



HANS HOFMANN (1880-1966)

The Zoo

M-1040-A

oil on panel

21 3/8 x 24 1/2 in. (22 1/4 x 25 1/2 x 2 in.)

54.29 x 62.23 cm (56.52 x 64.77 x 5.08 cm)

1944

47140

PROVENANCE:

Collection of the Artist

The Renate, Hans and Maria Hofmann Trust, New York, New York

Ameringer | McEnry | Yohe, New York, New York

Private Collection, New Jersey

EXHIBITION:

New York, New York, Ameringer | McEnry | Yohe, *Hans Hofmann: Pictures of Summer: Paintings & Works on Paper*, December 9, 2010 – January 29, 2011

LITERATURE:

Ameringer | McEnry | Yohe, *Hans Hofmann: Pictures of Summer: Paintings & Works on Paper*, "Art in America," announcement for the exhibition, New York, New York, 2010, p. 11 (illustrated in color)

Ameringer | McEnry | Yohe, *Hans Hofmann: Pictures of Summer: Paintings & Works on Paper*, "ARTnews," 109, no. 11, announcement for the exhibition, New York, New York, 2010, back cover (illustrated in color)

Suzi Villiger, *Hans Hofmann: catalogue raisonne of paintings, volume II*, Surrey, 2014, HH cat. no. 351-1944, p. 279 (illustrated in color)

Hans Hofmann's *The Zoo* (1944) brims with playful energy, its abstract forms suggesting a whimsical exploration of animalistic shapes and gestures. Dominated by a vivid blue field punctuated by bold strokes of red, green, and yellow, the formal elements and composition provide a lively interplay of color. While the title invites the viewer to seek out zoo-like references, the forms are ambiguous yet evocative: sweeping red arcs might suggest the curve of a tail, while the triangular green shape evokes the profile of an enclosure or a cage. The painting captures not the literal essence of a zoo but the dynamism and movement one might associate with such a space.

Heavily influenced by Surrealist automatism and the biomorphic forms of Joan Miró, the organic shapes and bold colors seem to pulse with life, blurring the boundary between abstraction and figuration. Yet, unlike Miró's delicate dreamscapes, Hofmann's brushwork carries a muscular energy, grounding the composition in his signature gestural style.

The Zoo reflects Hofmann's ability to balance spontaneity with deliberate compositional choices. The result is a vibrant, joy-filled work that celebrates the world's visual complexity and the boundless creative freedom of abstraction during this pivotal phase of his career.

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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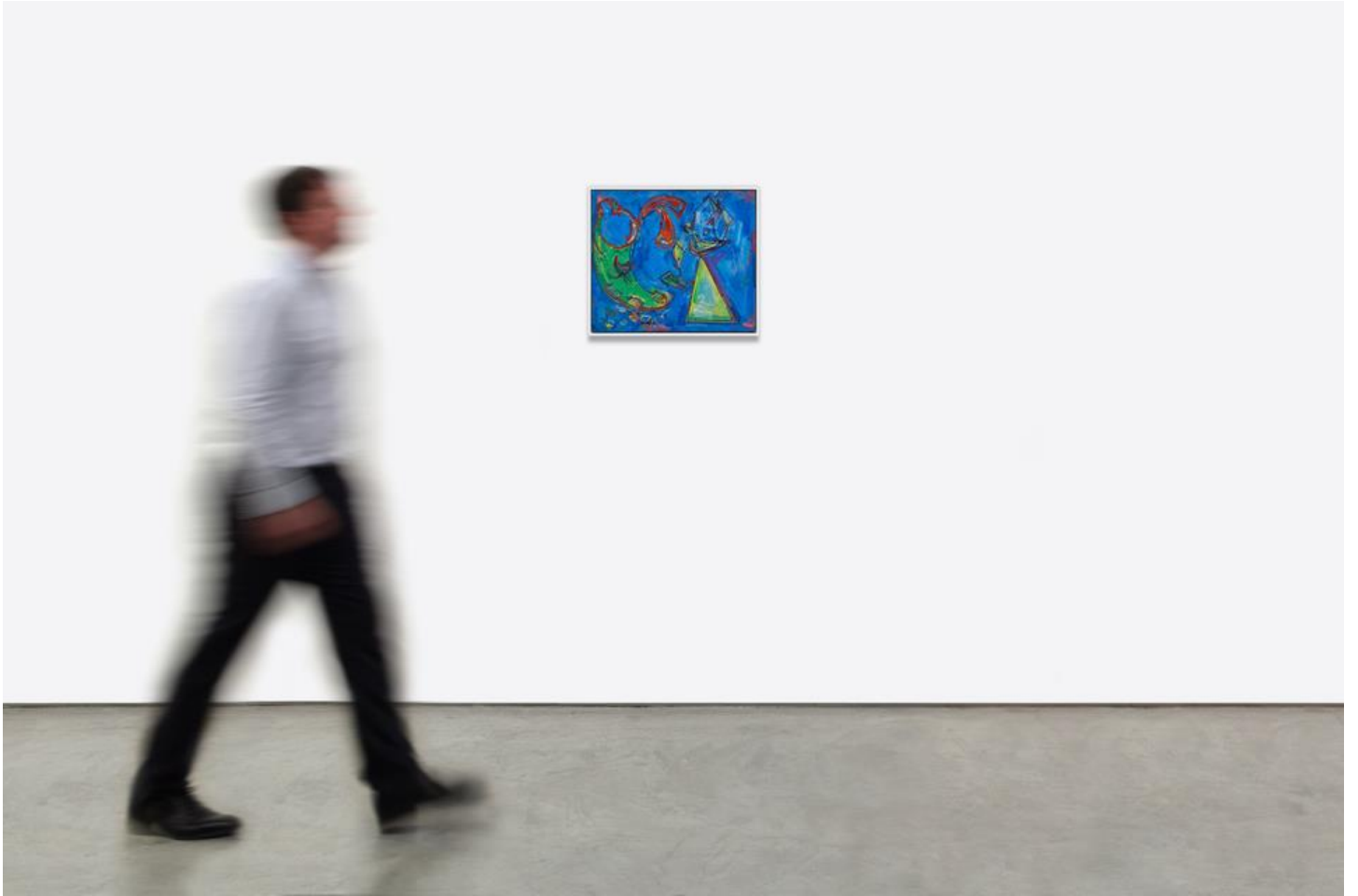














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HANS HOFMANN
 The Zoo
 1944
 Oil on wood: 21" x 24 1/2"
 9-1040/A 53 x 62 cm.

ESTATE OF HANS HOFMANN
 No. M 1040/A

M-1040A
 THE ZOO

HANS HOFMANN
 The Zoo, 1944
 Oil on panel
 21 x 24 1/2 inches
 53 x 62,2 cm
 NY193022 HN-EMMA-1040-A

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