



THE ESSENCE OF JOY

Celebrating the Art and Legacy of Lester Goldman

March 1 - May 30, 2025

Leedy-Voulkos Art Center



2012 Baltimore Ave. Kansas City, MO 64108

| 816.474.1919

| Weekly Hours: Wed-Sat 11am-5pm

THE ESSENCE OF JOY

An Exhibit Celebrating the Art and Legacy of Lester Goldman

Lester Goldman (1942-2005) was a prolific and influential Kansas City artist whose career spanned several decades and a wide range of styles and mediums. He was a dedicated teacher at the Kansas City Art Institute for nearly forty years, impacting generations of students. Goldman's work explored themes of humanism, the relationship between technology and humanity, political and social commentary, and the power of art to engage with life's complexities. Despite battling cancer in his later years, he continued to create and innovate, producing a powerful final body of work.



Artistic Evolution and Transformation

Goldman's work transitioned through several distinct phases. He began as a realist painter, influenced by Dutch and Flemish traditions and classical training. Then cubist investigations and sculptural investigations, then Neo-expressionist influences emerged, before evolving towards abstraction and the use of found objects, and non-traditional materials.

The Power of the Collective

A driving force behind Goldman's work was his embrace of collaborative, multi-media installations and performances with his project, *The Latest Blow to Mirth*. He sought to breakdown the barriers between artistic disciplines as well as create collective meaning. "...his role in the creation of collaborative, multi-media installation/performances are perhaps best described as Chaplinesque circus master." - Roberta Lord

The Impact of Life Experience

Central to Goldman's work was his connection to humanity. This connection evolved throughout his career and ultimately served as a source of inspiration during his last body of work: *Issachar's Surveillance*. His travels, personal experiences, including visiting the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp, his battle with cancer, and his relationship with technology informed his later work, infusing it with a sense of urgency and a profound meditation on mortality and humanity.

Importance of Legacy

Thanks to the efforts of his family, Goldman's work has been well-preserved for the past twenty years since his death. Without their efforts, his significant contributions to our community and beyond would be lost.

The Leedy-Voukos Art Center, a vital part of the Leedy Foundation, regularly exhibits the works of emerging and established artists. A comprehensive museum is under development to highlight the history of Jim Leedy and his role in the development of the Crossroads Arts District, as well as changing exhibitions that feature the works of the best midwestern artists both living and deceased. *The Essence of Joy | Celebrating the Art and Legacy of Lester Goldman* is the first in a series to feature artists whose work made a significant contribution to Kansas City and beyond. You can support this endeavor by a financial or professional contribution. Please inquire for details.

Special thanks to our sponsors: Sarah & Shawn Brixey, Scott Francis, Shari Hartbauer, Kangethe family, Mary Anne & Steve McDowell, Bradley W. & Linda J. Nicholson Foundation Fund, Missy & Tim Schaffer, Bill & Meg Zahner.

We acknowledge the writings of Marcus Cain, Kate Hackman, Elizabeth Kirsch, Sherry Cromwell Lacy, Christopher Leitch, Roberta Lord, Alice Thorson, and Peter Von Ziegeler which helped create this summary.

LESTER GOLDMAN TIMELINE

1942 Lester Goldman born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to a Jewish family of Eastern European immigrants from Kiev, Ukraine.

EARLY YEARS Paints murals and designs sets for summer stock theater in the Catskills with his high school instructor.

1964 Earns BFA in Painting from the Philadelphia College of Art.

MID 1960s Studies at Iowa University, then Indiana University. Spends summers at Aspen School of Contemporary Art and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Studies painting with Leland Bell and Larry Day.

1966 Receives MFA in Painting from Indiana University. Moves to Kansas City, Missouri, and begins teaching in the painting department at the Kansas City Art Institute, after being persuaded to move there by Wilbur Niewald.

LATE 1960s-1970s Creates highly rendered, observational paintings in the Dutch and Flemish traditions, including landscapes and figurative genre subjects.

LATE 1970s Lester's observational realism starts being supplanted by Cubist experimentations and sculptural investigations.

