



Atom Bomb

Date

1942-1945

Primary Maker

Okubo, Benji

Medium

oil, canvas

Description

Stretched and framed.;The painting is an anti-war comment noting the destructive force of the atom bomb. The white mushroom cloud is painted bare-white and the dark concavities and depressions of the cloud are reminiscent of the hollows in a skull, symbolizing death. The man in the foreground is carrying a burden and ramifications over his shoulder. This may be representative of the burden of unleashing such a terrible technology. His nakedness may symbolize his essential primitiveness and helplessness in unleashing this force beyond his control. In the blackish smoke column on the viewer's right hand side, what appears to be a man's proper right profile emerges from the darkness. This profile is very similar to the assumed self portrait of the artist (2003.159.9) with his goatee and cowboy hat. If so, it

may be that the artist is putting himself in the center of the devastation to show his anguish.;Image of atomic blast with flames, billowing smoke and the identifiable mushroom cloud. The sky is dark and filled with smoke and ash. In the background, the sea is a gloomy gray-green. In the foreground, a man stands upon a ledge observing the nuclear explosion. He is nude, except for a red woolen cap and he carries a large sack over his shoulders. His body is turned to the proper right and he is hunched over with the weight of his burden. Near the base of the explosion, small figures are hurled away with the force of the blast. The central focus of the painting, the atom bomb, is placed vertically in the middle of the picture. The flames at the base of the explosion radiate diagonally outwards, lending a sense of dynamism. The red and orange of the flames (the brightest colors on the canvas) are repeated in the red glow in the center of the smoke column, and the red of the man's hat. The strategic triangular placement of these reds help to lead the viewer through the painting. The sky and clouds are painted in somber shades of bare white, gray and dull green in loose brush strokes. The thrust of the flames are emphasized through the scratches made by the artist within the paint. The style of the painting is naturalistic surrealism -- a 20th century movement in art in which recognizable scenes are transformed into a dream or nightmare image. Frame is painted dark, muted olive green.

Dimensions

H: 24 in, W: 18 in, Frame: 31 x 25 in