MAX ARTHUR COHN BIOGRAPHY

Max Arthur Cohn, born in London in 1903, was brought to the United States as a young child. His first summer job, at the age of seventeen, involved work in a New York City silk screen studio. In 1922, Max began his studies at the New York Art Students League under the direction of Boardman Robinson, considered to be an accomplished draftsman. The following year Max joined fellow students Alexander Calder, Adolph Gotlieb and John Graham under the direction of John Sloan, a member of the original eight, or Ash Can School, whom Max considered one of the great influences on his work.

In 1927, in order to broaden his knowledge, Max went to Paris where he studied at the Academie Colarossi and absorbed the influences of modernism, particularly Abstraction and Cubism which were prevalent in the vanguard art circles of the French capital. Beginning at this period, Max’s use of color was influenced by Picasso and Matisse. By 1930, Max was painting strong urban images, always depicting the world around him as it appeared, pretty or not. During the Depression, Max was engaged in the Easel Project of the WPA. He worked for $26.00 per week to produce 26 works of art. Many artists at the time chose to make political statements with their work, painting bread lines or Hoovervilles. Max preferred to paint views of the waterfront, the Edison Power Plant, bridges and ships - capturing the essence of the time with a human aspect not just focused on the architecture.

During this period, silk screening, a printing method that had been used for the mass production of lettered signs, became an art form all its own. Max wanted his silk screen prints to imitate his watercolors, not the usual blocky use of color as in signage - but full color prints of artwork made available to those who couldn't afford originals. In 1942, Max coauthored a book entitled Silk Screen Stenciling as a Fine Art, so others could learn his techniques. In the 1950’s, Max ran his own commercial art studio where he taught the young Any Warhol how to make silk screen prints.

As the 1950’s progressed, Max started to modernize his art. He was still focused on the city, but became more abstract in his interpretation, allowing for the transition to his later abstract work of the 60s and 70s. From 1960 forward, Max moved into abstract forms with figures. He started with obvious figurative work and moved to a more abstract figurative, until he reached an abstract format with only the hint of a figure.

Max Arthur Cohn was an artist for more than 70 years. He has authored books, and held many one-man exhibitions and museum shows. His work is included in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the Philadelphia Museum, The Museum of Modern Art, (MOMA) the British Museum, Chicago Art Institute, the University of Wisconsin, and the Tel Aviv Museum, among others.

Max died in 1998, in New York City at the age of 95.