

George Tooker: Contemplative Gaze

A Selection of Paintings, Drawings, and Prints

September 5 – October 5, 2019



Guitar, 1957. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 18 x 24 inches.

DC Moore Gallery is proud to present *George Tooker: Contemplative Gaze*, featuring a selection of paintings, drawings, and prints. Tooker (1920-2011) painted in egg tempera, and due to the careful process, requiring a thorough and precise application, he was not a prolific painter. In this exhibition, viewers will have an opportunity to see rare paintings by the artist. Tooker is most often known as a magic realist, though he and his good friend Paul Cadmus preferred the designation symbolic realist.

This interest in the symbolic is well demonstrated in *Builders* (1952). This early painting has an ethereal and more overtly spiritual sensibility. It includes four male figures in a framed structure of a house being constructed, and three of the men are modeled after the artist at various stages of life. The fourth, a black man, is watching the scene from the right. The wooden frames of the house are open allowing for bright light to filter into the space yet it can barely contain all of the bodies. An oracle-like female figure stands close but outside the building, with a suggestive expression indicating expectancy and reverence. The painting is open to multiple interpretations.

Tooker was a master of creating framing devices that heighten the psychological tension of the work. He continued and adapted those compositional choices, beginning his *Windows* series in 1955. He had recently moved to Brooklyn and was fascinated by the way people spent time in their open windows, unselfconscious about the intimacy of the stances or reposes. Tooker's interest in the Renaissance and classical forms and devices is seen in *Guitar* (1957) with the use of sumptuous, red velvet curtains framing a couple, and drawing them closer together in an already intimate space, seen through a window. A young man's hand casually rests along the guitar as he gazes off, almost in reverie, while the woman behind him lays with her eyes covered, her torso fully exposed, in a position of repose. The psychological expression is sensual, a shared experience, perhaps between two lovers.

In *Windows XI* (1999) the imaginary window frame is implied by the young man's hand placements, his fingers ever so slightly pressed against clear glass. The work is another example of Tooker finding inspiration in classical forms.

In addition to Tooker's paintings on view, there will be working drawings used as studies for the paintings as they further demonstrate the artist's particular use of observation in his work.



Builders, 1952. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 16 x 16 inches.

George Tooker is represented in museum collections across the country, including those of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, Brooklyn Museum, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and National Museum of American Art. He has had numerous museum exhibitions, such as a retrospective, *George Tooker: Paintings, 1947-1973*, organized by the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, California, in 1974; *George Tooker: Paintings and Working Drawings* at the Marsh Gallery, University of Richmond, Virginia, in 1989; *50 Years of Painting and Study Drawings* at the Addison Gallery of American Art in Andover, Massachusetts, in 1994; and *George Tooker: A Retrospective* at the National Academy Museum, New York, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, and Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, in 2008-09. He received the prestigious National Medal of Arts in 2007.

DC Moore represents the George Tooker Estate.

Also on View: Yvonne Jacquette: Daytime New York September 5 – October 5, 2019
Ben Shahn: Register to Vote September 5 – October 5, 2019

DC Moore Gallery specializes in contemporary and twentieth-century art. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10am-6pm. For more information, photographs, or to arrange a viewing please call 212-247-2111 or email Sabeena Khosla at skhosla@dcmooregallery.com.