 1950's, the cool sensibility of the 1960's, and the linear geometricism of the 1970's," says Stephanie Noll at Levis Fine Art, NY.

His ability to achieve a geometric harmony within the picture plane and his use of bold colors and balance within his compositions allowed for the creation of an incredible body of work. Hopkins' art currently resides in the permanent collections of the Guggenheim Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, as well as the Provincetown Art Association and Museum among others.

The Renate, Hans and Maria Hofmann Trust has provided continuous assistance to PAAM exhibitions over the years. We applaud the Trustees for their continued generosity and support of Hans Hofmann and his students. The Alexander C. and Tillie S. Speyer Foundation has provided additional support for this exhibition and to both of these organizations, we are extremely grateful.

PAAM's Partners in Art program has consistently sustained the museum's curatorial efforts and we applaud this important group for their unfailing efforts in helping expand and grow our ambitious exhibition program.

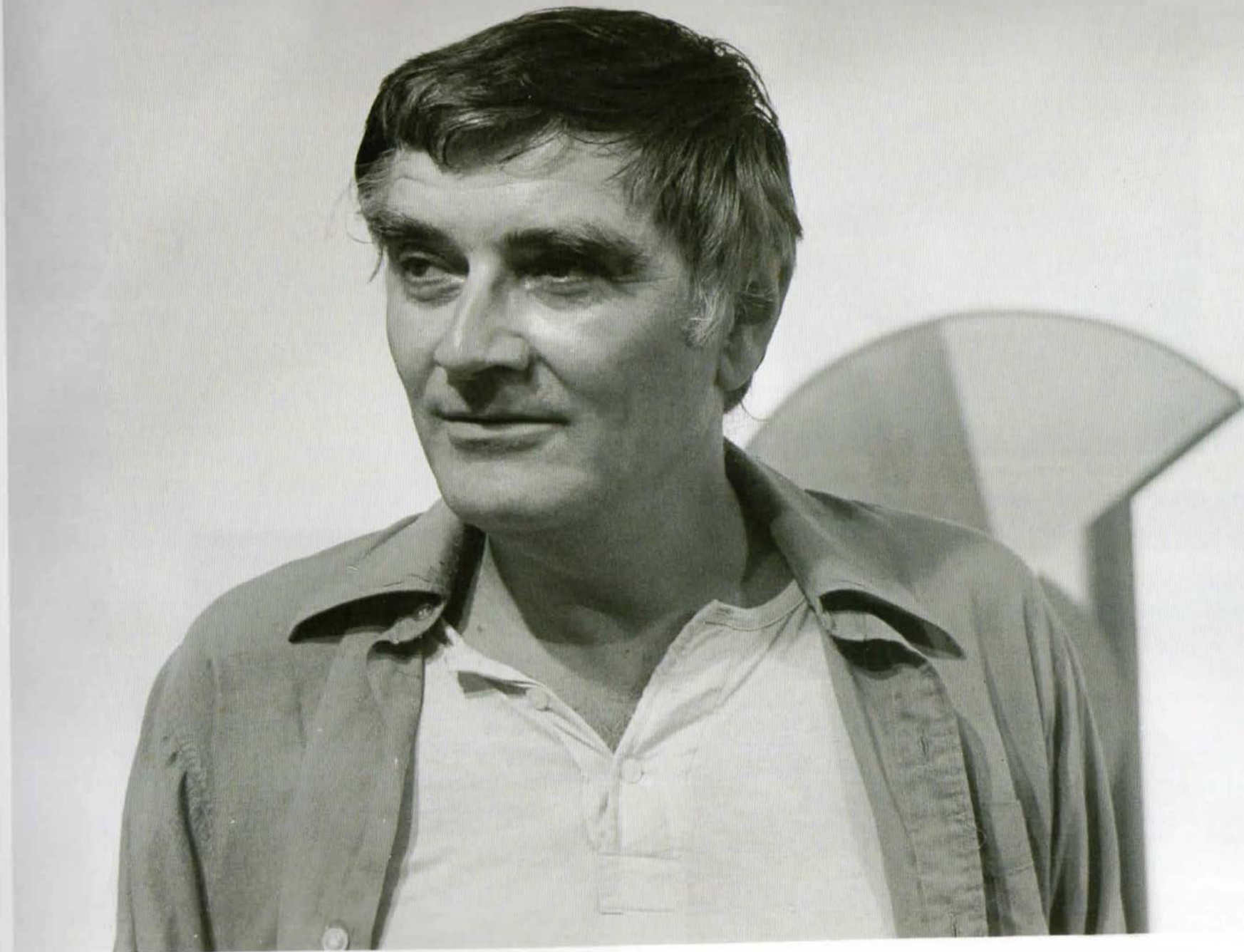
I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Grace Hopkins for her curatorial insight and sensitive selection of the artwork. Additionally, my thanks go to Irene Lipton who created an intelligent catalogue design and I am extremely thankful for her enthusiasm and creative advice.

As always, I am grateful to the PAAM staff for assisting with this project.

Christine McCarthy
Executive Director
Provincetown Art Association and Museum
March 2017

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BUDD HOPKINS, 1980s

Budd Hopkins Retrospective Exhibition 1957-1972

Huntington Galleries, Huntington West Virginia

By April Kingsley

The dualistic attitude which informs Hopkins' work stems primarily from a dichotomy he experienced early in his career. When he came to New York in 1953 from Wheeling, West Virginia via Oberlin College, it was the high-time of Abstract Expressionism. For that movement's heroes—De Kooning, Kline, Pollack and Rothko—generalized public acceptance was just beginning, and their audience was still primarily confined to friends and colleagues. Hopkins felt closest to Kline and Rothko and they had the strongest influence on his work. Their impact on him and the excitement of the whole Abstract Expressionist pioneering ambience was only mitigated by his unwavering admiration for the kind of geometric abstraction epitomized by Mondrian, and the expressive color of Matisse—both of which he found lacking to some extent in the art then being produced.

