

MARK BORGHI

NEW YORK | BRIDGEHAMPTON | SAG HARBOR

Maurice Sievan (1898 - 1981)

OORGOX, 1964

Oil on canvas

68 x 48 inches (172.7 x 121.9 cm)

Signed lower right

Ex-collection

The Artist and his estate until the present

Ex-exhibition

"Maurice Sievan", Vanderwoude Tananbaum Gallery, New York, NY, March 1 – April 2, 1983



An artist of the New York School, whom Clement Greenberg hailed as “one of the best or better painters in this country,” Maurice Sievan (1898-1981) became most known for his distinctive landscape works during the 1940s. A close friend of Milton Avery and Mark Rothko, Sievan’s career is the history of the New York art world itself, spanning the turn of the 20th century through the 1970s.

Born in the Russian Ukraine in 1898, Sievan’s family immigrated to New York City in 1908 to escape anti-Semitic pogroms. Sievan then embarked on a long, distinguished, and prolific career as an artist. He studied with Leon Kroll and Charles Hawthorne at the National Academy of Design and later at the Art Students League. In 1931, he studied with André Lhote in Paris and exhibited at the Salone d'Automne. Returning to New York in 1932 as a celebrated landscape and figurative painter, he became one of the many artists who worked on the Works Progress Administration Easel Project during the Depression.

His signature abstractions of the 50s and 60s represent some of his finest and most well-known works. Most of these works were painted in Mark Rothko’s Provincetown studio, who was one of Sievan’s close friends and colleagues along with Adolph Gottlieb (1903-1974) and Clyfford Still (1904-1980). The Museum of Modern Art in New York purchased his masterpiece from the series “OOMPALIK” in 1963. Pre-figuring the color-field painters of the 1970s, Sievan’s large abstractions resonate with awesome, subtle beauty and unusual harmonies. Of these powerful works of depth, individuality, and integrity Ivan Karp said, “Here was an artist who occupied a particular and very special place in the history of American painting, and who is worthy of public acclaim for his singular achievement.”

His paintings were also placed in the collections of the Brooklyn, Baltimore and Hirshhorn Museums. Maurice Sievan’s first retrospective was held in 1974 at the Queens Museum in Flushing Meadows. Followed by another major retrospective in 1997 at the Museum of the City of New York. His work was exhibited in 2004 at MB Fine Art in Los Angeles, CA.