
RICHARD MAYHEW, *Sonata in D Minor*, oil on canvas, 1970



Artist/maker: Richard Mayhew (1924-)

Title: Sonata in D Minor

Medium: Oil on linen canvas

Image Size: 60 x 72 inches

Frame Size: 62 by 74 inches

Date/period: 1970

Subject matter: abstract landscape—greens and blues.

Signature/markings: Signed and Dated "Mayhew '70" in oil on lower right, recto.

Condition: Very good; minor scuffs and/or paint on bottom of painting.

RICHARD MAYHEW (b. 1924) **Resides in California**



Richard Mayhew was born in Amityville, Long Island to Native American and African American parents. Considered one of America's greatest living landscape painters, Mayhew has had over thirty solo exhibitions. His work is in the permanent collections of The Metropolitan Museum, The Whitney Museum of American Art and The Brooklyn Museum in New York; The Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois; and The Smithsonian and The National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C. among numerous others.

Throughout his career, Mayhew's work has been described as Abstract, Impressionist, Realist and Romantic. His approach to his landscapes may have been 19th century, but upon closer examination his handling of paint and space is quite contemporary. He has uniquely synthesized his experiences, his heritage and the influences of his various teachers, Rubin Tam, Edwin Dickinson, Max Beckmann and Hans Hofmann.

The power of Mayhew's paintings derives from his intimacy and absorption with nature. His mother and father were slaves who both escaped and traveled to Long Island via the Underground Railroad and were aided by the natives of the land; his mother was taken in by the Blackfoot tribe, and his father, by the Mohawk. Mayhew takes pride in his dual heritage—he feels kinship between African American art and American Indian art. His attachment to the land comes from his American Indian heritage; his identification with jazz and blues comes from his African American heritage. In this way, his paintings were saved from banality because of his particularly sensitive eye and love for nature.

After his first one-person exhibition in 1957 at the Morris Gallery in New York, Mayhew received a grant to study in Europe where he was influenced by French Realism as practiced among the Barbizon painters. Upon his return, in 1963, Mayhew along with other artists and writers founded "Spiral," a contingent of black

intellectuals who were united in their dedication for civil rights in the art world and encouraged other black artists to never deny their true feelings. As one of the few living members of this historic group, Mayhew has achieved what the group set out to accomplish.

His work, acclaimed for the depth of beauty and serenity, has universal appeal. His large scale oils and his small, intimate watercolors, create moody, atmospheric landscapes which evoke the work of George Inness, Henry Tanner, and Winslow Homer. Mayhew believes in complete involvement with the medium. He believes the medium fosters involvement in a new culture, the culture of art, which is the ultimate aesthetic experience.

The particular work, *Sonata in D Minor (1970)*, appeared in the exhibition titled, *Afro-American Artists: New York and Boston*, which took place from May 19th—June 23rd of 1970. The show was sponsored by The Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists and The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The introduction of the catalogue written by the curator of the show, Edmund B. Gaither, focuses on the common confusion between the ideas of a “black show” and “black art.” Although Richard Mayhew is indeed of African American descent, that sociological fact does not inform the theme of the show by any means. *Sonata in D Minor* was included in *Afro-American Artists: New York and Boston* in order to exemplify the diversity of American artists who are black.

"Mayhew represents a bridge between the older black artists who developed through the WPA in the 1930s and those who, after World War II, attended art schools and matured during the turbulent civil rights movement of the 1960s and the rise of Abstract Expressionism." -Romare Bearden (from Blouinartinfo.com)

Sources:

"The Art World Online: Artnet." The Art World Online: Artnet. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 Nov. 2014.

"Bonhams : Auctions." Bonhams : Auctions. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 Nov. 2014.

Fine, Elsa Honig. *The Afro-American Artist; a Search for Identity*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973. Print.

Gaither, Edmund B., ed. *Afro-American Artists: New York and Boston*; The Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, the Museum of Fine Arts the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 19 May-23 June, 1970. Boston: Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, 1970. Print.

"Richard Mayhew." *Artworks, Biography, Paintings and Auctions*. N.p., n.d. Web. 03 Nov. 2014.

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Images of Relocation process from Deloitte Wilton, CT to 695 East Main Street, Stamford, CT, 6th Fl., Large Meeting Room