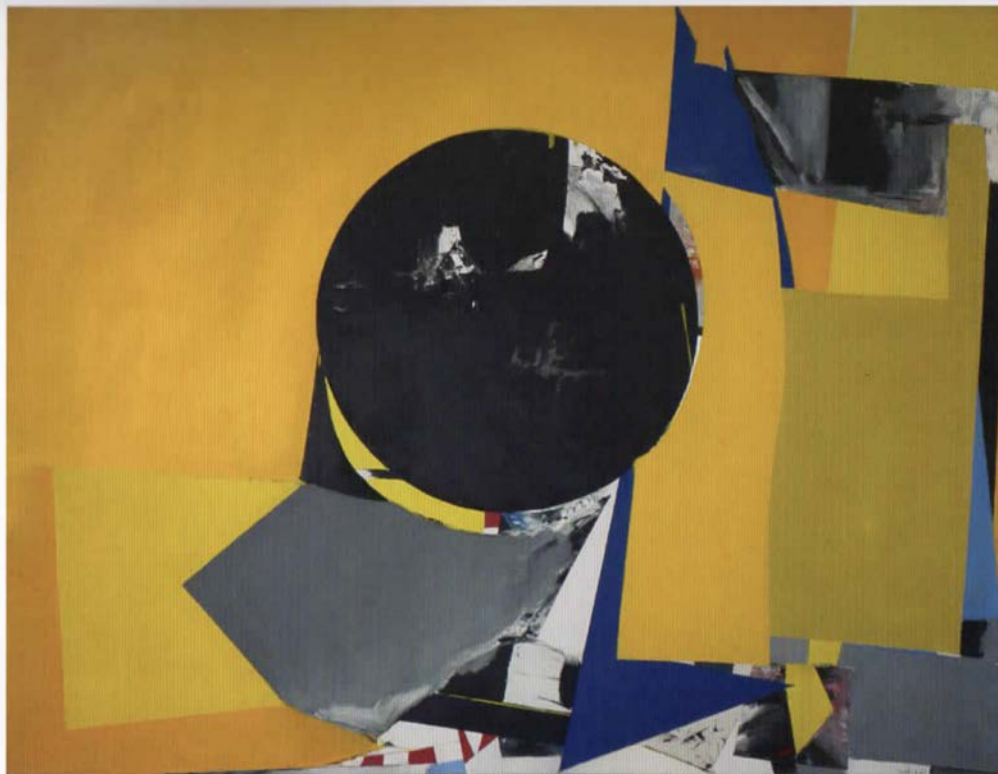
For Budd Hopkins, no longer surrounded by the hills and trees of West Virginia, immersed in a landscape of concrete, glass and steel, which he viewed through the rectilinear frame of a window, a door, or building-lined streets, the fifties was a time of profound development. His youthful Gorkyesque automatic washes and drawings of curvilinear, vegetal forms slowly became subsumed within an increasingly rigid structure of horizontals and verticals. By working automatically in these formative years however, he allowed his basic formal vocabulary—a congruence of circular and triangular forms with the canvas rectangle—to emerge naturally. This is one of the reasons why his personal image is so memorable, and so readily recognizable.

By the time he painted *Lassemann* in 1958, in which a Rothko-like rectangle floats near the top supported by a central triangular form, Hopkins had begun to shift into a much more powerful compositional gear. In 1959 and 1960 he began to underline this stability with a somber, predominantly gray, blue, and brown range of color. Curvilinear forms yielded to the domination of straight lines and square edges during these years, not to reassert themselves until the mid-sixties with the re-emergence of the circle in his work. While the structural scaffoldings became more architecturally sound, his brushwork became increasingly freer and more arbitrary. His technical handling of paint—splattering, scraping, scumbling, dragging, and dry brushing it across the surface—reached a peak of facility during the early



LASSEMANN 1958 oil on canvas 70 x 50 inches
PRIVATE COLLECTION

sixties which he has never since attempted to duplicate. That the division of his surfaces into clear rectangular units of quasi-sculptural solidity remained a constant in spite of, and in conjunction with, all this loose painterliness is quite evident in even so small a work as his oil on paper *Study for Bordeaux* of 1961.



SUN BLACK I 1966 oil on canvas 40 x 52 inches

Partially in response to the work of Fernand Leger, which has long been important to him, Hopkins began to introduce explicitly hard-edged forms into his work by 1962. *Little Northeast* of 1963 is among the most warmly-hued paintings in his initial series of oils including letter forms. Its rich purplish, green and blue colors are put into relief by the richly textured and dazzling whiteness of the rectangular shape descending from the top of the canvas. It was during this period that Hopkins began to use collage in his preparatory studies for paintings. This is true of *Little Northeast*, which clearly reflects the characteristics of the medium—fragmentation, discontinuous space, and the juxtaposition of contradictory elements. All of these qualities lend collage singular expressive import in this century, characterized as it is by an overwhelming simultaneous multiplicity of information and events.

ably. He also stepped-up the intensity of his color steadily over the years, moving more and more into using a preponderance of pure, unmixed, tube colors in recent years. This has greatly enhanced the masculinity of this colorist.

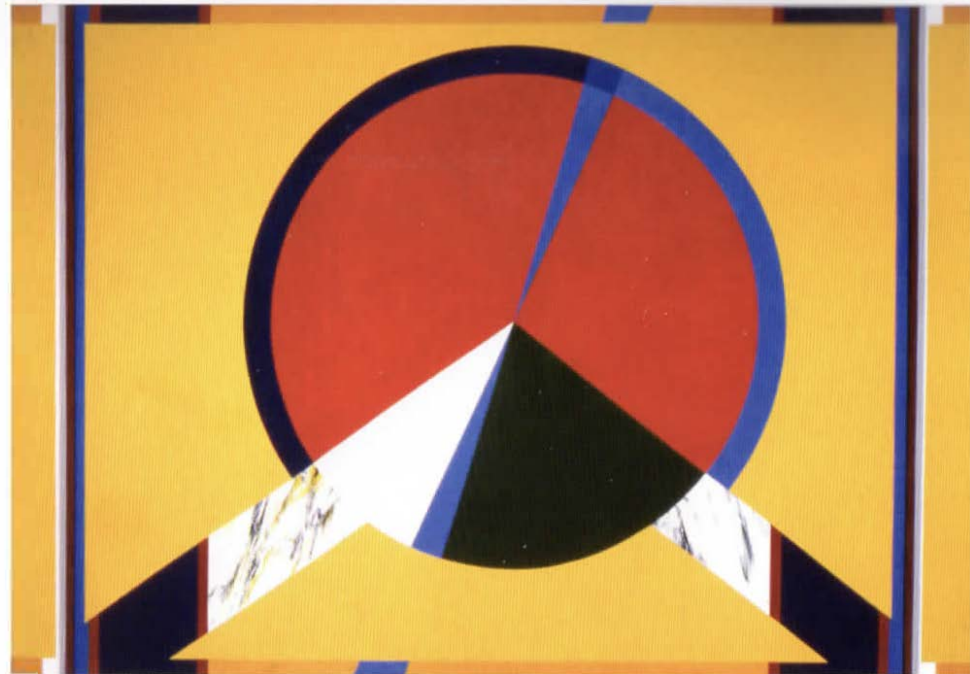
Sun Black I is a pivotal work in Hopkins' career. This is because it is the first major work to contain a prominent, centralizing circle. From this point on, the circle dominates most of his paintings. it is his personal image and it provides his work with hypnotic force—with a place in the painting where energy can be concentrated 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, and it supplies a focus for the kind of clearly constructed ordering

