

# TIBOR DE NAGY

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## Rudy Burckhardt

### A Painting Exhibition

February 1 to March 8, 2025



**Rudy Burckhardt**

*Pond IV*, 1997

oil on canvas

15 x 24 inches

Tibor de Nagy is pleased to present Rudy Burckhardt's *A Painting Exhibition*. This is the artist's 11th solo exhibition and the first solely devoted to the artist's paintings since 2006. The works on view were created from 1947 to 1997 and depict many of the artist's favorite subjects including views of New York City, interiors, self-portraits, and Maine landscapes. Also included is a group of rarely exhibited Artist Conk paintings.

Now known primarily for his photography and films, Burckhardt began drawing and painting as a young person before he left Basel, Switzerland for New York in 1935. He continued studying painting after the war on the GI bill with Amedee Ozenfant, a traditionalist and

School of Paris painter who did not like abstraction. In contrast, many in Burckhardt's circle of friends, including Jane Freilicher, Larry Rivers, and Nell Blaine, sought out the dynamic abstract painter Hans Hofmann as a teacher. Burckhardt chose a more academic route. He had his first New York painting exhibition in 1949 and thereafter regularly showed his paintings at Green Mountain Gallery, later renamed Blue Mountain Gallery, from the 1960s to the 1990s.

It was not uncommon for Burckhardt to set out with his camera and paints, frequently exploring the same image in both painting and photograph. Rudy set himself the goal of painting realistically which he did from the photographer's stance, "As a photographer you develop an instant vision. You see a situation that makes a picture - I saw the painting already finished."



**Rudy Burckhardt**  
*29th Street Panorama*, 1979  
oil on linen  
27 3/4 x 74 inches

Burckhardt's paintings are deliberate, highly detailed, and took time. In his New York City paintings, he was partial to views of facades of buildings with each window carefully articulated. He made closeups of manhole covers punctuated with trash and delighted in the intricate geometry of rooftops with skylights, water towers, and billboard advertising. Most of his cityscapes were made in and around the Chelsea neighborhood near his 29th Street studio.

Later in his life, as painting became a larger part of his output, particularly with his late Mainescapes, he would take his paint box into the woods. He painted images of autumn leaves, fern fronds, and uprooted trees decomposing on the ground. In his final decade, he painted

many closeup views of the bark on birch and pine trees and lichen on rocks and tree trunks. All appear as paeans to the Maine woods, where he has summered for over thirty years.

It was also in Maine where he discovered the folk-art tradition of Artist Conk mushrooms, named for their ability to be used as a canvas. Conks are large woody fungi, which grow on the sides of trees and have a white underside. The mushroom's cap is brown or gray, but the underside is a bright surface suitable for painting. His frequent subjects, Maine and New York City, and self-portraits and nudes are reprised on mushrooms. They are odd, quirky and delightful.

Burckhardt's sixty-year career spanned generations and witnessed the rise of Abstract Expressionism and the New York School. An influential presence in the New York cultural scene, Burckhardt counted among his friends artists Willem de Kooning, Alex Katz, Mimi Gross, and Red Grooms, among many others. Rudy Burckhardt's work has been exhibited widely in museums in the US and Europe. The photo album *An Afternoon in Astoria* was on view at MoMA in 2020, the work part of the museum's collection, and was also presented there in 2002. His album *New York, N. Why?* is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art collection and was presented in a 2008 exhibition. Other recent solo museum exhibitions include *Rudy Burckhardt. Im Dickicht Der Grossstadt: Fotografien und Filme 1932-1959*, in 2014 at the Fotostiftung Schweiz, Winterthur, Switzerland and *Rudy Burckhardt. New York/Maine*, in 2013 at the Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria. *New York Moments* was presented at the Kunstmuseum Basel in 2005. He was also included in the recent group exhibition *Slab City* in 2019 at the Farnsworth Art Museum in Rockland, Maine, and *Bohemia: History of an Idea, 1950-2000*, Kunsthalle Prague in 2023 and *New York, N. Why?*, at GEMS, New York.