

Ward Jackson

(1928 – 2004)

Ward Jackson was born and grew up in Petersburg, Virginia. He studied painting at the Richmond Polytechnic Institute of the College of William and Mary, now Virginia Commonwealth University, earning his Master's Degree there in 1952. While still in school Jackson began the correspondence with Guggenheim curator Hilla Rebay that would eventually lead to his long tenure with that institution. In a series of letters he sent drawings to her for comment and received critique and encouragement. Following graduation Jackson spent a summer studying under Hans Hoffman in Provincetown, Mass., settling in New York in the autumn of that year. Jackson's student work had already attracted the attention of painter and critic George L.K. Morris who invited him to contribute to an AAA annual exhibition in 1949. Morris, a founding member of the AAA, took Jackson under his wing and the two developed a close collegial relationship which lasted until Morris' death in 1975. Jackson later joined the group and was for many years its recording secretary.

Ward Jackson had his first solo exhibition in NYC at the Fleischman Gallery in 1956 and exhibited regularly after that. In the early 60's, inspired by the work of senior painters like Piet Mondrian and Josef Albers, Jackson moved away from the gestural style that had marked his work of the '50's, developing his signature style of austere, hard edged geometric compositions on square and diamond shaped canvases. In 1964 he showed a group of black and white diamonds in an important exhibition at the KayMar Gallery that included such figures as Jo Baer, Dan Flavin, Don Judd, Sol Lewitt, Robert Ryman, and Frank Stella, and which marked a pivotal moment in the early development of minimalism. For the rest of his life Jackson expanded upon this personal and rigorous approach to abstraction, developing his ideas in the hundreds of 4" x 6" "drawing books" that he always carried with him.

In addition to his long career as a painter, Jackson was employed by the Guggenheim Museum for nearly 40 years where he was archivist and director of the viewing program. A visible legacy from this long involvement is the remarkable group of photographs that Jackson curated from the archives for the cafe of that Museum after his retirement in 1998 illustrating the history of the Museum and its' associated artists. In 1969 Jackson joined forces with publisher Roger Peskin and staff photographer Paul Katz to found an experimental folio publication, ART NOW New York. This interesting venture paired loose 8 1/2 x 11 inch prints of art works recently exhibited in the galleries with brief statements solicited from the artists. Over a four year run ART NOW New York published the work of well over a hundred of the most significant figures of that period, from Jasper Johns and Brice Marden, to Louise Bourgeois and Robert Smithson. ART NOW gradually developed into the ubiquitous and well known ART NOW Gallery Guide for which he served as advisory editor until 1998. Widely known for his

encyclopedic knowledge of art and artists, Ward Jackson was an active, opinionated, and informed participant in the NY art world that he so loved. He passed away in February of 2004.

Ward Jackson's work has been widely exhibited in NYC and throughout the United States as well as in exhibitions in Germany, Spain, and Japan. His paintings and drawings can be found in numerous public collections including the National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C., Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, N.Y., the British Museum, London, San Francisco Museum of Contemporary Art, San Francisco, CA, Brooklyn Museum, N.Y., the Virginia Museum of Fine Art, Richmond, Va., and in Germany at the Kunsthalle Bremen, Bremen, the Museum Morsbruch, Leverkusen, the Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum, Duisberg.