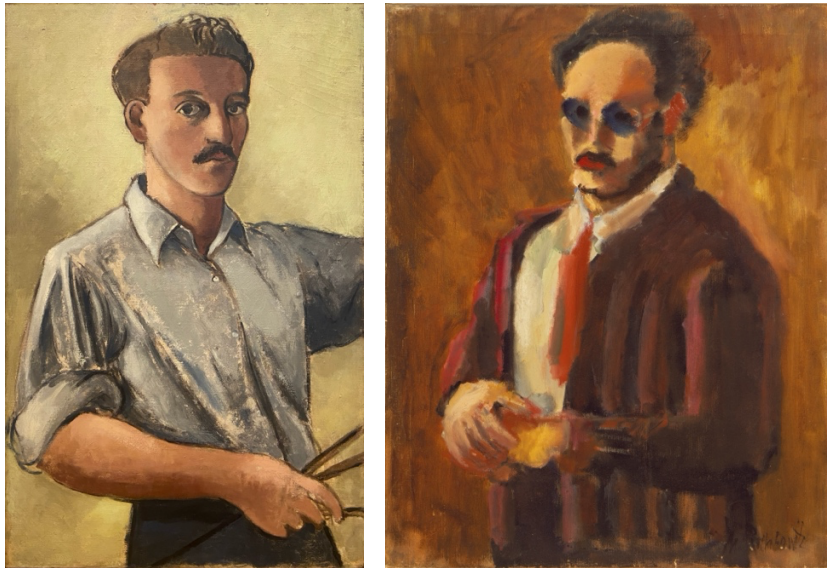




Gottlieb/Rothko: The Realist Years

May 9 – July 25, 2025



From Left to Right: Adolph Gottlieb, *UNTITLED (SELF PORTRAIT)*, 1928 © 2025 The Adolph & Esther Gottlieb Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Mark Rothko, *Self Portrait*, 1936 © 1998 by Kate Rothko Prizel and Christopher Rothko/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

New York, NY – April 17, 2025 –125 Newbury presents *Gottlieb/Rothko: The Realist Years*, a confluence of more than 30 works on canvas and paper by Mark Rothko and Adolph Gottlieb. The exhibition offers an intimate look at the artists’ friendship, mutual influences, and their parallel development during the 1920s and the 1930s. Their friendship began long before their pioneering roles in Abstract Expressionism, when both artists explored figuration in strikingly parallel trajectories, strongly influenced by the achievements of the School of Paris, German expressionism, and most of all their mentorship by Milton Avery. *Gottlieb/Rothko: The Realist Years* provides a fresh perspective on the artists’ transition from figuration to abstraction, and is particularly relevant at a moment when most contemporary artists seem to be anchored to figuration. The Realist Years, which could have defined careers in themselves, was a period through which these two artists matriculated in their evolution to becoming key figures of post-war American painting, renowned for their emotional use of color.

Meeting in the late 1920s in New York City, Rothko and Gottlieb shared artistic aspirations, intellectual curiosity, and even studio space together. In the exhibition, two drawings, exhibited side by side, are each of a man seated in a chair playing a mandolin. One of these drawings by Rothko is a portrait of Gottlieb, and the other by Gottlieb is a portrait of Rothko. Through side-by-side comparisons of these early paintings and drawings, the exhibition reveals how both artists experimented with flattened pictorial space, bold contours, and symbolic imagery foreshadowing their later breakthrough into abstraction. Simultaneously, the exhibition underscores the divergences in their styles. Rothko’s figures



are brooding and psychological, while Gottlieb's compositions are lean, structured and classical in their representation.

This is clearly visible in Rothko's striking 1936 **Self-Portrait**, a deeply introspective work that captures the artist's intensity. Recently featured in the acclaimed Rothko retrospective at the **Fondation Louis Vuitton** in Paris, this painting exemplifies his early exploration of color as a tool to project mood. Gottlieb's Self Portraits from the same era are of a much more linear description, displaying his skill as a draftsman.

