

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Merton D. Simpson

(1907 - 1977)

Paintings from a Life in Art

May 13 - June 25, 2005

The gallery is proud to announce the exhibition:

"Merton D. Simpson: Paintings from a Life in Art."

This presentation will feature 16 of the 36 paintings composed by Merton Simpson from our soon to be released 44 page full color catalogue of the same title. The catalogue highlights paintings created by Simpson from 1952-2004. Simpson is an artist, an art dealer, and a musician, he wears many hats, but rather possibly his name is most synonymous with that of a dealer in tribal arts. If you were to ask him what accomplishment he would most like to be acknowledged, he would vehemently say, "*Painting is my first love*", and sure enough, the paintings in this, our first exhibition of Simpson's works, indicate that indeed he is a fine painter. Educated at New York University, Simpson studied under the famed abstractionist William Bazotes. Simpson also attended Cooper Union art school and one of his instructors was Robert Gwathmey. But it seems that his most memorable critiques were from the working artist, Willem de Kooning, Max Weber and Hans Hoffmann who would arrive at Herbert Benevy's frame shop where Simpson worked for a time, and they were always available and eager to give him advice.

The earliest work in the exhibition, a 1952, oil, titled, *Nocturnal City*, received the honorable mention prize from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1954. Probably the most challenging works in the exhibition are the *Confrontation* paintings. Simpson recollect that he has completed more

than 30 Confrontation works on canvas and paper. The idea came to him one evening when he was visiting the jazz club, *Small's Paradise* in Harlem New York. The riots had started early in the evening and he was not able to leave the club until after 4 o'clock in the morning; later he decided to paint works pertaining to the violence between the races. The cover painting and many of the Confrontation paintings are severe and striking images that impose thrilling compositions. As an art dealer Merton Simpson is well respected throughout the world. As a painter his works should be comprehensively assessed, because he is a fine and demanding painter and time has come to give him the recognition he so greatly deserves. Simpson's works are collected and highly respected in museums, university art galleries as well as private collections throughout the world; including the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Detroit Art Institute, Fisk University art gallery and many other venues. the Bill Hodges Gallery specialize in historically significant African American and World art. The gallery is located on the 6th floor of, 24 West 57th street; between 5th and 6th Ave. Gallery hours are Tuesday to Friday 10am – 6pm and on Saturday from 12:30pm until 5:30pm.