

# BETTY CUNINGHAM GALLERY

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## FAIRFIELD PORTER

### Paintings and Works on Paper

Dates: March 8 - April 15, 2006

Hours of Operation: Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm

On Wednesday, March 8, 2006, Betty Cunningham Gallery will open an exhibition of the paintings and works on paper of Fairfield Porter (1907-1975). The exhibition is being presented in cooperation with The Parrish Art Museum, the major lender to the show, and with Hirschl & Adler Modern, representatives of the Estate. It will include approximately 20 paintings and 10 works on paper by the artist dating from 1949 to 1974.

Porter was known both for his paintings as well as for his writings. Educated at Harvard and well-traveled, Porter positioned himself in opposition to Clement Greenberg (whom he first met in 1939):

*"We always argued. We always disagreed. Everything that one of us said, the other would say no to it. He told me I was very conceited. I thought my opinions were as good as his or better. And, he once said – I introduced him to de Kooning – he was publicizing Pollock and he said to de Kooning (he was painting the Women), "You can't paint this way nowadays." And, I thought, 'Who the hell is he to say that?' He said, 'You can't paint figuratively today.'" ... "I thought, 'If that's what he says, I think I will do just exactly what he says I can't do! That's all I will do.' I might have become an abstract painter except for that."*

*- Art in its Own Terms, Selected Criticism 1935-75 by  
Fairfield Porter, from the introduction by Rackstraw  
Downes (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Zoland Books, 1993, p.28.*

Having lived in Long Island and Maine, Porter is often identified with those regions. However, the subject of his paintings, Porter insisted, was the painting and not the image. Porter began showing regularly in New York in 1952 with Tibor de Nagy at the urging of Willem de Kooning, Jane Freilicher and Larry Rivers. He continued to show there until 1970.

In 1975, at the age of 68, Porter died of a heart attack while walking on the beach in Southampton. His widow, Anne Porter, decided to donate approximately 250 works by her husband to their 'neighborhood' museum, The Parrish Art Museum, also located in Southampton. The Parrish therefore now holds the largest collection of Porter's work in the country. The museum has mounted two shows: one of prints in 1982 and another of paintings in 1993, curated by William C. Agee. The most comprehensive traveling retrospective occurred in 1983 - 84. It was organized and exhibited by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and traveled to The Greenville County Museum of Art, Greenville, South Carolina; Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio; Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and the Whitney Museum of

American Art, New York, New York. Although there have been other exhibitions since, particularly the exhibition at Hunter College in 1992, curated by William Agee, which inspired the Parrish Museum show, and Justin Spring's exhibition at AXA in 2000, none were of the same scale.

Among the several books that have been published on Porter's work and his writings, a few of the most notable are: *Art in its Own Terms, Selected Criticism 1935 – 1975* by Fairfield Porter, edited and with an introduction by Rackstraw Downes, New York: Taplinger, 1979; *Fairfield Porter, An American Classic*, New York: John T. Spike, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992; *Fairfield Porter, a Life in Art*, by Justin Spring, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000; *Fairfield Porter, A Catalogue Raisonne of the Paintings, Watercolors and Pastels*, edited by Joan Ludman, New York: Hudson Hills Press, 2001; and *Material Witness, the Selected Letters of Fairfield Porter*, edited by Ted Leigh, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005.

The current exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue with an introduction by William C. Agee, the Evelyn Kranes Kossak Professor of Art History, Hunter College. This exhibition will remain on view through April 15, 2006.

*For further information, catalogues and/or photographs, please contact the gallery at 212-242-2772 or [info@bettycunninghamgallery.com](mailto:info@bettycunninghamgallery.com)*

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**Next exhibition:            JUDY GLANTZMAN, *RECENT PAINTINGS*, Thursday, April 20 -  
Friday, May 26, 2006**