

THE CULTURE CENTER

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SIGMUND ABELES CELEBRATES LIFE AND ART AT THE CULTURE CENTER IN NEW YORK

The distinguished American artist Sigmund Abeles will be the subject of a solo exhibition at The Culture Center in New York, NY from November 6th - November 14th 2009.

***Sigmund Abeles at 75: Celebrating Life and Art*, features highlights from the artist's long and illustrious career, giving viewers a broad and compelling perspective of his work as a painter, printmaker, pastel artist and draftsman. There will be a festive 75th birthday reception with the artist on Friday, November 6th from 6pm – 9pm, and the public is cordially invited to attend this special event. The artist will also give a talk on November 8th at 3pm, and on November 14th at 3pm.**

Sigmund Abeles was born in New York City in 1934, but moved to South Carolina when he was two years old, and was raised as an only child by his mother. As a young boy he fell in love with horses and with the human figure, so he began drawing both, as a way to know them better. After years of studying art and drawing incessantly, it's not surprising to learn that drawing is as essential to Abeles' art as breathing is to his life. "Drawing is touching at a distance," the artist has said, and it seems that the closer he gets to his subjects, the greater the intensity and intimacy of each line he depicts.

As a humanist with a strong social conscience, Abeles has been influenced and inspired by other artists of the humanist tradition, including Rembrandt, Goya, Ingres, Degas, Kollwitz, Schiele and Lucian Freud. And as a young artist in NYC in the late 1950's, he swam against the popular current of Abstract Expressionism, holding onto the emotional expressiveness and narrative content of his representational style. The writer Issac Bashevis Singer once observed, "In a time when many artists try their best to be abstract, obscure, and detached from human suffering and human efforts, Sigmund Abeles has the courage to portray real people and even to tell a story in the way artists did for generations. His roots are attached to the soil."

Curated by Sandy Rupp and Michael DeCerbo, the exhibition features approximately forty works, including paintings, pastels, etchings and sculpture that highlight Abeles' passionate and enduring engagement with the human figure, and with human concerns. However, regardless of the medium he uses, it is the artist's profound empathy and eloquence of line that adds layers of intrigue and complexity to his soul stirring portrayals, and reveals a deeper identity in his subjects and self-portraits.

As the late Robert M. Doty, a museum director and former curator at the Whitney Museum, so clearly expressed in an essay on the artist, "Abeles believes in art that is about life, about the human condition. He has contemplated humanity's weaknesses, exaltations and irresistible attractions in order to gain a renewed understanding of the contradictions that exist in the modern world. With the aid of intense perception, he seeks out intimate situations, moments in time, episodes of human drama, the emotional nuances of life around him and transforms them into significant images."

Sigmund Abeles divides his time between studios in New York City and Columbia County, NY. He received his BA in Art from the University of South Carolina in 1955, and an MFA from Columbia University in 1957. He is a Professor Emeritus at the University of New Hampshire, and was awarded an honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts from Coastal Carolina University in 2000. Mr. Abeles exhibits his work nationally and internationally, and is the recipient of an extensive list of scholarships, awards, prizes and grants. He is a long-standing member of the prestigious National Academy of Design, and in 2006 was honored with the Degas Society Award by the Pastel Society of America. Abeles' work is represented in over 100 public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; Museum of Modern Art, NY; Whitney Museum of Art, NY; Montclair Art Museum, NJ; Museum of Fine Arts, MA; Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA; The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, MN; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, CA; Yale University Art Gallery, CT; Fogg Art Museum, MA; Williams College Museum of Art, MA; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK; and the Museo de Arte, Ponce, PR.

The Culture Center is located at 410 Columbus Avenue (between 79th and 80th Streets) in Manhattan's Upper West Side, across from the American Museum of Natural History. Dedicated to enriching the community by showcasing our diverse cultural heritage, The Culture Center hosts exhibitions and events that promote a greater understanding of our common humanity. *Sigmund Abeles at 75: Celebrating Life and Art* is free and open to the public. Hours are from 12 noon – 7pm, and by appointment. For further information, please contact The Culture Center at (212) 769-1600 or visit: <http://www.culturecenterny.org>