

**PRESSBOOK**

Hans HARTUNG

*Widewalls*

*February 2018*

# With Three Solo Shows Currently on View, Hans Hartung is Having a Moment

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## Art Exhibitions

February 2, 2018

### Andrey V.

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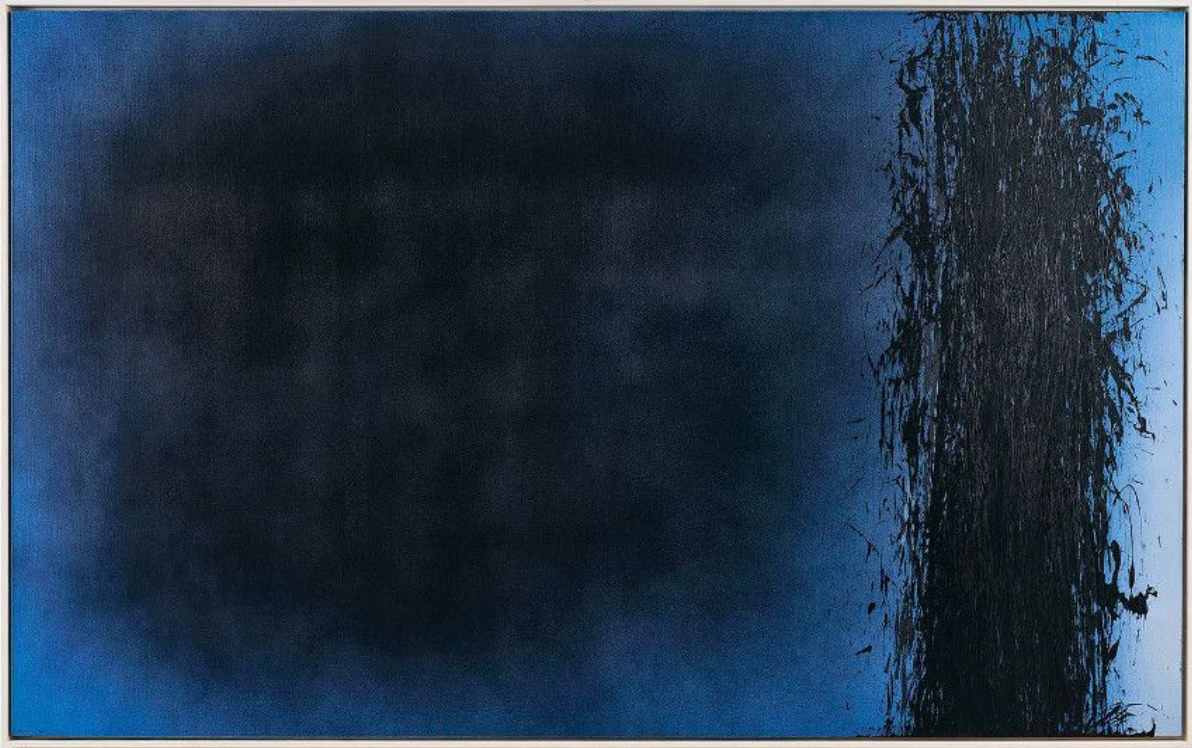
Always, always I looked for a law, the golden rule, an alchemy of rhythm, movement and color. Transmutation of an apparent disorder, the only goal of which was to organize a perfect movement, to create order in disorder, to create order through disorder.

German-French abstract painter **Hans Hartung** once stated that in an attempt to explain the complex visual vocabulary on which he relied on fortdecades. Embracing spontaneity, irrationality and freedom of form, he never even thought about trying to control the creative process, much like the way earlier abstract painters did – instead, he embracing accidental and unexpected outcomes.

And, even though this manner of painting completely revolutionized abstract art, Hartung's name is never spoken in the same breath as the likes of Mondrian, Kupka, Kandinsky or Pollock.

This neglect, however, may soon be coming to an end – Hans Hartung’s work is currently on display in simultaneous gallery shows: at Nahmad Contemporary in the Upper East Side and at Perrotin in the Lower East Side. Furthermore, another exhibition of his art is taking place at Simon Lee in London, a show that focuses on Hartung’s final decade.

Today, we’ll take a closer look at Hans’ oeuvre that notoriously continues to defy precise categorization, as well as discuss what may have caused the recent surprising rediscovery of this abstract master’s work.



