

# JASON MCCOY GALLERY

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*Vigil*, 1962, oil on canvas, 68 x 60 in.

## STEPHEN GREENE: 1960S ABSTRACTIONS

Curated by Alison de Lima Greene

March 3 – April 30, 2016

*"I have always felt the need as an artist to introduce both objective and subjective aspects of reality in my paintings, especially in the form of signs or symbols of the mystery and of the passion of human life."*

Stephen Greene

Jason McCoy Gallery is pleased to present Stephen Greene: 1960s Abstractions, an exhibition of nine major paintings spanning the first half of the 1960s, the decade which marked the artist's mature embrace of abstraction. It is the third solo exhibition devoted to Greene at the gallery.

Stephen Greene (1917-1999) first received critical acclaim for his figurative paintings in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and the following decade marked a significant change within his oeuvre. In the 1960s, he achieved a new authority with breakthrough compositions characterized by the artist's distinctive and autographic method of abstract composition. In part inspired by the canvases of Barnett Newman, Greene sought to purge his paintings of narrative elements without sacrificing the qualities of myth and timelessness that had been his early inspirations. As gesture and hue gained in importance, he brought a new quality of light to his paintings, working through subtle layers of oil washes, and bringing a quiet drama to his nuanced orchestrations of primary and secondary colors. At the same time, he allowed certain shapes to resonate. The fragments of ladders, props, and the human anatomy, for example, all persist like latent memories. Nevertheless, Greene pointed out: *"I'd say the most marvelous painting is a painting that offers nothing to anybody other than itself."*

At the same time, Greene's choice of titles for the works of this decade eloquently captures the larger dimensions of allegory he brought to his work: *Vigil* is a martial term that can be considered a metaphor for studio practice, the daily effort to conquer the canvas. *Chasm* and *Grey Light* further map the liminal territories Greene sought to chart and fix in place. Writing for the *New York Times* in 1964, Brian O'Doherty proclaimed: *"Stephen Greene...makes the word 'artist' take on its fullest meaning. His style is one of the most perfect in American art, utilizing all the skills of a consummate picture maker."*

Stephen Greene's work is in the permanent collections of the The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum New York; The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn; The Art Institute of Chicago; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden; Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Detroit Institute of Arts; Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover; Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, MA; Norton Simon Museum of Art at Pasadena; Tate Gallery, London, England; amongst many others. Alison de Lima Greene is a curator of Contemporary Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

The Estate of Stephen Greene is represented by Jason McCoy Gallery, New York.

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