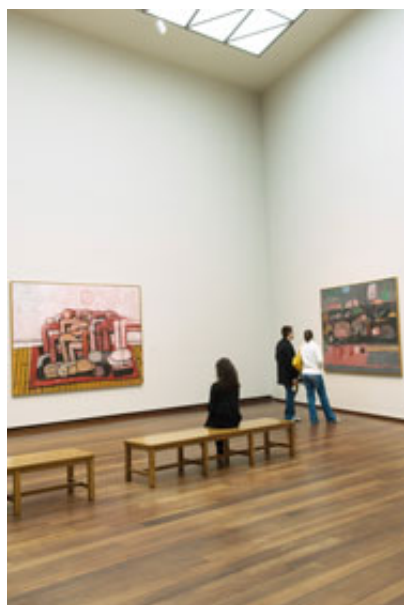


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## Philip Guston Focus Exhibition Inaugurates Series of Modern and Contemporary Shows "In The Tower," National Gallery of Art



A visitor contemplates American artist Philip Guston's painting, *Rug* (1976), in the new Tower Gallery in the National Gallery of Art's East Building. Photograph by Doris Alston © 2009 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington

(Updated September 18, 2009)

A focus exhibition of works by American artist Philip Guston (1913–1980) at the National Gallery of Art inaugurates a new series of shows in the Tower Gallery of the East Building that center around developments in art since the 1970s. A dramatic and meditative space, the Tower is among the most elegant in the I.M. Pei building, which opened in 1978.

Home to the popular exhibition of Matisse "cut-outs" for nearly a decade, the Tower Gallery now showcases seven major paintings and nine works on paper by Guston that

chart the artist's career from 1949 to 1980. On view February 1 through January 3, 2010, *In the Tower: Philip Guston* includes works drawn largely from the Gallery's own collection and features a six-minute film specially made for the exhibition. Many of the works were donated to the Gallery by Edward R. Broida, and others were given by Musa Guston, the artist's widow.

"Dedicating the Tower space to a series of focus exhibitions will enrich the visitor's experience of the East Building and bring to light the works of pivotal and emerging artists since 1970," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. "We hope that reinstalling the Matisse cut-outs in the Concourse galleries will make them accessible to more visitors and inspire artists of all ages seeing these for the first time."

### **Organization and Support**

The exhibition was organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

The exhibition is made possible by The Exhibition Circle of the National Gallery of Art.

The film was supported by the HRH Foundation.

### **The Matisse Cut-Outs**

Created during the last 15 years of Matisse's life, the cut-outs—monumental paper collages mounted on equally large canvases—have been relocated to the Concourse galleries where five of them are on view from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm every day. For the first time, the cut-outs appear alongside a rare life-size costume made by Matisse in 1919 for the Ballets Russes.

### **In the Tower: Philip Guston**

For more than five decades Guston explored painting, from the mural art of the Depression through mid-century abstract expressionism to a raw new imagery beginning in the sixties. His shocking return to figuration soon after, influenced by comic books and politics, paved the way for numerous developments in contemporary art.

Guston was born Philip Goldstein in Montreal in 1913 and moved with his family to Los Angeles in 1919. His early years were marked by tragedy and violence. Exposure to

local Ku Klux Klan activity politicized the artist, whose first works depict hooded figures and lynchings. In 1936 he joined his high-school friend Jackson Pollock in New York City, and for the next ten years he made a living as a New Deal muralist and college art teacher.

Around 1950 Guston's style changed dramatically. In *Review* (1949–1950) the figurative imagery of his early work gives way to abstraction, as distorted forms are washed over with red, a color that would become his trademark. A second change in Guston's style is apparent in works such as *Untitled* (1964), in which mysterious gray shapes emerge from a hash of black-and-white strokes.

In 1970 Guston shocked the art world with his most pivotal change—he reintroduced the figure to his paintings and works on paper, seen in the large pointing hand and outstretched arm in *Courtroom* of that same year. Political unrest triggered a return of Klansmen imagery, but now through the lens of the comics. While Guston's career seemed to shift dramatically, his spontaneous, painterly approach and fondness for red remained constant.

Ambiguous imagery prevails in the later paintings in the exhibition. In *Rug* (1976) a pile of legs oddly recalls photographs of concentration camp victims as well as Robert Crumb's *Keep on Truckin'* figure. In *Ladder* (1978) a wig parted in the middle refers not only to Guston's wife, Musa, but to Constantin Brancusi's sculpture *The Kiss* (1916). Despite failing health, Guston continued to paint prolifically. He helped install a major retrospective of his work in early 1980 and died later that year.

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## General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets along Constitution Avenue NW and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will be closing gradually beginning in July 2013 and will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit [www.nga.gov/renovation](http://www.nga.gov/renovation) (<http://www.nga.gov/renovation>).

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's website at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) and on Twitter at [twitter.com/ngadc](http://twitter.com/ngadc).

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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