HELEN FRANKENTHALER: *Composing with Color: Paintings 1962–1963*

Thursday, September 11–Saturday, October 18, 2014

Opening reception: Thursday, September 11th, from 6:00 to 8:00pm

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to announce its first exhibition of Helen Frankenthaler’s work organized in collaboration with the newly established Helen Frankenthaler Foundation. This follows the gallery’s critically acclaimed 2013 exhibition, “Painted on 21st Street: Helen Frankenthaler from 1950 to 1959,” which was organized with the artist’s estate.

The exhibition focuses on a brief but critical period in Frankenthaler’s career during 1962–63, when she “composed with color” rather than with line, resulting in the freer compositions that came to exemplify her long and prolific career. Transitioning from the sparer, more graphic works of 1960–61, Frankenthaler made paintings that more readily filled the space of the canvas, moving toward what critic B. H. Friedman described as the “total color image” that would become a hallmark of her later work. Included in the exhibition are *Cloud Bank*, *Hommage à M.L.*, and *Cool Summer* (all 1962), in which she employed a limited number of linear elements, linking them to her innovative stain paintings of the 1950s while marking a new direction with the use of spreading areas of color and a reassessment of the properties of painting materials.

Three paintings in the exhibition, *Filter*, *Gulf Stream*, and *Moat* (all 1963), belong to a series of works that include imprints of the floorboards of Frankenthaler’s studio. As she recalled of this technique, “I did a whole series of pictures... that I reversed; in other words they stained through and then I worked on them again from the other side.” During this period, Frankenthaler also began experimenting with acrylic paint, sometimes employing both acrylic and oil in a single canvas. *Gulf Stream*, one example of this method, features delicately layered passages of oil paint surrounded by denser expanses of vivid acrylic paint, a framing device that she would continue to explore the following year.

The culmination of Frankenthaler’s experimentation with acrylic paint is represented by two large-scale paintings, *Pink Lady* and *Sun Shapes* (both 1963). With their large expanses of intense hues that nearly fill the canvas, both paintings anticipate the development of her abstract vocabulary throughout the remaining years of the 1960s.

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The exhibition, curated by John Elderfield, is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with an introductory essay by Elizabeth Smith, Executive Director of the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation. The essay provides an in-depth examination of Frankenthaler’s development during this critical two-year period and places these works in the context of American art in the early 1960s.


For further information please contact the gallery at newyork@gagosian.com or at +1.212.744.2313. All images are subject to copyright. Gallery approval must be granted prior to reproduction.

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