EARLY 1980s His focus shifts toward abstract color kinetics. By the early 80s, he was transitioning into multimedia installation and performance art. Arabesque and gestural line drawing emerges as a signature element of his work, influenced by graffiti artists like Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat.

1982 Solo exhibition at the Charlotte Crosby Kemper Gallery signals a major transition away from realism.

MID 1980s Overly political subjects appear in his work, including the Gulf War I, the AIDS pandemic, censorship, and freedom of expression.

1985 The Leedy-Voulikos Art Center opens in Kansas City, offering a large exhibition space.

1986 Receives an NEA Grant for painting.

1986-1996 Embarks on the ambitious ten-year, three-exhibition series, *The Latest Blow to Mirth*

1989 *55 Gallons of Blue Laughter* (Leedy-Voulikos Art Center), the first phase of *The Latest Blow to Mirth*.

1989 Receives NEA Senior Fellowship for Painting. Also a performance exhibition at the Contemporary Art Center in Kansas City.

1990 The Kansas City Star features Lester opening his large, graphically-painted studio doors.

1993 *Kabalival: Carnival of Intrigue* (Leedy-Voulikos Art Center), the second phase of *The Latest Blow to Mirth*. The opening for *Kabalival* included the two performances *War Room* and *Plaguing Idiots*. *War Room* included two black-garbed women, sisters in reality, who danced as though dancing was all that had been left for them to do.

1994 *Womb Shot* the last play of *The Latest Blow to Mirth* series was performed and exhibited at Grand Arts.

LATE 1990s Continues to blend painting and sculpture, creating "paintings with issues."

1995 Peter Von Ziegesar focuses on Goldman in his "Art in The Heartland" article for *Art in America*.

1996 *Latest Blow to Mirth: Womb Shot* performed at Grand Arts.

1998 *Recent Paintings*, Jan Weiner Gallery.

1999 *Karma-Abstraction*, Joseph Nease Gallery.

EARLY 2000s Reinvention with bold, minimal abstract paintings and a new high-key color palette.

2000 Traveled to Europe and Germany, where he toured, among other destinations, the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp and its pathology building, in Oranienburg, Germany. This experience had a profound impact. *Karma-Abstraction*, Joseph Nease Gallery.

2001 Receives Charlotte Street Foundation Award. *Welcome to the Ragball*, Joseph Nease Gallery.

2003 *Boxcar: The Paintings*, Joseph Nease Gallery. Learns he has numerous cancerous tumors in his spine. As a result, struggles to complete some final large scale paintings.

2004 Diagnosed with cancer. Starts working with lighter materials, particularly gourds.

2005 Mounts his final exhibition *Issachar's Surveillance* at the KCAI Crossroads Gallery. Receives Kansas City Art Institute Distinguished Achievement Award. Lester Goldman dies at the age of 63.

2006 *Posthumous Works on Paper* exhibition at Albrecht-Kemper Museum in St. Joseph, Missouri. Alice Thorson writes an article in *Art in America*, about his *Issachar's Surveillance* exhibit.

2007 *Lester Goldman: Selected Works*, Review Studios, Kansas City, Missouri.

2013 *Tale of the Eye: Paintings, Sculpture, Works on Paper, and Ephemera from 1970-2004 from the Estate of Lester Goldman*.





1.

Lester Goldman

Peeling Oranges

oil on canvas

25.5" x 25.5"

NFS

Goldman family collection



2.

Lester Goldman

Kathrine with Jacob

oil on canvas

25.5" x 25.5"

NFS

Goldman Family Collection



3.

Lester Goldman

Self Pro

Photo of painting

15.5" 15.5"

NFS

Goldman Family Collection



4.
Lester Goldman
(Self portrait with Jake)
oil on canvas
26 x 25.5
NFS
Goldman Family Collection



5.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Painting on canvas

24 x 30

Circa 1980

\$5,000

SOLD



6.

Lester Goldman

An Act of Levitation Gone Awry

oil on canvas

10' x 72'

\$20,000



7.

Lester Goldman

Wheel of Misfortune

72" x 72"

\$5,000



8.

