

MARSDEN HARTLEY



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MARSDEN HARTLEY (1877-1943)

Bach Preludes et Fugues No. 1 (Musical Theme)

c. 1916-1917

oil on canvas laid down on board

28 ½ x 21 in. (72.3 x 53.3 cm)



WATCH VIDEO

PROVENANCE

Carl Sprinchorn, Albany, New York, acquired from the Artist, by 1945

Mr. and Mrs. Allan D. Emil, New York

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, gift from the above, 1964

A.M. Adler Fine Arts, New York, acquired from the above, 1979

ACA Galleries, New York

Acquired by the present owner from the above, 1979

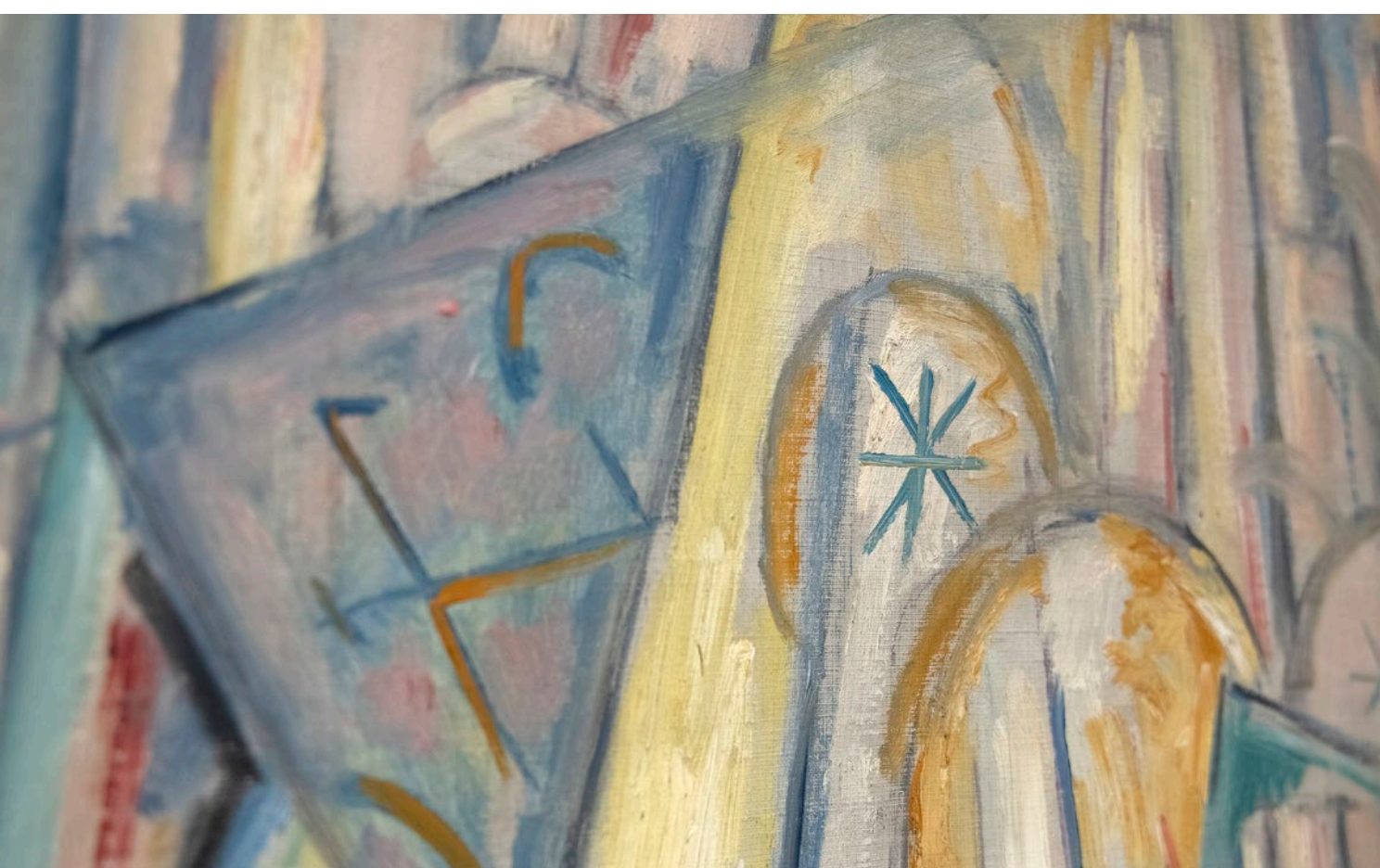
— IMPORTANT FACTS

- *Bach Preludes et Fugues No. 1 (Musical Theme)* was previously in the collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.
- In this period, Hartley was engaged with non-representational forms influenced by Wassily Kandinsky's paintings and writings.
