

VILCEK FOUNDATION

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Vilcek Foundation Presents “Ralston Crawford: Torn Signs”

Inaugural exhibition at new headquarters to feature later works of modernist artist through variety of mediums

Exhibition: *Ralston Crawford: Torn Signs*
Venue: Vilcek Foundation, 21 East 70th Street, New York
Dates: May 13–November 13, 2019
Hours: 11:00 AM–3:00 PM

New York, NY, April 15, 2019 — The Vilcek Foundation presents *Ralston Crawford: Torn Signs* as the opening exhibition in its new gallery space on the Upper East Side. On view from May 13 through November 13, the exhibition presents an important aspect of the modernist painter’s oeuvre not often seen by the public.

“We chose to inaugurate our gallery space with an exhibition of Ralston Crawford, an American artist whose early work is widely celebrated, but whose later work has been, at least until recently, relatively under-exhibited and under-known,” says Rick Kinsel, president of the Vilcek Foundation. “Crawford was celebrated as a painter of the American scene in the 1930s, but the war years changed him and altered his artistic vision, moving it farther into the realm of the abstract and spiritual. This exhibition charts the influence of war, travel, and cross-cultural exchange on his mid- and later-life work, in particular exploring the way in which he was influenced by the post-war art, culture, religion, and folkways in France and Spain. The Vilcek Foundation supports and encourages cross-cultural contributions to the American arts and sciences, so Crawford, the son of Canadian immigrants, is a perfect subject for our opening exhibition: He’s an iconic American painter who was not limited to working in the United States, and whose work profited by exposure to other lands, cultures, and ideas.”

While Crawford is best known for his Precisionist paintings of urban landscapes, he explored new modes of expression, including photography, throughout his later life. This exhibition examines the confluence of two seemingly disparate series completed later in his life, *Torn Signs* and *Semana Santa*. Though their subject matter is drastically different—one is inspired by tattered advertisements on the streets of New York, while the other depicts observers of Holy Week in Seville, Spain—Crawford connects them through his extraordinary visual memory, working method, and sense of spatial organization. The convergence of these two incredible series culminates in *Torn Signs*, 1974–76, the powerful, large-scale painting that sits at the thematic center of the exhibition.

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Organized by Vilcek Foundation curator Emily Schuchardt Navratil, *Ralston Crawford: Torn Signs* presents paintings, drawings, and photographs from the foundation's American Modernism Collection alongside loans from John Crawford, one of the artist's sons.

A catalogue of the exhibition, also titled *Ralston Crawford: Torn Signs*, will be available from Merrell Publishers, featuring essays by Rick Kinsel on the influence of Crawford's travels to Europe; William C. Agee on the artist's life and reaction to historical events of the 20th century; John Crawford on the relationship between the two series and the role of photography in their development; and Emily Schuchardt Navratil on the genesis and context of individual works in each series.

The exhibition marks the opening of the Vilcek Foundation's new headquarters, a five-story landmark structure renovated by Architecture Research Office that includes almost 2,000 square feet of gallery space. Located at 21 East 70th Street, in a building formerly occupied by Hirschl & Adler Galleries, the renovations include state-of-the-art technology for maintaining artwork. The site will host exhibitions that will expand public appreciation and scholarly understanding of the Vilcek Foundation Art Collections, which include holdings in American Modernism, Native American pottery, and Pre-Columbian art.

The headquarters also mark an evolution in the foundation's programming and mission. Established to raise awareness of immigrant contributions to American society and to foster appreciation of the arts and sciences, the building includes expanded administrative space. Its opening coincides with several new initiatives, including additions to its flagship Vilcek Foundation Prize program, awarded to immigrants in the arts and sciences; the publication of a cookbook featuring recipes from 40 immigrant chefs; and the creation of a new joint prize with The Arnold P. Gold Foundation honoring a foreign-born individual for their contribution to humanism in medicine throughout America.

The Vilcek Foundation will be open to the public on Mondays, Wednesdays, and select Saturdays from 11:00 AM–3:00 PM, through scheduled viewing appointments; visitors can sign up at vilcek.org. There is no admission charge.

The Vilcek Foundation was established in 2000 by Jan and Marica Vilcek, immigrants from the former Czechoslovakia. The mission of the foundation, to honor immigrant contributions to the United States and to foster appreciation of the arts and sciences, was inspired by the couple's respective careers in biomedical science and art history. The foundation awards annual prizes to immigrant biomedical scientists and artists, sponsors cultural programs, and manages the Vilcek Foundation Art Collections. To learn more, please visit vilcek.org.