

## Arthur Minters

Arthur Minters enrolled at Black Mountain College in the summer of 1951 to study with Robert Motherwell. He recalls that he could have heard about Black Mountain from a number of sources. He had visited the Kootz Gallery where Motherwell exhibited and was familiar with The Wittenborn Documents of Modern Art Series, including Motherwell's *The Dada Painters and Poets: an Anthology* which had been published in 1951. He and a colleague also frequented the Ninth Street Gallery where the Abstract Expressionists exhibited.

After graduation from William Howard Taft High School in 1950, Arthur had enrolled at City College in New York for a year while at the same time working in the "bull-pen" of an advertising agency. He took a cinema course with the Dada artist Hans Richter, who based the entire course on Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*. In the design class, Pevsner's *Pioneers of Modern Design* was required reading. Minters recalls a mention of Black Mountain and the Bauhaus in the book.

As a child, contemporary art had been an important part of Arthur's life. In Russia his father Herman Minters had worked in Zhitomir, in a Soviet lithograph studio that made posters for the Red Army after World War I. In the United States, his father's business, Champion Banner and Display Co., made silkscreen banners and posters for movie marquees and other businesses. His father helped Arthur build a library of art books and on weekends took him to the Whitney Museum on Eighth Street and the Museum of Modern Art.

Having been born in the Bronx and grown up there and in Greenwich Village, the isolation of Black Mountain College was like the "landscapes that Poussin and Claude Lorrain painted, these idealized landscapes." Arthur had been eager to escape the student world and experience that of the artist, and his small study in the Studies Building was "like heaven on earth." He spent most of his time there focusing on his work while listening to classical music, especially Bartok, Bruckner Schoenberg, Mahler, and other Viennese composers.

In Ben Shahn's class Arthur responded to comments on Cezanne in a manner which Shahn did not appreciate, and after a week he left the class and enrolled in Harry Callahan and Aaron Siskind's photography classes. Earlier he had made photographs for school publications, but he had never made "art" photographs. In Siskind's class he made rayograms as well as photographs of inanimate objects. Arthur also took a writing class with Charles Olson. It was Robert Motherwell, however, with whom he felt the greatest affinity as a teacher. In his class the students did automatic drawings and collages, which Arthur saw as equivalent to the abstract photographs he was making. He recalled that Motherwell discouraged the use of expensive art materials which brought with them unreasonable expectations and instead encouraged the student to buy inexpensive materials at the dime store.

At the end of the summer, Minters returned to New York where he frequented the Cedar Bar, a gathering place for the Abstract Expressionists painters. He studied painting with Franz Kline, before Kline went to Black Mountain for the 1952 summer, and metal sculpture with Ibram Lassaw. In 1952-53, he was assistant to Ibram Lassaw for his Art of the Synagogue sculpture commission at the Synagogue in Springfield, Massachusetts. In 1953, in need of money, Arthur accepted a job as a part-time packer for Paul Gottschalk, a German Jewish antiquarian, who taught him the antiquarian book business. In Berlin, Gottschalk had been a respected specialist in foreign publications and rare books. Arthur's interest in 19th and 20th century European material complemented Gottschalk's specialization in earlier periods. To improve his skills, he took courses at the New School for Social Research with Louis Schanker and Kurt Seligmann. In 1960 he completed his B.A. degree at New York University in art history. He worked his way up in the business working for Gottschalk from 1953-62.

In 1957, Arthur married his first wife Kathrynanne Baker and started his own business Arthur H. Minters, which specialized in European 19th Century material in the arts, architecture, small press publications, photography, manifestos from the French Revolution, and ephemera. In 1969, he incorporated the business as Arthur H. Minters, Inc. Arthur has

lectured extensively on antiquarian books. He has taught courses on collecting rare books and other printed material at the New School for Social Research and Marymount College. His business issued ninety antiquarian book catalogues. He is author of *Collecting Books for Fun and Profit* (New York: Arco Publishers, 1979).

Arthur is the father of two daughters Michele Anne and Elizabeth Anne. He presently lives in Florida with his second wife Frances C. Minters. He continues painting but more as a hobby than a professional pursuit.

Arthur observed that his experience at Black Mountain “gave me the ability, which was very natural for me, to associate with intellects and artists, poets, political people. It gave me that confidence.”

<http://blackmountaincollegeproject.org/Biographies/MintersArthurBIO/MintersArthurBIO.htm>