- A pioneer of abstraction, Hartley was America's first great modern painter of the twentieth century. Of the top 5 auction records for Hartley, 4 are from this formative early period before 1920.
- The record price for a Marsden Hartley painting at auction was set in May 2019 when a comparable piece from the same period, *Abstraction* (1912-1913), sold for over \$6.74 million USD.

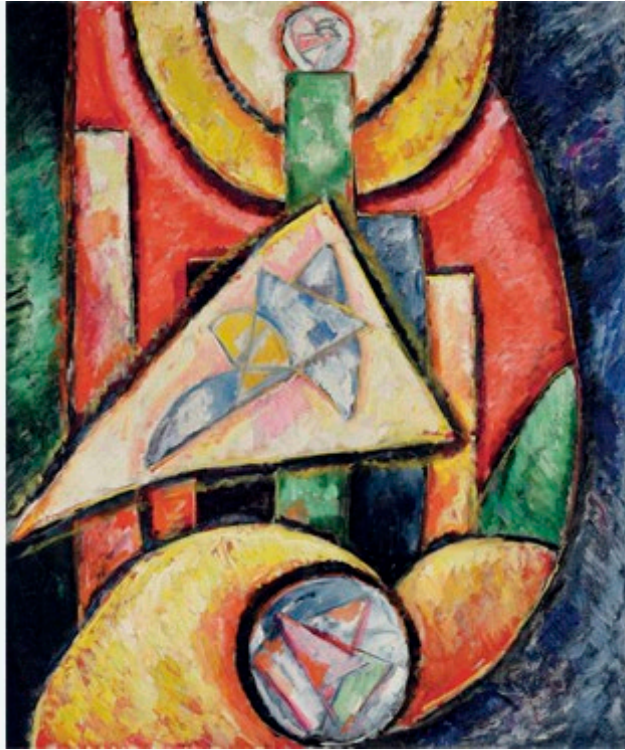
DETAIL IMAGES







MARKET ANALYSIS



The record price for a Marsden Hartley painting at auction was set in May 2019 when *Abstraction* (1912-1913) sold for over \$6.74 million USD

That painting sold at auction nearly 10 years earlier (November 2000) for \$2.2 million USD, an increase in value of 205.77%

Of the top 5 auction records for Hartley, 4 are from this formative early period before 1920

TOP PAINTINGS SOLD AT AUCTION

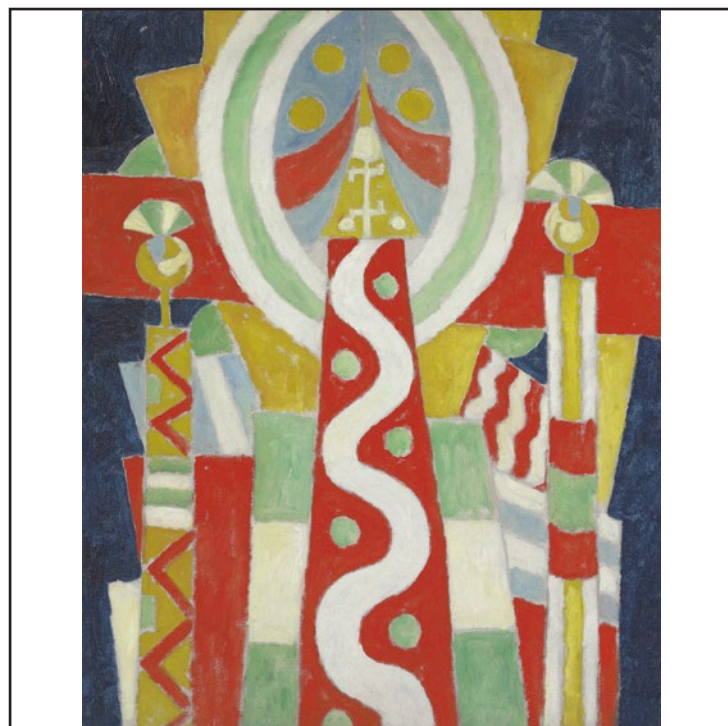


Abstraction
1912-1913
oil on canvas
46.5 x 39.8 in. (118.1 x 101 cm)

