

# The New York Times

January 19, 2001

GRACE GLUECK Art in Review

## Robert Moskowitz

The World Trade Center was not invented by Robert Moskowitz, but it has almost become his trademark. The center, the Flatiron Building, Rodin's "Thinker" and an anonymous smokestack are among the familiar icons he revisits in this show, along with a few other subjects. Emotionless, silhouetted shapes and the figure-ground relationship they set up are the forte of this figurative painter, whose pared-down work has always related to abstraction.

Pastel is his medium this time; his colors, several shades of blue. One exception is a large oil from 1994, "The Razor's Edge," echoing the title of Somerset Maugham's novel. Its jagged but precisely delineated outline of a bare tree is in blazing orange-red. The same tree, though smaller, also appears in a number of the blue pastels.

Particularly impressive is Mr. Moskowitz's view of the Rodin statue. Its dark blue bulk, not quite but almost an abstraction in its hard-edged rendering, looms against a lighter blue sky in one version and

against a white sky mottled with light blue in another. Also striking are his architectural themes, which include, in addition to the New York buildings, the Eddystone, the famous lighthouse in the English Channel.

These dark, uninflected (except for the Eddystone, with its brightly lighted window at the top) solid forms stand out against white grounds worked with blue flecks; grounds of lighter blue; and blues that are very close in value. Another arresting image is the hull of a ship that tapers down one side of the paper in an abstract rhombus, to be balanced on the other by a long anchor chain that hangs straight as a plumb line.

Although it hasn't changed much since his appearance in the Whitney Museum's landmark "New Image Painting" show of 1978, Mr. Moskowitz's best work, with its teetery balance between abstraction and recognizable object, still holds its edge. GRACE GLUECK