The black and white collage in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art is an example of Hopkins' use of collage as a pure expressive medium along these lines. His collagist attitude during the mid-sixties enabled him to move in the elusive space of his field with explosive force. The razor-sharp edges which resulted dominate his work by the time paintings like *Yarmouth* and *Red Wall Painting* were executed. They provided him with a method of concretizing the implicit geometries of Abstract Expressionism without sacrificing any of its energy. He never utilized the neutralizing, "cooling" effects of linear separations between adjacent hues that most of the other sixties artists used. A white or a black band between even strongly contrasted hues will tend to equalize them and minimize their spatial characteristics. Hopkins continued to juxtapose his hues and this energized his edges and his forms optically.

of values he had to establish in order to make his essential connection with the art of the past.

Hopkins firmly believes that "Hierarchical organization is an essential art principle behind art at its deepest throughout its whole history because it's the way we perceive the world—in terms of what's important and what's unimportant." All-over and grid paintings are based on simple ordering which involves few decisions and a somewhat passive attitude toward the chaos of contemporary life. The differentiating faculties necessary for the very complex ordering of values that occurs in hierarchically organized painting are most effective when they are grounded in very positive and well-conceived esthetic attitudes. Mondrian and Newman managed it all beautifully in their best paintings, convinced that they were thereby establishing beneficial moral values for mankind. Budd Hopkins feels that "The concept of hierarchy is anthropomorphic. The physiognomy of a painting relates somehow to that of a human being, and when that is expressed in paint it embeds the work directly into our lives. A painting at its best is as complex and fascinating as a person."

These principles receive their first full crystallization in the *Gemini* series of monumental black and white paintings, begun in 1968. Massive planes, like fragments of a secret world of unknowable imagery, lie tantalizingly near visibility beneath their surfaces. Both color and painterly freedom are minimized in favor of an austere conceptual rigor in a painting like the great *Gemini I*, in the collection of Maximilian Schell. The grand formality of such a work is diffused in other paintings, like *Saratoga* of 1969 and *Norbeck* of 1970, in order to promote coloristic expressivity. Also in 1970, Hopkins began the *Montezuma* series of light-filled, drastically simplified paintings



LIBRA 1963 silkscreen 21 x 29 inches COLLECTION PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM

which center around his old theme of circle and triangle within a rectangle.

Throughout his career he has periodically downshifted into quieter emotional gears in this way, as if to gather his forces for even larger statements. Two major triptychs resulted in this case: *Gray Wall Painting* and *Homage to Franz Kline*, in 1971. The former is a kind of summation, in the tonalities of gray, blue and green which had prevailed in the early years of his career, of many more recent attitudes; the latter bespeaks a new direction toward intense formal dynamism and a new structural colorist which is highly reminiscent of the work of Matisse.

Late in 1971, again almost by way of relief from the emotional intensity of such a painting as the *Homage to Franz Kline*, Hopkins began a series of simplified divided circle paintings based on a Leger

motif. All of these paintings are titled after signs of the zodiac. They represent a stylistic departure in that their huge planes of bright, unmodulated color coalesce optically to reiterate the shape of the canvas on which they float as a single united field. Literalizing the pictorial context in this way does not make obvious use of the collage technique. But, even though the fused fields of color compel a reading as unitary shapes, they are actually interrupted by linear elements which connect their edges, and the edges of the canvas, to a large dominating circle like arrows pointing to a center of emotional energy. In a work like *Aquarius III*, for instance, this relationship is very misleading, because it implies that the center of the circle is in the center of the field. Actually it is located eccentrically, and this forms the initial ambiguity of the work connecting it with the discontinuity and spatial complexity of collage. It does nothing to diminish the single-image impact of a dazzling yellow painting like *Libra IV*, which seems as emblematic as a flag, however.

It is typical of all Hopkins' recent paintings that numerous elements emerge to prominence in the viewer's perception as soon as the initial impact of the color and the large, dominant forms has had its effect. The planes of pure color in a painting like *Aquarius III* begin to separate and shift their places in its space as if juggling for time and attention. Some of them seem to bound forward into the space of the room, as if to share real-time with the viewer. Others seem to exist behind the surface of the canvas like forgotten memories of the past or palimpsests which serve to remind us of the various other forms the painting might have been given. Narrow bands of color zip in and out of the field across and behind larger elements, binding the space and time of the painting together and pointing to some mysterious possibility for an extension into the future. The primary colors which predominated in the beginning of the series vibrate in relationship with smaller areas of secondary hues and the inclusion of odd terms, like a green, ochre, or brown put the entire color range into relief. Black and white functions marginally in most

of the 1971-1973 paintings, but it is a strong reminder about the tonal range being covered by the colors as well as a hint that the painting might have existed, and functioned (in the manner of a Gemini painting), without color. This coloristic procedure is reversed in the virgo paintings and in most recent series of triptychs, initiated with Mahler's Castle I. Here moody, dusky secondary hues—wine reds, maroons, lavenders, pinks and blues—are optically activated by proportionally smaller areas of bright primary colors. His newest paintings look as if they coalesced magically, like the chips of colored light in a kaleidoscope.

Mahler's Castle I exemplifies a shift away from the holistic single image paintings of 1971 and 1972 to a new hieraticism. Both Mondrian and Newman, for instance, were masters at building scale referents into their paintings too. Frank Stella and many of the other post-painterly abstractionists tended to ignore this essential pictorial element and to rely on size alone to convey a sensation of monumentality. Hopkins' formal vocabulary covers a complete range from huge planes on down to tiny dots and lines within the freely brushed areas. The small bounded places of minutely nuanced painterliness provide keys to the scale of all the other elements in his paintings, as well as to their colors, velocities and directions. They are in resolutely calligraphic and organic contrast to the geometric rigidity surrounding them and seem to break the smooth continuity of his surfaces. By doing so they deliver a symbolic message which is an essential part of Hopkins' dualistic attitude. They say something about the existence of the unexpected, irrational, and infinite within life's most clearly ordered and controlled systems. Hopkins' paintings contain both color and black and white, hard edges and soft. His work is warm and cool, open and closed, solid and transparent, complete and open ended—all at once. Each painting is a contained world unto itself, while it implies infinite extensibility and is, in a very human way, contradictory, ambiguous, and deeply complex.