**Sold at Christie's New York:
May 2019 for \$6,744,500**

Lighthouse
1915
oil on canvas
40 x 32 in. (101.6 x 81.3 cm)

**Sold at Christie's New York:
May 2008 for \$6,313,000**



TOP PAINTINGS SOLD AT AUCTION



Untitled (Still Life)

1919

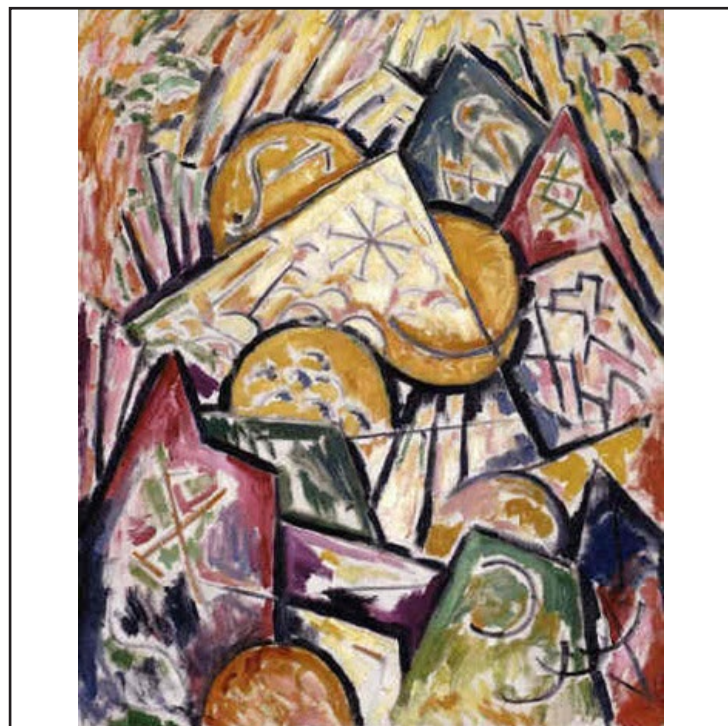
oil on board

32 x 25.7 in. (81.3 x 65.4 cm)

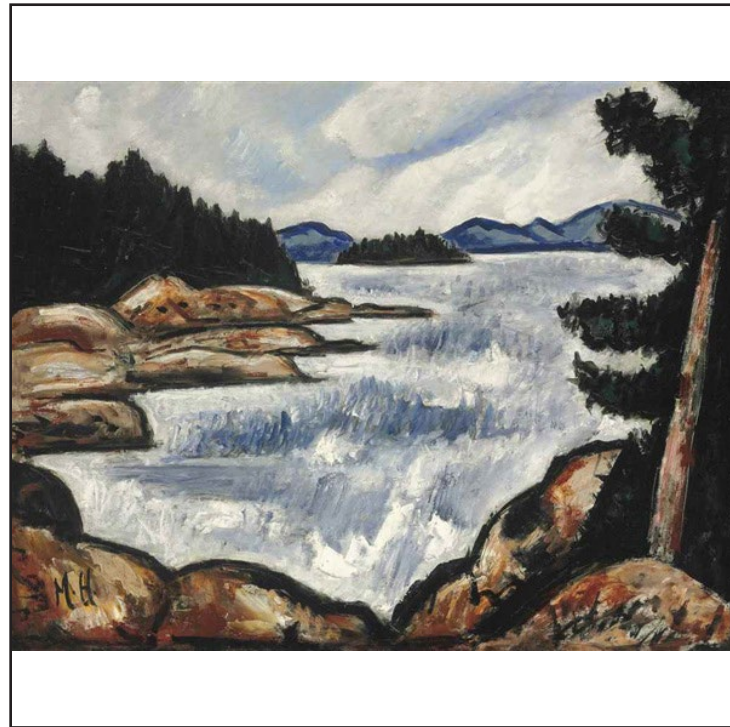
**Sold at Sotheby's New York:
December 2011 for \$3,218,500**

