

La fabrique du geste

October 11th 2019 - March 1st 2020

Hans Hartung

MAM MUSÉE
D'ART MODERNE
DE PARIS

There's an emotional state that drives me to draw, to create certain shapes, in an endeavour to trigger and communicate the same kind of emotion.

Personally, I want to stay free. In my mind, my ideas, my actions. To resist being trapped by others or by myself. All my life this unrelenting obstinacy has kept me going, kept me on my chosen path. Without betraying myself or my ideas.

*Hans Hartung, Self-portrait (1976),
Dijon, Les presses du réel, 2016*

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Hans Hartung

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11 October 2019 – 1 March 2020

To mark its reopening after renovations lasting a year, the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris is presenting **La Fabrique du Geste**, a monographic exhibition by **Hans Hartung** from 11 October 2019 to 1 March 2020.

Given that his last retrospective in a French museum dates from 1969, it was time to restore the visibility Hans Hartung (1904–1989) so richly deserves. This exhibition brings a fresh eye to the oeuvre of this major 20th-century artist and his crucial role in art history: Hartung was a forerunner of abstraction, one of the most influential artistic discoveries of his time.

Spanning a century, his career was marked by a thirst for freedom equal to the obstacles he had to face: the rise of fascism in his native Germany, and the precarity of his existence in postwar France, with its physical and psychological aftereffects. Yet never for a moment did he stop painting.

This retrospective is built around a tightly focused selection of some 300 works from various collections – French and international, public and private – and most notably the Hartung-Bergman Foundation. This tribute is a follow-up to the Museum's acquisition of a group of four works by Hartung in 2017.

The visitor is introduced to the wide range of media, the wealth of technical innovations and the array of tools used during six prolific decades. For Hartung experimentation was all-important, as was the uncompromising, conceptually inflected modernism he embodied. The essays on colour and format as a rigorous studio methodology, together with framing, photography, enlargement, repetition and – even more surprising – identical reproduction of quite a few of his works, were all elements of his research into the original and the authentic and have lost nothing of their relevance today. Hartung paved the way, too, for a number of his fellow artists, among them Pierre Soulages, who was always frank about his debt to him.

The exhibition takes the form of a succession of chronological sequences divided into four main sections. In addition to the paintings photographs testifying to the importance of the medium in his explorations, groups of graphic works, illustrated limited editions, experiments with ceramics and a selection of painted stones round off this retracing of a singular life path.

This account of Hartung's career and his part in the art history of his time is backed up by books, letters, notebooks, sketches, a youthful diary, catalogues, invitations, posters, photographs, documentary films and other archival material.

While a commanding figure in 20th-century abstraction, Hans Hartung cannot be confined to the role of mere precursor. Turned towards a future of human and technological progress, his artistic vision continues to challenge us today. The tension and interaction between these complementary aspects of the Hartung vocation come together as the guiding thread of this exhibition. A catalogue including fifteen essays and selected other texts is published by Paris Musées.

PRESS RELEASE

Museum director

Fabrice Hergott

Exhibition curator

Odile Burluraux

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Scenography

Cécile Degos

Visitor information

Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris
11 Avenue du Président Wilson
75116 Paris
Tél. 01 53 67 40 00
www.mam.paris.fr

