

Artist Resources – Hans Hofmann (German, 1880-1966)



Hofmann in New York studio, 1956
Photography: Arnold Newman

[Hans Hofmann estate](#)

MoMA's [1963 international touring display](#) of 40 works celebrated the visual vitality of Hofmann's monumental canvases. For the show, the museum published a [history, analysis, and selection of writings](#) about Hofmann.

Hofmann spoke with [ArtForum](#) just one month before his passing in 1966, elaborating on the relationship between spirituality and art making, teaching, and the role of creation versus accident. "It's not merely what you show. It's the process which is inherited in the created work that makes it a work of art. In other words, it reflects the artist in his full capacity of sensing, of feeling, in his capacity of thinking, of ordering, of feeling, and sensing things which only he senses."

Art in America detailed the impact of Hofmann's teaching in an [in-depth 1973 article](#), elaborating on his curriculum through the memories of his students and contemporaries, praised his "elasticity, his capacity to foster the personal qualities of his students' work."

The PBS documentary, [Hans Hofmann: artist/teacher, teacher artist](#) debuted in 1993, tracing the artist's start in Munich during his student days through his arrival in New York at age fifty and establishment of his schools in Manhattan and Provincetown, Massachusetts.

In 2015, the Bruce Museum in Connecticut debuted [the first exhibition of Hofmann's murals in the 1950s](#), accompanied by studies, maquettes, and archival material.

Two 2017 lectures explored diverse aspects of Hofmann's career. At the [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston](#), professor Davis looked at the circle of influence he took in and inspired through works in the MFA's collection, while [MOCA Jacksonville](#), Florida curators discussed Hofmann's life in Provincetown in conjunction with an [exhibition of works on paper](#).

The Berkley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA – which houses the largest collection of Hofmann's work in the U.S.) organized [Hans Hofmann: The Nature of Abstraction](#) in 2019, delivering a reevaluation of the extraordinary artist and teacher through a visual chronology of his career. Leading scholars, curators, and art historians discussed Hofmann's legacy and continuing relevance [at a symposium](#). The exhibition also traveled to the Peabody Essex Museum in Massachusetts, [accompanied by digital resources](#) including essays and interviews.

[New York's Bookstein Projects gallery](#) brought together twenty works on paper, including India ink, pencil, crayon, gouache and watercolors made between 1934 and 1944 to explore an underserved aspect of Hofmann's prolific and innovative career in 2020.

Take a virtual tour through [London's Bastian Gallery's 2020 display](#) of Hofmann's practice at the end of WWII, during which he was still experimenting between styles.



Hofmann, 1957
Photography: Andreas Feininger



Hans Hofmann (German, 1880-1966)

Early Dawn, 1957

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2020:118.4

“You have to reorder things—what you have experienced—into the sense of the material through which you express yourself,” Hans Hofmann wrote in 1966, reflecting on his legacy as one of the most important figures in American abstraction. As an artist, theorist, and teacher, Hofmann helped introduce American artists to the European avant-garde, arriving in New York in 1933 with a pedigree in teaching and three decades of hands-on experience with such pivotal movements as Neoimpressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism. During four decades in New York, California, and Massachusetts, he influenced the careers of Lee Krasner, Helen Frankenthaler, and Frank Stella, among many others. In his practice and his teaching, Hofmann praised the potential of color to create dimension and express emotion, the compositional importance of volume and space, nature as muse, and the iteration of spirit and sense through paint. He painted by following what he referred to as the “inner laws” of his chosen materials. The thick layered impasto of the monumental **Early Dawn** demonstrates his “push and pull” technique, developed in the 1950s, in which a nuanced blend of color and brushwork create sensations of movement, space, and dimension.

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