Painting no. 6
1913
oil on canvas
40 x 30 in. (101.6 x 76.2 cm)

**Sold at Sotheby's New York:
May 2002 for \$2,759,500**



TOP PAINTINGS SOLD AT AUCTION



Camden Hills from Bakers Island
1938

oil on board

22 x 28 in. (55.9 x 71.1 cm)

**Sold at Christie's New York:
November 2015 for \$2,741,000**

COMPARABLE PAINTINGS SOLD AT AUCTION



Abstraction

1912-1913

oil on canvas

46.5 x 39.8 in. (118.1 x 101 cm)

**Sold at Christie's New York:
May 2019 for \$6,744,500**

Larger example from the same period

Comparable abstract composition

Set the record price for Hartley at auction in
2019

Painting no. 6

1913

oil on canvas

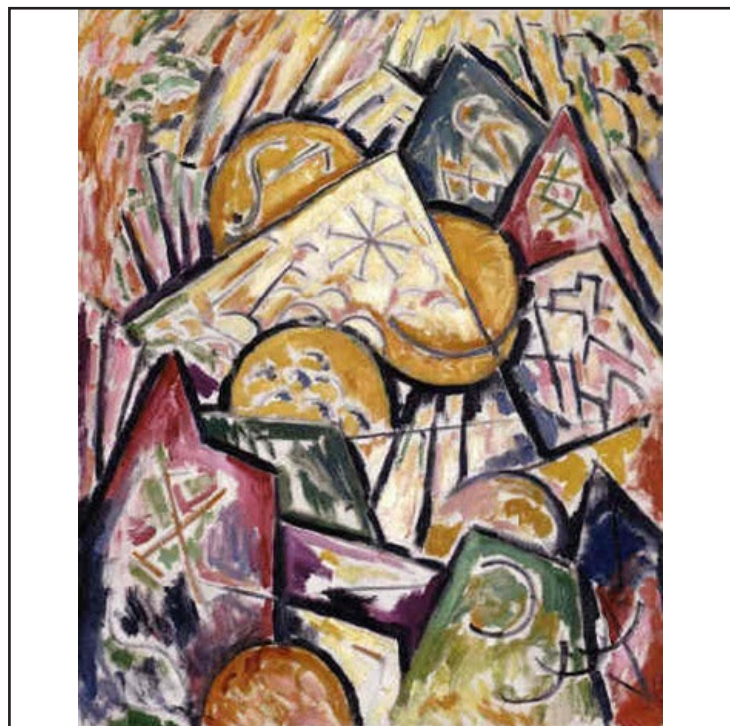
40 x 30 in. (101.6 x 76.2 cm)

**Sold at Sotheby's New York:
May 2002 for \$2,759,500**

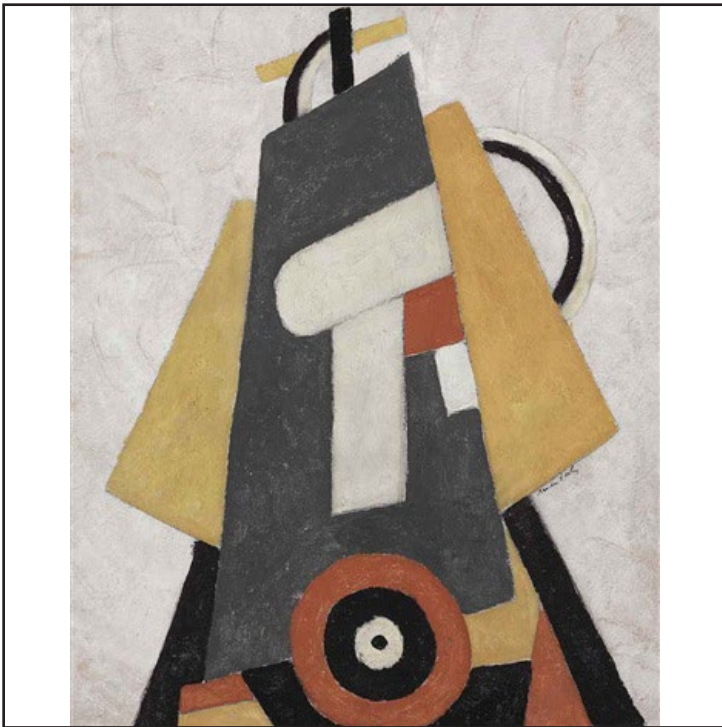
Larger example from the same period

Similar composition of stacked abstract shapes

Sold for over \$2.7M at auction 20 years ago



COMPARABLE PAINTINGS SOLD AT AUCTION



Movement, Sails

1916

oil on board

24 x 20 in. (61 x 50.8 cm)

