

# WASHBURN

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**FINE ART** | By Peter Plagens

## Nicolas Carone: Paintings From the 1950s

◆ **Washburn Gallery**

20 W. 57th St., (212) 397-6780  
Through March 31

Nicolas Carone, who passed away in 2010, lived to be 93, and in that wonderful fate sometimes visited upon artists, he was able to work in his studio almost to the end. But it was in the 1950s, as a second-generation Abstract Expressionist, that he made his brushy but not drippy, muted but not monotone, and hefty but not expansive mark. By the mid-'50s, Abstract Expressionism had come out of the cold-water lofts and into the art schools; it was a kind of painting that—although most practitioners of the style denied it—could be taught. (Mr. Carone was on the original faculty of the Studio School in Greenwich Village and taught there for 25 years.) The three big canvases, such as the 6-foot-wide “Idol” (1958), and the several smaller works on paper at Washburn are solid, muscular and really felt (unlike the limp, reconstituted

painterly abstraction that gets such a surprising amount of unearned credit for artistic courage these days).

But Mr. Carone's paintings are also a little cautious, as is often the case when the score has already been written (here, by Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock) and the painter is concerned mostly with performing genuinely and well. Mr. Carone's work also evidences traces of what Clement Greenberg, the most influential critic of the day, used to call “homeless representation.” By that, Mr. Greenberg meant tropes of figuration—light and shadow on objects, the feeling of an interior or still-life—lurking beneath the vigorous skeins of paint in an otherwise abstract painting. For a more generous opinion of Mr. Carone's exhibition, however, I recommend the short essay “Carone's Way” by the poet and critic Bill Berkson in the exhibition's free brochure. He's much less stingy than I am.



Nicolas Carone's 'Idol' at Washburn Gallery

### WASHBURN GALLERY

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