
Title of Object

Kingston

Photo of Object (optional)



Object Information

Artist: Harvey Quaytman

Country: United States

Date of Object: 1973

File Created: 6/26/2017

Accession Number: 2008.18A,B

Author of File: Kathleen Steiger

Material/Medium: Acrylic on canvas

Reviewer of File: Kara ZumBahlen

Department: Contemporary Art

Last Updated/Reviewed: 9/6/2017

Culture: American

Tour Topics

20th century American Art, World Art 1850 to Present, Shaped Canvasses, Abstraction, Geometry, Minimalism, color, brushstrokes, Modernism

Questions and Activities (list 3 to 4 sample questions here):

- (Explain how the artwork was created, with the two parts.) Quaytman is well known for his “Shaped Canvasses” like this. What impact does the shape or construction of this work have on you? (Intriguing? Confusing? Curious?)
- When Quaytman was 35, he used purple because he thought it was a color that gives profundity or a great depth of emotion to a painting. What colors do you think are “Profound” or convey intense feeling?
- Quaytman also said “In none of these paintings do I mix one color with another, because that seems to me to be wasting the specific energy of any one.” Why might he say that?

- Quaytman said the shapes of his canvasses had purpose, saying “An outrigger on a canoe isn’t there for decoration. It is there because the water’s rough.” What purpose do you think the artist had in mind for the shape of this two-part object?
- Take a moment to look at the surface of this canvas. What natural phenomena might it resemble?

Key Points (Form: subject matter, medium and techniques of manufacture, style, etc.)

The painting is quite large, giving it a sense of magnitude or significance. “The arc of movement becomes incorporated into the physical structure of the work while the asymmetry of its curved bottom and bracket elements successfully avoid a static arrangement. The ensemble effectively bridges the gap between sculpture and painting, while the sensuous surface magnifies the luminous depths beyond in a most provocative manner.” (Label)

From the New York Times obituary: “Mr. Quaytman's painting combined austere geometry and a quietly hedonistic sensuality of surface and color. His spare, layered compositions of gridded, hard-edged bands or centered crosses, often on shaped canvases, were realized in subdued yet lush hues. Velvety blacks and grays and rich blues would be accented by strips of bright red or by rust, a signature ingredient.

Emerging in the 1960's, he responded to Minimalism and formalist abstraction by producing sleek hybrids of painting and sculpture. In the 1970's he began to focus on extending traditions of reductive abstract painting that began with early Modernist works of artists like Kasimir Malevich and Piet Mondrian.

A Modernist to the end, Mr. Quaytman concentrated on the formal properties of painting....concentrating attention on the immediate experience of shape, texture, color and composition.”

Key Points (Context: use, history, cultural information, artist bio, etc.)

Quaytman Bio info, from *Harvey Quaytman*, Phaidon:

- He came of age in NYC during the 60's when Abstract Expressionism was giving way to Minimalism, Pop Art and Color Field painting.
- He had read T.S. Elliot's 1932 essay, 'Tradition and Individual Talent', in which the poet wrote 'The emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonability without surrendering himself to the work to be done.'
- From around 1967, Quaytman began his experiments with shaped canvasses. 'These forms are my way of making space for a color to be in. An outrigger on a canoe isn't there for decoration. It is there because the water's rough.'
- (Have you any specific meanings for the colors you use?) "I have no specific meanings, but a color must mean something. For instance, yellow – I'm aware of 20 different yellows, and in any one point of my life, I'm using only two or three of them, and I do that because those particular yellows spoke to me at that time. ... I used to use purple when I was 35, deep purple, with the thought that it's a color that gives profundity to painting. It's funny the ideas you have when you are growing up as a painter. It was a mistaken idea."

Regarding the color of blue: In an interview with Kimmo Sarge (Finnish artist and professor at Finnish Academy of Fine Arts) in 1987, Quaytman spoke of a blue he had discovered that “resonates in my soul. Apparently the colors I use have to do with saturation.... In none of these paintings do I mix one color with another, because that seems to me to be wasting the specific energy of any one.... One color I think I will never use again is green. I think I dislike green for the same reasons that Piet Mondrian disliked it. He hated green even in nature. I like it in nature and I like it to stay there, but I can’t even imagine it in a painting of mine.”

Current Mia Label Information (optional)

Born in Far Rockaway, Queens in 1937, Harvey Quaytman emerged on the New York art scene following formal studies in Boston at the Museum School and then at Tufts. While his work in the 60s gave a nod to the work of Willem de Kooning, he turned increasingly (like many of his contemporaries) to challenging the limits of the quadrilateral canvas. Unlike his contemporaries, though, his shaped canvasses (often in two parts) were remarkable in the manner they created tension with the wall behind and around them.

Kingston follows a compositional format that Quaytman used extensively in his work of the early 70s and is a natural progression from earlier works that incorporated pendulum-like forms with implied arcing movement. Here, however, the arc of movement becomes incorporated into the physical structure of the work while the asymmetry of its curved bottom and bracket elements successfully avoid a static arrangement. The ensemble effectively bridges the gap between sculpture and painting, while the sensuous surface magnifies the luminous depths beyond in a most provocative manner.

Sources of Information and/or Prop Ideas (photos/videos)

NYT Obituary, April 15, 2002: <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/15/arts/harvey-quaytman-64-painter-known-for-geometric-works.html?mcubz=0>

Harvey Quaytman by Harvey Quaytman – Mia Library ND 237.Q3 A4 (2014)

Artsmia: Label