SCORPIO III 1972 oil on canvas 52 x 70 inches



In the late 1950's, when I first found my voice as a painter, I was carried away by abstract expressionism. The sense of a fresh and inventive painterly attack, the sheer power of painters like Kline and De Kooning, and the way in which the ABEX captured the speed and energy of America were absolutely persuasive to me. Franz Kline was surely a central influence on my work, though oddly, Piet Mondrian, that most orderly of painters, was a constant underworld presence.

Gradually my work changed as I became interested in contrasting ABEX looseness and freedom with hard-edged elements, and began to look carefully at Leger and French cubism. 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.

And finally, the freedom and richness of abstract expressionism came back full force in my later collage-paintings, centrally conceived in black and white with color added. Also, in recent years, I have been more interested in working in a small 11 x 14 inch format, and ironically, I realized that in the 1960's, I painted many ABEX paintings on that same 11 x 14 inch format. In a way I can see that I am circling back to my beginnings.

A consistent undercurrent in these later works has been the black and white linear paintings of Piet Mondrian. So the influences of my two Gods of painting—Kline and Mondrian—appear together in what I feel now is a very satisfying amalgam.

BUDD HOPKINS

1931-2011

ONE-MAN EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Provincetown, MA
- 2013 Levis Fine Art, New York, NY
- 2011 Castle Hill Center for the Arts, Truro, MA
- 2002 Andre Zarr Gallery, New York, NY
- 1997 Longpoint Gallery, Provincetown, MA (and 1978, 1980, 1982, 1985, 1987, 1990, 1993)
- 1988 Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York, NY
Emilson Gallery, De Pauw University, Greencastle, IN
Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago, IL
Keystone Junior College, La Plume, PA
Denison University, Granville, OH
- 1988 Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York, NY
- 1982 Lerner-Heller Gallery, New York, NY (and 1978, 1980, 1981)
- 1981 Fedele Fine Arts, Print Retrospective, New York, NY
Coburn Gallery, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT
- 1979 Cultural Activities Center, Temple, TX
- 1978 Andre Zarre Gallery, Earlywork, New York, NY
Johnson Gallery, Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT
- 1977 Pelham-von Stoffer Gallery, Houston, TX
- 1975 William Zierler Gallery, New York, NY (and 1972-1974)
Tirca Karlis Gallery, Provincetown, MA (and 1958, 1960, 1962-1974)
Landmark Gallery, New York, NY
- 1974 Galerie Liatowitsch, Basel, Switzerland
Weatherspoon Art Gallery, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC
Kresge Art Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
- 1973 Huntington Galleries, Major Retrospective, Huntington, WV
- 1971 Poindexter Gallery, NYC (and 1956, 1962, 1963, 1966, 1967, 1969)
Hurlbutt Galleries, Greenwich, CT
- 1968 Philips Exeter Academy, Exeter, NH
- 1967 Reed College, Portland, OR
- 1966 Obelisk Gallery, Boston, MA (and 1964)
- 1963 Kasha Heman Gallery, Chicago, IL (and 1962)
- 1959 Zabriskie Gallery, New York, NY

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 "Inventing Downtown" Grey Art Gallery at NYU, New York, NY
- 2016 "Artists and Easels" Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Provincetown, MA
- 1986 "The Severe and the Romantic: Geometric Humanism in American Painting 1950's and 1980's," Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York, NY
- 1985 "A Rational Imperative" Ben Shahn Gallery, New Jersey and Sculpture Center, New York, NY
- 1984 "American Postwar Purism" Marilyn Pearl Gallery, New York, NY
- 1983 "Varieties of Sculptural Ideas" Max Hutchinson Gallery, New York, NY
"Modernist Trends" 22 Wooster Gallery, New York, NY
- 1982 "The Constructed Image" Rockland Center for the Arts, New York, NY
"Contemporary Art" One Penn Plaza, New York, NY
"Eccentric Constructivism" Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago, MI
- 1981 "All in Line" Syracuse University Art Gallery, Syracuse, New York
"New Spiritualism" Oscarsson Hood Gallery, New York
- 1980 "Geometric Tradition in American Painting 1920-1980"
Marilyn Pearl Gallery and Rosa Esman Gallery, New York, NY
- 1979 "14 Provincetown Artists of Today" Slusser Gallery, Ann Arbor, MI
"Collage: American Masters" Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, New Jersey
"The Language of Abstraction" Marilyn Pearl Gallery and Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, NY
"New York Artists: New Sensibilities" 22 Wooster Gallery, New York, NY
- 1978 "The Geometry of Color" Andre Zarre Gallery, New York, NY
"Cape Cod Artists" The Guild of Boston Artists, Boston, MA
- 1977 "Aspects of the Collage" Bard College, Annandaleon-Hudson, New York
"The Magic Circle" Bronx Museum, Bronx, New York
"Provincetown Painters" Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York
"Drawings" Fair Gallery and Landmark Gallery, New York
"Cape Cod as an Art Colony" Heritage Plantation of Sandwich, Sandwich, MA
- 1976 "NoHo for the Arts" Noho Gallery, New York, NY
- 1975 "The Magic Circle" Landmark Gallery, New York, NY
"Forms of Color" Akron Art Institute, Akron, OH
- 1974 Art Basel
- 1971 "Collage of Indignation II" Hundred Acres, New York, NY
- 1965 "Pop Op Art Abstract Expressionism" Gertrude Kasle Gallery, Detroit, IL
- 1963 "Annual Exhibition" at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
"New Acquisitions" at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

- 1960 "Young America, 1960" Traveling Exhibition: Whitney Museum, New York, NY; Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD; St. Louis Museum, St. Louis, MI; Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Columbus, MI, and the Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, OH
- 1958 "Annual Exhibition" at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
 "Artists of Provincetown" Martha Jackson Gallery, New York, NY

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- Genauer, Emily, *New York Herald Tribune*, June 2, 1963, "Acquisitions at the Whitney."
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- Budd Hopkins Assembled Paintings*, Lerner-Heller Gallery and Pelham -von Stoffler Galler, Houston, TX, 1977, text by Carter Ratcliff
- Budd Hopkins Retrospective Exhibition 1957-1972*, Huntington Galleries, Huntington, WVA, 1972, text by April Kingsley
- Budd Hopkins: Recent Paintings*, Obelisk Gallery, Boston, 1966, text by Brian O'Doherty