Open Tuesday – Sunday
10 am – 6 pm
Open late: Thursday 10 pm

Admission

Full rate: 13 €
Concessions: 11 €

Cultural activities

Information and bookings
Tél. 01 53 67 40 80

Responsible

des Relations Presse

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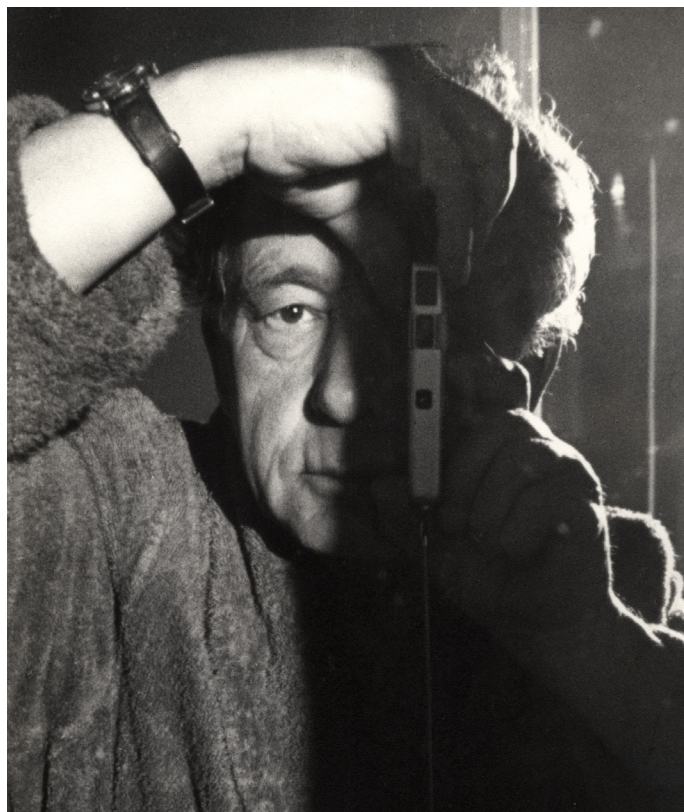


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#expoHartung

HANS HARTUNG

The 1930s, a period of increasing, quasi-nomadic precariousness in France, Germany, Norway and Spain, saw Hartung incubating his formal vocabulary. Breaking with Cubism and keeping his distance from Surrealism, he started turning out paintings – using a method he would adhere to until 1960 – based on the squaring-up of small, spontaneously-executed pictures on paper. Presented as a founding father of a lyrical, emotional form of action painting, he was also passionately interested in astronomy and mathematics, and his work cannot be fully understood without a parallel grasp of this rational element.

The 1950s, when he was already into his forties, brought favourable attention from the critics. He showed widely and quickly found recognition as an «Informal Art» trailblazer. In 1960 he was awarded the Grand Prix for painting at the Venice Biennale. Major retrospectives followed in Europe and the United States, with a solo show at the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 1975. Meanwhile the 1960s had proved a turning point, when his experimental quest led to a radical regeneration of his work via a plethora of tools he used to scratch and scrape the surface of his canvases.



Artist biography

A MAN OF HIS TIME

Driven by a true artistic vision, while still very young Hans Hartung embarked on a quest for pure gestural abstraction. Strong-minded and identifying with a modern, democratic Europe, he experienced a number of personal ordeals as well as difficulties stemming from the conflictual relations between Germany and France: left with no choice but to join the Foreign Legion, he lost a leg.

Success began to arrive in the late 1940s and he became a major figure on the Paris art scene. In 1929 he had married the Norwegian artist Anna-Eva Bergman, but divorced her to marry the painter Roberta González, daughter of the sculptor Julio González, whom he divorced in order to remarry Bergman in 1957.

A German in exile in France, Hartung was a witness to the 20th century and notably to the turbulent history of his homeland: the fall of the Berlin Wall came just a few weeks before he died. In both France and Germany he was showered with honours – for his war exploits as well as his work – and was a well-known public figure, with his anti-Nazi stance earning him a postwar reputation as the exemplary artist-Resistance fighter. Well before his death he had come up with the idea of the Hartung-Bergman Foundation, where his archives are now stored according to a system he had devised early in his career.

With historical hindsight we can now confirm the importance of an artist who ultimately achieved international recognition in his own lifetime.

TECHNICAL WIZARDRY

A tireless seeker and contributor to a formal revolution, Hans Hartung left a legacy of some 15,000 works. Over time he developed various working processes, including framed images on baryte card and cut-ups for series of inks and photographs. He regularly moved back and forth between media and transposed the outcomes of his printing technique investigations onto paintings: incisions inspired by engraving, photographs of skies as sources for cloud pictures, etc.

One method of working with painting he was particularly attached to – to save money, but also as part of his visual explorations – was the squaring-up and transfer of pastels and drawings into enlarged versions on canvas. He had begun working this way in the 1930s, but stopped definitively in the 1960s.

