

LEON BERKOWITZ (1911 – 1987)

Cathedral No#11, 1968

oil on canvas

90 x 72 inches

Leon Berkowitz was part of the Washington Color School, a group of artists central to the Color Field movement. In 1945 Berkowitz helped organize The Washington Workshop for the Arts, a focal point for contemporary artistic expression in Washington, DC, which brought together Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, Thomas Downing, Howard Mehring and Gene Davis in the 1950s.

Cathedral No. 11 was included in the 1969 exhibition “Recent Paintings by Leon Berkowitz”, at The Corcoran Gallery of Art (catalogue #3). In his insightful essay, the curator, James F. Pilgrim, wrote the following:

“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 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 wrote about the Cathedral Paintings:

“In the CATHEDRALS I have returned to the substance of color again, its glow, its tangibility, its temperature. I am in the world of sensation again, and out of it everything else can come: feeling, time, space.”

Gary Snyder/Project Space is pleased to represent the Estate of Leon Berkowitz.