

**Jason Berger** (January 22, 1924-October 19, 2010) was born in Malden, Massachusetts, the son of first generation Jews from Lithuania and Latvia, on his mother's side, and from Russia and Lithuania on his father's side. Speaking only Yiddish till the age of three, he grew up in the Boston suburbs and attended Roxbury Memorial High School. Encouraged by his mother and uncle, J.P.Savel, illustrator for the *Boston Post*, Berger's interest and passion in painting were evident very early. As a teen in the mid-nineteen thirties, he painted *en plein air* regularly emulating the influences he saw in Boston. The immediate approach of the watercolors of John Singer Sergeant and Winslow Homer, as well as, the love of the old master and the current trends of Modernism, Cubism and Abstraction would stay with him throughout his life.

At a young age, he frequented the Museum of Fine Arts of Boston and haunted the Boston Public Library, reading all he could on painting and painting techniques. His focus on painting was recognized during high school by acceptance to the "Vocational Art Classes" at the Museum of Fine Arts of Boston where he studied drawing and composition in the afternoons. With this preparation, he received a full scholarship to the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in 1941. Karl Zerbe, the principle painting teacher at the school, thought Berger and his classmates, Reed Kay, Jack Kramer, David Aronson, and George Sheridan were among best students.

Karl Zerbe, a German citizen, received his position at the Museum School in 1937 after a year at Harvard University. Like Hans Hoffman, who immigrated in the 1930's to New York City, Karl Zerbe brought the tenants of European Modernism to Boston. "For eager young Americans, most of whom had traveled little—and constrained in the 1930s by the Depression and in the 1940s by World War II and its aftermath—contact with Hofmann (and Zerbe) served as an invaluable alternative for direct contact with the European sources of Modernism".

Unlike Hoffman, whose emphasis was in abstraction and initiated the Abstract Expressionists, Zerbe was well rooted in the expressionism and spawned the Boston Expressionists. Associated with the Boston Expressionists are Jack Levine, Hyman Bloom, Kahlil Gibran, as well as, Zerbe's students-Jason Berger, David Aronson, Reed Kay, Jack Kramer, Bernie Chaet, Arthur Polonsky, and George Sheridan. In the 1940's, the Expressionist enthusiasm in Boston would materialize in exhibitions of Max Beckman, Chiam Soutine, Oscar Kokoshka, Marc Chagall, and James Ensor before they were exhibited in New York City.

World War II interrupted Berger's college education with three years in the Army, 1943-1946. Returning from the war, he graduated from college in 1948. Afterwards, with a traveling scholarship awarded by the Museum School, Berger went to Europe with his first wife, the painter Marilyn Powers. In France, Berger studied with cubist sculptor Ossip Zadkin in Paris and frequented Braque's studio, met Matisse and absorbed the direct influences of Bonnard, Dufy, Picasso, and Soutine.

Upon his return to the United States, Berger began teaching first at Mount Holyoke College (1955), and then enjoyed a long tenure teaching at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts (1956-69). He taught briefly at Wellesley College (1957-59), The State University of New York at Buffalo (1969-70) and The Metropolitan College at Boston University (1971-72). Until his retirement, he taught at the Art Institute of Boston (1973-88).

During the summers, the Bergers traveled and painted *en plein air* in France, Mexico, and Portugal. After his wife, Marilyn Powers, died in 1976 of cancer, he returned to Portugal where he met Estela Cuoto who became his second wife in 1978. They eventually moved to Portugal in 1994. Tragically, Berger lost his second wife, Estela, in 1997. Berger remained in Portugal where he eventually married the painter Leena Rekola in 1999. The couple moved back to Boston, MA in March 2008. He died in October, 2010.

A prolific painter, Berger has enjoyed great success. He began exhibiting while still a student with Boris Mirski Gallery and Swetzoff Gallery, as well as the Institute of Modern Art (now Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston). The latter gave him a solo exhibition in 1950. The artist has also exhibited in a number of museums, including the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA; Art Institute, Chicago, IL; Danforth Museum of Art, Framingham, MA; DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, MA; Fitchburg Museum of Art, Fitchburg, MA; Museum of Modern Art, NYC; Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, MA; Worcester Museum of Art, Worcester, MA. He has also exhibited widely in France, Mexico and Portugal. Berger's work can be found in numerous private collections, as well as in the permanent collections of many institutions which include: Chase National Bank, New York City; Danforth Museum of Art, Framingham, MA; Guggenheim Museum, New York City; Museum of Modern Art, New York City; Rockefeller Medical Center, New York City, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA; and Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, MA.

In addition to the European Traveling Fellowship from the School of the Museum of Fine Art, Boston, Berger received several awards, including the Grand Prize for Painting from Jacque Lipchitz at the Boston Arts Festival in 1956 and the Clarissa Bartlett Traveling Award in 1957.