Lester Goldman

Playing Cards

Mixed media on paper

44" x 30"

1995

\$3,500

SOLD



9.

Lester Goldman

Repressed Art / Fearful People

Archival digital print

25" x 56"

Printed 2025

\$1,500



10.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

oil on canvas

12' x 6' 8"

\$20,000

Both paintings go together. can not sell one without the other



11.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Mixed media on black paper

22" x 30"

\$1,500

SOLD



12.

Lester Goldman

Lilottometer

Painting on paper

22" x 30"

\$2,000

SOLD



13.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Painting on paper

22" x 30"

\$1,000

SOLD



14.

Lester Goldman

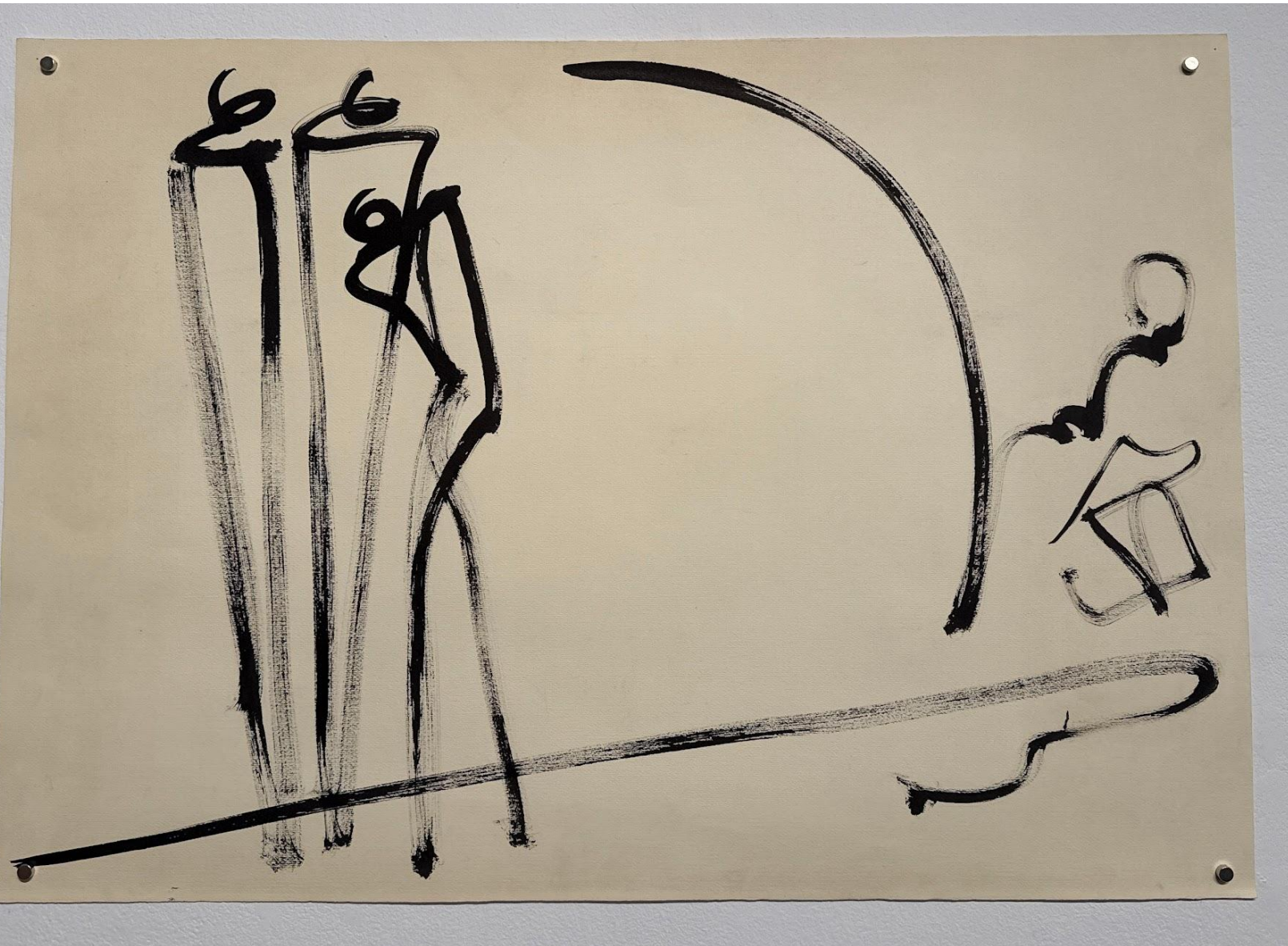
Untitled

Painting on paper

21" x 22"

