

SPOTLIGHT: Guy Anderson
Title of Piece: Totemic Image



El Presenter: Linda Schaefers

Date: December 4, 2007

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Year created: Unknown

Artist: Guy Anderson (1906-1998)

Five essential aspects of this work of art and the artist:

1. Guy Anderson was born in Edmonds, Washington in 1906, and never left the Northwest for long. His family lived simply, but his parents loved art and music, and his father was a carpenter who was capable of making beautiful furniture. Guy's introduction to Japanese art came when his Edmonds schoolteacher showed him some Japanese prints and he was taken by them. As a young student he continually visited Seattle's Chinatown and art museum. This early exposure to Asian art had a huge influence on his art and thinking.
2. After high school he studied portraiture with Alaskan painter Eustace Ziegler. Later he received a Tiffany Foundation Scholarship to study on Long Island, and while in New York, he used his weekends to visit the city's museums, where he was able to see much of the finest art that Europe and the East Coast had to offer.
3. He returned to Edmonds in 1926, where he met Mark Tobey, Morris Graves and Kenneth Callahan, with whom he became friends, and explored philosophy, art and religion, notably Buddhism and the writings of Joseph Campbell. He had an especially close relationship for a time with Morris Graves. In researching Guy Anderson, I found that as often as not, when his name was mentioned, so were the names of Callahan, Graves, and Tobey, probably because of a Life Magazine article which appeared in 1953, which dubbed the four artists "Mystic Painters of the Northwest." The article brought instant and widespread attention to the four artists.
4. Anderson moved to La Conner, WA in 1955 in order to live quietly and concentrate on his painting. La Conner is now home to the Museum of Northwest Art which has a wealth of holdings of all four of these artists, known as the Big Four, or the Northwest School. Although he was offered shows in New York and overseas, he was never driven by the market. He lived most of his life in La Conner until his death in 1998.
5. Anderson read widely, soaking in the myths, stories, and symbols of Native American, Asian and ancient cultures, whose influences can be seen in his work. Some of the images he uses are drawn from nature, from totems, basket weaving designs, tribal landscapes, and the human figure.

Possible questions to use when discussing this piece with museum visitors:

1. What do you notice about the color? How do these colors make you feel? What contrast do you see? Why do you suppose the artist used this kind of contrast?
2. Texture refers to what the surface is like. Look closely at the painting. What can you say about the texture of the painting?
3. What kinds of lines do you see? What shapes? Where is your eye drawn? Why is that?
4. What do you think this painting is trying to show? Does the image remind you of anything you have seen before?
5. Do you like this painting? What do you like or not like about it? Why do you say that?

Tour Type: Learning to Look

Additional Notes and Sources:

JSMA Collection:

<https://jsmacollection.uoregon.edu/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record;id=514;type=901>