STATEMENTS BY THE ARTIST

- Provincetown Arts*, summer, 1987, "The Observer as an Intruder: Budd Hopkins on Sculpture and UFO's, A Conversation with April Kingsley"
- Artforum*, September 1975, "Remarks on their Medium by Four Painters"
- Art in America*, July-August 1973, "Budd Hopkins on Budd Hopkins"
- ArtNow: New York*, Volume 4, Number 2, Statement
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- Provincetown Arts*, Summer 1997, "Remembering Edward Hopper"
- Provincetown Arts*, June 1986, "The Collages of Fritz Bultman"
- Drawing*, March-April 1984, "DeKooning's Drawings"
- Artforum*, Summer 1979, "Franz Kline's Color Abstractions: Remembering and Looking Afresh"
- Art in America*, March-April 1978, Contribution to the Cezanne Symposium
- Artforum*, March 1977, "Richard Diebenkorn Reconsidered"
- Artforum*, December 1976, "The New Works of Frank Stella: A Personal Note"
- Artforum* Summer 1976, "An As for Ad as Ad: The Collected Writings of Ad Reinhardt"
- Communiculture*, summer 1976, "Modernism and the Collage Esthetic"

Artforum, April 1976, "A Note on Composite Imagery—The Photographs of Barbara Jo Revelle"

Artforum, January 1976, Five Reviews: Samaras, Ferret, Lichteinstein, Asbaugh, Grillo

Artforum, April 1975, "A Proposal for the Museum of Modern Art"

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FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

1982 New York State Council on the Arts, Special Project Grant

1979 National Endowment for the Arts, Fellowship for Painting

1976 John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship for Painting

SELECTED MUSEUM AND UNIVERSITY COLLECTIONS

Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill, NC

Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, OH

Boca Raton Museum of Art, Boca Raton, FL

Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

British Museum, London, UK

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY

Carnegie-Mellon Art Museum, Pittsburgh, PA

Corcoran Gallery, Washington, DC

De Cordova Museum, Boston, MA

Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, DE

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY

Joseph Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC

Huntington Galleries, Huntington, WV

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA

Metropolitan Museum, New York, NY

Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY

Newark Museum, Norfolk, VA

Oklahoma Art Center, Oklahoma City, OK

Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, NH

Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Provincetown, MA

Reading Museum, Reading, PA

Reed College, Portland, OR

San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco, CA

Saulsbury Gallery, Cultural Activities Center, Temple, TX

University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA

Weatherspoon Art Gallery, Greensboro, NC

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

Williams College Museum, Williamstown, MA

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT

SELECTED PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Edward Albee

Justin Kaplan, Ann Bernays

B. H. Friedman

William Zeckendorf, Jr.

Maximilian Schell

David Solinger

Hugh Helner

Armand Erpf

J. Patrick Lannan

Walter Chrysler, Jr.

Tom Lehrer

V. Henry Rothschild

Robert Motherwell

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Joseph Hirshhorn

Stuart Preston

Eugene and Barbara Schwartz

Martha Jackson

Allan Stone

Higher Ground

The Assembled Paintings, Temples, Guardians, and Altars of Budd Hopkins

Terry R. Myers

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“Master of a Movement Manqué”—the title of Brian O’Doherty’s eloquent 1966 article on Budd Hopkins—was well chosen at the time,¹ but with almost twenty-five years of hindsight a case could now be made for substituting “détourné” for “manqué” in his description. Rather than exemplifying a “missing” movement, Hopkins’s paintings from the 1960s and 1970s prefigure much that is found in current approaches to abstract—particularly geometric—painting. The most striking aspect of today’s geometric abstraction is its ability, or desire, to support disparate sets of highly specific referential information—whether expressed, for example, in the Endgame strategies of Peter Halley and Sherrie Levine, the vernacular of Mary Heilmann, or the humor of Olivier Mosset and Andrew Spence. Hopkins’s most important achievements emerged in the sixties with his reverential, content-charged juxtapositions of complex, undefinable abstract spaces, both real and painted, at a time when painting was attempting either to accept subject matter at face value (Pop) or to deny its existence (Minimalism). These were detours that Hopkins did not take. At the same time, his works pressed the quickly expanding physical definitions of painting. Outgrowing stretchers, frames, and walls, Hopkins’s paintings articulated new opportunities for the cohabitation of formal, subjective, and even spiritual concerns within an abstracted and constructed environment that was deliberately *not* intended to be merely nonobjective or formal.

The spatial tension often found in the “build” of constructed painting—a term taken here to mean painting made from physical component parts that are readily distinguishable—was strongly suggested in Hopkins’s paintings even before his move to multipaneled formats. In 1962 he began incorporating hard-edge geometric shapes (including some that read as fragments of letter forms) into gestural painting, characterized (and often methodized) by the work of second- and later-generation Abstract Expressionists. In works such as *Yarmouth* (1965, collection of the artist), there is a palpable pressure between geometric shapes and atmospheric (subsequently read as “expressionistic”) areas, primarily because the adjoining flat, hard-edged areas firmly convey anti-illusionistic space on the surface of the canvas. It

is as if we were allowed to look behind a curtain—an idea that Hopkins would later articulate: “I had come to understand that an abstract painting at its most powerful was a kind of aesthetic scrim behind which lurks a concealed, obsessive ‘thing’ or image of some kind, transformed, made palatable by the artist’s mediating skills.”² The solidification of this idea can be traced in increasingly formal and spiritual terms from Hopkins’s mid-sixties paintings to his latest found-wood Altar sculptures.

By the early seventies, the crisp geometry that had infiltrated Hopkins’s work of the previous decade was more emphatic, a condition that seems to have led naturally to his first multipaneled paintings. A formal mainstay of these works was his highly suggestive use of the circle; by this time it was clearly an obsessive shape for him. While this centered circle (more precisely, this almost-centered circle) remained prominent, the divisions between canvases underwent dramatic structural revision in the Assembled Paintings, his first truly constructed paintings.

In the 1974–77 series of Assembled Paintings, Hopkins extended his abstract investigations into urban experience. He developed an architectural approach to abstraction, while retaining the more effective components of painting, the most important being the freedom to explore intense color and the ability to convey a distinctive narrative. Erecting the Assembled Paintings as though they were building facades, Hopkins saturated them with a meaning significantly beyond their formality.

