Bob Thompson

American, b. 1937, Louisville, KY, d. 1966, Rome, Italy

After briefly studying medicine at Boston University in 1956, Thompson returned to his hometown to study painting at the University of Louisville. He was a prolific painter who often appropriated work of the Old Masters in his large scale paintings.

This composition is based upon an etching from one of Francisco Goya’s most significant works entitled Los Caprichos (The Whim). Plate 65 from the series, Donde Va Momma (Where is Mother Going?), 1799, depicts a menagerie of figures descendent upon a naked woman as she is supported by a beastlike creature. The series was intended by Goya to be a representation of the prejudices and social ills that occur in all societies. The economic urgency in Thompson’s painting process deftly depicts the implied violence of the etching. Thompson received considerable professional success in the United States during his short career which ended prematurely from gall bladder surgery when he was 29. An avid traveler, the artist died in Rome. Ultimately, he has left a legacy of over 1,000 paintings. In 1998, the Whitney Museum of American Art organized a retrospective of his work.

Thompson’s paintings are included in the permanent collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Art Institute of Chicago, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, The Brooklyn Museum, The Denver Art Museum, the Detroit Institute of Arts.



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