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HANS HOFMANN

9 DECEMBER 2021 – 29 JANUARY 2022

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GALLERY

NEW YORK, NEW YORK – MILES McENERY GALLERY is pleased to present an exhibition of Hans Hofmann's *Chimbote Mural* paintings on view 9 December 2021 through 29 January 2022 at 520 West 21st Street. The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue featuring essays by Dr. David Anfam and Alexandra Thorold.

These historically important works, all painted in 1950, will be displayed in New York City for the first time in thirty years. The nine mural studies will subsequently travel to Germany for exhibitions at Museum Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern and Museum Lothar Fischer in Neumarkt in 2022. The shows will mark the second occasion that the collection has been exhibited together in Europe.

Hans Hofmann, a pioneering painter of the 20th century and influential teacher, was a link between American and European art in the middle of the last century—he spent his formative years in Munich and Paris before immigrating to the US in 1930. His work was influenced by Cubism, Fauvism, and Surrealism before he made his own impact on Abstract Expressionism with the development of his “Push-Pull” technique.

In 1950 Hofmann was invited by gallerist Samuel Kootz to collaborate with architects Josep Sert and Paul Lester Wiener in the making of a modernist site in the coastal town of Chimbote, Peru. Hofmann planned to paint 9 large murals that would become a mosaic at the site but ultimately the project was never realized. The resulting large-scale abstract panels—nearly 7 x 4 feet at their widest, half the size of the intended murals—provide significant insight into his energetic compositions and distinct theoretical approach to painting.

Made when Hofmann was seventy years old, these ambitious paintings had a lasting impact on his later, more mature work and represent a watershed moment in his career. The *Chimbote Mural* studies established him as a modernist visionary and exemplified his pursuit of formulating his own visual language, defining a unique space between the spiritual and material.

The murals demonstrate Hofmann's preoccupation with transforming the canvases into dynamic pictorial surfaces through the use of his “Push-Pull” technique. As Thorold describes in her text, his canvases, where adjacent colors and shapes provide an illusion of depth, space, and movement, led him, “to configure a form of abstraction that psychologically transcended the confines of the picture plane through the projection of oscillating movement and radiating light.”

HANS HOFMANN was born in Weissenburg in Bavaria, Germany in 1880. He began his education in art in Munich and later moved to Paris in 1904. While in Paris, Hofmann frequented the Café du Dome where he met the many artists, dealers, and intellectuals who gathered there. It was also during this time that Hofmann took drawing classes at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière and the Académie Colarossi, and was introduced to Matisse, Picasso, and Braque. While on a visit home to Germany in 1914, the outbreak of World War I prevented Hofmann from returning to Paris, so in 1915 he opened his own art school in Munich, which quickly garnered an international reputation of excellence. In 1930, Hofmann traveled to the United States, and from 1930 to 1932 he was invited to teach at the University of California, Berkeley, and at the Chouinard School of Art in Los Angeles.



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In 1932, Hofmann moved to New York. He taught a drawing class at the Art Students League and in 1934—shortly after closing his school in Munich—he opened the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts in New York. In 1935, Hofmann’s School additionally began to hold summer classes in Provincetown, Massachusetts. Hofmann became well known not only as an important artist of the time but also as an admired teacher—Helen Frankenthaler, Allan Kaprow, Lee Krasner, Louise Nevelson, Joan Mitchell, and Wolf Kahn were amongst his students. 1944 was a significant year for Hofmann as he was featured in four group exhibitions and notably had his first solo exhibition in New York at Peggy Guggenheim’s renowned Art of This Century Gallery.

Although considered one of the leading Abstract Expressionist artists in New York during the period, unlike his American counterparts, Hofmann had spent his formative years in Paris, taking in elements of Cubism and Fauvism directly from the sources of European Modernism. Hofmann’s paintings are celebrated for their utilization of color relationships to create spatial effect as well as their compositional structure and theories of “push/pull,” which have had a lasting impact on modern artists.

Hans Hofmann never shied away from challenge and instead embraced it head-on, a trait that gives his paintings an air of life and enthusiasm that is palpable even over half a century after the artist’s death. When describing his process, Hofmann said, “I do not want to avoid immersing myself in trouble—to be in a mess—to struggle out of it. I want to invent, to discover, to imagine, to speculate, to improvise—to seize the hazardous in order to be inspired. I want to experience the manifestation of the absolute—the manifestation of the unexpected in an extreme and unique relation. I know that only by following my creative instincts—in an act of creative destruction—will I be able to find it.”

During his lifetime, Hofmann’s work was the subject of exhibitions at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco (1931); the Art of This Century Gallery, New York, NY (1944); the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts (1948); Whitney Museum of American Art (1957); the XXX Venice Biennale (1960); and The Museum of Modern Art (1963).

Hofmann’s work is in many permanent collections including The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Musée de Grenoble, Grenoble, France; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany; Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv, Israel; and the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich, Germany.

Hofmann died in 1966 in New York at the age of 85.

Miles McEnergy Gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM and by appointment.

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 [@miles.mcenery.gallery](https://www.instagram.com/miles.mcenery.gallery)

Image: *Chimbote Mural Fragment of Part I [Study for Chimbote Mural]*, 1950, Oil on board, 84 x 36 1/2 inches, 213.4 x 92.7 cm

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