\$750

SOLD



15.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

ink on paper

28" x 39"

\$2,500



16.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

ink on paper

28" x 39"

\$2,500



17.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

ink on paper

28" x 39"

\$2,500



18.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

ink on paper

28" x 39"

\$2,500



19.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Mixed media

16' x 12'

circa 1990

POR

Start at \$25,000 (Big canvas behind stage)



20.

Lester Goldman

Baby Philosopher

Painting on canvas

4' x 6'

\$16,000



21.

Lester Goldman

John! Dear

Mixed media

30" x 22"

\$2,000

SOLD



22.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Mixed media

30" x 22"

\$2,500



23.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Mixed media on red paper

20" x 24"

\$350



24.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Painting on red paper

25" x 20"

\$350



25.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Painting on paper

22" x 30"

\$300



26.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Painting on canvas

22" x 30"

\$300



27.

Lester Goldman

Peas in a Pod

Painting on paper

22" x 30"

\$300



28.

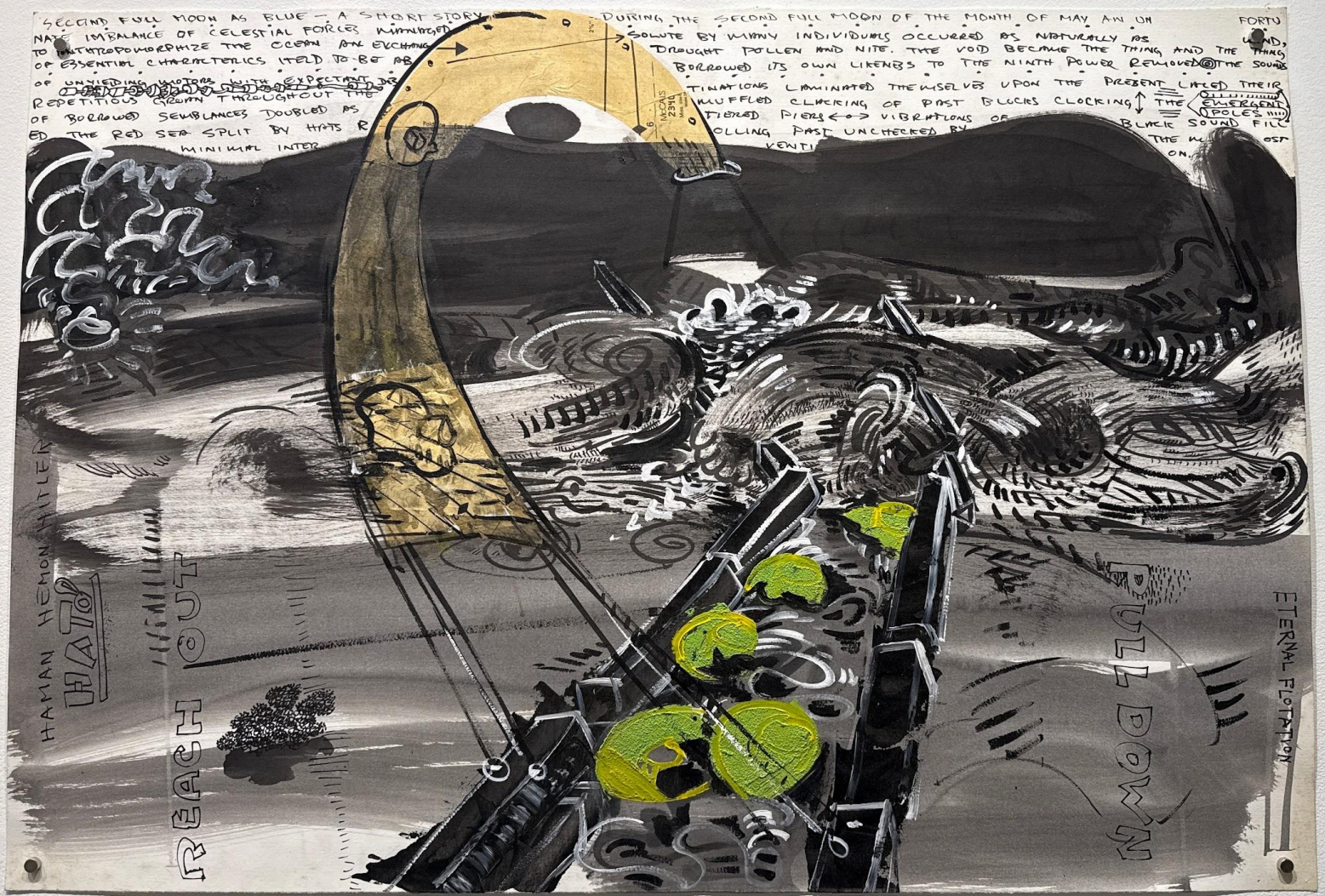
Lester Goldman

Jazzy

Painting on paper

22" x 30"

\$300



29.

Lester Goldman

Eternal Flotation

Mixed media on paper

44" x 30"

circa 1990

\$3,000



30.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Painting on paper

44" x 30"

circa 1990

\$3,000



31.
Lester Goldman
Untitled
Paint on wood
\$350
SOLD



32.

Lester Goldman

Untitled (Puppet of Lester Goldman)

Mixed media

8" x 15" x 7"

NFS



33.

Lester Goldman

Ocean of Milk

Painting on paper

30" x 45"

1995

\$3,500



34.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

painting on paper

14" x 17"

\$1,500



35.
Lester Goldman
Untitled
painting on paper
14" x 17"
\$1,500



36.
Lester Goldman
