



KAREL APPEL (1921-2006)

Personage

Signed lower left, "Appel 75"

oil on canvas

50 1/4 x 50 1/8 in. (51 7/8 x 51 7/8 x 2 in.)

1975

38195

PROVENANCE:

Property from the collection of Gloria Luria

Karel Appel (1921 – 2016) was born in Amsterdam in the wake of the First World War. After studying art at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam, Appel narrowly escaped forced labor in Nazi Germany and went into hiding to avoid capture by German forces in 1944.

After the war, in 1948, Appel co-founded the short-lived but influential Cobra art movement in Paris. The Cobra group was founded in opposition to the cool apolitical abstraction of the New York School in the United States and the doctrinaire socialist realism of the Soviet east. Cobra embraced surrealism's focus on spontaneity and chance and the "uncivilized" or "primitive" style of artists like Jean Dubuffet. Appel and other members of the group became known for the vigorous spontaneity and strong colors in their work.

Beginning in the 1950s, Appel traveled to Mexico, Brazil, and the United States, building an international reputation for his semi-abstract works that incorporated American action painting techniques while maintaining a degree of representation. Heavily influenced by folk and children's art, Appel's style is characterized by thick paint layering, violent brushwork, and crude forms. In the 1970s and 1980s, Appel began to work simultaneously in painting and sculpture, pushing his abstract style further as he aged.

Solo exhibitions of his work were held at the Centre national d'art contemporain, Paris, and the Stedelijk Museum (1968), and at the Kunsthalle Basel and the Palais des beaux-arts (1969). A major Appel show opened at the Centraal Museum, Utrecht, Netherlands (1970), and a retrospective toured Canada and the United States (1972). More recently, Appel has been the subject of solo exhibitions National Museum of Art, Osaka (1989); Stedelijk Museum (1998, 2000, and 2001); and Cobra Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Amstelveen, Netherlands (2001). Appel's work is represented in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam among many others.

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