

GERTRUDE ABERCROMBIE: A GROWING MARKET

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The interest and market value of the surrealist artist Gertrude Abercrombie is growing (Austin, 1909 -Chicago, 1977). Left in the shadows until 2016, it has been gradually rediscovered and now seems to be on the way to gaining a prominent place among the surrealist colleagues - whose market values had always been more encouraging. This is confirmed by the results of Wright's online auction of 10 October 2019 during which the two works "Shell" and "Untitled (Woman and Tree)" were sold for \$ 10,000 and \$ 24,000 respectively, both with a minimum estimate of \$ 3,000 and a maximum of \$ 5,000. The price range for Abercrombie works is \$ 5,000-50,000. The top lot is achieved by the single exception throughout her career: the work "Night Arrives" in 1948, it estimated 56,970 to 74,500 €, was sold for 130,594 € during the auction organized by Treadway held on November 18, 2018. More generally, 2018 was the turning point for the growth of the artist, the year in which her personal exhibition "Gertrude Abercrombie: Portrait of the Artists as a Landscape" was held in the Karma Gallery in New York, curated by Dan Nadel and which had previously also traveled to Springfield, at the Illinois State Museum and Chicago at the Elmhurst Art Museum .

The story

If her personality caused a sensation and her production was appreciated above all in Chicago, while she was alive and celebrated with a retrospective at the Hyde Park Art Center in 1977. After Abercrombie's death, despite having been called "Queen of Chicago" due to her frequent artistic and musical circles, especially jazz, she was slowly forgotten, only to return to arouse interest from 2016. From this moment, in fact, the artist's works begin to appear much more frequently within group exhibitions, such as "A Home for Surrealism" at The Arts Club of Chicago and "Surrealism: the Conjured Life", also in Chicago at the MCA .

The 126 auction passages of Abercrombie's works in the decade 2000-2019, however, achieved a turnover of more than € 1,180,000, an increase in number considering the works that have been auctioned in the last two months.

The rumor

Even critics have drawn attention to the value of Abercrombie. Donna Seaman, author of "Identity Unknown: Rediscovering Seven American Women Artists", underlines the depth that emerges from her works: "I believe that the work of Gertrude Abercrombie deserves to be illuminated by the spotlight of the art world for its deep psychological excavation, for the way she expresses feelings in the images of the Midwestern landscapes - flat stretches of land under a great sky that breathes - for her originality and her suggestive solitude, for her sense of humor ". However, it should be noted that her popularity is still limited to the United States, in fact the collectors are American and some of her works are preserved mainly in Illinois, in particular in the Illinois State Museum, in the Art Institute of Chicago and in the Museum of Contemporary Art of Chicago. As evidence of the artist's growth, it should be noted that, until her death, it was followed only by avant-garde and short-lived galleries (Katharine Kuh Gallery, Myrtle Todes Gallery, Associated American Artists Gallery, Little Gallery, Edwin Hewitt Gallery, Newman Brown, Robinson's studio Gallery, New Studio Gallery) but since her death, galleries of greater prestige and credibility have also dealt with her works: in addition to the aforementioned Karma Gallery, there is the Aaron Gallery in Chicago, the Sullivan Goss in Santa Barbara, Richard Norton and the Heater James Fine Art in Chicago.

The artistic production

Gertrude Abercrombie's work is characterized by a visionary and dreamlike art, characterized by an extremely personal style and with evident references to Surrealism. As she herself states, in fact, her main source of inspiration was Renè Magritte, who she called her "artistic dad". Despite the complete lack of interest in the technique, the artist attached particular importance both to the chromatic choices and to the arrangement of the elements in the space. Abercrombie's paintings are characterized by the presence of a group of objects that begins to appear regularly since the beginning of its production. Cats, black pedestals, carnations, owls and Victorian furniture are mysterious emblems, most of the time they are placed in a very specific environment: the artist's private room. The importance that Abercrombie attributed to the supernatural, occultism and the dreamlike dimension is evident in its scenarios always suspended between real and unreal. The recognition of Gertrude Abercrombie's value could increase hand in hand with that of other surrealist artists.