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Robert Fishko, *Director*

BERNARD PERLIN

(1918-2014)

Hospital Corridor, 1961
tempera on board
13 1/4 x 24 1/4 inches
signed lower left "*Bernard Perlin*"



Provenance

The Artist
Collection of Edward Insull
Private Collection, Australia

Literature

Schreiber, Michael, *One Man Show: The Life and Art of Bernard Perlin*, (Berlin, Germany: Bruno Gmünder, 2016), p. 224, Illustrated.

Note

Born in Richmond, Virginia in 1918 to Russian Jewish immigrants, American artist Bernard Perlin was a painter, illustrator, and war artist-correspondent whose works expressed the horrors of WWII, issues of social justice, and homosexuality with conviction and bravery.

Early in his career, Perlin lent his artistic talent to the creation of American wartime propaganda and illustration, going on to create throughout his lifetime a body of work that gravitated from social realism to magic realism with subjects as varied as graphic wartime recollections, sensuous male nudes, evocative New York scenes, and works implicit with social comment concerning the plight of minority groups and the poor. He led a life that, in his own words, was “a direct path to making art and seeking human connection.”

Perlin was openly gay at a time when there were real risks involved, both socially and physically and he pursued his art as he pursued his lovers - unapologetically and with great passion and aplomb. He was active in the gay Greenwich Village scene in the 1950s, living in a small room on Jones Street, and at the center of the Paul Cadmus and Jared and

Margaret French circle. He befriended artists, musicians, and personalities including Leonard Bernstein, Grace Hartigan, David Hockney, Lincoln Kirstein, Pavel Tchelitchew, and George Tooker, along with literary figures Truman Capote, Gore Vidal, Arthur Laurents, Glenway Wescott, E. M. Forster, Somerset Maugham, Christopher Isherwood, and Tennessee Williams.

In the 1930s, Bernard Perlin was an artist for the Works Project Administration, painting murals for the Treasury Department and the U.S. Maritime Commission. During World War II, he was embedded with American forces in Europe, Asia and the South Pacific as an artist-correspondent for *Life* and *Fortune* magazines creating works he described as *reportage*.

Bernard Perlin's tempera work, *Hospital Corridor* was commissioned by *Fortune* magazine for an article, "What the Doctor Can't Order – But You Can" published in the August 1961 issue. Here, Perlin portrays a scene at Lincoln Hospital, where the demand for medical treatment had increased tremendously because of five new low-income housing projects erected nearby in the Bronx. Perlin rhythmically divided his composition with alternating green and white rectangles to describe the orderly cubicles installed by the hospital to maintain privacy for their patients. Upon closer examination, the painting is much more than a mere illustration revealing ubiquitous inequities in the hierarchy of the medical world in 1960s America. In this way, Perlin enters his own statement for Civil Rights. Edward Insull was a close friend in Perlin's inner circle and first owner of *Hospital Corridor*.

Perlin embraced and lived his own life in his own way, without apology, to the very end. At age 91, Perlin legally married his longtime partner, Edward Newell, as a "political statement."

Works by Bernard Perlin are represented in many prominent museum collections, such as the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Museum of Modern Art and Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; Art Institute of Chicago; Pritzker Military Museum & Library in Chicago; and the Tate Modern in London.

In his lifetime, Perlin's work hung in many notable private collections including those of Mrs. Vincent Astor, Mr. and Mrs. John Jay Whitney, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Bernstein, Harry Hirshhorn, and Lincoln Kirstein.