

HANS HARTUNG

January 12–March 17, 2018

Always, always I looked for a law, the golden rule, an alchemy of rhythm, movement and color. Transmutation of an apparent disorder, the only goal of which was to organize a perfect movement, to create order in disorder, to create order through disorder. – Hans Hartung

NEW YORK—Nahmad Contemporary is pleased to announce ***Hans Hartung***, on view from **Jan. 12 through March 17, 2018**. Surveying Hartung's prolific career, the exhibition brings together works spanning four decades beginning in the 1950s to the final years of his life. The presentation unearths the creative fervor and resolute discipline inherent to the artist's practice and marks the first show in New York since his solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1975.

After serving in the French army during World War II, German-born Hartung settled in Paris where he worked among artists, such as Jean Dubuffet and Pierre Soulages, associated with the School of Paris and Art Informel. Exemplifying the freeform style of his contemporaries and the expressive aesthetic characteristic to the postwar era, the earliest works in the exhibition, *T-1952-3* (1952) and *T-1956-23* (1956), feature bold strokes of paint assembled onto colored grounds. Varying in weight and thickness, the energetic marks expel across the canvas in various directions. The seemingly spontaneous vitality of these lines recalls expressionism's emphasis on the mark as a window into the artist's experience. As such, Hartung's paintings of this decade have generally been perceived as expressions of his traumatic war experiences. However, these marks were culled from the artist's compendium of drawings and watercolors created prior to the war. Using a stencil, Hartung meticulously enlarged and transposed the forms of his early works on paper into oil on canvas. While maintaining a visceral intensity in his paintings, the artist diverged from his peers through his systematic process of creation.

During the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, Hartung adopted a breadth of newfound tools and mark-making techniques to apply pigment to his canvas. He used a compressed-air spray gun to create a unified ground with radiating swathes of color and other unconventional tools, such as tree branches or garden rakes, to mark his surfaces. Unlike his earlier works, the gestural marks on these mid-career paintings evince the physical exertion involved in their making. In paintings such as *T-1971-R27* (1971), *T-1971-R19*, (1971) and *T-1971-R21* (1971), the effects of a rake's teeth emphatically scraping the colored ground are palpable. Likewise, in *T1982-K29* (1982) and *T1982-H29* (1982), the record of a tree branch after it thrashed the surface of the canvas is apparent. Yet, amid the spraying, scraping and thrashing, the artist maintained incredible reign over his tools. The inherently unruly devices were governed to generate deliberate patterns, forms and expanses of color within an orderly composition. Adhering to an unwavering method of applying paint that predicated on disciplined mark-marking, Hartung unleashed controlled bouts of impulse and emotion.

Following a stroke in December of 1986 that restricted his physical capabilities, Hartung relied on paint spraying devices to yield a range of effects on his canvases, from the large splatters in *T1986-H43* (1986) to the misty droplets in *T1989-U38* (1989). Throughout his wheel-chair bound days, however, the artist never conceded his technical precision nor his liberated aesthetic.

Whereas the expressive mark-making and frenzied lines of Hartung's paintings exude a loose and gestural aesthetic, their creation, for over 40 years, involved a fiercely regimented practice rooted in calculated exactitude. The focus of the exhibition hinges on Hartung's brilliant interplay between technical control and stylistic freedom that radically distinguished his work from that of his peers early in his career and continued, despite his physical restrictions, toward the end of his life. His artistic legacy can be found in the work of various artists that came after him, from the splattered marks of Sam Francis, to the brazen experimentation of Sigmar Polke and the systematic approach of Gerhard Richter. The exhibition at Nahmad Contemporary will coincide with presentations at Gallery Perrotin, New York, and Simon Lee Gallery, London, and will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue.

Hans Hartung (b. 1904, Leipzig, Germany; d.1989, Antibes, France) is one of the most acclaimed European painters of the postwar era. Among the artist's major, solo presentations are a forthcoming exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Bonn (2018) as well as recent shows at the Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria, Perugia, Italy (2016), and the Fonds Hélène & Édouard Leclerc pour la Culture, Landerneau, France, (2017, curated by Xavier Douroux). Hartung's work has also been featured in numerous group exhibitions at venues that include the Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris (2009), alongside works by Martin Kippenberger and Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and the Fondation Beyeler, Basel, Switzerland (2008), with paintings by Jackson Pollock, Eva Hesse and Robert Motherwell. His work is held in many prominent collections worldwide, including the Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; the Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; the Museo Tamayo, Mexico City; the Museum Ludwig, Cologne; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and the Tate Modern, London.