**Sold at Christie's New York:
November 2011 for \$1,874,500**

Same size and period

Sold for over \$1.87M more than 10 years ago

Berlin Series, no. 1

c. 1913

oil on canvas board

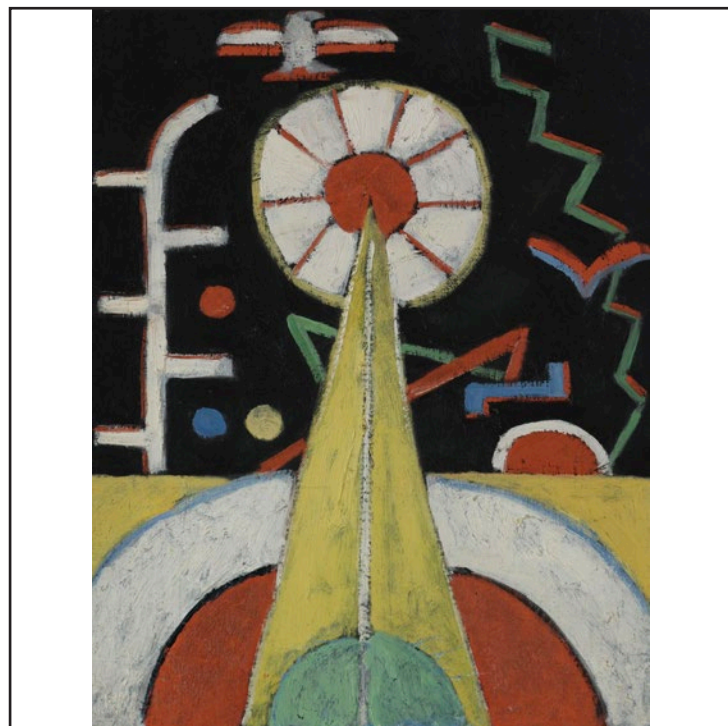
18 x 15 in. (45.7 x 38.1 cm)

**Sold at Sotheby's New York:
May 2010 for \$1,762,500**

Smaller example from the same period

Comparable medium, though a darker palette

Sold for over \$1.76M nearly 12 years ago



HARTLEY PAINTINGS IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS



**Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum
Madrid**

Musical Theme No. 2 (Bach Preludes et Fugues)
1912
oil on canvas mounted on masonite
24 x 20 in. (61 x 50.8 cm)

Art Institute of Chicago

Movements
1913
oil on canvas
47 x 46 7/8 in. (119.5 x 119 cm)

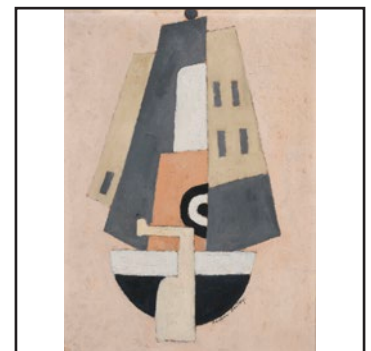


**Metropolitan Museum of Art
New York**

Portrait of a German Officer
1914
oil on canvas
68 1/4 x 41 3/8 in. (173.4 x 105.1 cm)