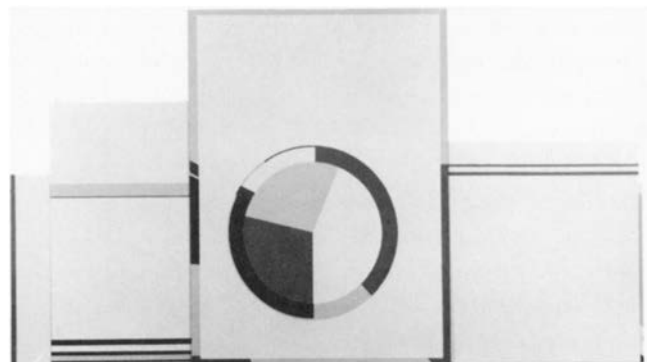


FIG. 1 Budd Hopkins, *Gallatin's Drive I*, 1976, oil on canvas, 70 × 129 inches. Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh.

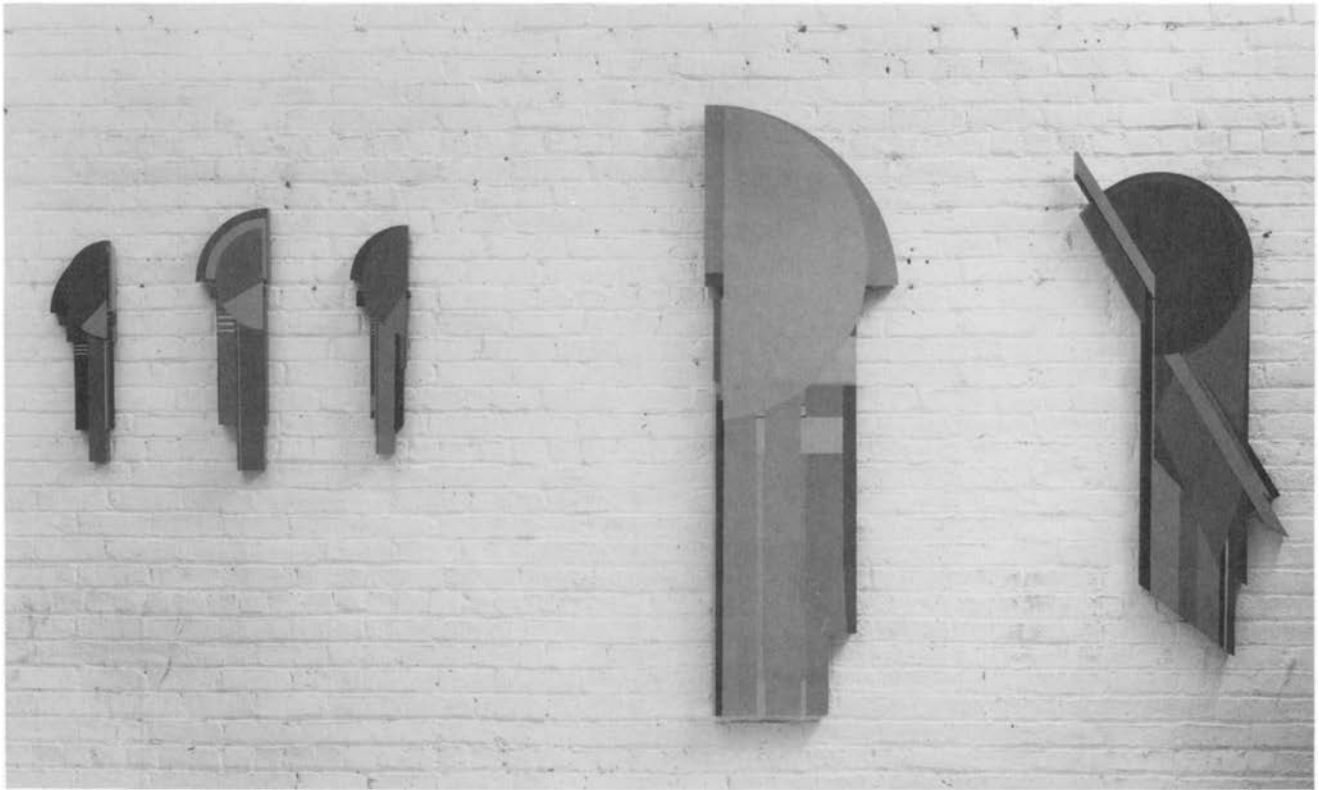


FIG. 2 Budd Hopkins, left to right: *Guardian S-2*, 1982, 25 × 7 inches; *Guardian S-8*, 1983, 29¼ × 8¼ inches; *Guardian S-4*, 1983, 25½ × 6¾ inches; *Guardian XXXVIII*, 1983, 67½ × 21¾ inches; *Guardian XXXIV*, 1982, 62 × 21 inches; all acrylic on panel. Private collections.

Gallatin's Drive I (fig. 1), for example, is one of several major paintings from the series of Assembled Paintings to be given urban names; among others are *White City Wall* and *New York Wall II* (both 1974), *Long Avenue* (1975), *Stuyvesant Square* (1976), and *Seward Square* (1977, all collection of the artist). Composed of rectangular panels of various sizes, these paintings reflect the shifting scale of the contemporary city (specifically, New York), especially those in which the bottom edges of all of their component canvases are in line, so that a "skyline" is created at the top. In some cases, a panel may project out slightly from the painting, hinting at the aggressive sculptural protrusions to come in Hopkins's Temples and Altars of the eighties.

The colors in *Gallatin's Drive I* are unusual in relation to the rest of the Assembled Paintings. The focus on the primaries, set against black and white, spiritually connects the painting to Piet Mondrian, whose enthusiasm for the vivacity of the city makes him a natural reference in a discussion of Hopkins's work. Many of the Assembled Paintings juxtapose harsh, jarring colors in a highly improvised fashion that suggests the erratic nature of city planning, as well as our fractured consciousness of the city as a highly charged, disjunctive environment. All of these paintings solidify around the circles found in their most central panels. In his catalogue essay for a 1977 exhibition of the Assembled Paintings, Carter Ratcliff outlined the circle's important and tenuous position within each painting:

These round shapes buoy the panels they occupy, yet they often need the support of pictorial vectors originating in the distant reaches of a painting. Further, they are often just off-center in their own panels, and their centers are often just missed by the focal points of their internal patterns. . . . So the circles seem as much conclusions as opening premises, as much pictorial results as causes—or perhaps it's impossible to decide one way or the other, just as it's very often impossible to say what is figure and what is ground, what is overlaid and what recedes, what is a dissonant hue and what isn't.³

Ratcliff effectively verbalized the contradictory nature of these works, capturing the unusual formal effects of constructed paintings.

