

EDWARD AVEDISIAN (1936-2007)

An artist who mixed the hot colors of Pop Art with the cool, more analytical qualities of Color Field painting, Edward Avedisian was among the leading figures to emerge in the New York art world in the 1960s. Along with his contemporaries, including Jules Olitski, Kenneth Noland, Walter Darby Bannard, Dan Christensen, Ron Davis, and Larry Poons, he was instrumental in the exploration of new abstract methods to explore the primacy of optical experience, breaking from the tactility of Abstract Expressionism. He was included in the landmark exhibitions, *Op Art: The Responsive Eye*, held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1965, and *Expo 67*, held in Montreal. He showed at the prominent Hansa (1958-59) and Elkon (1960-75) galleries and participated in four annuals at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Through the early 1970s, works such as his “beach balls,” “seedlike orbs,” and “stripes with splashes” were prominently featured in *Artforum* (including the magazine’s cover in January 1969), *Artnews*, and *Arts* magazines. After leaving New York City in the mid-1970s for Hudson, New York, he shifted his attention to figurative images, painting his surroundings in an expressionist style compared by critics to the work of the Fauves, Marsden Hartley, and Paula Modersohn-Becker. In the 1970s, he created colorful abstract sculptures out of Styrofoam.

Avedisian was born in Lowell, Massachusetts and attended the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. His first exhibition was in 1957, at the Boylston Print Center Gallery, Cambridge, Massachusetts. After moving to New York City about that time, he joined the dynamic art scene in Greenwich Village, frequenting the Cedar Tavern on Tenth Street, associating with the critic Clement Greenberg, and joining a new generation of abstract artists who were exploring the limits and possibilities of art by experimenting with new techniques and ways of organizing pictorial space. In 1958, he was the last new member invited to join the Hansa Gallery, which was under the direction of Richard Bellamy and Ivan Karp. Begun in 1952, the Hansa had been the site of Allan Kaprow’s “Happenings”; its members included Robert Beauchamp, Paul Georges, Wolf Kahn, Jan Müller, George Segal, and Richard Stakiewicz. Avedisian’s first and only show at Hansa took place in March of 1958—the gallery closed the following year. By 1962, Avedisian was represented by the Elkon Gallery. In his first show at Elkon that year, he exhibited stained canvases with central images consisting of three plumes arranged against a large blot. A critic for *Arts* magazine noted the way the paintings explored issues relating to the picture plane that were successful in being “effective and controlled.”^[1] By 1963, Avedisian had transitioned to a hard-edge approach, portraying primarily large striped circles that were placed in, and turned in, different directions within the picture plane, creating challenging eye movements for the viewer. Brian O’Dougherty noted the shift in Avedisian’s work in *The New York Times*, stating that his “targets woo the eye . . . in a sort of shooting match of afterimages.” To O’Dougherty, Avedisian’s work represented the emergence of a “definite school,” of which he noted: “the time seems ripe for a group show intelligently examining what is definitely a new and exciting trend.”^[2]

Avedisian was included in the annual of the Whitney Museum for the first time in 1963, and two years later, the new direction in art was given recognition by the Museum of Modern Art in its exhibition, *The Responsive Eye*. Avedisian was among the artists included in the show that curator William Seitz stated consisted of works that “exist less as objects to be examined than as generators of perceptual responses in the eye and mind of the viewer.”^[3] Critic John Canaday observed that the exhibition presented art that left behind the “sloppiness” that had previously marked avant-garde in favor of “art forms that demand technical perfection as an integral part of expression.”^[4] Avedisian was also represented in the Whitney Museum’s *Young America 1965* and the aforementioned *Expo 67*.

In the late 1960s, Avedisian enlarged the scale of his canvases and began to use a verticalized emphasis in paintings consisting of overlapping, irregular swaths of rich color. One critic noted of these images in 1970 that they were “beautifully and lyrically executed paintings that created a busy arena for the eye.”^[5] In 1970, a solo show of his work was organized by the Bucknell University Art Gallery, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. In 1971, Avedisian was included along with Bannard, Christensen, Davis, Poons, and Peter Young in the exhibition, *Six Painters*, organized by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in collaboration with the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Milwaukee Art Center. The show, which traveled to the three museums, was accompanied by catalogue including an essay by Albright-Knox

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curator James N. Wood, who wrote that the selection for the exhibition consisted of the “highest quality work of younger, abstract painters.”^[6]

In the mid-1970s, Avedisian abruptly left New York City and moved upstate to Hudson, New York, cutting his ties with the Manhattan art scene. He also broke out in new directions in his work, painting representational scenes from his immediate environment, such as men at work, billboards, and couples in repose. Some of his art of the time expressed homoerotic themes, while others captured the beauty of the natural landscapes in which he found respite. One critic described the art of his late career as having a disarming directness and a furtive sense of narrative. The last show of his lifetime was held at the Albus Gallery in 2003.

