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Contact: Michael Kaminer, 212-260-9733

press@yum.cjh.org

EXCLUDED FROM “MACHO” ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONIST MOVEMENT, RUTH ABRAMS GETS RETROSPECTIVE AT YESHIVA UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

Exhibition Reclaims Place of Visionary Female Artist

WHAT:	<i>Microcosms: Ruth Abrams, Abstract Expressionist</i>
WHEN:	August 12, 2012-January 6, 2013
WHERE:	Yeshiva University Museum, 15 W. 16th Street, NYC, 212-294-8330
COST:	Adults: \$8; seniors and students: \$6. Free for members and children under 5
WEB:	http://yumuseum.tumblr.com/RuthAbrams or www.yumuseum.org

New York City, July 16 -- When Ruth Abrams died in 1986, *The New York Times* called her “a woman unfairly neglected in a macho era.” Though she produced a strong and fascinating body of work and was active alongside some of the 20th century’s most acclaimed artists – including Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock– her own work remains largely overlooked and nearly forgotten.

Now, in the first solo show of Ruth Abrams’s work in a quarter century (since a show at the Grey Art Gallery in 1986), Yeshiva University Museum is showcasing the art of this talented, intelligent, and visionary artist. “Microcosms” places Abrams’s work in the intellectual and cultural context of the era and aims to restore her place alongside her contemporaries in the Abstract Expressionist movement. According to curator Reba Wulkan, the exhibition’s presentation of Abrams’s work continues a trend in the history of post-war art, which has brought belated recognition to female artists such as Lee Krasner, Grace Hartigan, Elaine de Kooning, Helen Frankenthaler, and Joan Mitchell.

Abrams, a painter of the New York School who remained closely associated through much of her career with artists of the Abstract Expressionist movement, was fascinated with art’s capacity to evoke fundamental aspects of the human experience, and convey the dynamics of scale and space in the cosmos.

The centerpiece of the Yeshiva University Museum exhibition: “Microcosms,” a series of striking works, each as small as two by three inches, which paradoxically explore notions of infinite space. Abrams painted her “Microcosms” from the 1950s-1970s, with the emergence of the space race and as space travel became viable. More than 70 of these small-scale works will be on display, many for the first time. The exhibition will also showcase large-scale color landscapes, abstract portraits, and other work from across Abrams’s 40-year career, all from the Museum’s own collection. Yeshiva University Museum holds the largest institutional repository of Abrams’s work, together with a significant archive of her letters, press clippings and personal papers.

The exhibition will also give visitors the opportunity to see Abrams’s only film in its first screening in 40 years. Employing an avant-garde aesthetic that aimed to evoke a feeling of transcendence, “Paradox of the Big” was written and directed by Abrams in 1974 to elucidate her artistic vision behind the “Microcosms” – the

capstone of her artistic journey. The seven-minute film suggests an illusionistic *trompe l'oeil*, blurring the viewer's sense of scale through an elusive horizon line, an evocation of infinite space, and the sensation of speed. Yeshiva University Museum owns the only known print of the film, which can be viewed at: <http://vimeo.com/yumuseum/ruthabrams>.

According to Wulkan, the "Microcosms" series signified a bold departure from prevailing styles of the time, when Abrams's Ab-Ex contemporaries tended toward large-scale works. For Abrams, the "Microcosms" series also reflected a fascination with outer space and the freedom from limitations that space suggested, themes subsequently picked up by a new generation of Abstract Expressionists in the 1960s. "These tiny paintings brought her work to a new level," Wulkan suggests, "by concentrating on pure color, space tensions and juxtapositions of the two. They also reflected her interest in exploring the cosmos through the experimentation with spatial viewpoints."

"It's a privilege for us to bring this fascinating and overlooked artist to the attention of the public," said Dr. Jacob Wisse, director of Yeshiva University Museum. "We think Abrams's studies of light, color and scale will be revelatory to people already familiar with the Ab-Ex movement; her intense and sensitive evocations of nature and the human form, and her ambitious studies of the cosmic sphere provide a distinct face of the movement."

Ruth Abrams was born in Brooklyn in 1912. In the 1930s she studied art at the Art Students' League, Columbia University, and the School of Social Research, and worked in the studios of sculptors William Zorach, Aleksandr Archipenko, and Jose de Creeft, and painters John Graham, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, and Wallace Harrison. As early as the 1940s she exhibited at the American Contemporary Art Gallery along with Hans Hofmann, I. Rice Pereira and Giorgio Cavallon, and went on to achieve other significant gallery exposure.

ABOUT YESHIVA UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

Yeshiva University Museum is dedicated to the presentation and interpretation of the artistic and cultural achievements of Jewish life. The Museum, founded in 1973, is distinguished by its wide-ranging and intellectually rigorous exhibitions and, as the cultural arm of Yeshiva University, by its strong educational mission. As a partner in the thriving Center for Jewish History and a participant in New York's lively downtown cultural scene, Yeshiva University Museum makes a distinctive and important contribution to Jewish life and to the world of culture and the arts. The Museum's rich and diverse collections preserve Jewish artifacts, art, texts and material culture for posterity, making objects accessible through exhibitions, educational programs, and research and conservational initiatives.

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