Berger continued to work directly from nature until his death always putting the picture first and feeding nature into it. This focus on combining the formal elements of color, shape and compositional scheme to make a good picture never interfered with an overall expression of a child-like joy of discovery through the act of painting.

## **EDUCATION**

The Boston Museum School, 1949  
University of Alabama, 1943 - 44  
Ossip Zadkine (Atelier in Paris), 1950 - 52

## **TEACHING**

1983-1986 The Art Institute of Boston, Summer School in Normandy  
1973-1988 Art Institute of Boston  
1971-1972 Boston University  
1969-1970 State University of New York at Buffalo  
1957-1959 Wellesley College  
1956-1969 The Boston Museum School  
1955 Mt. Holyoke College

## **HONORS**

Katz, Lois, "The Paintings of Jason Berger"  
Phar Na International, Inc., Toyko, Japan, 1998  
Monograph with c. 150 color reproductions to be published under the aegis of The Sackler Foundation Video: Jason Berger at the Edge of the World. Directed by Howard Posner. 43 minutes. Shown at Boston University, College of Communication, June 23, 1993; Boston Museum of Fine Arts, October 3, 1993; aired of WGBH, May 31, 1994.  
Interviewed and archived by Art Archives of America, Smithsonian Institution, 1979 - 80; 1994  
Who's Who in America, 1977 - present  
Member of the Bicentennial Task Force Boston 200, Boston, Massachusetts, 1975  
Direct Vision Catalogue funded by Massachusetts Council on Arts and Humanities, 1973  
Who's Who in American Art, 1970 - present  
Art New England Feb-March, 2009

## **AWARDS**

1983 The Copley Society at Boston City Hall, Boston, Massachusetts  
1970 State University of New York at Buffalo, Faculty Research Fellowship  
1961, 1955 Boston Arts Festival, Boston Massachusetts  
1957 The Boston Museum School, Clarissa Bartlett Traveling Scholarship  
1949 The Boston Museum School, Paige Traveling Scholarship for Study Abroad  
Festival -- Grand Prize, awarded by Jacques Lipchitz, 1955

## **COLLECTIONS**

Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY  
Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY  
Boston Sheraton, Boston Massachusetts  
Chase National Bank, New York, NY  
Smith College, Northampton, MA  
Rose Art Center, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA  
Rockefeller Medical Center, New York, NY  
The Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ  
Simmons College, Boston, MA  
Numerous other public and private collections

## **SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

**2009** The Art Store, Selected Works, Charleston, WV  
**2008** Judi Rotenberg Gallery, *Essential Jason Berger*, Boston, MA  
**2008** Danforth Museum, *Directed Vision*, Framingham, MA  
**2008** Hoyt Institute of Fine Arts, *Jason Berger*, New Castle, PA  
**2007** Arqué Galeria de Arte, *Jason Berger Revisited*, Lisboa, Portugal  
**2006** Ernesto Myans Galleries, JASON BERGER: THE MASTER AT 80, Santa Fe, NM  
**2006** Judi Rotenberg Gallery, WOOD CUTS, Boston, MA  
**2006** University of New England, DIRECT VISION PAINTINGS, Maine  
**2006** Jameson Modern, The Color of Life, Portland, ME  
**2005** ARQUE, Galeria de Arte, *Direct Vision*, Lisbon, Portugal  
**2005** Direct Vision, Arqué Galeria de Arte, Lisboa, Portugal  
**2005** Galerie Katia Granoff, Honfleur, France  
**2004** Judi Rotenberg Gallery, *Jason Berger*, Boston, MA  
**2004** Tapper-Popermajer, Malmo, Sweden  
**2004** Maison-Henri, Normandy, France  
**2002** Judi Rotenberg Gallery, Boston, MA  
**2001** Judi Rotenberg Gallery, Boston, MA  
**2000** Judi Rotenberg Gallery, Boston, MA  
**2000** Maison Henri IV/Saint Valery en Caux, JASON BERGER: RECENT PAINTINGS, Normandy, France  
**1998** Judi Rotenberg Gallery, The Paintings of Jason Berger, Boston, MA  
**1994** Mercury Gallery, JASON BERGER: FIFTY YEARS OF PAINTING, Boston, MA  
**1991** Mayans Galleries, Santa Fe, NM  
**1990** Art Communication International (Art Com'In), Rouen, France  
**1988, 1990** Alon Gallery, *Jason Berger*, Brookline, MA  
**1987** The Art Store, Charleston, WV  
**1986** Simmons College, The Trustman Art Gallery, Boston, MA  
**1982** Field Branch Library, PAINTING OF PORTUGAL, Cambridge, MA