Bent on overcoming the physical limitations he was faced with, Hartung devised approaches to painting that required either assistants in the studio or polyptychs that allowed him the freedom of gesture he needed. The diversity of his experiments, made feasible by his range of tools, reveals his enormous scope for self-renewal, and the choice of works on display provide an inventory of the strategies he came up with after 1960: the reverse vacuum cleaner, aerosol, vaporiser, Tyrolean gun, vine sprayer and air gun, not to mention items like the street sweeper's broom and pruning knife that found their way into the studio.

Artist biography

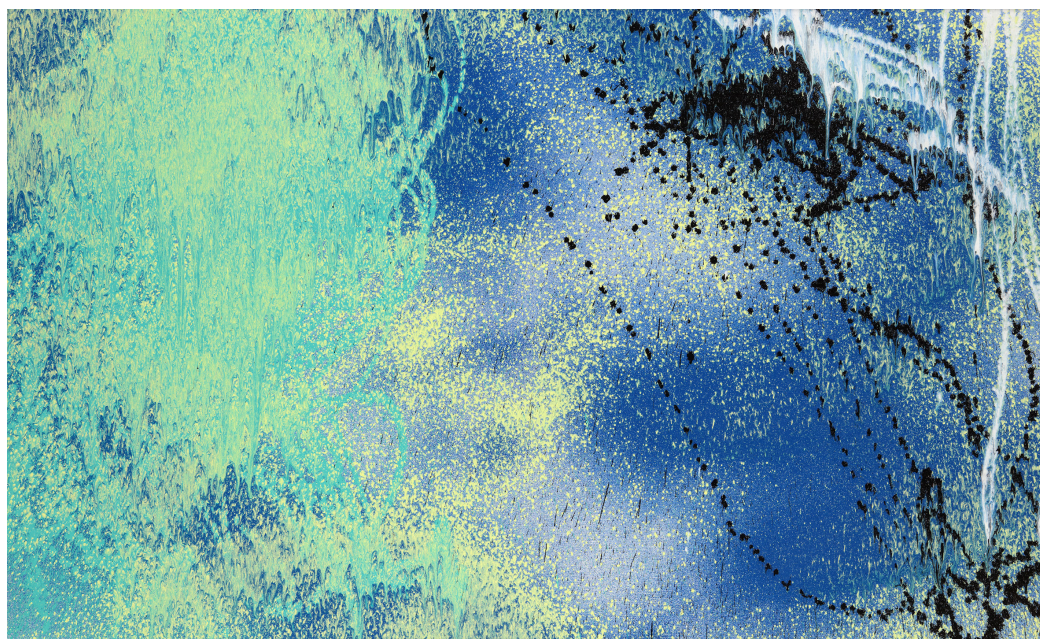
HANS HARTUNG AND THE MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE PARIS

Hans Hartung's last retrospective during his lifetime took place in 1969 at the Musée National d'Art Moderne. In 1980 the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris followed up with a showing of 300 works from the period 1922–1939, with the accent on the historical character of his approach and its implications for the development of «lyrical abstraction».

Over the last ten years the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris has hosted Hartung twice: in 2008 the pictures representing a single day's work (4 June 1989) and his last painting, T1989-N10, featured in the Deadline exhibition, devoted to the final works of fifteen artists; and in 2017 the museum added four big works from his late period to the thirteen already on show, some of them from the Girardin bequest of 1953.

This exhibition is the latest in a series dedicated to abstract artists ranging from Mark Rothko (1997) to Zao Wou-Ki (2018–2019), and including Bridget Riley (2008) and Sonia Delaunay (2014). It also plays a part in the ongoing

exploration and reappraisal of the oeuvres of some of the 20th-century greats: Pierre Soulages (1996) and more recently Serge Poliakoff (2013), Lucio Fontana (2014), Bernard Buffet (2016), Karel Appel (2017) and Jean Fautrier (2018).



