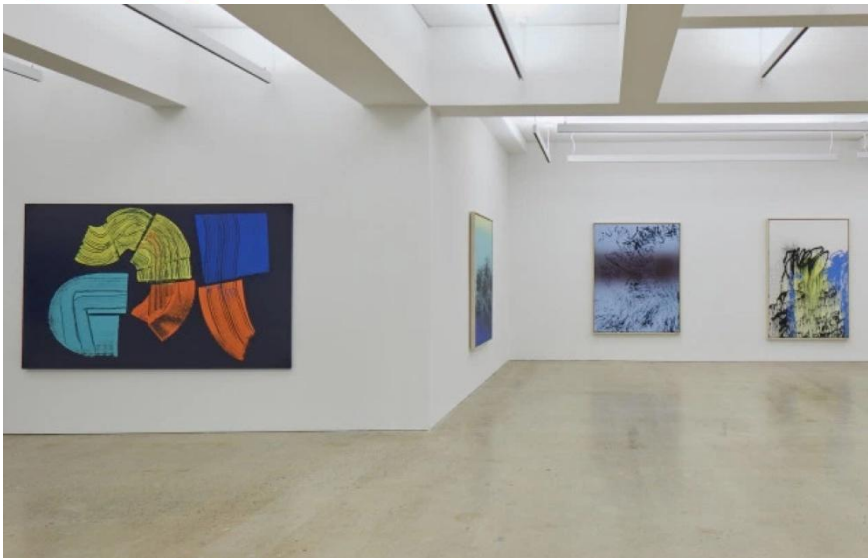


WWD

Abstract Painter Hans Hartung Is Having a New York Moment

A selection of the late artist's work is the focus of simultaneous exhibits at Perrotin and Nahmad Contemporary in New York, and Simon Lee Gallery in London.

By [Kristen Tauer](#) on January 16, 2018



German-French abstract painter Hans Hartung is getting his first major New York exhibition since 1975, when the artist was given a retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of [Art](#). It was panned by critics, notably the New York Times' Hilton Kramer who asked: "Why Hartung?"

A selection of the late artist'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; another exhibition, at Simon Lee in London, focuses on Hartung's final decade of paintings, produced during the Eighties.

"The works are more relevant than ever. They have a certain freshness to them," says Joseph Nahmad of Nahmad Contemporary, which is showing an intimate selection of the artist's work from the Fifties to Eighties.

"I think, first of all, a lot of people are looking back in time at certain artists that have been underappreciated in certain places," Nahmad continues of the artist's modern-day appeal. "The Eighties work, especially work with this quality, hasn't really been exhibited much, hasn't really been seen much. And when you look at it in context with other artists that might be very popular such as Christopher Wool, such as Albert Oehlen, such as Jeff Elrod, you see how avant-garde Hartung was, and I think that excites people. Because [art](#) is always, over the course of art history, in constant flux. Things might seem like they're not relevant one minute."

The artist's process often included the use of unconventional tools, such as vacuum cleaners, cat brushes and sticks, resulting in a gestural quality on the canvas which is on further display downtown at Perrotin. The full span of his career, from 1922 to his final piece created in 1989, is situated throughout the gallery's two floors.

"It's kind of a rediscovery, in a way, of his work. Hartung's been kind of forgotten for at least three decades," says Matthieu Poirier, who curated the show at Perrotin and offered further insight to the artist's modern resonance. "Why is it relevant for today? Mostly because of all the artists that reclaim from him, and say 'Han Hartung is a great genius.' He's one of the great masters of 20th-century abstract art. He's not only the precursor, one of the inventors of abstract art since 1922, he's really kind of the missing link between Mondrian, Kupka, Kandinsky and Pollock," he continues.

"He's the missing link — and art historians love missing links."

"Hans Hartung: A Constant Storm" on display at Perrotin through February 18; "Hans Hartung" on display at Nahmad Contemporary through March 17.