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PAIRINGS: 'Gandy Brodie/Bob Thompson: The Ecstasy of Influence'

By [ROBERTA SMITH](#)

*Steven Harvey Fine Art Projects
24 East 73rd Street*

Manhattan

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The companionship and inspiration that artists gain from other artists and their work is pinpointed in this sweet and unusual show. Its main focus is the friendship between Gandy Brodie (1925-1975) and Bob Thompson (1937-1966), who met in Provincetown, Mass., in the summer of 1958 and remained close until Thompson's death. At the time Brodie was in his early 30s and his stripped-down Expressionist figuration was enjoying a career spurt that would flag by the early '60s, thanks to the onslaught of Op, Pop and Minimal Art. Thompson, fresh from Nashville, had come partly in hopes of meeting his hero, Jan Müller, another Expressionist painter who had died several months before he arrived.

Thompson's debt to Brodie is clearest in the juxtaposition of two works recently tracked down by the private dealer Martha Henry, who collaborated with Steven Harvey on the exhibition. Brodie's "Penetration of a Thought," a wonderfully rough, angular portrayal of a seated woman reading, hangs next to Thompson's "Differences," a similarly awkward rendering of a standing man reading and a nude woman, seated, her back to us, gazing into a mirror. The book exudes an unearthly glow, brighter than the mirror's silvery tint, implying that the man's route to self-knowledge is the superior one.

But the specifics of influence borne out by these impressive paintings are less affecting than the show's general ambience of admiration, affinities and presaging. These include Mr. Brodie's attention to [Picasso](#), as well as the way Brodie's luminous and monumental "Young Bather" from 1956 sets the stage for [Philip Guston](#)'s late paintings.

Thompson remains more of a cipher, although it is a treat to see his imagining of Müller's funeral, a series of dark silhouettes that evoke [Jacob Lawrence](#) and [Munch](#).