



ARNE HIERSOUX (1938-1983)

Mem Sahib

Signed and dated lower right, "Hiersoux 62".

acrylic and paper on canvas

70 1/2 x 120 1/2 in. (71 x 121 5/8 x 2 in.)

1962

6793

For Arne Hiersoux, American Abstract Expressionist and “Action Painter” 1938- 1983, life itself was this space. Hiersoux brought this no holds-barred spirit of creativity to bear in both his artistic and entrepreneurial pursuits. The legacy he leaves behind chronicles both the artistic and business climates of this uniquely American period.

Born in West Virginia, in 1938, to a family of accomplished chamber musicians, Hiersoux learned the value of art and the discipline required of a true creative. For Arne, the complete integration of art and life meant that he committed as fully to his paintings as to his business ventures, always layering and circling back to create something new, inspiring and enduring. From the beginning, Arne was given permission to make a career in the arts. In his youth, the family made a trip to New Mexico. Arne was profoundly influenced by this landscape. The openness and endless sense of space, to him, meant unlimited possibility. The mysterious spirit of Native American’s way of life, so different from his own, captivated the young man’s soul. These influences led Arne to push the boundaries of man’s relationship to the physical and spiritual world, both in art and in business. Arne spoke occasionally of a premonition of a short life, which may have contributed to the underlying drive for his tireless energy. In a series of black and white paintings referencing Franz Kline, figures could be detected obliquely emerging through the expressionism of splashes and drips. The reference to “figures” appeared through out his work of the next few years. In 1962 at the Richmond Art Center, Arne exhibited a series of collages, using paper and acrylic on canvas. It was in show that he also began pushing the limits of size, with one painting stretching to eighteen feet. In the oil paintings shown in his one-man show at the Palace of the Legion of Honor, in 1963, the figures became more defined and appeared to be carrying a burden, or possibly forming wings. A subsequent show at Mills College, 1966, brought together his figures and their abstract worlds. At the same time the grand scale and unusual shapes of some of these works evoked questions about the relationship of the physical life of the paintings, and their environment.

Hiersoux was awarded an artist in residence fellowship in 1969 for the following year at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. The University was completing construction of the impressive Annenberg School for Communications. As part of the opening Arne was invited to exhibit in the lobby his expansive and euphoric Berkeley Park paintings. These paintings, impressive in their size, reflected his newfound love of flying – using poured paint, much like Pollock or Morris Louis.