The exhibition offers a rare opportunity to see how the artist's early explorations in figuration laid the groundwork for their revolutionary artistic philosophies. By examining this pivotal period, *Gottlieb/Rothko: The Realist Years* provides a fresh look at the formation of two artists who transformed the language of modern art. The exhibition closes with the juxtaposition of two transitional works linking figuration and surrealism, which would become the artists' next stop en route to the sublime.

Adolph Gottlieb (b. 1903, New York; d. 1974, New York) was a leading figure of the New York School. An advocate of abstraction, he produced paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture, and tapestries with an aesthetic vocabulary underpinned by automatism, primitivism, and Surrealism. He first received widespread recognition for his Pictographs series, which combine biomorphic abstraction with totemic imagery in compartmentalized compositions. In 1950, Gottlieb organized the protest of an exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, for which he and a group of fellow artists became known as the Irascibles. Further refining his approach, Gottlieb developed his Labyrinths, Imaginary Landscapes, and Bursts series, works that he created with painted gestures and abstract forms that prompt an immediate, visceral impact on the viewer.

Gottlieb's works are held in over ninety public collections worldwide, including The Art Institute of Chicago; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Detroit Institute of Arts, Michigan; Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Spain; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin; Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Tate, London; Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among many others.

Mark Rothko (b. 1903, Dvinsk, Russia; d. 1970, New York), a pioneer of the New York School, is predominantly recognized for his mesmerizing Color-field paintings of immense scale produced between 1949 and 1970, which followed his works of figurative and biomorphic imagery. His stylistic explorations resulted in a proliferation of works on paper and canvas, with layered transparencies of vibrant pigments and earth tones culminating in luminous and ethereal soft-edged compositions. His approach to painting emphasized an experimental engagement with process in order to fully articulate a universal expression. Among Rothko's artistic philosophies, he held that painting was a deeply psychological and spiritual experience through which basic human emotions could be communicated.



Rothko has been the subject of over ninety solo exhibitions, including twelve traveling exhibitions, held at institutions worldwide. Important solo exhibitions have been held at Tate Modern, London (2009); National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (2010, 2011); Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, Netherlands (2014); Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2015); Seoul Arts Center, Hangaram Art Museum (2015); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2017); Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Vienna (2018); Stedelijk Museum, Schiedam, the Netherlands (2019); Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris (2023); and Tate St Ives, United Kingdom (2024), among many others. Rothko's work is held in virtually every major international public collection of postwar art. He received his first commission in 1958 for The Seagram Building, New York, from which he ultimately withdrew, followed by a commission from Harvard University in 1961. At the height of his career, Rothko received his most prominent commission from John and Dominique de Menil in 1964. Asked to produce murals for a non-denominational chapel in Houston, Texas, Rothko created a suite of fourteen dark palette paintings for the site, which, in their meditative quality, enact a total environment. Known as the Rothko Chapel, the building was posthumously dedicated to the artist upon its inauguration in 1971.

ABOUT 125 NEWBURY

125 Newbury is a project space in New York City helmed by Arne Glimcher, Founder and Chairman of Pace Gallery. Named for the original location of Pace, which Glimcher opened at 125 Newbury Street in Boston in 1960, the venture is located at 395 Broadway in Manhattan's Tribeca neighborhood, at the corner of Walker Street. Occupying a 3,900-square-foot ground-floor space in a landmark building with 17-foot ceilings, the interior of 125 Newbury has been fully renovated by Enrico Bonetti and Dominic Kozerski of Bonetti/Kozerski Architecture.

Guided by Glimcher's six decades of pioneering exhibition-making and steadfast commitment to close collaboration with artists, 125 Newbury presents up to five exhibitions per year, with a focus on both thematic group shows as well as solo exhibitions by emerging, established, and historical artists. The 125 Newbury team is led by directors Arne Glimcher, Kathleen McDonnell, Talia Rosen, and Oliver Shultz, who work together to develop cutting-edge and thought-provoking exhibitions that reflect a global, cross-generational perspective.

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