



MEMORIA DI UN ARTISTA

CELEBRAZIONE PER IL CENTENARIO DELLA NASCITA

Allan Ceen
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INTRODUCTION

For the first half of his artistic career, Albert Ceen was entirely self-taught. He developed the ability to sketch at an early age and became particularly proficient at drawing figures and faces. Only when he moved to New York (see Chronology below) did he decide to take formal training, but by then his particular style and attitudes were already set. He had started painting in oils in Australia in the mid-1940s, and in order to perfect his technique, studied under Ivan Olinsky in New York in the mid-1950s. Simultaneously he attended the sessions of sketching from the live model organized by Joe Marino.

He was convinced that oil painting was the highest possible achievement of the artist but, as this exhibit reveals, his strong suit was drawing, and remained so to the end of his life. More than once he was heard to criticize artists who developed a single style or medium and did not change. Practicing what he preached, he branched out in all directions. In Australia he started the silk screen print series which was to continue to the end of his career. His choice of this medium was perhaps influenced by his brother-in-law who had set up a firm in Sydney called Silk and Textile printers (STP), where all the printing was done with silk screens. The silk screen medium made the artist deal with the juxtaposition of flat color areas, forcing him to develop ways of suggesting gradation and shaping of volumes through color.

In Australia he also started working in wire sculpture. Using one of his sketches as a base, on another sheet he would simplify the lines of the sketch to the point of abstraction, and then bend lengths of copper wire to fit the lines. He would then solder the pieces and enamel the assembled work. While the result was usually two-dimensional, he also experimented with three-dimensional forms (see Cat. 23). In Rome he extended the notion of assembling elements to form sculpture with what he called "ferrofantasie". These were assemblages of pieces of scrap iron found in local junk yards. The pieces often suggested the subject and were turned into frequently witty, humorous compositions. They reflected a theme which he had developed earlier in his watercolors: "things made of other things" (see Cat. 6,7).

The development of his drawing technique is easily traceable in this exhibit. There is a gradual development from the sharply defined, smoothly shaded early drawings to the looser, more contrasty sketches of his later work. The culminating point is probably the set of figure studies of 1957 (see Cat. 15), where line merges with mass and mass blends into line. The tool which enabled him to free up his sketching technique was the Flowmaster or felt tip pen. This almost completely replaced the pencil in his later work. Before leaving New York for Rome he stocked up on a large quantity of Flowmasters of various colors because at the time they were not available in Italy.

The artist worked in other media as well: he tried his hand at collage (see Cat.92) and at clay and bronze sculpture. At a restaurant a linen napkin and a few match sticks would turn into a turbaned head in his hands. But the sketch was always his favorite. He filled numerous sketchbooks with the faces of people he saw at work, on trains and ferryboats, in parks, restaurants, and theaters. At the painting academy, he would pause momentarily to catch the image of a colleague attacking his canvas (see Cat. 82).

A friend has referred to Ceen's work as eclectic. Indeed we can see quotations of Picasso (see Cat. 91) and of Modigliani (see Cat. 87) as well as others. But on the whole it seems fairly clear that he gradually developed a recognizable style of his own, especially in his sketches. While never a commercial success, this artist may be described as a representative, significant contributor to the art of the 20th century.

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

1924-1927	Antwerp: Entry clerk with Dreyfus Commodities Trading Co.
1928	Milano: CIDAC, Commodities trading
April 1929	Genova: Weds Flavia Cabib
1929-1935	Napoli: CIDAC Commodities trading
1935-1939	Genova: Bunge, Commodities trading
1939-1941	Melbourne: Bunge, Commodities trading
1942-1945	Tocumwal NSW and Melbourne: Australian Army
1946-1958	New York: Bunge, Commodities trading
1959-1976	Roma: retired

CATALOG

Cat. 1		
1932 Napoli	PIAZZA MUNICIPIO	
	Watercolor	51 x 38
Cat. 1b		
1930 Napoli	QUALCHE SPASSO A PIAZZA MUNICIPIO	
	Watercolor	24 x 18
Cat. 2		
1939 Melbourne	CHRISTMAS FEELING	
	Watercolor	26 x 36
Cat. 3		
1941 Melbourne	RECLINING NUDE	
	Watercolor	24 x 16