Hans Hartung – T1980-K5, 1980

## Taking a Closer Look at the Art of Hans Hartung

No matter how you slice it, Hans Hartung was a pioneer and major proponent of abstract art. Born in Leipzig, Germany in 1904, he began developing an instinctive practice of gestural painting during the course of the 1920s. His singular pictorial universe was made up of colored immaterial backgrounds flooded with various clustered forms and graphic structures.

Despite their deceiving simplicity, the works of Hans Hartung are in fact the result of complex layering. His process often included the use of unconventional tools, like vacuum cleaners and brushes, tools which allowed him to achieve a completely unpredictable gestural quality.

By the time Second World War came about, Hartung’s paintings enjoyed great recognition and had many imitators in Europe who recognized him as an artistic leader. His name quickly became very relevant on the other side of the Atlantic as well when Abstract Expressionists discovered his style. An entire army of followers was fascinated by the way Hartung established the concept of pure painting, fundamentally liberated from any kind of imagery yet rich with visual stimulation and narrative.



## Hans Hartung – “A constant storm” collection – Full version 19’28

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### A Constant Storm at Perrotin

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*Hans Hartung: A Constant Storm. Works from 1922 to 1989* is a pretty self-explanatory title of a show taking place at the Perrotin gallery. The exhibition features over sixty works spanning seven decades of Hartung’s career and is the most important solo presentation of the artist in New York City since the exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1975.

This survey traces the artist’s development from his first abstract works in 1920s all the way through to the time of his death in 1989. With the artworks displayed in a chronological order, *Hans Hartung: A Constant Storm. Works from 1922 to 1989* presents the successive stages and evolution of Hans Hartung’s art that saw the painter constantly adapt his style and introduce new tools.

Each of the works prepared for the show is, as the artist himself explained, “*continual correction of what is done at speed*,” something the organizers of the show described as the outcome of a dialectic between spontaneity and control.

*Hans Hartung: A Constant Storm. Works from 1922 to 1989* will be open to the public **until the 17th of March 2018** at the Perrotin gallery in New York City.



View of the exhibition *A Constant Storm. Works from 1922 to 1989*, curated by Matthieu Poirier at Perrotin New York (U.S.A.), 2018, Courtesy of Perrotin and Hartung-Bergman Foundation

### The Abstract Composition Show at Simon Lee Gallery

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The second exhibition of Hans’ works taking place as you are reading this is hosted by Simon Lee Gallery. This show zeros-in on the works created during the last decade of the painter’s life which saw him return to many of the themes that had occupied him throughout the

years.

While he did rediscover some of his previous themes, Hartung greatly expanded his later repertoire with an array of innovative painting practices. These paintings, many of which were made from the confines of a wheelchair, are arguably the most vigorous artworks of Hans' lifetime, rich with a renewed sense of freedom, energy and ambition despite the painter's increasing frailty.

These works, distinguished by dramatic shifts in technique, tools, scale and gesture, will be on display **between the 17th of January and the 17th of February 2018** at Simon Lee Gallery in London.



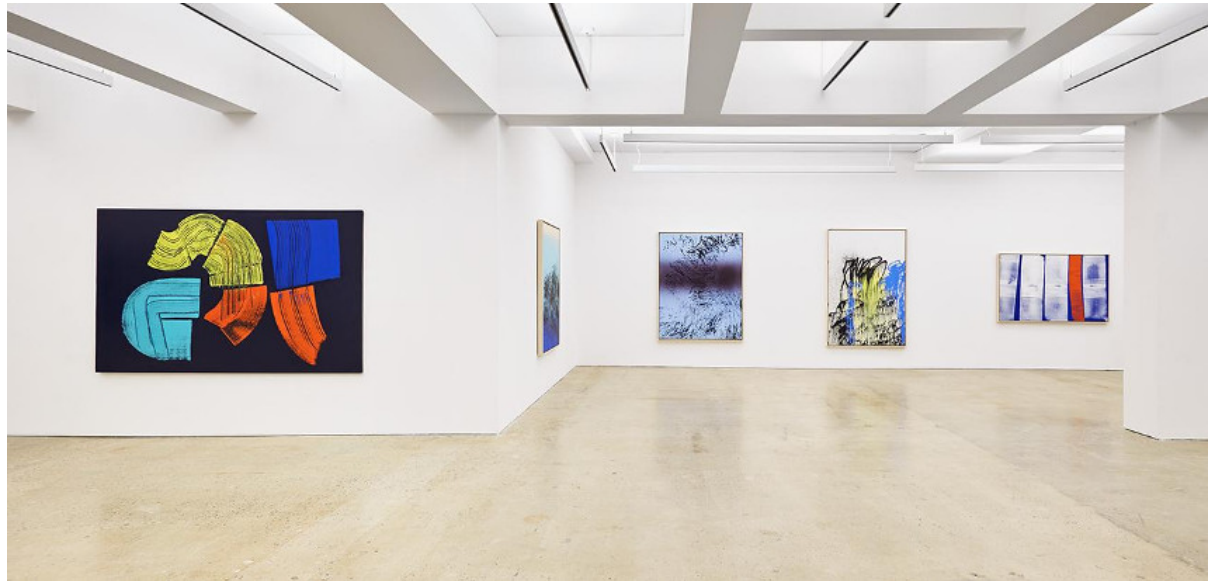
Hans Hartung, 2018, at Simon Lee Gallery, London

