



HANS HOFMANN (1880-1966)

Fruit Bowl No. 1

M-1004

Signed lower right, "Hans Hofmann"

oil on canvas

29 1/2 x 37 1/2 in. (38 1/8 x 46 1/8 x 3 1/4 in.)

74.93 x 95.25 cm (96.84 x 117.16 x 8.26 cm)

1949

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PROVENANCE:

Collection of the Artist, New York, New York

The Renate, Hans and Maria Hofmann Trust, New York, New York

Ameringer & Yohe Fine Art, New York, New York

Private Collection, New Jersey

EXHIBITION:

New York, New York, Kootz Gallery, *Resumé of the 1950–51 Season*, June 4-29, 1951

Boston, Massachusetts, Marcus Krakow Rosen Sonnabend Gallery, *Hans Hofmann Paintings*, November 17 - December 22, 1973

Toronto, Canada, Marianne Friedland Gallery, *Hans Hofmann: Major Painting and Works on Paper*, April 4 - 25, 1981

New York, New York, Ameringer Yohe Fine Art, *Hans Hofmann: The Unabashed Unconscious: Reflections on Hofmann and Surrealism*, March 30, - April 27, 2006

LITERATURE:

Kootz Gallery, *Resumé of the 1950–51 Season*, New York, 1951, cat. no. 10, as *Fruit Bowl*

Marianne Friedland Gallery, *Hans Hofmann: Major Painting and Works on Paper*, Toronto, 1981

Cynthia Goodman, *Hofmann: Abbeville Modern Masters*, New York 1986, p. 37

Jed Perl, *Hans Hofmann, the Unabashed Unconscious: Reflection on Hofmann and Surrealism*, New York, 2006, p. 40 (illustrated in color)

Suzi Villiger, *Hans Hofmann: catalogue raisonne of paintings, volume II*, Surrey, 2014, HH cat. no. 327-1949, p. 453 (illustrated in color)

Hans Hofmann explored linearity and color with persistence during the late 1940s, creating a tension between Cubist structure and gestural abstraction. In this painting, *Fruit Bowl #1*, the linear impulse takes center stage, with dynamic black contours weaving and unspooling across the canvas, limning forms that merely hint at a still-life composition. Hofmann's approach is far from conventional; the traditional fruit bowl is fractured and reimagined into an abstract interplay of geometric and organic shapes. The addition of bright, flatly applied patches and demarcation of green, red, and yellow punctuates the composition, adding an energetic entropy and vitality. Hofmann's raw, alluring, yet slightly uncomfortable palette and gestural freedom elevate the piece beyond its Cubist origins, revealing an artist deeply engaged with the challenges of mid-20th-century abstraction. Hofmann's lines and color fields balance spontaneity with control, oscillating between chaos and structure.

Fruit Bowl #1 reflects Hofmann's ongoing dialogue with earlier European modernists while pushing toward the freer instincts of American Abstract Expressionism. Often criticized as misaligned with the rising dominance of gestural abstraction, paintings from this period in Hofmann's career remain his own—vibrant, exploratory, and unapologetically personal.

Hans Hofmann is one of the most important figures of postwar American art. German born, he played a pivotal role in the development of Abstract Expressionism as an influential teacher of generations of artists in both Germany and America.

Born in Bavaria and educated in Munich, Hofmann studied science and mathematics before studying art. Moving to Paris in 1904, he studied at both the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere and the Academie Colarossi and was influenced by Picasso, Braque, Delaunay, Leger and Matisse, many of whom he met and became friendly. Hofmann moved back to Munich after WWI and opened an innovative art school, transmitting what he learned from the avant-garde in Paris and attracting students from Europe and the United States.

In 1930 Hofmann went to teach at the University of Berkeley and in 1932 settled in New York where he taught art at the Art Students League and later again opened his own schools in Manhattan and Provincetown, Mass. For eager young American artists constrained by the aftermath of WWII and the Depression, contact with Hofmann served as an invaluable connection with European Modernism. Noted art historian Clement Greenberg called Hofmann "in all probability the most important art teacher of our time." His school remained a vital presence in the New York art world until 1958 when the then seventy-eight year old Hofmann decided to devote himself full-time to painting.

Combining Cubist structure and intense Fauvist color, Hofmann created a highly personal visual language, continuously exploring pictorial structures, spatial illusion and chromatic relationships and creating volume through contrasts of color, shape and surface. Also a prominent writer on modern art, his push/pull theory is a culmination of many of his ideas and describes the plasticity of three-dimensionality translated into two-dimensionality. Due to a dazzling burst of creative energy when he was close to 70 years old, his most highly recognizable canvases are from the late 1950's and 1960's, paintings of stacked, overlapping and floating rectangles and clear, saturated hues that assured his reputation and cemented him as a key member of the Abstract Expressionists.

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