

# Robert De Niro, Sr.

## *Works from the Studio*

HACKETT  
GALLERY  
FREEDMAN

March 9 – April 29, 2006

Opening Reception: Thursday, March 9, 5:30–7:30 PM

Fully illustrated catalog with essay by W.S. Di Piero available.

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Hackett-Freedman Gallery is proud to announce an exhibition of work by Robert De Niro, Sr., March 9 – April 29, 2006. An opening reception will take place on Thursday, March 9, from 5:30 to 7:30pm. A fully illustrated catalog with an essay by W.S. di Piero accompanies the exhibition.

Grounded in European antecedents, specifically French, but unmistakably American in style, the paintings of Robert De Niro, Sr., represent one of the foremost achievements in painterly representation. De Niro's efforts to reconcile the real with the abstract through the use of brilliant draftsmanship, bold, Fauvist-inspired colors, and confident, gestural brushwork stand as one of the great achievements in postwar twentieth-century American painting.

Hans Hofmann reportedly considered De Niro one of his two best students ever, (the other being Virginia Admiral, De Niro's wife).<sup>1</sup> Thus it was no surprise when De Niro emerged from the New York abstract expressionist school in the 1940s and became a leading member of the second-generation of postwar American painters who turned to representational subject matter as a means of reinvigorating the tradition of painterly expression. These painters, a group that included Larry Rivers, Jane Freilicher, and Paul Resika

(whose work is also on view at Hackett-Freedman Gallery at the same time) reopened the discussion of what is possible in painting by returning to figuration and confronting the legacy of their art historical predecessors head on.

In 1946, De Niro had his first one-person exhibition at Peggy Guggenheim's famed New York gallery, Art of this Century, and was enthusiastically reviewed by Clement



*Nude in Chair* 40 x 46" oil on canvas, 1970–71

<sup>1</sup> Peter Frank, *Robert De Niro, Sr.* (New York: Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, 2004), p.21.



*Winfield Street Houses II, Bernal Heights* 25 x 32" oil on canvas, 1978

Greenberg: "The originality and force of [De Niro's] temperament demonstrate themselves under an iron control of the plastic elements such as is rarely seen in our time outside the painting of the oldest surviving members of the School of Paris."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, De Niro revered 19<sup>th</sup>-century French painting (Corot, Ingres, Delacroix) and was a fervent admirer of the French modernists (Matisse, Bonnard, Derain, and Soutine). By 1960, he had settled into the style that sustained him for the remainder of his career: an exploration of the possibilities inherent in paint via the depiction of the everyday and the exotic. Paintings, tables, nudes, and antiquities, along with landscapes, all serve as fodder for a breathtaking exploration of the plastic possibilities inherent in paint, color, and form. In this way, De Niro's work shares an affinity with that of the Bay Area Figurative painters from the fifties and sixties such as David Park.

This exhibition features work from the seventies and eighties—De Niro's most mature period—and includes interiors, figures, and landscapes, including *Winfield Street House II: Bernal Heights* (1978) which was painted during De Niro's residence in San Francisco during the late seventies. This exhibition marks the third solo showing of De Niro's work at Hackett-Freedman Gallery.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 22.

Robert De Niro, Sr. died in 1993 at the age of 71. His work is included in the following museum collections: the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, The Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY, and the Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA, among others. In 2004 Salander-O'Reilly Galleries published a major monograph on the artist with an essay by Peter Frank, and art critic Jed Perl devotes significant attention to De Niro in his acclaimed book *New Art City* (Knopf, 2005), a history of the New York art world in the mid-twentieth century.



*Busts* 24 x 20" oil on panel, 1970