



T1988-E24, 1988 Acrylic on canvas 142 x 180 cm / 55^{7/8} x 70^{7/8} in ©Hans Hartung / ADAGP, Paris & ARS, New York, 2018. Photo: Claire Dorn. Courtesy Perrotin

Hans Hartung

A Constant Storm. Works from 1922 to 1989

Curated by Matthieu Poirier

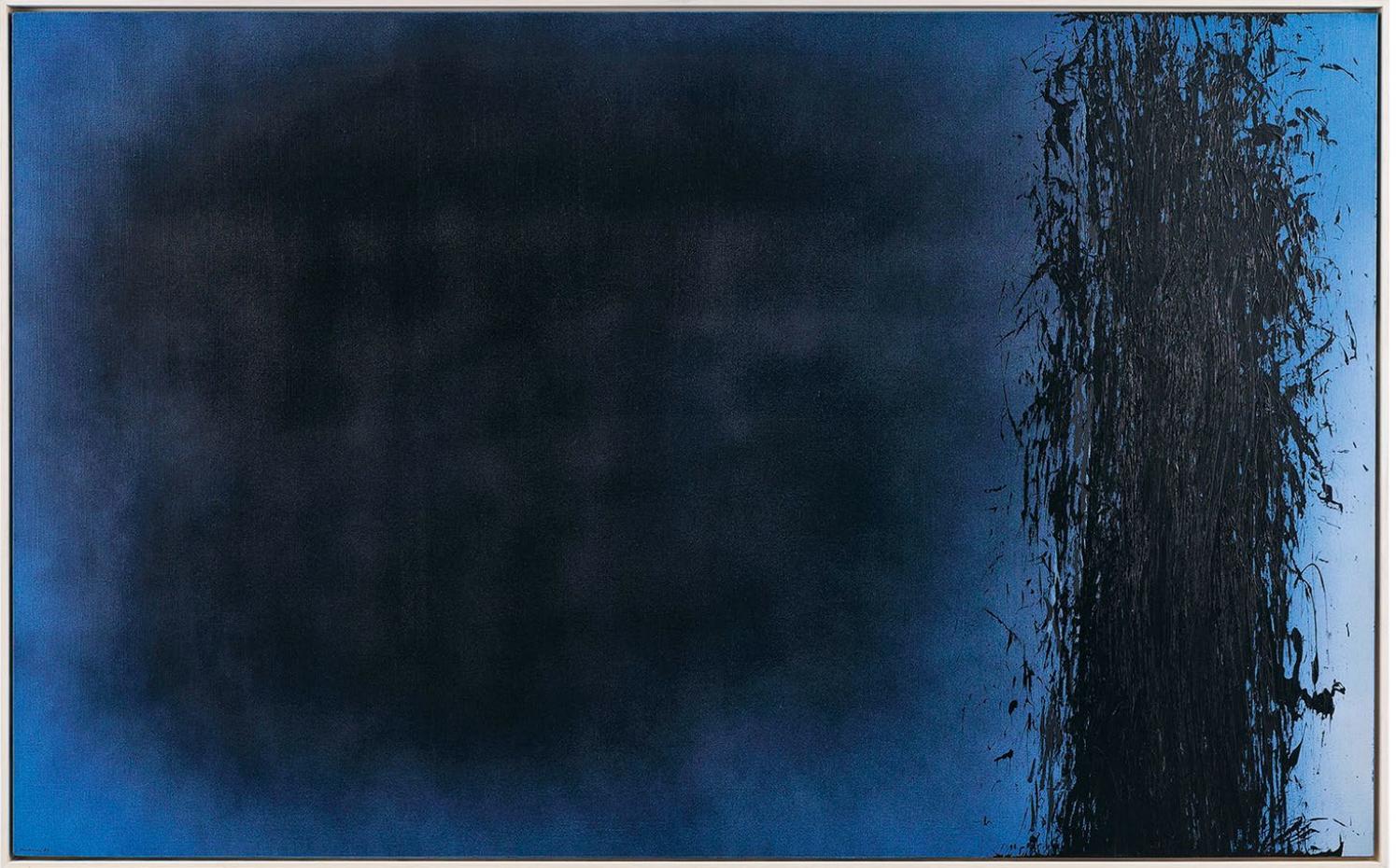
Opening Friday January 12, 6 - 8pm

January 12 - February 18

Perrotin is honoured to present "Hans Hartung: A Constant Storm. Works from 1922 to 1989," the first exhibition of Hans Hartung at the gallery, which is now the representative of the Estate. The exhibition, featuring over 60 works spanning seven decades of Hartung's career, is the most important solo presentation of the artist in New York since his solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1975. Thanks to exceptional loans from the Hartung-Bergman Foundation (Antibes), the Museum of Modern Art (New York) and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery (Buffalo), key works by the artist have been brought together for this survey exhibition tracing the artist's development from his first abstract works in about 1922 through 1989, the year of his passing.

The works are displayed in strictly chronological order to present the successive stages and evolution of his nearly 70-year career. Seminal artworks from the 1920s are highlighted as they paved the way to later development in his work; in particular some larger paintings, starting in 1961, when Hartung was confronting the canvas directly as he kept inventing new techniques or painting devices.

Hans Hartung was a pioneer and major proponent of abstract art. Born in Leipzig, Germany, in 1904, he began developing a practice of gestural painting in the 1920s that was both instinctive and regulated. Hartung's singular pictorial universe is made up of coloured grounds over which float various forms and graphic structures. These are ranging from indeterminate, amorphous "blotches" to strident, sharp-edged signs, all produced, undirectly then directly by the artist's swift gestures. Despite their apparent simplicity, the works are in fact the result of complex layering. Their strikingly vivid and immaterial backgrounds and clusters of colour are formed by an almost alchemical process, stemming from the artist's physical relation to natural elements and phenomena. Each of his works brought together here is an oxymoron, the outcome of a dialectic between spontaneity and control, what the artist called the "continual correction of what is done at speed." In this aesthetic paradox, the storm is therefore constant and the deflagration always channelled.



