

RUTH ABRAMS



THE MICROCOSMS OF RUTH ABRAMS

One of the current theories of cosmology is that the beginning of the universe came about with a "Big Bang". It is believed that since that time, eons ago, the universe has been expanding at a speed of 186,000 miles per second (the speed of light), and as we look further and further into space we are able to look back in time. This is a concept hard for the human mind to comprehend, and it is fascinating that the artists of today are striving to give us a more comprehensive answer.

Ruth Abrams has been able to approach this concept with both an intuitive and learned perception. Her microcosmic paintings succeed in capturing this complex time/space phenomenon through panoramic scenes. The paintings, filled with rich daubs and sweeps of color, depict bursts of energy, supernovas, the formation of black holes, fiery dances of sun spots and other phenomena. In retrospect, some appear prophetic, predating recent space exploration.

The Microcosms reflect a concept which the artist herself originated — The Paradox of the Big. David Levy, Dean of the Parsons School of Design, said: "This concept is based upon her realization that, when viewed from the unthinkable vantage point of infinity, any scale within the range of our cognitive capacity is meaningless." The small scale of Abrams paintings conveys catastrophic events in relation to the cosmos as only blips in time in an ever-changing universe. She has succeeded in capturing a small aspect of the enormous. The strength of Abrams' images is thus enhanced and indeed dependent upon the limitations of her tiny format.

The Microcosms are envisioned freed from the arbitrary horizon line which has been an artistic reference point for centuries. Her art intimates that weightlessness in space results in a unique difference in body orientation. Conceiving of herself as having broken away from the constraints of horizontals and verticals (gravitational pull, that is) Abrams has ventured into a relativistic realm when viewing a landscape.

To the question that is asked "Why not paint big, instead of small?" Abrams said "I thought of that, too. I had been painting 9 and 10 foot canvases from 1954 through 1956, so it wasn't painting "big" that fazed me. The astonishing fact is that the smaller I made my aerial view paintings the bigger the scale appeared, as if viewed from a great distance. I recognized it was the kind of distance and kind of suspended panoramic view experienced so many times from the window of an airplane. This recognition released a store of impressions that related to the unfolding of multi-level perspectives on leaving the earth's surface: overlapping horizons, wind shaped clouds, veiled stratospheres . . . It's been a trip! Yes, I still do big canvases at times. But the rapture of the cosmos stays with me. The surprising revelation, the unexpected image, and the yet unknown looms in the landscape of my mind."

Today, space exploration has established a frontier leading to a new sensibility in our space age. Certainly its impact has powerfully affected and has been a source of inspiration for the imaginative ongoing art of Ruth Abrams.

Sandra Gilbert
with thanks to
Ruth Mayberry



EXHIBITIONS

- 1934 Solo Exhibition, paintings & sculpture at ACA Gallery, New York.
1943 Ceramics and sculpture at ACA Gallery, 3 person exhibition.
1944 Artists League of America, New York.
1947 The Corcoran Gallery: The Twentieth Biennial Exhibition, Washington, D.C.
1954 Provincetown Art Association, Provincetown, Mass.
Solo Exhibition at The Artists' Gallery, Provincetown, Mass.
1956 Solo Exhibition at Roko Gallery, New York.
Stable Gallery Fifth Annual Exhibition, New York.
"The Tenth Street Group", Tainager Gallery, New York.
American Abstract Painters, Riverside Museum, New York.
1957 Solo Exhibition at Camino Gallery, New York.
1958 Art, U.S.A. Armory exhibition, New York.
1959 Solo Exhibition Roko Gallery, New York.
5 Contemporary Painters in a 25 Year Retrospective, Camino Gallery, N.Y.
Solo Exhibition, Camino Gallery, New York.
1960 Critics Choice of Artists of Fame and Promise: City & Country School, N.Y.
1962 Smolins Gallery: Art of the 30's N.Y.
Solo Exhibition at the D'Arcy Gallery, New York.
Painting Ten Years Ago at the East Hampton Gallery, New York.
1963 The Dallas Museum of Fine Arts: Tenth Annual Exhibition, Young Collections.
Solo Exhibition at the Museo de Bellas Artes de Caracas, Venezuela.
1964 Solo Exhibition at M.I.T. Faculty Club, Cambridge, Mass.
1967 Solo Exhibition, on loan at Avery Hall, Columbia University, N.Y., through 1968.
1969 Solo Exhibition at M.I.T. Faculty Club, Cambridge, Mass.
1976 Solo Exhibition at Delson-Richter Galleries, Jerusalem, Israel.
Visual Arts Coalition, Contemporary Arts Gallery, New York University.
Washington International Art Show: Delson-Richter Gallery, Washington, D.C.
1977 Solo Exhibition, Contemporary Arts Gallery, New York University.
Visual Arts Coalition, Women Painters and Poets, New York University
The Tenth Street Days: the Coops of the Fifties, Plaedies Gallery, N.Y.
Tenth Street Now, Landmarks Gallery, N.Y.
Solo Exhibition at the Amarillo Art Center, Amarillo, Texas
1978 Solo Exhibition at the Anderson Gallery, Virginia Commonwealth Univ.,
Richmond, VA.

COLLECTIONS

The Rose Art Museum, Waltham, Mass. New York University Art Collection, N.Y.C. Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama. Cornell University Museum of Art, Ithaca, N.Y. Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum, Springfield, Mass. Center for Urban Studies, Cambridge, Mass. Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, Venezuela. University Central de Venezuela, Facultad de Humanidades. New York Studio School, New York. The Neuberger Museum, Purchase, N.Y. Private collections in New York, California, Massachusetts, and Caracas, Venezuela.

RUTH ABRAMS

Ruth Abrams was born in Brooklyn, New York. She studied art at the Art Students' League, Columbia University, and The New School for Social Research, and worked in the ateliers of sculptors William Zorach, Aleksandr Archipenko, and Jose de Creeft, and painters John Graham, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, and Wallace Harrison. Between 1965-66, Ruth Abrams was Art Director for The New School for Social Research Association. She has lectured at the Parsons School of Design and elsewhere on changing perceptions of space as affected by advanced space-technology. In 1974, she wrote and directed the film, **Paradox of the Big**.