**1981** Galeria Jornal de Noticias, Oporta, Portugal  
**1979** Christian Herter Center, NEW PAINTINGS FROM PORTUGAL, Boston, MA  
**1979** MacIvor Reddie Gallery, JASON BERGER/ 37 years of printmaking, Boston, MA  
**1977** ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF ARTS & SPORTS, Ferragudo, Algarve, Portugal  
**1976** Brookline Town Hall, HOMAGE TO REVERE BEACH, Brookline, MA  
**1971** Helen Bumpus Gallery, Duxbury, MA  
**1967** Nashua Art Center. Nashua, NH  
**1962, 1972** Joan Peterson Gallery, Boston, MA  
**1961** Pace Gallery, Boston, MA  
**1960** Gallery 10, DRAWINGS, Boston, MA  
**1960** Nova Gallery, Boston, MA  
**1958, 1957, 1956** Peridot Gallery, New York, NY  
**1956, 1952** Swetzoff Gallery, Boston, MA  
**1955** Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg, MA  
**1954** Deerfield Academy, Deerfield, MA  
**1950** Institute of Modern Art, Boston, MA

## **GROUP SHOWS**

### **2008**

Small Works, The Art Store, Charleston, WV

Best of Summer, The Art Store, Charleston, WV

**2006** Three Artists, Three Generations, Palacio de Galeria, Tavira, Portugal

**2004** The Visionary Decade : New Voices in Art in 1940's Boston, Boston University Art Gallery, Boston, MA

**1991** Wingspread Gallery, Northeast Harbor, Maine

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**1989** Wingspread Gallery, Northeast Harbor, Maine

**1988** Museum School Faculty Exhibition, 1980- 1988, Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg, MA

**1987** Joseph Ablow, Jason Berger: Boston Colorists, Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg, MA

**1986** Expressionism in Boston: 1945- 1985, DeCordova Museum, Lincoln, MA

### **1985**

Southeastern Massachusetts University, North Dartmouth, MA

Boston Arts Festival, Boston, MA

### **1983**

Visconti Gallery, Boston, MA

The Copley Masters Exhibition, Federal Reserve Bank, Boston, MA

Wingspread Gallery, Northeast Harbor, Maine

**1982** Wingspread Gallery, Northeast Harbor, Maine

**1980** A Centennial Exhibition, Copley Society, Boston, MA

**1978** The Direct Vision, Phoenix Gallery, Concord, NH

### **1977**

355 Gallery, Boston, MA

Paintings of Portugal, (In conjunction with Festival of Portugal and Spain) Sheraton- Boston Hotel, Boston, MA

The Direct Vision, Boston City Hall, Boston, MA

### **1976**

The Direct Vision, Walters Gallery, Regis College, Weston, MA

The Direct Vision, The Academy of the Arts, Easton, MD

The Direct Vision, Hilles Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

The Direct Vision, MacIvor Reddie Gallery, Boston, MA

**1975**

The Direct Vision Paints Boston, State House, Doric Hall, Boston, MA. Funded by Mass Council on Arts and Humanities

The Direct Vision: 14 Days in May, Boston City Hall, Boston, MA

Paysages Francaises, Bibliotheque Francaise, Boston, MA

The Direct Vision: Exhibition and Symposium, St. Paul's School Concord, NH

**1974**

The Direct Vision, New Hampton School, Hampton, NH

The Direct Vision, Point Gallery, Kittery Point, Maine

The Direct Vision: 100 Paintings, Boston Center for the Arts, Boston, MA

**1973**

Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg, MA

The Direct Vision, Boston City Hall, Boston, MA

The Direct Vision, MacIvor Reddie Gallery, Boston, MA

**1972** Direct Vision Show, Boston City Hall, Boston, MA

**1969**

Museo de Artes Populares, Patzcuaro, Mexico

Providence Art Festival, Providence, RI

**1967** Joan Peterson Gallery, Boston, MA

**1962**

Pennsylvania Academy, Philadelphia, PA

Smith College, Northampton, MA

Institute of Contemporary Art (Dana Collection), Boston, MA

**1961**

Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA (travelling exhibition, auspices of AFA)

Boston Arts Festival, Boston, MA

Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA

**1956**

Recent Drawings U.S.A., Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY

Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA

**1955**

Collector's Show, Dallas, TX

Silvermine Art Show, Mystic, CT

Carnegie Institute International, Pittsburgh, PA

**1954**

Young Printmakers, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Carnegie Institute International, Pittsburgh, PA

Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA

Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA (travelling exhibition, auspices of AFA)

Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL

**1953**

Boston Independent Artists, Boston, MA

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

Tufts University, Medford, MA

Brandeis University. Waltham, MA

Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA (travelling exhibition, auspices of AFA)

**1952**

Boston Arts Festival, Boston, MA

Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA

Salon de la Jeune Sculpture, Musée Rodin, Paris, France

Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL

**1950** Galerie Le Grip, Rouen, France

**1949** Swetzoff Gallery, Boston, MA. Exhibited through 1957.

**1947**

Berkshire Museum, Springfield, MA

Downtown Gallery, New York, NY

Boris Mirski Gallery, Boston, MA

**1943**

Institute of Modern Art, Boston, MA

Boris Mirski Gallery, Boston, MA