**The Barnes Foundation
Philadelphia**

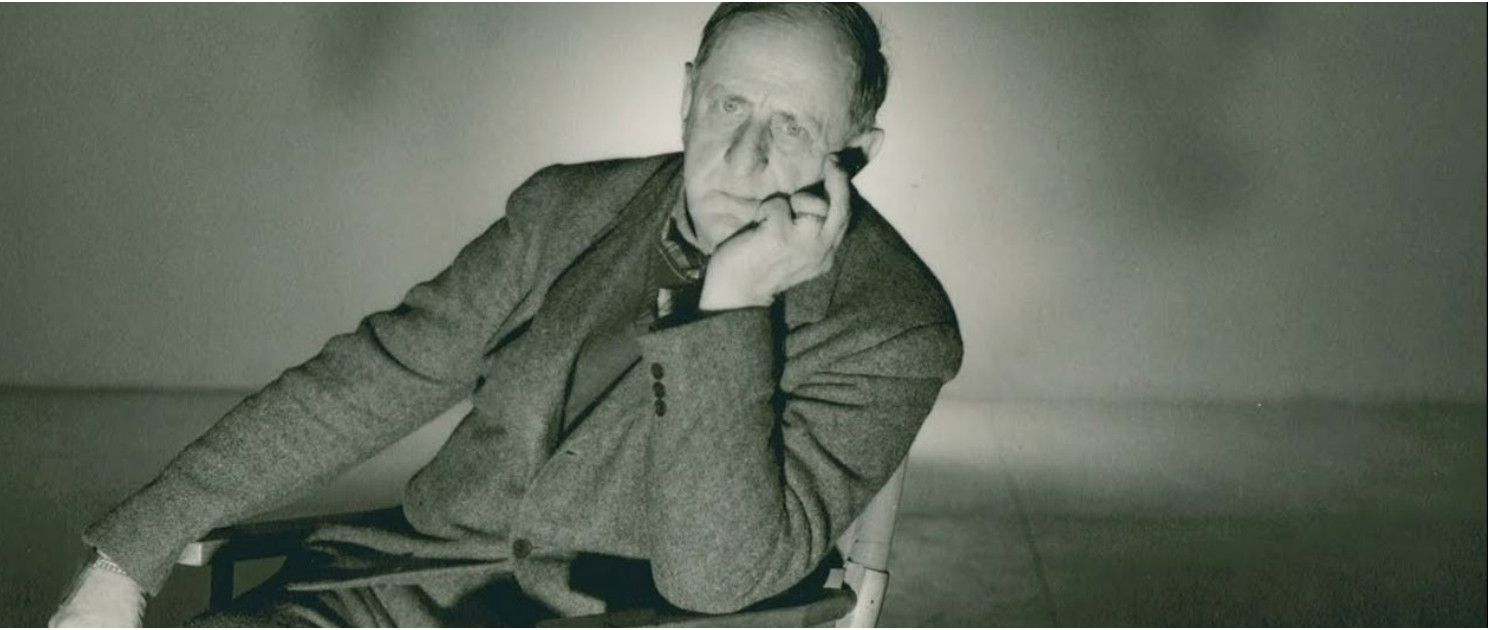
Movement, Bermuda
1916
oil on beaver board
16 1/8 x 11 7/8 in. (41 x 30.2 cm)



"It is never difficult to see images –
when the principle of the image is
embedded in the soul."