Untitled
Painting on paper
14" x 17"
1998
\$1,500



37.

Lester Goldman

Untitled (female puppet)

Mixed media

9" x 21" 4"

\$500

SOLD



38.
 Lester Goldman
Untitled (Two-sided sketchbook drawing)
 Mixed media
 14" x 17"
 \$350



39.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Painting on paper

30" x 42"

\$2,500



40.
Lester Goldman
Untitled
Mixed media
30" x 22"
\$2,000



41.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Painting on paper

44" x 30"

\$3,000



42.

Lester Goldman

Untitled (male puppet)

Mixed media

11" x 24" x 4"

\$300

SOLD



43.

Lester Goldman

Otto Buys New Boots

Woodblock print, chine colle on rice paper, 1/15

30" 52"

1993

\$500

SOLD



44.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Painting on paper

22" x 30"

\$500

SOLD

This is a preparatory painting for a print. Lester donated art for many prints for the ACLU.



45.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Painting on paper

22" x 30"

\$1,000

Elements from this painting appear again in the preparatory painting shown above.



46.

Lester Goldman

Untitled (Silver Wooden Figure)

14" x 16" x 2"

\$500

SOLD



47.

Lester Goldman

Womb Shot

Painting on canvas

5.5' x 8'

1996

\$20,000



48.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Mixed media sculpture

2' x 5' x 3'4"

\$10,000



49.
Lester Goldman
The Tail of the I
Oil on canvas
73" x 55"
1998
\$20,000



50.

Lester Goldman

Untitled (large gourds)

Mixed media sculpture

24" x 64" x 20"

2003

\$8,000



51.

Lester Goldman

Untitled (mini gourd)

Mixed media sculpture

6" x 17" x 6"

2003

\$300

SOLD



52.

Lester Goldman

Vision for Glenn

Painting on paper

44" x 30"

1995

\$3,500



53.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Painting on canvas

47.5" x 66"

\$15,000



54.
Lester Goldman
Torso Tech
Mixed media sculpture
2003
\$7,000



55.

Lester Goldman

Untitled

Double-sided mixed media on canvas

68" x 84"

\$15,000