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How Michael Goldberg Carried Abstract Expressionism into the 21st Century

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A FEW SECONDS AGO

In 2001, as many contemporary artists continued the embrace of digital and new media technologies that began in the 1960s, abstract expressionist artist Michael Goldberg declared abstract painting to be "the primary visual challenge of our time. It might get harder and harder to make an abstract image that's believable," he continued, "but I think that just makes the challenge greater."

Full of an energy that translated to his exuberantly expressive compositions, this native New Yorker came of age when the center of the art world was shifting to his city, and when abstract expressionism was at its height. He studied with Hans Hofmann and was influenced by such pioneers of gestural abstraction as Franz Kline, Clyfford Still, and Willem de Kooning. Like these older artists, Goldberg was deeply inspired by the lyrical freedom and improvisation of jazz music, which informed his own dancing paintings and collages.

After serving in the China-Burma-India Theater in World War II, the artist returned to New York with a Purple Heart and the Bronze Star, and resumed painting. In 1951, his work was included in the "Ninth Street Show," a pioneering exhibition of abstract art. By the late 1950s, he had gained gallery representation and widespread recognition.

For Goldberg, painting was a form of dialogue. Through it, he conversed with artists throughout history and communicated with his contemporaries—both artists and viewers. So it is fitting that New York-based Michael Rosenfeld Gallery and Los Angeles-based Manny Silverman Gallery are coming together in 2015 in a bi-coastal partnership with concurrent exhibitions of the artist's work. Eight years after his death, and more than half a century after the abstract expressionists demonstrated the power of color, gesture, and line, Goldberg's own paintings still speak. And in an age dominated by glowing screens and virtual connections, we would do well to stand in front of them—and listen.

—Karen Kedney

"Michael Goldberg: Making His Mark, 1985-2005" is on view at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, New York, Jan. 17–Mar. 14, 2015.

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Michael Goldberg
Matlock Tor by Daylight, 2002
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

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Michael Goldberg
To Violet "Bunny" Lang, 1991
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

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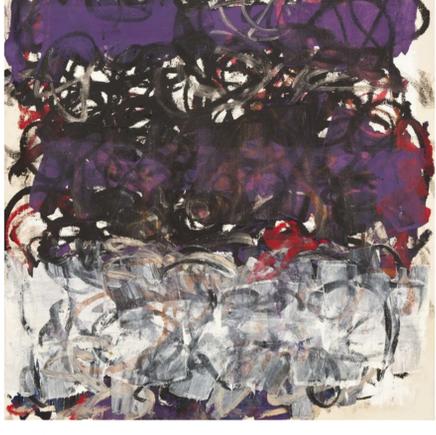
Michael Goldberg
Untitled (S792-DWG), 1992
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

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Michael Goldberg
Untitled (S/85-NY), 1985
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

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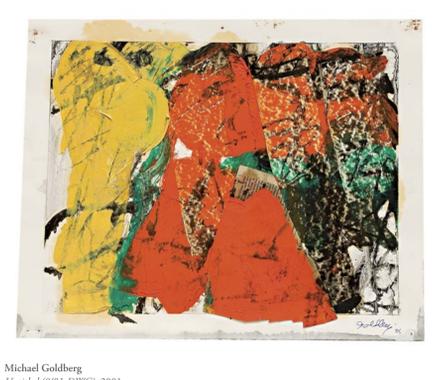
Michael Goldberg
Untitled (18/95-S)
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

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Michael Goldberg
Untitled (13/90-DWG), 1990
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

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Michael Goldberg
Untitled (8/01-DWG), 2001
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

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