



T1988-E24, 1988 Acrylic on canvas 142 x 180 cm / 55<sup>7/8</sup> x 70<sup>7/8</sup> in ©Hans Hartung / ADAGP, Paris & ARS, New York, 2018. Photo: Claire Dorn. Courtesy Perrotin

## Hans Hartung

### *A Constant Storm. Works from 1922 to 1989*

Curated by Matthieu Poirier

**Opening Friday January 12, 6 - 8pm**

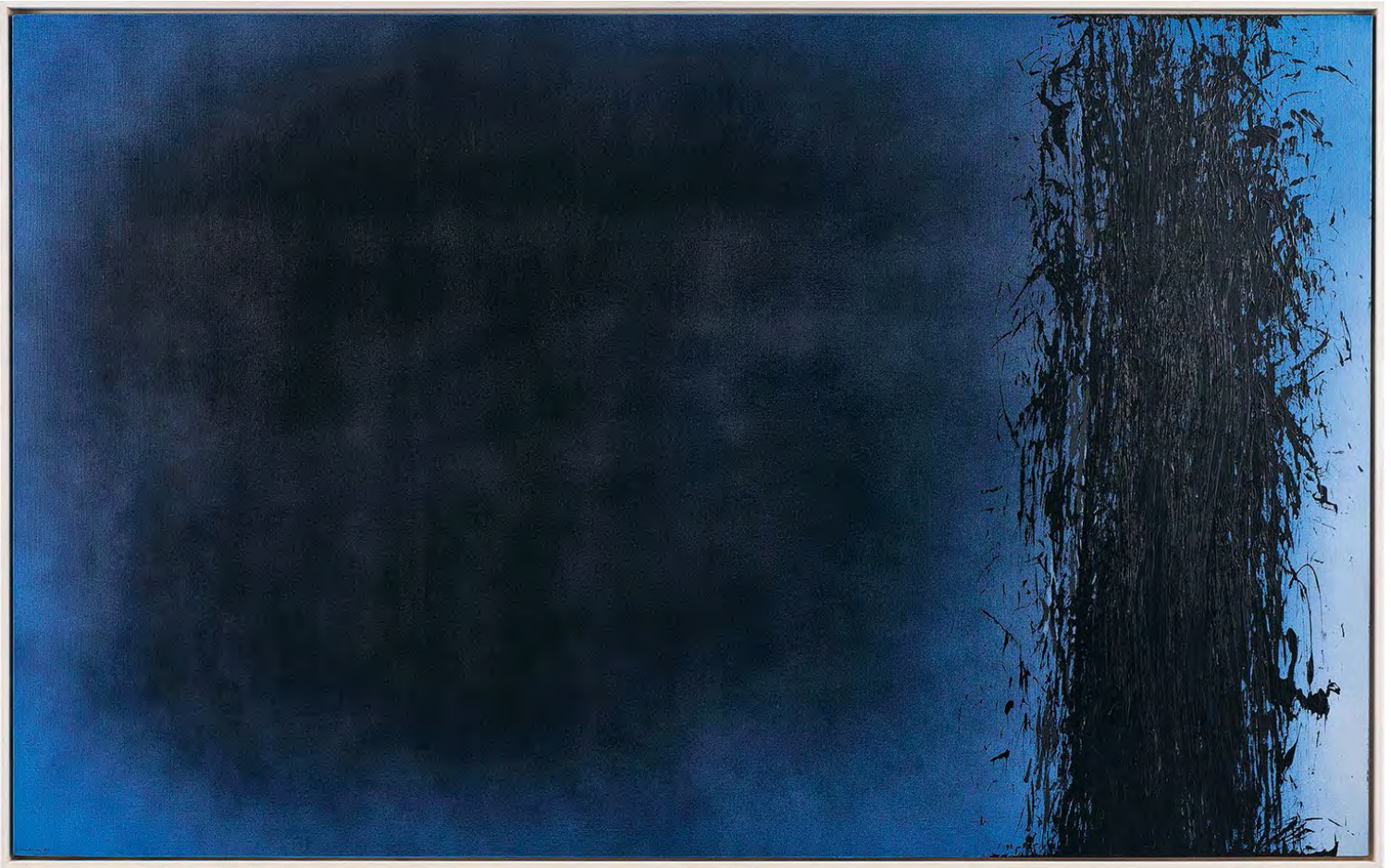
**January 12 - February 18**

Perrotin is honoured to present “Hans Hartung: A Constant Storm. Works from 1922 to 1989,” the first exhibition of Hans Hartung at the gallery, which is now the representative of the Hartung Estate. The exhibition, featuring nearly seventy works spanning seven decades of Hartung’s career, is the most important solo presentation of the artist in New York since his solo exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1975. Thanks to exceptional loans from the Hartung-Bergman Foundation, the Museum of Modern Art, New York and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, key works by the artist have been brought together for this survey exhibition tracing the artist’s evolution from the first abstract works in about 1922 through 1989, the year of his passing.

The works of Hans Hartung gathered in the exhibition are displayed chronologically in order to better understand the different stages of his nearly seventy years career. Seminal artworks are highlighted as they paved the way to later development in his work ; in particular the large paintings, starting in 1961, when Hartung was confronting the canvas, in constant technical innovation.

Hans Hartung was a pioneer and major proponent of abstract art and modernism. Born in Leipzig, Germany, in 1904, he developed a practice of gestural painting that was both instinctive and regulated. The seemingly immediate aesthetic impact of Hartung’s paintings is in fact the result of subtle layering. These strikingly vivid and immaterial clusters of colour are formed by a complex, almost alchemical process, stemming from a particular relation to the real. Each of the works by Hartung brought together for this project is a kind of oxymoron, the outcome of what the artist called the “continual correction of what is done at speed.” In this artistic paradox, the tempest is constant and the deflagration always channelled. The point is to change the way we look at this singular pictorial universe made up of coloured grounds over which float various forms and graphic structures, ranging from indeterminate, amorphous “blotches” to strident, sharp-edged signs, all produced by the artist’s swift gestures.





