

September 24–27, 2026

INDEPENDENT 20TH CENTURY



Coming to America

Immigrant artists—and architects, like Marcel Breuer—have contributed immeasurably to the history of art and culture, nowhere more so than in the United States. Newcomers to this country were especially central in the development here of modernism, which was seen at first as suspiciously radical and “foreign.” Several presentations at Independent 20th Century this fall, on view at Breuer’s masterpiece at 945 Madison Avenue, will highlight these artists and their critical importance in the decades-long struggle to bring modern art to America. Read on to learn more.



Winold Reiss at Hirschl & Adler

German-born Winold Reiss (1886–1953) arrived at Ellis Island in 1913. Coming from a background in Art Nouveau and Jugendstil, European movements that made little distinction between the fine and applied arts, Reiss worked in a variety of fields—illustration, graphic design, fabric design, and interior decoration, as well as in easel and mural painting. In his art, he essayed a gamut of styles and genres, including abstraction, symbolic landscapes, and Art Deco, which resulted in several important decorative commissions. But Reiss is best remembered for his portraiture, which combines careful observation with modernist flair. He portrayed models and society figures, but also notables of the Harlem Renaissance and, further afield, common people in Mexico and elsewhere. His sensitive yet boldly assertive portraits of Native Americans were used extensively in promotional materials for the Great Northern Railroad, cementing his popular

recognition. New York's Hirschl & Adler presents an exhibition of Reiss's portraits at Independent in the Breuer this fall.

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Esphyr Slobodkina at Rosenberg & Co.

Born in Russia, Esphyr Slobodkina (1908–2002) came to the U.S. in 1928. By the mid-1930s, she had devoted herself to abstraction and co-founded the American Abstract Artists (AAA) group in 1936. Another co-founder was Ilya Bolotowsky, also a Russian Jewish immigrant, who was a mentor and, briefly, husband to Slobodkina (and whose work will be included in a group exhibition presented by Los Angeles's Weinstein Gallery at Independent). Over her long career, Slobodkina created dynamic compositions with flat, overlapping forms, related to Cubism, Constructivism, and other abstract movements. Some have seen in their crisply defined shapes a precursor and a parallel to hard-edge painting of the 1950s and '60s. But the artist also found enormous success as an author and illustrator of children's books, most famously *Caps for Sale*, first published in

1940. Rosenberg & Co., from New York, brings a survey of Slobodkina's art from across seven decades to Independent 20th Century in September.

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Raphael Soyer at Forum Gallery

Russian Jewish émigré Raphael Soyer (1899–1987), once described as “the dean of American realist painters” by John Canaday in *The New York Times* in 1972, took up gritty urban subjects in the 1920s. Committed to humanist representation, Soyer devoted himself to a socially and pictorially progressive, if stylistically conservative, art. “I consider myself a modern artist or rather an artist

of today,” he once said, “because I am influenced by the thoughts, the life and the aesthetics of our time.” New York’s Forum Gallery, which has represented the artist and his estate since 1964, brings to Independent an exhibition of Soyer’s work that will include early cityscapes of largely deserted New York streets, Depression-era portraits and group scenes of exhausted men and women in soup kitchens and dance studios, academic studio figure studies from the 1940s, and lively compositions of young people out in the world from the 1960s and ‘70s.

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Images: Raphael Soyer, *Under the Bridge*, circa 1932, oil on canvas, 26 1/4 x 32 1/8 inches, courtesy of Forum Gallery; Winold Reiss, circa 1934, courtesy of The Reiss Partnership; Esphyr Slobodkina in Great Neck Studio, courtesy of the Slobodkina Foundation; Raphael Soyer, courtesy of Forum Gallery.

Independent

20th Century

September 24–27, 2026

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