T1980-K5, 1980. Acrylic on canvas. 185 x 300 cm / 72 13/16 x 118 1/8 in. ©Hans Hartung / ADAGP, Paris 8 ARS, New York 2018. Photo: Claire Dorn. Courtesy Perrotin

In the late 1940s, Hartung's paintings enjoyed great recognition and had many imitators in Europe, where he was recognized as an artistic leader, and also across the Atlantic, in relation to Abstract Expressionism.

Always wary of dogma and categories, he never encouraged a linear reading of his work and it remains difficult, even today, to precisely define his contribution in historical or critical terms. This is due to the deep singularity of his oeuvre but also to his own life and its traumas: a German expelled by the Nazis, he fought on the Allied side and lost a leg in battle while carrying a wounded man; he was then awarded the Croix de la Guerre and naturalized as a Frenchman. Both German and French, romantic and rational, he was attracted at once to the expressive brutality of Die Brücke and the scenographic intensity of Rembrandt, the typological rigor of Paul Klee and the formal clarity of Henri Matisse. By doggedly ploughing his own furrow, Hartung in a sense refused to choose between two simplistic visions of abstract art: on one side, eruptive and chaotic painting, based on pure intuition, combined with the expressionist, gestural, lyrical, informal and Tachiste tendencies of post-war painting; and, on the other, control, precision and systems, whose notions belong more to the realm of Geometric Abstraction.

Hartung was obsessed with renewing his painting, and he achieved this through some remarkable technical innovations. At the same time, he was constantly going back to the seminal artistic vocabulary that he elaborated instinctively after World War I. He thus constructed his practice in a constant back-and-forth between the physical impulses of work in the studio and the resurgences of a sensorial memory, between the transcription of the sense of nature and the conception of pure painting fundamentally liberated from any kind of imagery.

Matthieu Poirier

Two exhibitions are organized simultaneously at Simon Lee Gallery, London and Nahmad Contemporary, New York.



Publications:

An exhibition catalog will be co-published by the three galleries.

A monograph (hardcover, 328 p.) accompanies the exhibition.

A Constant Storm, 2018, Perrotin Publishing is available at our bookstore

Scientific direction: Matthieu Poirier

Texts: A Constant Storm by Matthieu Poirier, Hans Hartung by Jean Clay, About Hans Hartung interview of Pierre Soulages by Pierre Encrevé

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