

PRESSBOOK

Hans HARTUNG

Modern Painters

January 2018

DATEBOOK

The season's top picks from all the art capitals

NEW YORK

Hans Hartung at Perrotin

HANS HARTUNG'S STRIKING visual language prefigured developments in Post-War Western painting: abstraction, action painting, and color-field painting. His oeuvre is the focus of an exhibition in the New York space of Galerie Perrotin—which now represents the Hartung Estate—offering the broadest solo presentation since his exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in 1975.

“Hans Hartung: A Constant Storm. Works from 1922 to 1989,” on view January 12-February 18, showcases his experimental paintings across 70 works. Two tandem exhibitions are on view at Simon Lee Gallery in London and Nahmad Contemporary in New York. Later in 2018, the Kunstmuseum Bonn will organize a solo exhibition of Hartung's work.

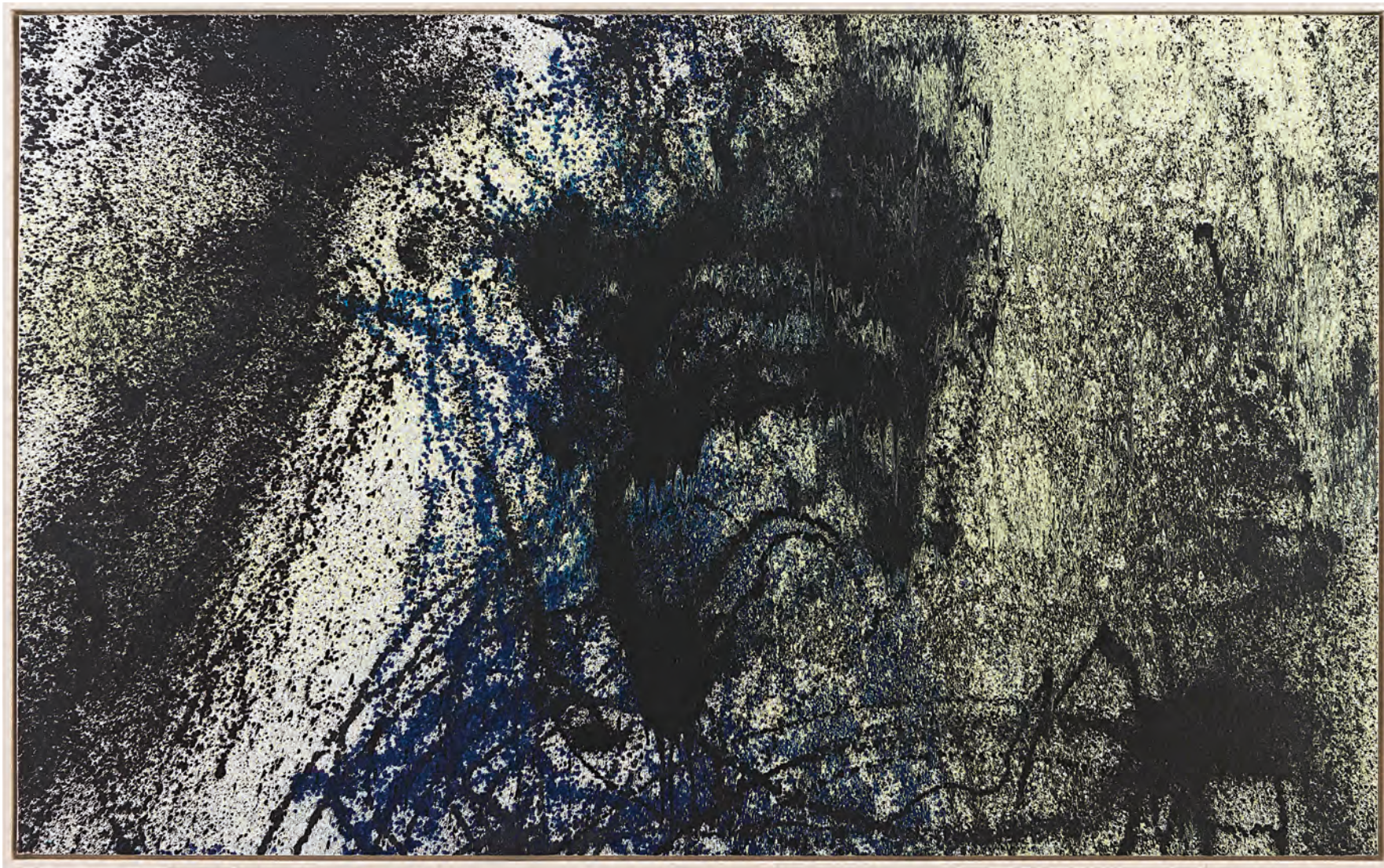
The artist was born in Leipzig, Germany in 1904 into a bourgeois Protestant milieu. In the 1920s, he studied at the Kunstakademie in Leipzig, and the Kunstakademie in Dresden. Having encountered French Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism, he headed for Paris and enrolled in the atelier of André Lhote. In 1935, Hartung fled the Nazi regime and moved to France definitively. During World War II, he joined the Foreign Legion; he lost a leg in battle, and was awarded the Croix de la Guerre. He was then naturalized as a French citizen.

Chronologically examining the artist's evolution across seven decades, the exhibition

T1962-R13, 1962
Vinyllic paint on canvas
180 x 111 cm/ 70 7/8 x 43 11/16 in



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T1988-R46, 1988
Acrylic on canvas/
154 x 250cm/ 60 5/8 x 98 7/16in



T1980-K5, 1980
Acrylic on canvas
185 x 300cm/ 72 13/16 x 118 1/8 in

starts with his 1920s abstract works. “My ink drawings during my school years... had a decisive influence on my whole life as an artist,” Hartung wrote in his memoirs. (He deemed his approach “tachisme.”) Up until his death in 1989, he deployed all kinds of tools to manipulate paint: self-fashioned brushes; branches pulled from the olive trees surrounding his Antibes studio with which to paint-thrash the canvas; the “tirolienne,” a hand-held appliance house painters spatter onto walls; the “sulfateuse,” used by gardeners to spray herbicide in gardens.

His play on rhythmic forms evokes scraggly hairballs (“KP1960-22,” 1960, in pencil, pastel, scratching on paper) to pickup sticks (“T1961-H35,” 1961, in vinyl paint on

canvas) to atmospheric sci-fi dystopias (“T1971-R30,” 1971, in acrylic on canvas). His titles, composed of classifying markers (“T” for canvases, “P” for works on paper, followed by year and number) were a distinctive choice—not only relative to the artistic tendency to use allusive titles to infuse potential meanings, but because they convey none of the exuberance of his style.

His vivid palette and tempestuous blotches reveal a turbulent creative act. Jennifer Mundy described his approach in “Tate Papers no.9” as “the free cursive gestures, the courting of chance,” and a mix of “delight and foreboding.” Artist Pierre Soulages, who was friends with Hartung, described—in an interview with art historian

Pierre Encrevé—his gestural outbursts as a means of “translating something inside.” In the text “A Constant Storm,” Matthieu Poirier, who curated the Perrotin show, noted: “Hartung’s pictorial world is rigorously non-figurative and non-narrative,” but remarked on the “existential dimension and the inner dialogue it established between the expressive power of its graphic lines and the airy quality of its colored grounds.”

Hartung once said: “If you’re furious, you smack someone in the face. Well, the same goes for painting: the vigorous sign you make is always the expression of something.” Even posthumously, his fury is still raw and potent.

—SARAH MOROZ