

Paintings by Janet Sobel
Peggy Guggenheim's
Art of This Century
30 West 57th Street NYC
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Catalog Introduction by Sidney Janis

In seclusion from art and artists and only after she had become a grand-mother did Janet Sobel feel the compelling urge to paint. Her beginnings, fresh as those of a child, were primitive, not in the sense of crude and awkward strivings many believe primitive to mean but in a truer sense, that of original, source inspiration.

The self taught or instinctive-naïve painter is generally expected to develop. Unfortunately this development usually is at the sacrifice of a rare innate quality - his originality. Becoming aware of sophistication in art, he introduces knowing touches and short cuts which are in conflict with his basic style. Although Mrs. Sobel's work is no longer primitive and has taken another direction no such development but rather a metamorphosis takes place. A comparison of her early oils, Nos. 1, 3, and outstanding recent examples, Nos. 11, 12, 16, demonstrate this metamorphosis. Today her paintings are filled with unconscious surrealist phantasy.

The psychological drive of instinctive-naïve painters almost invariably manifests itself in perfection of detail. Mrs. Sobel is an exception. More and more her work is given over to freedom and imaginative play. Her auto-didactic techniques in which automatism and chance effectively predominate, are improvised according to inner demands. Further, a posteriori images suggest themselves to her and these she develops. Out of them springs the intense hallucinatory phantasy that often intuitively parallels in concept and spirit the work of leaders of surrealism such as Ernst and Masson.

Unexpected color transpositions and self-invented methods for applying pigment are uncanny plastic weapons in Mrs. Sobel's hands. With these the artist is enabled to project psychologically and in various moods her emotive forms which confront the observer as strange new visual experiences.