While shifting around the leftover scraps from his cut-paper collage studies for the Assembled Paintings, Hopkins discovered figural imagery. From the circular fragments he developed what has become a continuing series of intricately shaped paintings called Guardians—panels that approximate head and torso configurations. These works still maintain powerful abstract qualities in their intense colors and hard-edged forms. The Abstract Expressionist brushwork has completely disappeared, most likely because the eccentric silhouettes of the Guardians demand an interior clarity in order that they remain readable.

Lined up on the wall (fig. 2), the Guardians form a

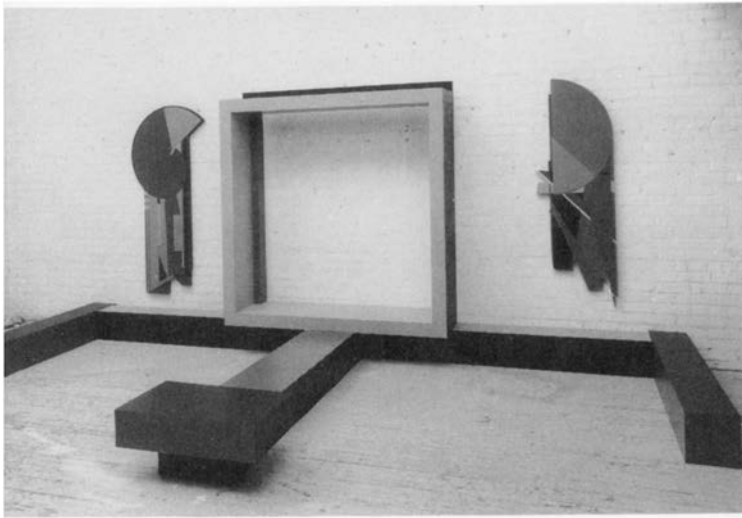


FIG. 3 Budd Hopkins, *Black Temple with Guardian LI and Guardian LII* (installation view): *Black Temple*, 1984, acrylic on panel, 186½ × 100 × 78¼ inches, collection of the artist. Left: *Guardian LI*, 1984, acrylic on panel, 62¾ × 28 inches, private collection. Right: *Guardian LII*, 1984, acrylic on panel, 62½ × 20½ inches, private collection.



FIG. 4 Budd Hopkins, studio view with, left to right: *Sky Altar*, 1986, 105 × 36 × 93 inches; *Altar I*, 1983, 81½ × 111 × 14 inches; *Sentinel II*, 1985, 96 × 47 × 36 inches; *Cape Altar*, 1986, 46¾ × 170¾ × 116½ inches; *Chariot*, 1985, 33 × 36¾ × 26½ inches; *King*, 1986, 68½ × 49½ × 10¼ inches; *High Altar*, 1986, 70¼ × 115 × 71½ inches; all wood. Collection of the artist.

meaningful procession, particularly when works of various sizes are juxtaposed in order to establish a sense of hierarchy. All of them “face” in one direction or the other, pointing to something, forcing the viewer to refocus his or her attention somewhere else, all the while aggressively defending their positions. In a seminal artist’s book titled *Sacred Spaces: The Book of Temples, The Book of Guardians, The Book of Altars*, Hopkins portrayed them as “sentinels participating in a frozen ritual, fixed—absolutely—within a privileged space. . . . They are watchful and unmoving, a flanking, framing procession.”⁴

The Guardians play a supporting role to something outside their borders, locking perfectly into place when they bracket a Temple. In these architectural complexes, Hopkins’s work expands into sculptural issues. In the 1984 *Black Temple with Guardians LI and LII* (fig. 3), Hopkins detached a square Temple from the wall and put it on an altarlike base that extended forward more than six feet. By hanging a Guardian on each side, he incorporated most of the possibilities for constructed painting into a single work: paintings with interior constructed imagery (the Guardians) that appropriately hang on a wall and a floor-bound structure (the Temple), detached from a support, yet also painted, making it difficult to classify as pure sculpture. In addition, Hopkins completes the fusion by allowing a highly specific, spiritually significant narrative into the work that emerges as inevitable. The piece becomes an active magical space in which it seems that a ritual (or a miracle) is about to occur.

In the 1980s Hopkins turned much of his attention toward making sculpture from scavenged wood (fig. 4) that both resembles and departs from earlier work. Inherent contradictions are to be expected from the artist—he has built a career on his ability to combine antipodal concerns. Like his paintings, these sculptures have a sense of permanence and inevitability because their expressionistic nature does not come from the artist’s hand, but from their embodiment of a spiritual subject matter. The sculptures also have a sense of the arbitrary that stems from the manner in which they are constructed. Overall, Hopkins’s works maintain their rigor through a continuous, structured movement. He is an artist who has the unique ability to travel continually and significantly in a circle without revealing the movement on the surface, so that his work reveals itself to be at once clear, mysterious, and all-knowing. ●

Notes

1. Brian O’Doherty, “Master of a Movement Manqué,” *Arts Magazine* 40 (April 1966): 27–30.
2. Budd Hopkins, *Budd Hopkins Sculpture* (New York: Budd Hopkins, 1988), n.p.
3. Carter Ratcliff, *Budd Hopkins Assembled Paintings*, exh. cat. (New York and Houston: Lerner-Heller Gallery and Pelham-Stoffler Gallery, 1977), n.p.
4. Budd Hopkins, *Sacred Spaces: The Book of Temples, The Book of Guardians, The Book of Altars* (New York: Budd Hopkins, 1982), n.p.

TERRY R. MYERS lives in New York and writes on art regularly for *Arts Magazine*, *Flash Art*, and *Lapiz*. He was Budd Hopkins’s studio assistant in 1986.

Budd Hopkins, Abstract Expressionist and U.F.O. Author, Dies at 80



By **Margalit Fox**

Aug. 24, 2011

Budd Hopkins, [a distinguished Abstract Expressionist artist](#) who — after what he described as a chance sighting of something flat, silver, airborne and unfathomable — became the father of the alien-abduction movement, died on Aug. 21 at his home in Manhattan. He was 80.

The cause was complications of cancer, his daughter, Grace Hopkins-Lisle, said.