T1980-K5, 1980. Acrylic on canvas. 185 x 300 cm / 72 13/16 x 118 1/8 in. ©Hans Hartung / ADAGP, Paris 8 ARS, New York 2018. Photo: Claire Dorn. Courtesy Perrotin

From the end of the 1940s, Hartung's paintings enjoyed great success and had many imitators in Europe, where he was recognised as a real artistic leader, and also across the Atlantic, in relation to Abstract Expressionism in New York.

Always wary of dogma and categories, Hartung never encouraged a one-way reading of his work and it remains difficult, even today, to precisely define his contribution in historical or critical terms. This is due to the deep singularity of his oeuvre but also to his own life and its traumas: a German expelled by the Nazis, he fought on the Allied side and lost a leg in battle while carrying a wounded man; he was then awarded the Croix de la Guerre and naturalised as a Frenchman. Both German and French, romantic and rational, he was attracted at once to the expressive brutality of Die Brücke and the scenographic intensity of Rembrandt, the typological rigor of Paul Klee and the formal clarity of Henri Matisse. By doggedly ploughing his own furrow, Hartung in a sense refused to choose between two simplistic visions of abstract art: on one side, eruptive and chaotic painting, based on pure intuition, combined with the expressionist, gestural, lyrical, informal and Tachiste tendencies of post-war painting; and, on the other, control, precision and systems, whose notions belong more to the realm of geometric abstraction.

Throughout his rich and productive career, Hartung was obsessed with renewing his painting, and he achieved this through some remarkable technical innovations. At the same time, he was constantly going back to the seminal artistic vocabulary that he elaborated instinctively after World War I. He thus constructed his practice in a constant back-and-forth between the physical impulses of work in the studio and the resurgences of a sensorial memory, between the transcription of the sense of nature and the conception of pure painting fundamentally liberated from any kind of imagery.

Matthieu Poirier



Two exhibitions are organized simultaneously at Simon Lee Gallery, London and Nahmad Contemporary, New York. A catalog will be published on this occasion. The book *A Constant Storm* is published by Perrotin in January 2018.

*A Constant Storm*, 2018, Perrotin Publishing

Scientific direction: Matthieu Poirier

Texts: *A Constant Storm* by Matthieu Poirier, *Hans Hartung* by Jean Clay, *About Hans Hartung* interview of Pierre Soulages by Pierre Encrevé.

Preview of the book: <http://bit.ly/2DsQBtR>