

[Philip Guston Foundation](#)

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## Philip Guston (Canadian-American, 1913-1980)

Read an [oral history interview](#) with Guston from 1965 with the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art. Another [interview](#) was recorded in 1980, the year of the artist's death, with art critic Mark Stevens.

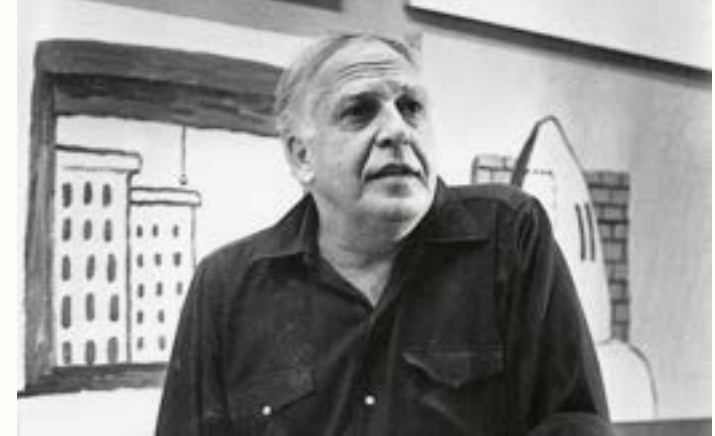
[Philip Guston: Paintings of Four Decades](#) was on display at the National Gallery of Canada in 2000, featuring 45 paintings by the Montreal-born artist.

The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth installed [Philip Guston Retrospective](#) in 2003, the most comprehensive exhibition of the artist's work to that date.

[Philip Guston: Works on Paper](#) focused solely on the artist's drawings produced throughout his career and was on display at the Morgan Library & Museum in 2008.

Guston's first solo exhibition in Oxford was at the Ashmolean Museum in 2019, titled [Philip Guston: Locating the Image](#).

Read an article in [ARTnews](#), "Figuration to Abstraction and Back Again: How Philip Guston Shaped 20<sup>th</sup> Century Painting" by Claire Selvin, in conjunction with the [online exhibition Philip Guston 1969-1979](#) at Hauser & Wirth.



Guston, 1970  
Photograph: Frank R. Lloyd



Guston with *The Studio* (1969), 1969  
Photograph: Frank R. Lloyd

A major Guston retrospective was [controversially postponed](#) in 2020 to reflect "the urgencies of the moment," a decision that was widely criticized. Read an [article](#) by Barry Schwabsky, "Philip Guston's Peculiar History Lesson" about how Guston's work speaks to the current moment. Peter Schjeldahl's article in the [New Yorker](#) discussed "Philip Guston and the Boundaries of Art and Culture."

[Philip Guston Now](#) finally opened to the public at the [Museum of Fine Arts Boston](#) in 2022. An article in the New York Times [pronounced](#): "Delayed Philip Guston Show Opens, With a Note From a Trauma Specialist" and [The Art Newspaper](#) reported on how the exhibition changed after the delay. It then traveled to the [Museum of Fine Arts Houston](#) and the [National Gallery of Art](#) in the United States. Read reviews of the National Gallery edition in the [Washington Post](#) and the [Brooklyn Rail](#), and watch an [exhibition overview](#) produced by the National Gallery. The exhibition's final stop was at the [Tate Modern](#) in London in 2023.

In 2022-2023, a small exhibition at the [Saint Louis Art Museum](#) featured a recent promised gift of *Dark Room* (1978) to the museum.

[Philip Guston: What Kind of Man Am I?](#) was installed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2023, featuring an extraordinary [promised gift](#) of 220 paintings and drawings to the museum from the artist's daughter, Musa Guston. Read an [article](#) written by Musa about her father's art and its legacy.



Philip Guston (Canadian-American, 1913-1980)

**Untitled (Roma)**, 1971

Oil on paper mounted on panel

Private Collection; L2024:11.1

“I’ll just take white and I’ll take cadmium red medium, which is my favorite color, and mix it up and make a pink. That mess of pink makes me want to paint.” Philip Guston’s neo-expressionist paintings often respond to the social upheaval of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century in a satirical, cartoonish style. He returned to figurative painting in 1967 following years as a noted Abstract Expressionist. After the controversial opening of his Marlborough Gallery show in 1970—which first featured his new representational style—the artist accepted a residency at the American Academy in Rome. In the wake of relentless criticism of his new work, Guston moved forward along the path he had chosen. **Untitled (Roma)** is one of 39 paintings completed at this time, responding to the surrounding Roman architecture in vivid pink and salmon colors.

*On view May 8 – August 11, 2024*



Philip Guston (Canadian-American, 1913-1980)

**Couple**, 1972

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2023:125.1

Philip Guston was born in Montreal and raised in Los Angeles by his immigrant Jewish parents who had escaped persecution in Ukraine under the Russian Empire. The painter began his career as a WPA muralist before first turning to abstraction and then to figuration in a neo-expressionist, cartoonish style. **Couple** is part of Guston's work in the 1970s that interrogated and sharply criticized the Ku Klux Klan presence in Los Angeles. The artist himself personally experienced violent confrontation with Klan members; once when they broke up a strike he was participating in, and later when Klan members slashed paintings he'd made attacking the KKK. He was also deeply haunted by the idea of mundane, everyday lives led by people devoted to hooded violence and racist extremism. In **Couple**, a hooded figure lies in bed with a bare-headed partner as they smoke. As Guston explained: "In this new dream of violence, I feel like Isaac Babel with his Cossacks; as if I were living with the Klan. What do they do afterwards? Or before? Smoke, drink, sit around their rooms..."

*On view January 31 – May 5, 2024*



Philip Guston (Canadian-American, 1913-1980)

**At the Table**, 1969

Acrylic on panel

Private Collection; L2023:103.1

Philip Guston grew up acutely aware of the xenophobic, antisemitic, and racist violence perpetrated by the Ku Klux Klan in the United States. As a child of Jewish parents who escaped persecution in Ukraine under the Russian Empire, Guston experienced confrontations with the Klan membership in Los Angeles as a teenager. The artist became fascinated by the signature white shroud that encased the body in evil and began painting KKK figures in the 1930s. However, Guston often reflected on the unsettling, mundane humanity that lay underneath the hood with his neo-expressionist and cartoonish style. **At the Table** is one such scene, where two hooded figures sit around a polka-dot table with a playful pink lamp. Guston explained: “In this new dream of violence, I feel like Isaac Babel with his Cossacks; as if I were living with the Klan. What do they do afterwards? Or before? Smoke, drink, sit around their rooms.... Dumb, melancholy, guilty, fearful, remorseful, reassuring one another?”

*On view October 25, 2023 – January 28, 2024*

Philip Guston (Canadian-American, 1913-1980)

**Group in Sea**, 1979

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2023:74.10

Born in Montreal and raised in Los Angeles by immigrant Jewish parents, Philip Guston began his art career by painting activist murals in California and for the WPA in New York. His later neo-expressionist works often engage with themes of racism, fascism, antisemitism, and American identity in a satirical, cartoonish style. **Group in Sea** is one of many Guston paintings that features dismembered body parts piled together as an abstract island. The artist often reflected on the horrors of the Holocaust, Vietnam war, and global genocide in works such as this, with a signature pink, red, and blue color pallet.

*On view October 25, 2023 – January 28, 2024*

