

# Powerful pastels that lean toward the political

Moskowitz's minimalist paintings are reflections on troubled times.

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New York artist Robert Moskowitz began painting the World Trade Center in 1978, treating the Twin Towers as modernist icons that he reduced to their essentials in minimalistic images emphasizing their soaring silhouettes.

"I saw them as straight and beautiful," Moskowitz said. "Something that was easy for me to work with. I tended to see them as two people, maybe related in a same-sex relationship. After all, the buildings were two giant phallic symbols.

But now, of course, I can't look at the paintings I did of them the same."

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**Keyword:**

**Entertainment**

Learn more about the artist

He stopped painting the Twin Towers on Sept. 11, 2001.

"Now the images seem unbearably grim," Moskowitz said. "I haven't been able to sell one since 9-11. It's real interesting how history has changed our perceptions of the Twin Towers. None of us will ever be able to look at them the same."

A few of his Twin Tower images are featured as part of his one-man show, "Robert Moskowitz: Pastels," on view through April 13 at Lawrence Markey. He usually painted the towers in dark tones, which now have taken on a haunting, elegiac quality.

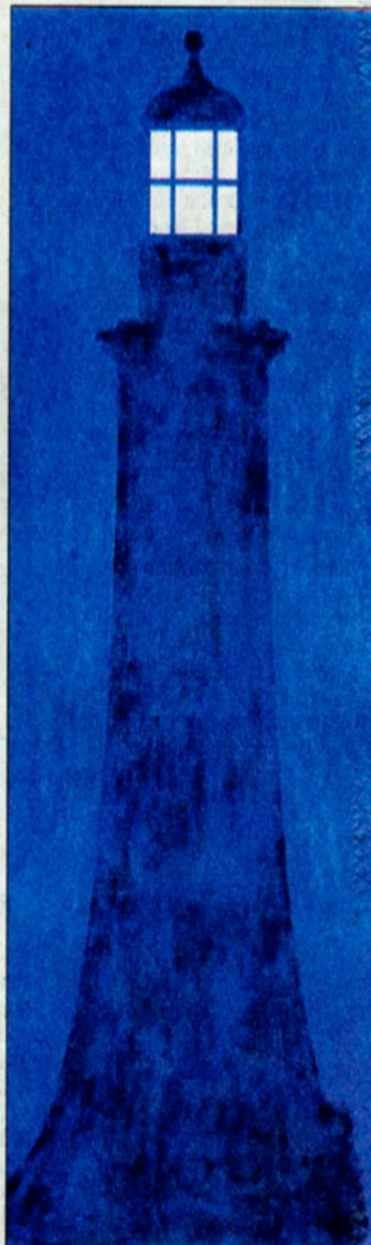
"I never saw them that way; I was always happy when I was painting them," he said.

Moskowitz came to prominence in 1978 when his work was included in the influential "New Image Painting" exhibition

at the Whitney Museum in New York. He is noted for his monochromatic paintings in oils and pastels, including skyscrapers such as the Empire State and the Flatiron buildings as well as the Twin Towers. He divides his time between New York and Nova Scotia.

He had a midcareer retrospective organized by Washington's Hirshhorn Museum in 1989, which also traveled to La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art in California and New York's Museum of Modern Art. Lawrence Markey had four

See MOSKOWITZ/3G



COURTESY LAWRENCE MARKEY

Robert Moskowitz's 'Eddystone' was painted in 2000.

# Moskowitz exhibit definitely political

CONTINUED FROM 1G

exhibits by Moskowitz in New York, but this is his first show with the gallery in San Antonio.

Most of the show is devoted to the artist's latest works with pastels. With dramatic cropping, he isolates silhouettes of familiar objects in his reductive paintings. But these enigmatic minimalist paintings are lightened by evidence of the artist's touch — a sprinkling of fingerprints in the white spaces. While somewhat mysterious, his images can be potent symbols of the times.

"Landing Eagle" features a glimpse of an outspread eagle's wing, while "Red Cross" could almost be a flag for the international relief organization, except for the red, smudged fingerprints that conjure visions of bleeding victims.

"The eagle could be a symbol of America in peril," Moskowitz said. "The 'Red Cross' makes me think of a war hospital I visited in 1986. But a lot of what the content evokes comes after I make the image. My focus is on the formal qualities of the image, but I think the context of these images has a real edge."

The most mysterious image is a lighthouse, "Eddystone," with the yellow glow of lights peering out from a black on blue murk. An untitled piece features a black chain and clearly defined fingerprints, evoking troubling thoughts of slavery, concentration camps and torture.

He works at creating rich, dense textures with the pastels, but the fingerprints and smudges are purely incidental.

Despite their pared-down, formal qualities, Moskowitz's new



COURTESY LAWRENCE MARKEY

'The Razor's Edge,' pastel on paper, was painted by Robert Moskowitz in 2001.

paintings are impossible to look at without thinking about recent events in American history. Although his work may not have been consciously political before 9-11, now his images seem to be glaring signs of where we've gone wrong.

*"Robert Moskowitz: Pastels" runs through April 13 at Lawrence Markey, 311 Sixth St., (210) 228-9966, info@lawrence-markey.com.*

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