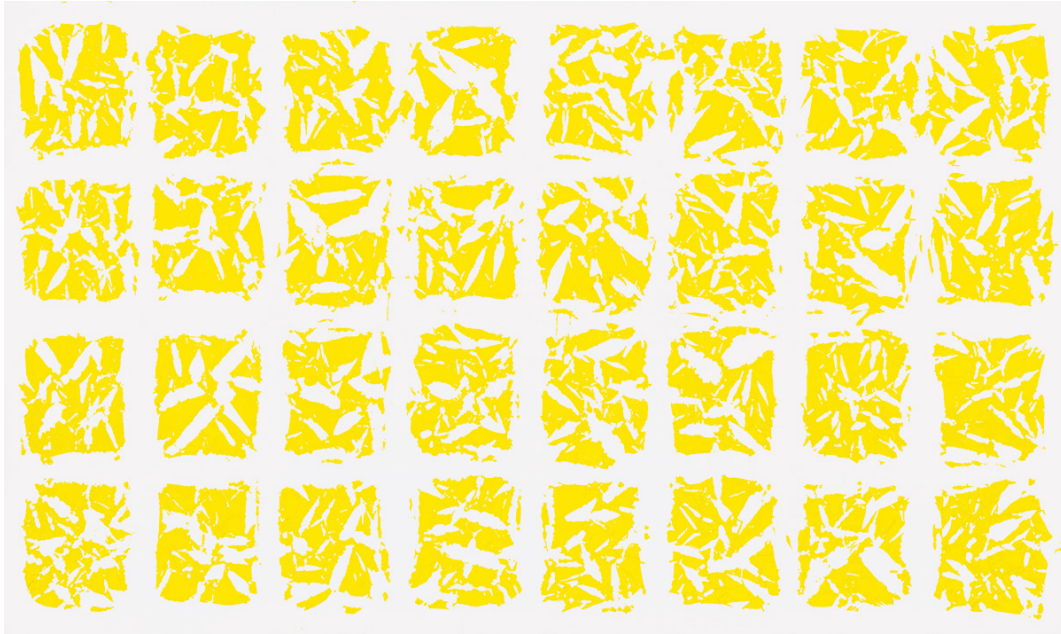


GAGOSIAN

Gagosian New York to Present an Exhibition of Paintings by Simon Hantaï Focused on His Exploration of Color, White, and Light

Opening January 27, 2022



Simon Hantaï, *Tabula*, 1980, acrylic on canvas, 104 3/4 × 177 1/4 inches (266 × 450 cm) © Archives Simon Hantaï/ADAGP, Paris. Photo: Thomas Lannes

The function of color is essentially linked to light. Light is necessarily the foundation of the world on the material, absolute level. It is, precisely, the sign and symbol of another infinity.

—Simon Hantaï

NEW YORK, January 21, 2022—Gagosian is pleased to present an exhibition of eighteen paintings by Simon Hantaï (1922–2008). *Les blancs de la couleur, la couleur du blanc*, curated by Anne Baldassari, is Gagosian’s second solo exhibition of Hantaï’s work since the gallery announced its representation of the artist’s estate in 2019, and occurs in the centenary year of his birth. Many of the works in the exhibition, which occupies both floors of the gallery at 980 Madison Avenue, have not been previously exhibited.

Les blancs de la couleur, la couleur du blanc—the title alludes to Hantaï’s use of white in several series of works—features paintings made using the artist’s *pliage* (folding) technique, in which a canvas is crumpled and knotted, painted over, and then spread out to reveal a pattern of alternations between pigment and ground. In contrast to *LES NOIRS DU BLANC*, *LES BLANCS DU NOIR*, also curated by Baldassari, an exhibition of black-and-white paintings and prints dating from 1951 to 1997 that was presented at Gagosian Le Bourget in 2019–20, the current selection focuses on work distinguished by color combinations of primary and secondary colors, including blue and orange, yellow and purple, and red and green. These powerful hues had a unique significance for Hantaï, representing a link to the clothing worn by his mother on feast days—a foundational image from childhood—and reflecting his study of Paul Cezanne, Henri Matisse, and Goethe’s *Theory of Colors* (1810).

Hantai began making *pliage* paintings in 1960, conceiving of the process as a synthesis of Surrealist automatism and the all-over gestures of Abstract Expressionism. The technique dominated his output from this point on, and *Les blancs de la couleur, la couleur du blanc* features examples from several series executed according to its strictures. The series *Études* (1968–71) and *Blancs* (1973–74) illustrate Hantai's efforts to expand the white of the canvas with the addition of abstract figures generated by the folding process. The *Tabulas* series (1972–76 and 1980–82) also features such designs but regulates them through the systematicity of the works' all-over folding and monochrome coloration. Thus the loose grids of the *Tabulas* present sets of variations that embody the conjunction of intentional and incidental mark making. For Hantai, *pliage* acts and *thinks* painting.

Born in Bia, Hungary, Hantai moved to Paris in 1948 and joined André Breton's circle of Surrealists, then broke with the group in 1955 after a transformative encounter with the work of Jackson Pollock. He gained increasing recognition over the next two decades and was invited to represent France at the 1982 Biennale di Venezia. Months later, however, he withdrew from the public eye, declining to exhibit any new work until 1998. Following this extended isolation, he began altering a set of *pliage* paintings that he had shown in 1981 at CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, photographing them at an angle and producing black-and-white silkscreen prints from the distorted images. Hantai continued to work largely in isolation until his death in 2008.

Les blancs de la couleur, la couleur du blanc is accompanied by a multipart publication housed in a box, comprising a booklet featuring an essay and chronology by Anne Baldassari, individual cards devoted to each artwork, and a folded poster. Hantai will also be the subject of an essay by Baldassari in the Spring 2022 issue of *Gagosian Quarterly*. A retrospective of Hantai's work is currently being organized for Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris.

Simon Hantai was born in 1922 in Bia, Hungary, and died in 2008 in Paris. Collections include CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, France; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Ludwig Museum, Budapest; Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Exhibitions include *Hantai, Rétrospective*, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris (1976); *1960–1976*, CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux (1981); 40th Biennale di Venezia (1982); *Donation Simon Hantai*, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1997); *Hantai: Collections du Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne et autres collections publiques françaises*, Musée d'art moderne de Céret, France (1998); *Werke von 1960 bis 1995*, Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Münster, Germany (1999); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2013); Villa Medici, Rome (2014); and Ludwig Museum, Budapest (2014).

#SimonHantai

SIMON HANTAI

Les blancs de la couleur, la couleur du blanc

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