Cat. 4 1943 Tocomwal	LASH - COOK - CARRY Watercolor	77 x 55
Cat. 5 1944 Melbourne	CAMP PELL INTERNATIONAL HOTEL Watercolor	72 x 50
Cat. 6 1944 Melbourne	TYPIST Watercolor	24 x 34
Cat. 7 1944 Melbourne	PEASANT WOMAN Watercolor	23 x 33
Cat. 8 ~1928 Milan	SIX SKETCHES OF MAN WITH MOUSTACHE Black Pencil	each 20 x 30
Cat. 9 1929 Napoli	PROFILE OF MAN IN BOWLER HAT Black and red pencil	23 x 31
Cat. 10 ~1929 Napoli	PROFILE OF M. DASCHE Black pencil	23 x 31
Cat. 11 ~1929 Napoli	PROFILE OF LEON HAKIM Black pencil	23 x 31
Cat. 12 1934 "in treno per Foggia"	THREE QUARTER VIEW OF D. VENTURA Black pencil	16 x 23
Cat. 13 ~1953 New York	VIOLINIST (Giorgio Ciompi) Black Flowmaster and black pencil	27 x 39
Cat. 14 ~1953 New York	CELLIST (Benar Heifetz)	

	Black Flowmaster	22 x 28
Cat. 15 1957 New York	SIXTEEN FIGURE STUDIES Black Flowmaster, orange india ink stick and grey wash	each 35 x 42
Cat. 16 Montecatini 1960	PROFILE OF MAN WITH CAP Black Flowmaster and pink wash	27 x 33
Cat. 17 ~ 1960 Roma	PROFILE OF BEARDED MAN Black, brown and red Flowmaster	23 x 30
Cat. 18 ~ 1970 Roma	PROFILE OF ADOLESCENT BOY Black Flowmaster and grey wash	20 x 30
Cat. 19 ~1957 New York	THREE-QUARTER VIEW OF MAN Black Flowmaster	30 x 40
Cat. 20 ~1957 New York	THREE-QUARTER VIEW OF WOMAN Black Flowmaster	34 x 40
Cat. 21 ~1955 New York	PORTRAIT OF IRVING MOSKOWITZ Painted copper wire	22 x 27
Cat. 22 ~1955 New York	SELF-PORTRAIT Painted copper wire	20 x 22
Cat. 23 ~1955 New York	VIOLINIST Painted copper wire	15 x 36
Cat. 24 ~1955 New York	OPERA SINGER Painted copper wire	33 x 10 x 8
Cat. 25		

1940 Melbourne	PREPARATORY DRAWING FOR WIRE SCULPTURE Black pencil	43 x 68
Cat. 26 ~1960 Rome	STUDY FOR WIRE SCULPTURE Black Flowmaster	35 x 41
Cat. 27 ~1953 New York	PREPARATORY DRAWING FOR NEW YORK WIRE SCULPTURE Black pencil on squared paper	42 x 35
Cat. 28 ~1953 New York	PHOTOGRAPH OF NEW YORK WIRE SCULPTURE Color photo	15 x 12
The photograph taken by the artist of the New York wire sculpture (see Cat.***)		
Cat. 29 ~1954 New York	PHOTOGRAPH OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WIRE SCULPTURE Color photo	15 x 12
Cat. 30 ~1963 Rome	DEER Iron Assemblage	11 x 20 x 33
Cat. 31 ~1964 Rome	MOTHER AND CHILD Iron Assemblage	27 x 10 x 36
Cat. 32 1940 Melbourne	GRAPES Watercolor	27 x 37
Cat. 33 1942 Melbourne	GRAPES Silk Screen print and water color	27 x 36
Cat. 34 1942 Melbourne	GENERAL MACARTHUR Silk Screen print	25 x 33

Cat. 35 1968 Rome	ISCHIA Silk Screen print	30 x 24
Cat. 36 ~1960 Rome	BOATS AT NIGHT Silk Screen print	33 x 24
Cat. 37 1969 Rome	MICHELANGELO DAVID WITH HORSE Silk Screen print	28 x 38
Cat. 38 1966 Rome	ABSTRACT OF NUDES Silk Screen print	46 x 34
Cat. 39 ~1961 Rome	VIEW OF VIA CASSIA FROM THE ARTIST'S STUDIO Silk Screen print on grainy grey paper	36 x 27
Cat. 40 1960 Rome	PANNI AL SOLE Silk Screen print	37 x 26
Cat. 41 1956 New York	THE MIRROR Silk Screen print	27 x 27
Cat. 42 1956 New York	ADORATION Silk Screen print	40 x 27
Cat. 43 ~ 1958 New York	STANDING FEMALE NUDE Black Flowmaster	20 x 40
Cat. 44 1969 Rome NUDE print	STANDING FEMALE 25 x 35	Silk Screen
Cat. 45		

