



**SIDNEY GORDIN: RUSSIAN AMERICAN CONSTRUCTIVIST**  
[1918-1996]

# SIDNEY GORDIN: RUSSIAN AMERICAN CONSTRUCTIVIST

[1918-1996]

ON EXHIBIT FEBRUARY 9 - APRIL 13, 2008

In 1915, artist Vladimir Tatlin heralded the birth of the Constructivist movement with the debut of his corner counter-reliefs. Considered the father of Russian Constructivism, Tatlin, among fellow artists such as El Lissitzky and Aleksandr Rodchenko, promoted the use of industrial-related materials and questioned the traditional representation of space in art. Born on October 24, 1918—one year after the Bolshevik Revolution and Russia's withdrawal from World War I—in Chelyabinsk, Russia, Sidney Gordin (né Shura Aleksandr Gordin) would soon pick up where his predecessors left off.

At the age of 4, Gordin came to the United States and settled with his family in New York City. While attending Brooklyn Technical High School, he studied draftsmanship and ironwork. Upon graduation, he enrolled at the Cooper Union, devoting his class schedule to courses in drawing and painting.

With the onset of World War II, New York City became a hotbed for the international avant-garde, allowing for an influx of European aesthetic movements. For the first time, Gordin turned his attention to the Constructivist art of his homeland. He created geometric abstractions that explored the ambiguous relationship between light and depth, and recalled the architectural designs of Tatlin and the Suprematist compositions of Kasimir Malevich.

By the end of World War II, the center of the art world shifted from Paris to New York and with it came the rise of Abstract Expressionism. As a member of The Club and the American Abstract Artists group, Gordin produced work that reflected his close proximity to the Ab-Ex scene. In his paintings and drawings of the 1940s and 1950s, he synthesized Cubist and Surrealist styles to create lyrical interpretations of movement.

In 1949, Gordin turned his attention to sculpture. Combining his background in draftsmanship and welding, he worked in three sculptural styles: a geometric format of intersecting steel planes; a jagged style of hammered bronze; and an arabesque design of welded iron rods that seem to suggest drawings done in space. Transforming his steady ink line into free-formed iron wires, these “air drawings” take on semi-representational forms in their acrobatic appearance.

Gordin began a lifelong relationship with the Whitney Museum of American Art when they acquired a metal construction for their permanent collection in 1953.

Following teaching stints at both Sarah Lawrence College and the New School for Social Research in New York, Gordin accepted a position within the Department of Art at the University of California, Berkeley in 1958.



**INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS, c. 1939**

20 x 16 inches | oil on canvas over board  
from the estate

**1-42, 1942**

24.75 x 20.75 inches | acrylic on board  
signed lower left

Coinciding with his move to the Bay Area, he began to employ wood in his sculptures, eventually leading to the creation of painted reliefs. Gordin used a predetermined group of shapes and a spontaneous color palette in order to wholly explore spatial relationships between forms. In both his three-dimensional reliefs and two-dimensional “flat paintings,” he united the crisp, disciplined line of his Constructivist heritage with the expressive brushwork that characterized Bay Area painting at that time.



From his humble beginnings at Brooklyn Technical High School to his 28 years as a professor at UC Berkeley, Gordin led a superlative career in both New York and San Francisco, with numerous museum and gallery exhibitions across the nation. Sullivan Goss-An American Gallery is pleased to present a legacy of Russian art in America with the first retrospective of Sidney Gordin’s Constructivist career since his death in 1996.

-Danielle Peltakian, Art Historian



**20-57, 1957**

10 x 10 x 3 inches | welded bronze

signed

**19-57, 1957**

10.25 x 9.5 x 4 inches | welded bronze

signed





**45-58, 1958**

11.5 x 19.5 x 4 inches | welded steel wire

signed



**1-60, 1960**

13.5 x 12 x .25 inches | hammered bronze  
signed

**FEBRUARY 1964, 1964**

36 x 22.5 x 2.5 inches | acrylic on wood with wood constructions  
signed lower right





**NOVEMBER 1967, #4, 1967**

39 x 39 inches | acrylic on board  
signed lower left

**NOVEMBER 1967, #1, 1967**

60 x 48 inches | acrylic on wood with wood constructions  
signed on back





**JUNE 1968, 1968**

42 x 36 inches | acrylic on board

signed upper left



**23-80, 1980**

38 x 32 inches | acrylic on board

signed lower left



**8-81, 1981**

32.5 x 24.5 x 3 inches | acrylic on wood with wood constructions

signed lower left



**1-86, 1986**

32 x 38 x 6 inches | acrylic on wood with wood constructions  
signed on back



## **PUBLIC COLLECTIONS (selected)**

Art Institute of Chicago, IL  
Baltimore Museum of Art, OH  
Brooklyn Museum, NY  
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.  
Newark Museum, NJ

Oakland Museum, CA  
Provincetown Art Association and Museum, MA  
St. Louis Museum of Art, MO  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA  
Whitney Museum of American Art, NY

## **EXHIBITION HISTORY (selected)**

1951-52 Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY  
1951-58, 1960-65 Grace Borgenicht Gallery, NY  
1952, 1954, 1959-60 Museum of Modern Art, NY  
1952-63, '78, '80, '85, '89, 1991-93, '95 Whitney Museum of American Art, NY  
1954, 1962 Art Institute of Chicago, IL  
1954 Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA  
1955 Guggenheim Museum, NY  
1955, 1959 Saint Louis Art Museum, MO  
1955-57, 1960-61 Riverside Art Museum, NY  
1955, 1960, 1963-64, 1966-67, '69 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA  
1956 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VI  
1957 Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX  
1957 Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT  
1958 Brooklyn Museum, NY  
1958-59, 1964-65, 1994 Provincetown Art Association and Museum, MA

1959, 1961-63, 1965 Dilexi Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
1959 Denver Art Museum, CO  
1959 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA  
1959-60 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA  
1961 Scripps College, Claremont, CA  
1961 Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT  
1962 Newark Museum, NJ  
1962, 1968 M.H. DeYoung Memorial Museum, CA  
1963, 1970-71, 1984-85 Oakland Museum, CA  
1967 Berkeley Art Center, CA  
1968, 1996 Portland Art Museum, OR  
1981, '84, '88, 1990-91, '94, 2000 Gallery Paule Anglim, CA  
1988 Terra Museum of American Art, Chicago, IL  
1993-94 National Academy of Design, NY  
1994 Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



## **SIDNEY GORDIN: RUSSIAN AMERICAN CONSTRUCTIVIST**

### **ON EXHIBIT:**

FEBRUARY 9 - APRIL 13, 2008

### **RECEPTION:**

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9 | FROM 5-7PM  
7 EAST ANAPAMU STREET | SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

### **PREVIEW ONLINE:**

[www.sullivangoss.com/exhibits/sidney\\_gordin\\_2007.asp](http://www.sullivangoss.com/exhibits/sidney_gordin_2007.asp)



# Sullivan Goss

AN AMERICAN GALLERY

*7 East Anapamu Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 730-1460*

**[www.sullivangoss.com](http://www.sullivangoss.com)**

**FADA**