

Modern Retrospective

“SERGE CHARCHOUNE: The Early Years,” a museum-style exhibition of works by the Russian-born, French painter will be on view at New York’s Rosenberg & Co. through July 11.

This is the first posthumous solo exhibit of the artist’s work in New York, and features 36 pieces drawn from

the European avant-garde. By 1916, he was living in Barcelona among the many other artists who had fled to Spain as World War I began. It was there that he began developing his own style, dubbed “Ornamental Cubism,” although he was also strongly aligned with the Dada movement. This style combined certain aspects

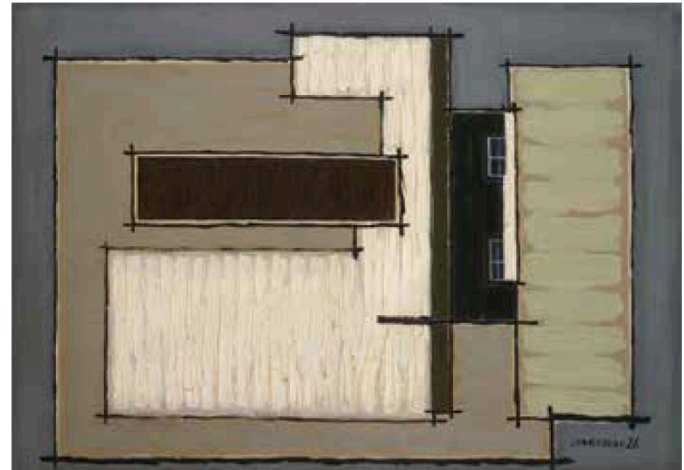


his early artistic period.

Charchoune defied easy categorization during his career, as he drew from Cubism, abstraction, and representation throughout his life. Concerning the years between 1916 and 1930, this show explores Charchoune’s period of experimentation while he navigated the influences of

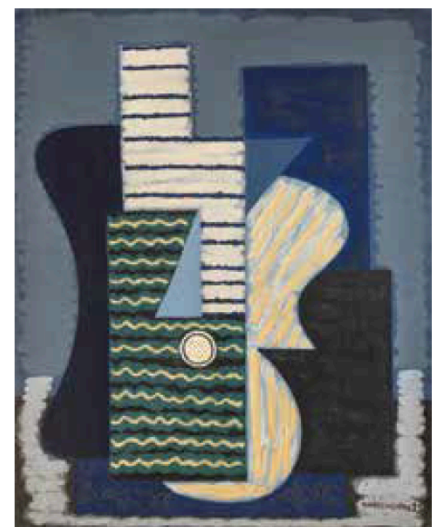
of Analytic Cubism, of whom the most notable proponent was Pablo Picasso, with the influence of Moorish design and architecture.

The show at Rosenberg traces the evolution of Charchoune’s work as he incorporated these influences from Dadaism, Cubism, and Spanish and Moorish architecture,



through to his shift toward a more Purist form after his introduction to the German thinker Rudolf Steiner and theosophy. During this period, he even explored certain techniques, like drip painting, that would come to be essential elements of the abstract expressionist movement.

Contrasting works like *Composition—Guitare puriste* (1929) and *Les Verres Verts* (1927), for example, we can see Charchoune’s undulation between styles. In *Composition*, the guitar is rendered in a Purist style, deconstructed into simplified forms, yet with an element of decoration and detail that is more aligned with the Cubist movement. *Les Verres Verts*, on the other hand, eschews detail to create



abstracted, flat depictions of the glasses (les verres) referenced in the title.

Sentier calligraphe (1917) shows another side of the artist. Here, a curved line dives in and over itself in the center of the canvas, with a graduated series of colored outlines surrounding it, moving toward the canvas’s outer edges.

Cubisme ornamental (1922) is one of the more complex works on view, consisting of interlocking lines and boxes interspersed with curvilinear shapes, more reminiscent of the decorative aspects of Cubism. And *La maison d’en face* (1928) depicts a kind of Purist blueprint, taking the familiar, flattened interior perspective of a home and reducing it to its most basic architectural components.

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The Art of Oscar Howe

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