~1969 Rome	STANDING FEMALE NUDE Silk Screen print	25 x 38
Cat. 46 1969 Rome	KNEELING FEMALE NUDE Silk Screen print	29 x 39
Cat. 47 1969 Rome	SITTING FEMALE NUDE Silk Screen print	29 x 36
Cat. 49 1969 Rome	KNEELING FEMALE NUDE Silk Screen print	29 x 36
Cat. 50 ~1969 Rome	RECLINING FEMALE NUDE Silk Screen print	40 x 26
Cat. 51 ~1969 Rome	SITTING FEMALE NUDE Silk Screen print	40 x 25
Cat. 52 1969 Rome	SITTING FEMALE NUDE Silk Screen print	36 x 27
Cat. 53 1963 Rome	VENERE NERA Silk Screen print on brown paper	32 x 42
Cat. 54 ~1964 Rome	VENERE NERA Etching with drypoint	18 x 24
Cat. 55 1969 Rome	HEAD OF YOUNG GIRL Silk Screen print	28 x 34
Cat. 56 ~1970 Rome	HEAD OF YOUNG GIRL Etching and dry point on rice paper	26 x 33

Cat. 57 1971 Rome	RITRATTI DI ALBERT CEEN Silk Screen print poster	35 x 50
Cat. 58 1929 Genova	PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST Sepia photograph	14 x 21
Cat. 59 ~ 1929 Napoli	HALF SELF-PORTRAIT Colored pencils	10 x 22
Cat. 60 1937 Genova	SELF-PORTRAIT Black pencil	24 x 34
Cat. 61 1937 Genova	SELF-PORTRAIT WITH CIGARETTE HOLDER Black pencil	31 x 46
Cat. 62 1939 Melbourne	SELF-PORTRAIT Black pencil and charcoal	23 x 34
Cat. 63 1958 New York	SELF-PORTRAIT Flowmaster and wash	34 x 41
(Cat. 64 1967 Rome	SELF-PORTRAIT Watercolor	27 x 32
Cat. 65 ~1972 Rome	SELF-PORTRAIT Etching	23 x 30
Cat. 66 1929 Napoli	FLAVIA Black pencil	17 x 21
Cat. 67 ~1938 Genova	FLAVIA AND GUIDO Black pencil	18 x 25
Cat. 68 1935 Naples	ALLAN Brown pencil	16 x 20
Cat. 69		

~1939 Melbourne	GUIDO Black pencil	18 x 22
Cat. 70 ~1940	GUIDO READING IN ARMCHAIR Black pencil	15 x 19
Cat. 71 ~1940 Melbourne	ALLAN Black pencil	19 x 24
Cat. 72 1961	HOUSE IN PONZA Flowmaster and grey wash	28 x 35
Cat. 73 1960 Anzio	“FAVILLA” IN ANZIO HARBOR Black Flowmaster	35 x 28
Cat. 74 ~1960 Ponza	DECK OF FERRYBOAT Black Flowmaster	35 x 28
Cat. 75 1959 Anticoli	LA CASA ROSSA (Anticoli Corrado) Flowmaster and watercolor	42 x 36
Cat. 76 ~1959 Monterano	VIEW OF MONTERANO Flowmaster and watercolor	42 x 36
Cat. 77 ~1960 Cortina	ALPINE LANDSCAPE Flowmaster	30 x 24
Cat. 78 ~1960 Cortina	ALPINE LANDSCAPE Flowmaster and watercolor	36 x 28
Cat. 79 ~1956 New York	THE ARTIST’S STUDIO Flowmaster	35 x 42

- Cat. 80
~1955 New York
- THE ARTIST AND THE MASTER**
Black pencil and black ink 27 x 21
- Cat. 81
~1955 New York
- WIRE SCULPTURE OF IVAN OLINSKY**
Photograph 10 x 15
- Cat. 82
~1955 New York
- AT THE ACADEMY**
Flowmaster and grey wash 35 x 43
- Cat. 83
~1950 New York
- STILL LIFE ON HEXAGONAL TABLE**
WATERCOLOR 21 x 31
- Cat. 84
1958 New York
- PORTRAIT OF ALLAN**
Flowmaster 32 x 4
- Cat. 85
1957 New York
- STANDING FEMALE NUDE**
Flowmaster and grey wash 20 x 40
- Cat. 86
Various dates
- EIGHT ASSORTED SKETCHES**
Pencil, pen, Flowmaster
- Cat. 87
~1957 New York
- AMATA**
Oil on canvas board 34 x 44
- Cat. 88
~1960 Cortina
- PORTRAIT OF WOODCUTTER**
Oil on masonite 44 x 75
- Cat. 89
1960
- PORTRAIT OF BLANQUITA VILLALBA**
Oil on canvas 48 x 59
- Cat. 90
~1955 New York
- THE PIT**
Oil on canvas 72 x 56
- Cat. 91

~1951	STUDY FOR PORTRAIT OF SI KERN	
	Black pencil	40 x 30
Cat. 92		
1950	PORTRAIT OF SI KERN	
	Paper collage, dry India ink sticks	21 x 33
Cat. 93		
~1955	STUDY FOR "THE PIT"	
	Black pencil	35 x 24
Cat. 94		
Various dates	SIX CARDS	
	Silk screen prints	