Avedisian’s work may be found in the collections of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, the Brooklyn Museum, New York; the Chrysler Art Museum, Norfolk, Virginia; the Denver Art Museum; the Flint Institute of Arts, Michigan; the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, Texas; the Larry Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut; the Los Angeles County Museum, California; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Minneapolis Institute of Fine Arts, Michigan; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, New York; the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, California; the Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, New York; the Portland Art Museum, Oregon; the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Stamford Museum & Nature Center, Stamford, Connecticut; the University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor; The Wadsworth Museum, Hartford, Connecticut; the Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut.

[1] N. E., “Edward Avedisian,” *Arts* 60 (January 1962), 13.

[2] B[rian] O’D[ougherty], “The Week around the Galleries,” *New York Times*, December 15, 1963, 138.

[3] “The Responsive Eye,” press release, February 1965. http://www.moma.org/pdfs/docs/press_archives/3439/releases/MOMA_1965_0015_14.pdf?2010, retrieved October 27, 2013.

[4] John Canaday, “The Responsive Eye: Three Cheers and High Hopes,” *New York Times*, February 28, 1965, X19.

[5] M. L., “Edward Avedisian,” *ArtNews* 69 (April 1970), 12.

[6] James N. Wood, “Introduction,” *Six Painters*, exh. cat. (Buffalo, N.Y.: Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1971), 8.

Lisa N. Peters, Ph.D.

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CV

Born, 1936 Lowell, Massachusetts
School of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
1969, University of Kansas, Artist-in-Residence
1970, School of Visual Arts, NY, Artist-in-Residence
1972, University of California, Irvine, Artist-in-Residence
1973, University of California, Los Angeles, Artist-in-Residence
Died, 2007 Hudson, NY

AWARDS

1967, Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship
1968, National Council of the Arts Award

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

Hoylston Print Center Gallery, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1957.
Tibor de Nagy, New York, 1957.
Hansa Gallery, New York, 1958.
Tibor de Nagy, New York, 1959.
Tibor de Nagy, New York, 1960.

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Robert Elkon Gallery, New York, 1962.
Robert Elkon Gallery, New York, 1963.
Galerie Ziegler, Zurich, Switzerland, 1964.
Robert Elkon Gallery, New York, 1964.
Kasmin Limited, London, 1965.
Nicholas Wilder Gallery, Los Angeles, California, 1965.
Robert Elkon Gallery, New York, 1965.
Kasmin Limited, London, 1966.
Nicholas Wilder Gallery, Los Angeles, California, 1966.
Robert Elkon Gallery, New York, 1966.
Kasmin Limited, London, 1967.
Robert Elkon Gallery, New York, 1967.
Nicholas Wilder Gallery, Los Angeles, California, 1968.
Robert Elkon Gallery, New York, 1968.
Nicholas Wilder Gallery, Los Angeles, 1969.
Bucknell University Art Gallery, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, 1970.
Robert Elkon Gallery, New York, 1970.
Jack Glenn Gallery, Corona del Mar, California, 1971.
Walter Moos Gallery, Toronto, 1971.
Robert Elkon Gallery, New York, 1971.
Robert Elkon Gallery, New York, 1972.
Janie C. Lee Gallery, Houston, Texas, 1974.
Robert Elkon Gallery, New York, 1974.
The Carriage House, Buffalo, New York, 1975.
Robert Elkon Gallery, New York, 1975.
Gray Art Gallery, New York, 1977.
The Carriage House, New York, 1978.
Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Buffalo, New York, 1978.
Fishbach Gallery, New York, 1979.
Jason McCoy Inc., New York, 1984.
Carrie Haddad Gallery, Hudson, New York, 1995.
Mitchell Albus, New York, 1996.
Mitchell Albus, New York, 1999.
Carrie Haddad Gallery, Hudson, New York, 2002.
Mitchell Albus, New York, 2003.
Carrie Haddad Gallery, Hudson, New York, *Edward Avedisian Retrospective*, 2010.
Carrie Haddad Gallery, Hudson, New York, *Avedisian: Abstract Paintings*, 2012.
Berry Campbell, New York, *Edward Avedisian: The Soho Years*, 2013.
RCM Galerie, Paris, *Edward Avedisian: Abstract Pop*, 2018 – 2019.
Berry Campbell, New York, *Edward Avedisian: Reverberations*, 2020.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Dayton Art Institute, Dayton OH, *Dayton Art International*, 1963.
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *Annual Exhibition of American Painting*, 1963.
Gallery of Modern Art, Washington, DC, 1964.
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, *The Responsive Eye*, 1965.
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting*, 1965.
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *Young American 1965*, 1965.
The Jewish Museum, New York, *Harry Abrams Family Collection*, 1966.
Boston Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Massachusetts, *Paintings from Expo '67*, 1967.
Expo '67, Montreal, *American Painting Now*, 1967.
San Francisco Museum of Fine Arts, California, *R. Rowan Collection, Color Painting*, 1967.
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting*, 1967.