K-35, 1989,
acrylic on canvas, ,
100x162 cm,
Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris
© ADAGP, Paris, 2019
Photo : Julien Vidal / Parisienne de
Photographie

The singularity and perseverance of Hans Hartung's approach to abstraction are the core elements of this exhibition. While still at secondary school, in the early twenties he painted a series of watercolours he called «stains», in which the absence of figurative representation showed a move towards abstraction.

The same period also brought studies mainly inspired by the art of the past, his masters being Rembrandt, Goya, Van Gogh, Kokoschka, Cézanne and Nolde. The work of a self-educated painter unaware of developments in abstraction, these youthful pictures are nonetheless exemplary and already marked by the characteristics of all the work to come: exigency, determination, powerful lines and signs, tensions and use of colour..



The War hampered Hartung in his practice and career, forcing him to take refuge in the Free Zone with the González family and then to flee the Germans; after being arrested he was interned in Spain for several months and served two stints in the Foreign Legion.

1945 found him back in Paris after losing a leg in the Battle of Belfort, and the ten years that followed were a time of immensely purposeful studio work. Recognition then came gradually in France and Europe.



The exhibition itinerary

1957 – 1970: DIFFERENT TOOLS, DIFFERENT SYSTEM

This was a time of exploration of media and techniques, and the discarding of the squaring-up/transfer method early in 1960. Now leading a more comfortable existence, Hartung was able to devote himself full-time to painting and the other activities his restless creative nature urged him towards.

He experimented with new techniques like spraying, and vinyl colours that thinned easily and dried fast. His supports varied, too: ceramics, tapestry and – most of all – photography. The upshot was direct, spontaneous access to the shapes he wanted for his big canvases, without the tedious enlargement process.



T1962-U8, 1962,
Vinyl paint on canvas, 180x142 cm,
Fondation Hartung-Bergman, Antibes
© ADAGP, Paris, 2019

1971 – 1989: A FREE HAND

After many months spent building the studio, in 1973 the Bergman - Hartung couple moved to the Colline des Oliviers at Antibes, a more isolated, peaceful setting ideal for full-time creative work.



T1973-E12, 1973,
Acrylic on canvas, 154x250 cm,
Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Genève
© Fondation Gandur pour l'Art, Genève
© ADAGP, Paris, 2019
Photo : Sandra Pointet

The exhibition itinerary

CROSSOVER CREATIVITY

PHOTOGRAPHY

Hans Hartung's interest in photography came early and he took some 15,000 photos in the course of his life. Never without a camera close to hand, he would sometimes produce multiple rapid-fire portraits of himself and his family and friends. The exhibition will include images illustrating his formal concerns – clouds, lights at night, movement on water, stones, interwoven branches – and a selection of portraits.

CERAMICS

Hartung discovered ceramics in the South of France in 1972, when his studio at Antibes was being built. Invited to use the kiln at Galerie Maeght, he set about scratching, scraping and hollowing-out the clay with the same enjoyment and curiosity he brought to all his creative ventures.

PRINTS

The prints are a major but relatively unknown segment of the Hartung oeuvre, one he turned to regularly and enlivened with countless innovations in the fields of lithography, etching, woodcuts, engraving and the monotype.

THE STUDIOS

A great lover of architecture, Hartung lived and worked in several studios of his own design: on Minorca (1932), on Rue Gauguier in Paris (1959), and at Antibes, from 1973 until his death.

DOCUMENTS AND ARCHIVAL MATERIAL

Various documents, some of them never displayed before – Hartung's youthful diary and his studio registers, for example – are presented in vitrines. Letters to and from artists, critics and curators – Otto Dix, Calder, Will Grohmann, Artaud – are evidence of his part in the artistic social networks of the time. His relationships with Anna-Eva Bergman and Roberta González, the two women who successively shared his life, will be gone into, as will his friendships with Henri Goetz, Jean Hélion, Julio González, Pierre Soulages et al.

AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL

A number of documentary films and extracts will be screened in the exhibition space.

Visite chez Hartung: Alain Resnais made a documentary in 1947 in the studio at Arcueil, but for lack of funds the sound track was never added. For the exhibition the museum has subtitled the film, using the text originally written as a voice-over by art historian Madeleine Rousseau.

