



Edward Dugmore: *Ancient Evenings (for Ernie)*, 1984, oil on canvas, 84 by 65 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches; at Anita Shapolsky.

## Ernest Briggs and Edward Dugmore at Anita Shapolsky

Briggs and Dugmore were the closest of friends and would be still, had not Briggs died in 1984. They first met in 1948 at the California School of Fine Arts, where Douglas MacAgy had assembled a faculty that included Mark Rothko, Ad Reinhardt and Clyfford Still. Of these stellar personalities it was Still who impressed them the most, less stylistically than philosophically. While living in San Francisco, both artists had their first one-man shows at Met/ art Gallery, a cooperative they had assisted in founding and maintaining. Moving to New York in the mid-'50s, both soon had solo shows at the Stable Gallery and were accepted as members of the New York avant-garde. While neither artist worked representationally, there is usually a feeling of outdoors, of landscape, in their work.

Earlier this year, Dugmore had a show of his paintings at the Manny Silverman Gallery in Los Angeles. In addition to an appreciative essay by Dore Ashton, the catalogue reproduces his works as well as Blake's poem "The Tyger." I was struck by the fact that Dugmore stuck to Blake's original spelling and punctuation, which the *Oxford Book of English Verse* has seen fit to correct and emasculate. For Blake's poem is an anthem to moods and feelings going beyond those associated with words, just as Dugmore's paintings go beyond the imagery associated with canvas, brush and oil paint to explore transcendental levels of consciousness.

After Briggs died in 1984, Dugmore painted *Ancient Evenings (for Ernie)*—a beautiful picture, all silver with two areas of pale yellow and salmon pink. Among the other striking canvases shown at Shapolsky were *Guadalajara Quartet #33* and *Edie Quartet #120* (1982), the latter a mostly yellow work on top of an underpainting, with a streak of blue near the top.

Whereas the spectator wades directly into Dugmore's recent paintings, the way into Briggs's may seem partly blocked by heavily outlined forms suggesting megalithic posts and lintels, in between which there is light. At times it is as though Briggs placed the observer in shadow, at other times as though he had removed the roof. In the most recent works there is a pinkish light, an impression of dust and flying motes, the look of desert antiquity. Two especially handsome canvases hanging side by side, suggesting the wings of an altar painting, were *Untitled* (1982) and *Phalicon* (1981). In these two works there is a sinuous flow of pink and rose moving into the post forms in counterbalance to other blues and greens. Briggs was a splendid painter and never greater than in his final years.

—Lawrence Campbell



Ernest Briggs: *Phalicon*, 1981, oil on canvas, 67 $\frac{3}{4}$  by 54 inches; at Anita Shapolsky.