## The Exhibition at Nahmad Contemporary

Another comprehensive survey of Hartung's prolific career is currently playing out at Nahmad Contemporary. This exhibition brings together works created between the 1950s and the final years of the painter's life, unearthing the creative fervor and resolute discipline that marked Hans' created prime.

The main focus of this show is defining Hartung's brilliant interplay between technical control and stylistic freedom that radically distinguished his work from that of his peers – even after Hans ended up in a wheelchair.

This exhibition will be available to the public **between the 12th of January and the 17th of March 2018** at Nahmad Contemporary in New York.



Installation view, Nahmad Contemporary, Photograph by Tom Powel Imaging

## A Remarkable Comeback Hans Hartung and His Art Enjoyed in Recent Times

So, what caused this incredible rediscovery of Hartung's work in recent times? According to Joseph Nahmad of Nahmad Contemporary, these works are now more relevant than ever:

I think, first of all, a lot of people are looking back in time at certain artists that have been underappreciated in certain places.

We tend to agree with Joseph Nahmad. People seem more and more interested in discovering crucial artists who, despite playing major roles in their time, somehow lost themselves in the pages of art history.

Hans Hartung is certainly one of the great masters of 20th century abstract art – not only a forerunner, but a vital inventor of abstraction who can be observed as a missing link between Piet Mondrian's Plasticism and Jackson Pollock's action painting. His artistic legacy can be found in the work of various artists that came after him, like in the splattered marks of Sam Francis or the systematic approach of Gerhard Richter.

We find it appropriate to end this article with the quote by the artist himself whose work will, hopefully, never again lose itself in the shadows of presumably greater artists:

[My paintings] allow me to evoke atmospheric and cosmic tensions, the energies and forces that govern the universe. These are the vital, natural, and physical forces that I have always expressed in the gesture... I like the gesture to be definitive; I don't want to have to come back to it, unless of course it didn't come out quite right. From this improvisation on the canvas, this spontaneity comes the rhythm and the intensity.

**Editors' Tip:** *Hans Hartung: In the Beginning was Lightning*

Hans Hartung (1904-1989) observed the world and reality with the same abstract sensibility with which he painted on canvas, seeking to draw from them a formal representation not only through painting and engraving, but also through architecture and photography. Through over 200 paintings realised between 1922 and 1989, this catalogue offers a reinterpretation of the work of a great 20th-century abstract artist who is known for his

innovations in painting, but whose experimentations with different artistic and creative areas have remain unexplored. The catalogue offers a 360-degree view of Hartung's long and prolific career, presenting the artist not only as a protagonist of the art informal movement, but also as a multifaceted artist interested in pushing the boundaries of other art forms as well.

Featured image: Hans Hartung – T1982-E15, 1982, via [tate.org.uk](http://tate.org.uk); View of the exhibition "A Constant Storm. Works from 1922 to 1989" curated by Matthieu Poirier at Perrotin New York (U.S.A.), 2018, Courtesy of Perrotin and Hartung-Bergman Foundation; Hans Hartung show, 2018, at Simon Lee Gallery, London. All images courtesy of Nahmad Contemporary / Perrotin Gallery / Simon Lee Gallery.

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