



*Cathedral #12, 1968, oil on canvas, 90 x 72 inches*

# Leon Berkowitz

(1919 - 1987)

## *Cathedral Paintings*

March 6 – May 2, 2009

### **GARY SNYDER/Project Space**

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#### PRESS RELEASE

**Gary Snyder/Project Space** is pleased to present an exhibition of important paintings by Washington School painter **Leon Berkowitz**. The exhibition will be open to the public from March 6th through May 2nd, 2009. The paintings, all from his Cathedral series, were executed mostly in 1968, and many were featured in the 1969 exhibition at The Corcoran Gallery ("Recent Paintings by Leon Berkowitz").

Leon Berkowitz was one of the early abstract artists in the Washington DC area, and he helped organize the Washington Workshop, which brought together Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, Thomas Downing, Howard Mehring and Gene Davis in the 1950s. He was chairman of the painting department at The Corcoran Gallery's School of Art from 1969 until his death.

James Pilgrim, curator of the Corcoran exhibition, wrote about the Cathedral series:

"In his Cathedral series Berkowitz established a pictorial format through which he could use light to create form. The narrow white triangle that splits the canvas acts, symbolically, as a light source. Light seems to move laterally from this core, creating changes in color intensity (the changes actually result from light reflecting through varying densities of pigment). Light also seems to move horizontally through subtle color changes from cold to warm to cold. The changes in color and intensity produce an undulating spatial effect, a feeling of advance and recession from the picture plane. These horizontal movements are balanced by the tendency of light to shoot upward through shimmering columns of color. Thus a formal tension is established between the horizontal and the vertical."

Berkowitz has had over 50 one-person and group exhibitions, and his paintings are in many private and public collections.