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Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *Painters Under 40*, 1968.
Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indiana, *Painting and Sculpture Today '69*, 1969.
Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, *The George Waterman Collection*, 1969.
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting*, 1969.
Chicago Art Institute, Illinois, *69th American Exhibition*, 1970.
Darmstadt, Germany, *International Drawing Exhibition*, 1970.
Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indiana, *Painting and Sculpture Today*, 1970.
The Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York, *Graphics from the Collection of Marine Midland Bank*, 1971.
The Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York, *Six Painters*, 1971.
Grey Art Gallery, New York University, 1977.
Grey Art Gallery, New York University, 1980.
Comune di Udine, Civici Musei e Gallerie di Storia e Arte, Udine, Italy, *Arte Americana Contemporanea*, 1980.
Pittsfield Museum, Massachusetts, 1981.
Robert Elkon Gallery, New York, 1981.
Storm King Art Center, New York, 1983.
Vrej Baghoomian Gallery, New York, *Landscape*, 1989.
Warren Street Gallery, Hudson, New York, *Works on Paper*, 1994.
Hudson Opera House, Hudson, New York, *South Bay*, 2003.
Haddad Lascano Gallery, Great Barrington, Massachusetts, 2004.
Richard Sena Gallery, Hudson, New York, *Resilience*, 2004.
Anita Shapolsky Gallery, New York, *Potpourri*, 2009.
Carrie Haddad Gallery, Hudson, New York, *New York City Paintings: A Glance at 50 Years*, 2013.
Miami Project, Miami, FL, Berry Campbell, 2014.
Art Silicon Valley/San Francisco, San Francisco, CA, Berry Campbell, 2014.
Berry Campbell, New York, NY, *A Year in Review*, 2014.
Art Wynwood, Miami, FL, Berry Campbell, 2014.
RCM Galerie, Paris, 2015.
Carrie Haddad Gallery, Hudson, New York, *Cityscapes*, 2015.
Carrie Haddad Gallery, Hudson, New York, *Paper*, 2015.
Art Wynwood, Miami, FL, Berry Campbell, 2016.
Carrie Haddad Gallery, Hudson, New York, *Interlock: Color & Contrast in Abstraction*, 2017.
Berry Campbell, New York, *Summer Selections*, 2017.
Carrie Haddad Gallery, Hudson, New York, *Painted Cities*, 2018.
Baron and Ellin Gordon Art Galleries, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia, *The Jules Olitski Project*, 2018.
Berry Campbell, New York, *Summer Selections*, 2018.
Berry Campbell, New York, *Summer Selections*, 2019.
RCM Galerie, Paris, *Construction: Group Show Exploring the Limits of Form*, 2019
Museum of Modern Art, *The Shape of Shape*, 2019. Curated by Amy Sillman
Loretta Howard Gallery, New York, *Specific Forms*, 2019. Curated by Saul Ostrow
Mitchell Albus, *Acquired on eBay (and from other surrogate sources)*, New York, 2019.
Upsilon Gallery, New York, *Hard-Edged Geometric Abstraction*, 2022.
Stamford Museum & Nature Center, Connecticut, *Discovering Color: Two Decades of Abstraction*, 2022.

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York
Brooklyn Museum, New York
Chrysler Art Museum, Norfolk, Virginia
Denver Art Museum, Colorado
Flint Institute of Arts, Michigan
Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, Texas
The Larry Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut
Los Angeles County Museum, California
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

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Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Michigan
Museum of Modern Art, New York
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Neuberger Museum of Art, State University of New York, Purchase
Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, California
Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, New York
Portland Art Museum, Oregon
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York
Stamford Museum & Nature Center, Stamford, Connecticut
University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor
The Wadsworth Athenaeum, Hartford, Connecticut
Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut