

Albert Hoffman

November 2 – December 7, 2013

Opening Reception: Saturday, November 2, 4 - 6 pm

Andrew Edlin Gallery is pleased to present *Albert Hoffman*, the gallery's first solo show of the artist's work since 2007.

Historically speaking, artists — not arts professionals — are usually the first to recognize and encourage outsider artists, whose art might otherwise be dismissed as merely an obsession. When artist and filmmaker Herbert Danska stumbled into a quaint Atlantic City boardwalk museum in 1988, he came upon a wall covered with over a dozen painted wood reliefs. There, he saw genre scenes depicting daily urban American life in the 1930s, carved with unapologetic honesty by the hands of a laborer, not an academically trained sculptor. Danska (who's entire catalog of critically acclaimed films was recently purchased by MoMA, NY) was able to see Albert Hoffman's self-taught ingenuity and singular drive to create, and spent the next quarter century sharing the older man's gift with the rest of the world.

Born in Philadelphia in 1915, Hoffman was forced to leave school after the 8th grade due the onset of the Great Depression. As a child, he collected junk metal and painted simple scenes on neighbors' doors. After World War II, where he saw combat serving in the Navy, Hoffman returned to New Jersey to marry, settling down in the coastal town of Absecon, close to Atlantic City, where he established a thriving junkyard.

Hoffman was a prolific carver whose work spans several genres. An important context for his practice is the rich vernacular tradition of Jewish folk carving brought to America by generations of immigrants, which has yielded countless Torah arks, synagogue furniture, and Biblical narratives, as well as secular genres such as carousel horses that have become an integral part of American cultural history. Hoffman was not devoutly religious, but his Jewish identity was of great significance to him, especially when considering works such as *The Ark*, *Tabernacle*, and many of his smaller reliefs.

Hoffman's quintessentially outsider transformation of the familiar to the archetypal can best be seen in works that explore his relation to the sea, drawn from memories of Naval service, his shore life, and his rich imagination. It isn't hard to find rustic carvings along eastern boardwalks, but his monumental *Toothed Whale*, and uncanny *Neptune, King of the Sea*, mark this artist's departure from the commonplace. It is where Hoffman joins his global outsider counterparts in a transcendent realm of vision and myth.

Albert Hoffman's work has been exhibited at the American Visionary Art Museum (Baltimore), the Noyes Museum of Art (solo) and Luise Ross Gallery (solo). It is in the permanent collections of the American Folk Art Museum, New York, the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum (Williamsburg, VA,) and the Noyes Museum of Art (Oceanville, NJ).