Marsden Hartley

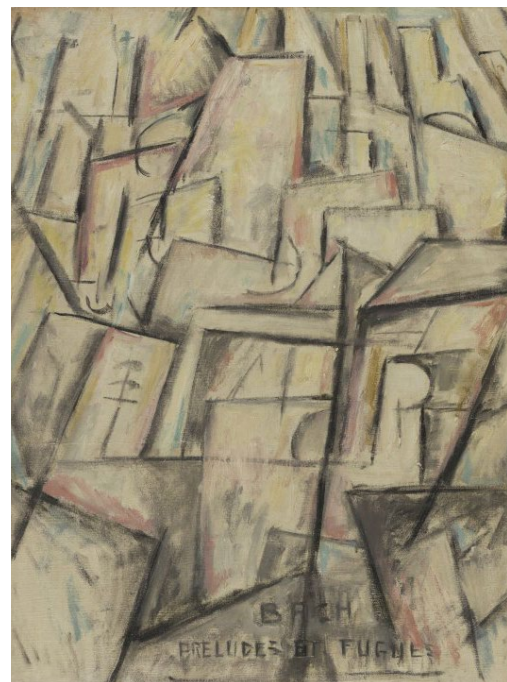
HISTORY



Shortly after arriving in Paris by April 1912, Marsden Hartley received an invitation. It had come from Gertrude Stein and what he saw at her 27 rue de Fleurus flat stunned him. Despite his presumptions and preparedness, “I had to get used to so much of everything all at once...a room full of staggering pictures, a room full of strangers and two remarkable looking women, Alice and Gertrude Stein...I went often I think after that on Saturday evenings — always thinking, in my reserved New England tone, ‘how do people do things like that — let everyone in off the street to look at their pictures?...So one got to see a vast array of astounding pictures — all burning with life and new ideas — and as strange as the ideas seemed to be — all of them terrifically stimulating — a new kind of words for an old theme.” (Susan Elizabeth Ryan, *The Autobiography of Marsden Hartley*, pg. 77)

The repeated visits had a profound effect. Later that year, Hartley was clearly disappointed when Arthur B. Davies and Walt Kuhn chose two of his still life paintings for the upcoming New York Armory show in February 1913. "He (Kuhn) speaks highly of them (but) I would not have chosen them myself chiefly because I am so interested at this time in the directly abstract things of the present. But Davies says that no American has done this kind of thing and they would (not) serve me and the exhibition best at this time." (Correspondence, Marsden Hartley to Alfred Stieglitz, early November 1912) A month later, he announced his departure from formal representationalism in "favor of intuitive abstraction...a variety of expression I find to be closest to my temperament and ideals. It is not like anything here. It is not like Picasso, it is not like Kandinsky, not like any cubism. For want of a better name, subliminal or cosmic cubism." (Correspondence, Marsden Hartley to Alfred Stieglitz, December 1912)

At the time, Hartley consumed Wassily Kandinsky's recently published treatise *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (*The Art of Spiritual Harmony*) and Stieglitz



Marsden Hartley
Musical Theme no. 2, 1912

Marsden Hartley
Musical Theme, 1912



followed the artist's thoughts with great interest. For certain, they both embraced musical analogy as an opportunity for establishing a new visual language of abstraction. Their shared interest in the synergetic effects of music and art can be traced to at least 1909 when Hartley exhibited landscape paintings of Maine under titles such as "Songs of Autumn" and "Songs of Winter" at the 291 Gallery. The gravity of Hartley's response to the treatise likely sparked Stieglitz's determination to purchase Kandinsky's seminal painting *Improvisation no. 27 (Garden of Love II)* at the Armory Show. As for Hartley, he announced to his niece his conviction that an aural/vision synesthetic pairing of art and music was a way forward for modern art. "Did you ever hear of anyone trying to paint music — or the equivalent of sound in color?...there is only one artist in Europe working on it (Wassily Kandinsky) and he is a pure theorist and his work is quite without feeling — whereas I work wholly from intuition and the subliminal." (D. Cassidy, *Painting the Musical City: Jazz and Cultural Identity in American Art*, Washington, D.C., pg. 6)



Marsden Hartley
Musical Theme (Oriental Symphony), 1913

In Paris, during 1912 and 1913 Hartley was inspired to create a series of six musically themed oil paintings, the first of which, *Bach Preludes et Fugues, no. 1 (Musical Theme)*, incorporates strong Cubist elements as well as Kandinsky's essential spirituality and synesthesia. Here, incorporating both elements seem particularly appropriate. Whereas Kandinsky's concepts were inspired by Arnold Schoenberg's twelve-tone method of composition whereby no note could be reused until the other eleven had been played, Hartley chose Bach's highly structured, rigorously controlled twenty-four Preludes and Fugues from his Well-Tempered Clavier, each of which establishes an absolute tonality. The towering grid of *Bach Preludes et Fugues, no. 1* suggests the formal structure of an organ, its pipes ever rising under a high, vaulted church ceiling to which Hartley extends an invitation to stand within the lower portion of the picture plane amongst the triangular and circular 'sound tesserae' and absorb its essential sonority and deeply reverberating sound. All of it is cast with gradients of color that conjures an impression of Cézanne's conceptual approach rather than Picasso's, Analytic Cubism. Yet *Bach Preludes et Fugues, no. 1*, in its entirety suggests the formal structural of Picasso's *Maisons à Horta (Houses on the Hill, Horta de Ebro)*, one of the many Picasso paintings Gertrude Stein owned and presumably staged in her residence on the many occasions he came to visit.