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**MAJOR RETROSPECTIVE OF THE ART OF PHILIP GUSTON
OPENS AT SFMOMA JUNE 28**

The most comprehensive survey to date of the work of Philip Guston will be on view at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) from June 28 through September 28, 2003. *Philip Guston Retrospective* includes more than 100 paintings and drawings that range from the artist's early figurative works of the 1930s to a group of rarely seen paintings completed in the years before his death in 1980. SFMOMA has a substantial history with this critical artist: the Museum organized his last in-depth retrospective in 1979 and owns several Guston works.

Philip Guston Retrospective was organized by the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas. The curator of the exhibition is Michael Auping, chief curator of the Modern Art Museum; overseeing the San Francisco presentation is Madeleine Grynsztejn, Elise S. Haas Senior Curator of Painting and Sculpture at SFMOMA.

"Philip Guston was a leading figure of the avant-garde whose influence continues to be felt today," said Grynsztejn. "He moved from figuration to abstraction, finally returning to figuration late in his life in a shift that was considered extremely risky at that time. Given SFMOMA's long association with Guston, we are the ideal venue in which to present this important career overview."

Philip Guston Retrospective begins with figurative works dating from the 1930s and 1940s that reflect Guston's early and wide-ranging pictorial interests, including the work of Giorgio De Chirico and Pablo Picasso. Such influences are evident in the two earliest works in the exhibition, *Mother and Child* and *Drawing for Conspirators*, both completed in 1930 when Guston was just 17, in which swollen, ominous hooded figures are located in eerie, vacant cityscapes. Guston's interest in German Expressionism, particularly the work of Max Beckmann, is clear in paintings such as *Martial Memory*, 1941, and *Porch No. 2*, 1947, in which children are brought together in strange battle scenes in a compressed and layered space.

These early figurative works are followed by a pivotal group of transitional paintings that reflect the artist's entry into abstraction and his involvement with Abstract Expressionism, including *The Tormentors*, 1947–48; *Review*, 1949–50; *Red Painting*, 1950; and *White Painting I*, 1951. Beginning with *The Tormentors*, Guston



Philip Guston, *Sleeping*, 1977;
Private Collection

gradually unravels the figurative scaffolding that he used throughout the 1940s into subtle painterly abstraction. Anchoring the center of the exhibition is a major group of Guston's lush abstractions from the 1950s and 1960s in which rich, delicately applied brushstrokes come together to suggest floating, abstract forms. These works include *To B.W.T.*, 1952; *Painting*, 1954; *Zone*, 1953–54; *Beggar's Joys*, 1954–55; and *For M*, 1955. (*The Tormentors*, *White Painting I* and *For M* are all part of SFMOMA's permanent collection.)

Interspersed throughout *Philip Guston Retrospective* is a revealing survey of drawings from different stages of the artist's career. Guston began drawing at the age of 12 and consistently relied on that medium as a way to work out ideas and structure his compositions. During each decade of Guston's life, drawing invariably announced changes in his imagery.

In the late 1960s Guston's abstractions gradually evolved into stark, semifigurative forms that took on the shape of heads and later became simple, utilitarian objects such as books, light bulbs and shoes. This late figurative evolution was presented in the artist's controversial yet highly acclaimed 1970 exhibition at the Marlborough Gallery in New York City. That exhibition, which included his symbolically loaded hooded figures, had a powerful impact on at least three generations of artists who have subsequently re-engaged figuration after decades in which abstraction dominated American painting. Among the works on view in the SFMOMA presentation that were included in that groundbreaking exhibition are *Blackboard*, 1969; *Edge of Town*, 1969; *The Studio*, 1969; and *Flatlands*, 1970 (collection SFMOMA). Also on view at SFMOMA is *By the Window*, 1969, in which Guston creates poignant autobiographical statements. The finale of the exhibition includes the grand still lifes and landscapes that occupied Guston throughout the 1970s. This section includes major canvases such as *Pit*, 1976; *Couple in Bed*, 1977; and *The Street*, 1977. The exhibition ends with a group of rarely seen small paintings completed in the years before his death in 1980. Following its tenure at SFMOMA, the exhibition will travel to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Royal Academy of Arts, London.

An extensive catalogue published by Thames and Hudson in conjunction with *Philip Guston Retrospective* is available at the SFMOMA MuseumStore or on the Museum's Web site at www.sfmoma.org. The hardcover sells for \$50 (\$45 for SFMOMA members) and the softcover for \$40 (\$36 for SFMOMA members). Essayists include exhibition curator Michael Auping; Dore Ashton, art historian and author; Bill Berkson, poet and longtime friend of the artist; Andrew Graham-Dixon, chief art critic for London's *The Independent* from 1986 to 1998; Joseph Rishel, curator of European painting at the Philadelphia Museum of Art; and Michael E. Shapiro, director of the High Museum of Art, Atlanta. An interactive multimedia program on Guston approaches the life and work of the artist through SFMOMA's painting *Back View*. It features footage of the artist at work and an interview with exhibition curator Michael Auping. It can be viewed in the Museum's fourth-floor galleries and Koret Visitor Education Center.

Philip Guston Retrospective was organized by the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, Texas and made possible by The Burnett Foundation and special funding from Gerald L. Lennard. Support for SFMOMA's presentation has been generously provided by Roselyne Chroman Swig.

Philip Guston Retrospective Public Programs

Lecture

Faith, Hope and Impossibility: The Art and Life of Philip Guston

Saturday, June 28, 2 p.m.

Phyllis Wattis Theater

Michael Auping, chief curator of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, chronicles Guston's move from symbolic realism to Abstract Expressionism and finally to a bold form of figuration. Aspects of Guston's personal life are woven into the discussion of his work.

Admission: \$12 general; \$8 SFMOMA members, students with ID, and seniors. Tickets are available at the Museum with no surcharge or through www.ticketweb.com, 866/468-3399.

Free Tuesday Program

Sick and Tired of Purity: Guston's Marlborough Gallery Show

Tuesday, July 1, Noon

Phyllis Wattis Theater

Tara McDowell, SFMOMA curatorial associate, discusses the 1970 show at New York's Marlborough Gallery when Guston surprised the art world by showing figurative paintings with bold social and personal subjects.

McDowell talks about the reception of these works by critics and artists.

Video Screenings

Philip Guston: A Life Lived by Michael Blackwood, 1980, 58 min

Thursdays July 3–24, August 7 and 21, 7 p.m.

Fridays and Saturdays, July 4–25, 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

Fridays and Saturdays, July 26–August 30, 3 p.m.

Koret Visitor Education Center

Filmed in San Francisco and at Guston's Woodstock studio, this documentary shows the artist speaking candidly about his philosophy of painting and the psychological motivations for his work.

Free with Museum admission.

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Admission prices: Adults \$10; seniors \$7; students \$6. SFMOMA members and children 12 and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings, 6 to 9 p.m., admission is half price. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free.

SFMOMA Summer Hours (until November 4) : Open daily (except Wednesdays) 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; open late Thursdays until 9 p.m.; closed Wednesdays. Koret Visitor Education Center open Thursdays 6 to 8:30 p.m., Fridays and Saturdays 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Beginning July 26 the Museum is also open Fridays until 9 p.m.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by MUNI, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans and Caltrain. Hourly and daily parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415/348-0971.

Visit our Web site at www.sfmoma.org or call 415/357-4000 for more information.

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