

Marlborough

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Avigdor Arikha / Works from the Estate

March 20 – April 21, 2012

The Directors of Marlborough Gallery announce the opening of an exhibition of works by Avigdor Arikha, the preeminent Paris-based artist, who died the day after his 81st birthday in 2010.

Arikha's last show in New York was in 2007 when he showed a superb collection of twenty-five pastels. The show this March will be the first New York exhibition of works from the artist's estate and will consist of approximately 56 works, including 12 oils on canvas and 16 pastels along with watercolors and drawings and a few rare lithographs. These works have been in the artist's collection and many have never before been exhibited. The depictions, quintessentially Arikha, are composed from his personal canon of favored subjects: still lifes, self-portraits, portraits of his wife, the poet Anne Atik, studies of female nudes, landscapes, and various objects of visual interest. Arikha's work combines intense observation with an inherent refinement, and together they create a penetrating, quiet beauty. On the one hand one could say that observation, or *seeing*, is the real subject of Arikha's work regardless of what is depicted. On the other, one could say what Michael Kimmelman did in a review in *The New York Times* of Arikha's exhibition at Marlborough in 2002: "Painting this refined and gorgeous is in short supply today and precious. Mr. Arikha, a throwback at 73, reminds us what craft means and how pleasurable it is to see."

Alan Ross called Arikha a "classicist with a modern sensibility." His erudition was known to be formidable. He wrote on art (*On Depiction*) and curated exhibitions for which he wrote the catalogs such as the one he did of Poussin shown at the Louvre; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and Princeton University Art Museum, and of Ingres shown at The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and The Frick Collection, New York. His last curatorial exhibition and catalog was at the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid of eighteen paintings from the collection. He gave numerous lectures at the Prado Museum, the Louvre, the British Museum, The Warburg Institute, and the Frick Collection. He also made films for the U.K.'s BBC television. Samuel Beckett, who was a close friend, admired "his acuity of vision and sureness of execution and incomparable grasp of the past and of the problems that beset continuance." Patrick Kinmonth writing about the essence of Arikha's pictures said, "we read, once we have learned his language, the traces of a dedicated search for meaning in life and art which can rise... to the status of poetry." Robert Hughes in *Time* magazine said of Arikha, "He has a surer sense of tone – the equivalent of natural pitch – than anyone painting today." One could add that possibly no other artist working today has such avid dedication to precise tone and to the exclusive use of natural light. Arikha's dislike for artificial, what he called, "canned" light was

often noted by critics. He worked only in daylight and finished a work in one sitting. This gave his work a luminous, tonal beauty and spontaneity. When one sees an Arikha work, be it a painting, pastel or drawing, it is its enduring freshness, vitality, and aliveness that stick in the mind.

Arikha's recent museum exhibitions include the following: in 1998-1999 there were simultaneous retrospectives (the first time this was done) at the Tel Aviv Museum and The Israel Museum in Jerusalem, which was visited by more than one hundred thousand people, and traveled in part to the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh. In 1999 he had a major drawing exhibition entitled *Paris sur le vif, encres et dessins* at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Lille, France, in 2006-07 a show entitled *From Life, Drawings and Prints 1965-2005* at The British Museum in London, and in 2008, a retrospective exhibition at the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid. The catalog for the show at The British Museum was written by Stephen Coppel and Duncan Thomson and included among others three texts by Samuel Beckett and two essays by Robert Hughes.

Since 1952 Arikha had twenty-five museum shows and approximately forty gallery exhibitions, including participation in the Venice Biennale in both 1982 and 1995. Among the many public institutions where his work can be found are The British Museum, London, Le Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; The Tate Gallery, London; and Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Arikha was born in 1929 in Bucovina, a province of the ex-Austro-Hungarian Empire now split between Rumania and the Ukraine, to a German-speaking Jewish family. From 1941 to early 1944 he endured life in Nazi labor concentration camps from which he was saved thanks to his drawings. He was brought to a kibbutz in Palestine in 1944. He received a Bauhaus type art education at the Bezalel School of Art in Jerusalem, fought in the war for Israeli independence in 1948, and was severely wounded. In 1949 he went to Paris with a scholarship to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Arikha has received several awards and honors such as *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres* (1977), *Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur* (2005), *Honorary Professor*, National Academy of Fine Arts of China, Hanchow (1995) and *Doctor Philosophie, Honoris Causa*, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem (1977).

A color catalog of the Arikha exhibition will be available from the gallery at the time of the exhibition.

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