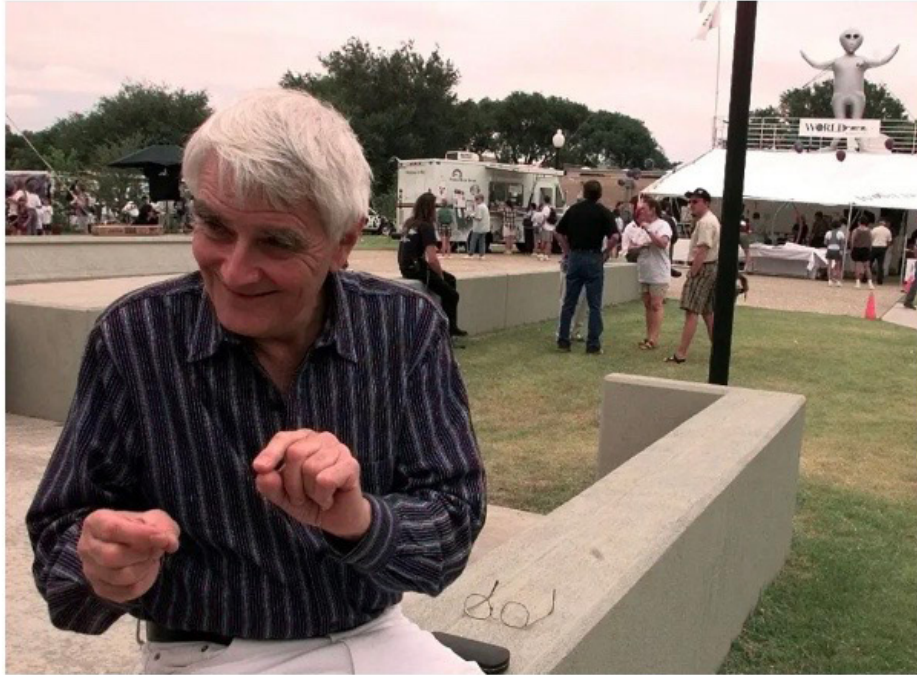
A painter and sculptor, Mr. Hopkins was part of the circle of New York artists that in the 1950s and '60s included [Mark Rothko](#), [Robert Motherwell](#) and [Franz Kline](#).

His work — which by the late '60s included Mondrian-like paintings of huge geometric forms anointed with flat planes of color — is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington and the British Museum, among others.

In later years Mr. Hopkins turned to large, quasi-architectural sculptures that seemed to spring from primordial myths. In 1985, reviewing one such piece, “Temple of Apollo With Guardian XXXXV” — it was part house of worship, part archaeological ruin, part sacrificial altar — Michael Brenson wrote in The New York Times:

“If the work is about sacrifice and violence, it is also about ecstasy and illumination. In the course of trying to re-establish the broadest meaning of the abstract geometry that has fascinated so many 20th-century artists, Hopkins makes us consider that ritual, worship, cruelty and superstition have always been inseparable.”

Some articles about Mr. Hopkins made much of the relationship between these pieces and his fascination with otherworldly visitors, for by then his books, lectures and television appearances had made him well known as a U.F.O. investigator. Mr. Hopkins, however, disavowed a connection.



Budd Hopkins in Roswell, N.M., in 1997. Chang W. Lee/The New York Times

He was also quick to point out that he had never been abducted himself. But after what he described as his own U.F.O. sighting, on Cape Cod in 1964, he began gathering the stories of people who said they had not only seen spaceships but had also been spirited away in them on involuntary and unpleasant journeys.

As the first person to collect and publish such stories in quantity, Mr. Hopkins is widely credited with having begun the alien-abduction movement, a subgenre of U.F.O. studies. Later high-profile writers on the subject, including [Whitley Strieber](#) and the Harvard psychiatrist [John Mack](#), credited him with having ignited their interest in the field.

In eliciting the narratives — many obtained under hypnosis — of people who said they had been abducted, Mr. Hopkins was struck by the recurrence of certain motifs: the lonely road, the dark of night, the burst of light, the sudden passage through the air and into a waiting craft, and above all the sense of time that could not be accounted for.

He went in search of that lost time. What he found, in story after story, was this:

The aliens were technically sophisticated and many spoke improbably good English. They were short, bug-eyed, thin-lipped and gray-skinned, stripped their subjects naked and probed them with instruments, often removing sperm or eggs.

These narratives, Mr. Hopkins wrote, led him to a distasteful but inescapable conclusion: The aliens — or “visitors,” as he preferred to call them — were practicing a form of extraterrestrial eugenics, aiming to shore up their declining race by crossbreeding with *Homo sapiens*.

In 1989 Mr. Hopkins founded [the Intruders Foundation](#), based in Manhattan, to help sound the alarm.

He wrote four books on the subject, including “Intruders: The Incredible Visitations at Copley Woods” (1987), which spent four weeks on the New York Times best-seller list and was the basis of a 1992 TV movie starring Richard Crenna.

Mr. Hopkins’s work drew inevitable fire; in interviews he sometimes likened his attackers to Holocaust deniers, an analogy that incurred further criticism.



"Guardian LXVII" by Budd Hopkins, 1989.
Grace Hopkins-Lisle

Elliott Budd Hopkins was born in Wheeling, W. Va., on June 15, 1931, and at 2 survived polio. He earned a bachelor’s degree in art history from [Oberlin College](#) in 1953 and afterward settled in New York, where he soon made his artistic reputation.

After the Cape Cod sighting he described — a silvery disc over Truro, Mass. — Mr. Hopkins began researching U.F.O.'s. In 1976 he published an article about abductions in *The Village Voice*, which led to an article in *Cosmopolitan*.

The exposure drew sacks of letters from readers wondering if they too had been abducted, and his second career was born. By the 1980s, it had eclipsed the first.

Mr. Hopkins's three marriages, to Joan Baer, April Kingsley and Carol Rainey, ended in divorce. Besides his daughter, Grace, from his marriage to Ms. Kingsley, he is survived by his companion, Leslie Kean; a sister, Eleanor Whiteley; and a grandchild.

His memoir, "[Art, Life and UFOs](#)," was published in 2009 by Anomalist Books.

Unlike some writers in the genre who described their own abductions as spiritually transformative, Mr. Hopkins believed that no good could come of being the unwilling subject of a vast human genome project in the sky. He called his informants "victims" and ran group therapy sessions for them in New York.

Many who shared their stories with Mr. Hopkins had no conscious memory of their abductions at first. But they had lived for years, he said, with the nagging feeling that somewhere, something in their lives had gone horribly wrong.

Their condition, Mr. Hopkins said, was not as rare as one might suppose. By his reckoning, 1 in 50 Americans has [been abducted by an alien and simply does not know it](#).

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