



## **HANS HOFMANN (1880-1966)**

### **Astral Image No. 1**

#### **M-1133**

oil on canvas

48 x 60 in. (50 x 62 x 1 3/4 in.)

121.92 x 152.4 cm (127 x 157.48 x 4.45 cm)

1947

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#### **PROVENANCE:**

Andre Emmerich Gallery, New York, New York  
Estate of Hans Hofmann  
Ameringer & Yohe Fine Art, New York, New York  
Private Collection, New Jersey

#### **EXHIBITION:**

New York, New York, Betty Parsons Gallery, *Hans Hofmann: Recent Works*, March 24 – April 12, 1947  
New York, New York, American Academy of Arts and Letters, *Hans Hofmann*, 1971  
Toronto, Canada, David Mirvish Gallery, *Hans Hofmann: The Thirties through the Sixties*, April 15 – May 23, 1972  
New York, New York, Andre Emmerich Gallery, *Hans Hofmann, The years 1947-1952*, April 3 - 28, 1976  
New York, New York, Ameringer Yohe, *Hans Hofmann: The Unabashed Unconscious; Reflections on Hofmann and Surrealism*, March 30 – April 29, 2006

#### **LITERATURE:**

Cynthia Goodman, *Hofmann: Abbeville Modern Masters*, New York, 1986, pl. 45, p. 56 (illustrated in black and white)  
Jed Perl, *Hans Hofmann, The Unabashed Unconscious: Reflections on Hofmann and Surrealism*, New York, 2006, p. 37 (illustrated in color)  
Suzi Villiger, *Hans Hofmann: catalogue raisonne of paintings, volume II*, Surrey, 2014, HH cat. no. 1135-1947, p. 382 (illustrated in color)

Hans Hofmann's "*Astral Image #1*" of 1947 captures a pivotal moment in his artistic evolution as he wrestled with the competing forces of linearity and painterly abstraction. Exhibited in the same year at Betty Parsons Gallery in New York—Hofmann's first show with Parsons — the painting represents a phase of intense experimentation in which Cubist-inspired linear elements took center stage. Lines arc and stretch across the canvas, creating a dynamic framework that opens into areas filled with flatly applied alizarin crimson. These contrasting forces give the work a sense of tension and vitality.

During this period, Hofmann's reliance on linearity provided a departure from the more fluid, painterly dynamism of his earlier works. From 1944 to 1951, this linear impulse permeated his practice, signaling a prolonged exploration of modes of expression in which he grappled with reconciling abstraction and structure. While some viewed this phase as a retreat from the energetic breakthroughs that defined American art's rise to global prominence, others recognized the distinctiveness of these paintings. *Astral Image #1* challenged the framework of Hofmann's singular vision, blending Cubist discipline with

the vibrant, unruly energy that remained a hallmark of his oeuvre.

The work's flat planes of bright alizarin crimson, contrasted with the angular momentum of the lines, evoke a cosmos of restless energy, hinting at the celestial themes suggested by its title. This painting reflects Hofmann's deliberate explorations during the late 1940s that underscore his unique ability to create works that resist easy categorization, standing apart as deeply personal explorations of form and color.

Hans Hofmann is one of the most important figures of postwar American art. German born, he played a pivotal role in the development of Abstract Expressionism as an influential teacher of generations of artists in both Germany and America.

Born in Bavaria and educated in Munich, Hofmann studied science and mathematics before studying art. Moving to Paris in 1904, he studied at both the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere and the Academie Colarossi and was influenced by Picasso, Braque, Delaunay, Leger and Matisse, many of whom he met and became friendly. Hofmann moved back to Munich after WWI and opened an innovative art school, transmitting what he learned from the avant-garde in Paris and attracting students from Europe and the United States.

In 1930 Hofmann went to teach at the University of Berkeley and in 1932 settled in New York where he taught art at the Art Students League and later again opened his own schools in Manhattan and Provincetown, Mass. For eager young American artists constrained by the aftermath of WWII and the Depression, contact with Hofmann served as an invaluable connection with European Modernism. Noted art historian Clement Greenberg called Hofmann "in all probability the most important art teacher of our time." His school remained a vital presence in the New York art world until 1958 when the then seventy-eight year old Hofmann decided to devote himself full-time to painting.

Combining Cubist structure and intense Fauvist color, Hofmann created a highly personal visual language, continuously exploring pictorial structures, spatial illusion and chromatic relationships and creating volume through contrasts of color, shape and surface. Also a prominent writer on modern art, his push/pull theory is a culmination of many of his ideas and describes the plasticity of three-dimensionality translated into two-dimensionality. Due to a dazzling burst of creative energy when he was close to 70 years old, his most highly recognizable canvases are from the late 1950's and 1960's, paintings of stacked, overlapping and floating rectangles and clear, saturated hues that assured his reputation and cemented him as a key member of the Abstract Expressionists.

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