

# ANITA SHAPOLSKY GALLERY

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## Karl Hagedorn - "Symbolic Abstraction"

**Sculptors exhibited: Thomas Beckman, Claire Falkenstein, Mark Gibian, Ibram Lassaw, Clement Meadmore, Louise Nevelson, Nancy Steinson and Wilfrid Zogbaum.**

*May 8 - Summer 2014*

*Opening Reception: Sat. May 10th, 3 -5 PM*

Karl Hagedorn (1922-2005) was an artist shaped by the time and history he lived through, as well as the geography of where he resided. His hometown was a small village in the mountains of what had previously been the Weimar Republic, Germany. His life were impacted by world history. As he wrote, "The Weimar Republic had given way to the Nazi regime and one's own life was no longer one's own but at the service of the government.

Living in the Russian zone, Hagedorn related, "Art became more dream than reality." He and his family escaped to West Berlin in 1952. In Munich, he became a student at the Art Academy at the age 34.

He considered his six years in West Germany (1953-1959) of tantamount importance to the growth of his art. He visited Paris which was a pivotal experience for him, as he came in contact with artists he had previously been unaware of. The Cubists and Surrealists, along with Leger, Picasso, Miro and Matisse were a revelation to him. He wrote, "They jolted my artistic system alive and capitulated me into the mid-20th century with a clearer direction for myself in it."

The next stop for Hagedorn was the United States. Sponsored by a friend in St. Paul, Minnesota. In Minneapolis, the Walker Art Center grew pivotal in his life and was where he had his first solo museum exhibition.

By 1973 he relocated to New York City and he ultimately connected with the well-regarded Gimpel & Weitzenhoffer Gallery on Madison Avenue. He was featured in their "New Talent Show," and at 51 years old received a mention in John Russell's review in the *New York Times*. He exhibited there for more than 20 years while maintaining close ties to Germany and exhibiting there.

He spent the last years of his life with his wife, Diana, in Philadelphia Pennsylvania.

"Symbolic Abstraction" was the term Hagedorn used to reference his work, which spanned the 1950s to the 21st century. He employed the mediums of painting, drawing, watercolor and gouache. Through the decades the connective tissue throughout his output was his vivid colors, forms, and shapes.

His work relates all these elements in the search for a connection between the human system, spirit, and the world it simultaneously reflects and creates. Hagedorn worked in the traditional European style, mostly small paintings well balanced with great precision,



*Procession, 1980, o/c, 54x72 in*

pleasing to the eye, apolitical, stressing growth of industry and entwined with the human element.

What a difference between the younger German artists of our 21st century who defy easy categorization. They are inventive, skeptical of all authority, and work within a broad range of mediums which vary in size from notebook to monumental paintings - between high culture and low, figuration and abstraction, the heroic and the banal - allowing flux rather the stability to prevail.

Selected collections: Brooklyn Museum, Walker Art Center, New York Public Library, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Goethe Institute, Deutsches Museum and the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

Anita Shapolsky