Hartung, 1989: Shot by Hartung's assistants in the Antibes studio in 1989, this video shows Hartung in his wheelchair, painting big pictures with a vineyard spraying machine.

Hartung had also been extensively filmed by the international media and extracts from documentaries showing him at work will be screened.

MUSÉE
D'ART MODERNE
DE PARIS

REOPENING OF THE MUSEUM

A more modern, more welcoming museum. From 11 October discover the refurbished Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris:

- a renovated reception area
- a fresh presentation of the collection: a century of art history seen through major works
- an enriched, easy-to-follow visitor experience

A free, fun weekend for all from 11 to 13 October.

Full programme available soon on: www.mam.paris.fr

YOU

WORKS FROM THE LAFAYETTE
ANTICIPATIONS COLLECTION

The Moulin Family Endowment Fund, Paris

11 October 2019 – 16 February 2020

The museum is presenting works by French and international contemporary artists, chosen from among the 330 pieces making up the Lafayette Anticipations – Moulin Family Endowment Fund Collection.

This is the first museum showing of works from the Lafayette Anticipations Collection. Centred on installations – sculptures, videos, performances – acquired by the fund since 2005, these fifty pieces offer a panorama of the most recent developments in the art field and a demonstration of artists' ability to investigate and decipher our changing world. A world that often stimulates and shapes their creative ventures, as they in turn change our perception of it.

A NEW PRESENTATION OF THE COLLECTION

In a presentation of more than 500 works from its collection, the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris looks back over a history of seminal acquisitions and major donations that began in 1937.

This new encapsulation of the art of the 20th century draws on the main masterpieces of Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Derain, Freundlich, Robert and Sonia Delaunay, Léger, Rouault, Bonnard, Vuillard, Fautrier, Picabia, Ernst, De Chirico and other greats. The emphasis is simultaneously on Surrealism and forms of realism, abstraction and the new postwar currents. The exhibition closes with the most recent contemporary acquisitions and a tribute to all the museum's donors.

Visitor information

MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE PARIS

Postal address

11, Avenue du Président Wilson, 75116 Paris
Tél. 01 53 67 40 00
www.mam.paris.fr

Public transport

- Métro : Alma-Marceau ou Léna (line 9)
- Bus : 32/42/63/72/80/92
- Vélib' bike stations : 3, av. Montaigne or 2, rue Marceau
- RER C : Pont de l'Alma (ligne C)

Opening hours

- Tuesday–Sunday, 10 am–6 pm (last entry 5:15 pm)
- Open late: Thursday, 10 pm exhibitions only (last entry 9:15 pm)
- Closed Mondays and some public holidays

Admission

Full rate: 13€
Concessions: 11€
Passes **Hans Hartung: La fabrique du geste** and **You: Works from the Lafayette Anticipations Collection**: 16€ (full rate), 14€ (concessions)

The exhibition is accessible to people with motor disabilities and reduced mobility

No-queue tickets: www.mam.paris.fr

Press Officer

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Paris Musées

THE CITY OF PARIS MUSEUMS NETWORK

United since 2013 under the Paris Musées banner, the City of Paris museums and heritage sites are home to collections as remarkable for their diversity as for their quality. In a gesture of outreach visitor services have been upgraded, more attractive entrance fees introduced for temporary exhibitions, and special provision made for visitors unfamiliar with this kind of cultural context. The permanent collections (which are free*), the temporary collections and the varied cultural activities drew 3 million visitors in 2018. By consulting the Paris Musées website you can keep up to date on what's happening at the museums, get acquainted with the collections, and prepare your visit: parismusees.paris.fr

* Except for the heritage sites: the Ile de la Cité Archaeology Crypt, the Catacombs and Hauteville House.

THE PARIS MUSÉES PASS

VISIT WHEN AND WHERE YOU LIKE!

The Paris Musées Pass means unlimited, no-queue access to all temporary exhibitions in the 14 City of Paris museums, together with special prices for museum activities, reductions in the bookshops, boutiques, cafés and restaurants, and advance information on museum events. More than 16,000 people are currently holders of the Paris Musées Pass.

All information: Museum reception or : www.parismusees.paris.fr

