

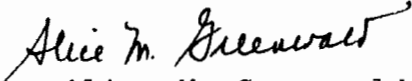
MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY

Independence Mall East

Arthur Sussman's work is characterized by a sense of power: the power of line, the power of brush-stroke, the power of color.

His early paintings, dark-hued and highly varnished, evoke an intensity reminiscent of late medieval painting. The intensity of the early works evolved into an energetic style, epitomized by Sussman's biblical-themed works and his more recent "Blue Feather" series. In paintings like "Jacob Wrestles the Angel" and "David and Goliath," or graphic works like "David's Dance," the artist makes effective use of open space within the field of the work, allowing the eye to concentrate on the action defined by a line etched frantically onto the surface, or brushed with controlled force onto the ground of a panel.

There is a mysterious quality to much of Sussman's work, a characteristic heightened by the artist's use of wash, together with oil and graphite. His subjects carry an inherent mysteriousness: biblical figures, familiar from ancient texts, yet remote from our daily lives; an American Indian, isolated, instinctual, bound intimately to the natural world of which he is a part. Sussman is successful in capturing the attention of his viewer through the romantic mystery of his subjects; yet once caught, the viewer is struck by an unanticipated sense of the familiar, of being touched by the essence of the subject portrayed. It is in this paradox of merging distance with proximity, aloofness with intimacy that Sussman's painterly powers are realized.


Alice M. Greenwald
Director

August, 1983