



Ron Gorchov, *Spice of Life*, 1976, Oil on linen, 49 x 75 x 15 inches (124.5 x 190.5 x 38.1 cm)  
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**RON GORCHOV**  
***SPICE OF LIFE***  
**SEPTEMBER 14 - OCTOBER 30, 2021**

**VITO SCHNABEL GALLERY**  
**455 WEST 19TH STREET**  
**NEW YORK, NY 10011**

Vito Schnabel Gallery is pleased to announce *Ron Gorchov: Spice of Life*, an exhibition that pays tribute to the revolutionary work of the late American painter acclaimed for shaped canvases that uniquely merged the grandeur of Abstract Expressionism, formal conceits of Minimalist sculpture, and subversive wit of the 1970s, arriving at an enigmatic and wholly new form of abstraction.

Opening September 14, *Spice of Life* will be on view through October 30 at the gallery's 455 West 19th Street location. The exhibition features a selection of exceptional paintings made by Gorchov across the course of his fifty-year career, from the 1970s to the late 2010s.

Vito Schnabel first met Ron Gorchov in New York in the early 2000s, and immediately gravitated toward the curved "shield" and "saddle" shaped canvases he viewed in the artist's studio. Though separated by more than a half-century in age, the two men formed a close bond, and in 2005 Gorchov's paintings became the subject of the first solo exhibition Schnabel curated. At the time, Gorchov's work had not been presented publicly in over a decade, and the small survey ignited resurgent interest in the artist's work and his place in the evolution of postwar American painting. The following year, MoMA PS1 hosted a solo exhibition of the artist's work. An independent spirit who had consistently pushed the boundaries of what a painting could be, Gorchov became an inspiration for a new generation of young painters. Since their first collaboration, Schnabel has continued to exhibit and curate exhibitions of Gorchov's work in New York, Switzerland, and the UK.

"Ron Gorchov's paintings embody a very rare optimism that can only come from a profound belief in abstract art and the ability to convey a deeply felt human connection through it," Schnabel reflects. "These works speak to me, bridging distances of experience that only art can bridge. They're filled with color that resonates through the unique way Ron put paint down on linen. His invention of the curved saddle form holds its power as the paintings change in scale, as does his special way of applying his pigments. In being so alive and vibrant, these paintings speak in the young voice of all great paintings, inviting a connection to eyes that haven't been opened yet."

#### **About the Exhibition**

Ron Gorchov's craft and skill as a painter lies not just in the structure of his radical "shield" and "saddle" shaped canvases, but in the artist's visceral intelligence and acute sense of perception. Gorchov sought a new dimension in painting, and his gently curved stretcher that simultaneously bows inward and out creates a volumetric, topological space that considers all the opportunities that painting offers, while confronting the relationship between the perceived object, the space around it, and the viewer's psychological experience. As noted critic and curator Robert Storr avers, Gorchov's paintings "subject the act of looking."

Breaking onto the New York art scene in 1960, when his work was included in the Whitney Museum's *Young America 1960: Thirty American Painters Under Thirty-Six*, Gorchov established his forward-thinking and distinctive framework in the latter part of the decade. For more than fifty years, his masterful application of paint and reverie of gesture would drive his remarkably singular, original, and pioneering vision for painting to infinite and unexpected ends.

On view in *Spice of Life*, the towering work *Set* (1971) stacks four monochromatic canvases in indigo, midnight, marigold, and tangerine. Ascending vertically, the wide shaped fields of color, mounted on top of one another, climb to 14 feet in height. The gently arched curves of Gorchov's canvas lend a sculptural and architectural quality to painting. The monumental, bowed structure draws in light and casts shadow, adding to the physical sensuality of the colorfully pigmented surfaces.

Orientated vertically or horizontally, either concave or convex, the two signature marks that emerge in Gorchov's "shield" and "saddle" shaped canvases comprise the core of his painterly oeuvre. Archetypical in their compelling simplicity of form, these distinctive but mysterious floating biomorphic bodies exist in states of flux and becoming. Gorchov was masterful in his handling of paint, able to achieve a phenomenal viscosity of color. He held a deep understanding for color and pigment, and the qualities that would motivate it to sit in a frontal way on the surface of his canvas. Fascinated by solvents and oils, he used these mediums to dilute his paints, adding acetone, linseed or lavender oil, strippers, or by using silver radiator paint to negate color in the same way white pigment does. At times the twin forms in Gorchov's paintings become mirror images of one another, as in *Ulysses* (1979) and *Spice of Life* (1976). These shapes animate the pictorial field and draw us in to experience the vast monochromatic ground of a field that quivers, as Storr notes, with "vivid physicality and breath." In the former painting, a pair of widely spread, thin white bone-like forms hover in a dense matte field of azure; in the latter work, two inscribed, blazing red bowed crescents advance towards us from the blackened curved surface.

Gorchov's decisions, impulses, and intuitions reveal themselves through the process of making, and can be felt by the viewer as the artist layers, drips, draws, washes, and rubs away lucid and softened hues to render texture and density, or loose, thin, water-like stains. Generous and open, Gorchov's work incites fresh visual experiences and above all conveys the joy, reverie, and pleasure- the spice of life- he felt as he conceived new visual zones of experience.

### **About the Artist**

Ron Gorchov (b. 1930, Chicago, IL, d. 2020, New York, NY) was an American artist who began working with curved surface paintings in 1967. He created his first shaped canvas work in Mark Rothko's studio. Gorchov was best known for helping to spearhead the shaped canvas movement. As part of a group of artists in New York in the 1960s and '70s including Frank Stella, Richard Tuttle, Blinky Palermo, and Ellsworth Kelly, Gorchov pushed painting to its extreme, defying Greenbergian formalism. Gorchov lived and worked in Brooklyn, NY until his death in August 2020.

Major solo exhibitions have been presented at Everson Museum of Art (Syracuse, NY); Sotheby's S|2 (London, UK); Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis (Missouri); MoMA PS1 (Long Island City, NY); Vito Schnabel Gallery (New York, NY and St. Moritz, Switzerland); Lesley Heller Workspace (New York, NY); Galerie Forsblom (Helsinki, Finland); Cheim and Read (New York, NY); Galerie Richard (Paris, France); Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno (Canary Islands, Spain), Susanne Hilberry Gallery (Ferndale, MI); Jack Tilton Gallery (New York, NY); Texas Gallery (Houston, TX); and Tibor de Nagy Gallery (New York, NY). Gorchov's paintings are included in many prominent collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Detroit Institute of Art, the Guggenheim and the Everson Museum of Art.

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