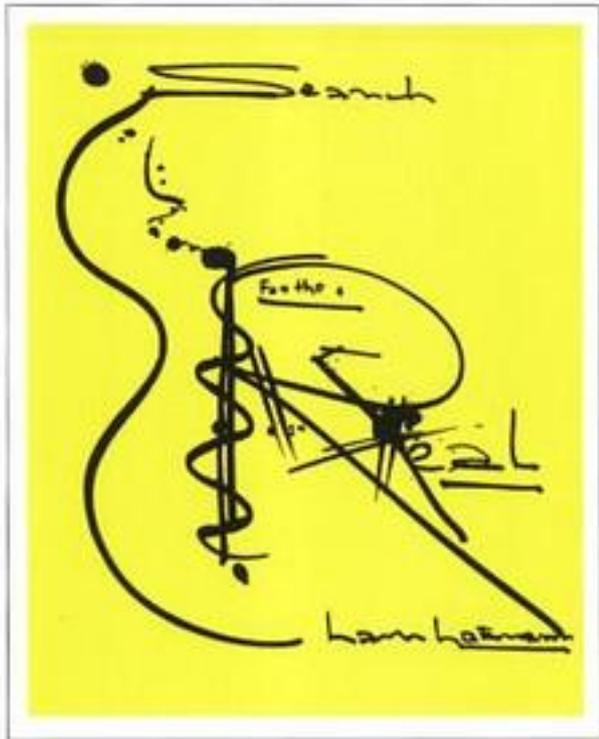


The Search for the Real and Other Essays

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Search for the Real Hans Hofmann

edited by Sara T. Weeks and Bartlett H. Hayes, Jr.

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"The creative process lies not in imitating, but in paralleling nature; translating the impulse received from nature into the medium of expression, thus vitalizing this medium. The picture should be alive, the statue should be alive and every work of art should be alive." Thus Hans Hofmann wrote nearly half a century ago. He left the Old World; Germany; for the New, at the age of 50. In 1948 when the retrospective exhibition was held at the Addison Gallery of American Art, Hofmann was 68; he had been in the United States for 18 years, a citizen for seven years. Yet he was scarcely recognized in Europe or America as an artist of significance and had never had a full-scale retrospective exhibition of his work. Beginning with a group exhibition in Germany in 1909, he had been given 12 one-man shows and had been included in four group exhibitions before the exhibit at Andover. Subsequently, he was to have 33 one-man shows and to be in over 60 group exhibitions, including the 1960 Venice Biennale, in which he was one of the four artists chosen to represent America. The catalogue of the 1948 retrospective at the Addison Gallery incorporated Hofmann's writings, all originally written in German, some pieces translated fluently, others awkwardly paraphrasing the original. He had written them over a period of 40 years for periodicals, journals, or his own teaching purposes; occasionally they overlapped; there was no sequence of development. In the original volume of *Search for the Real*, published in 1948, it was felt desirable to edit his writing as little as possible, nevertheless to present the essays in the most lucid English true to his meaning, printed only with his approval. "The Search for the Real in the Visual Arts," "Sculpture," and "Painting and Culture" were all printed in full. The section "Excerpts from the Teaching of Hans Hofmann" was composed of selections from his essays "On the Aims of Art," and "Plastic Creation." The last brief section, "Terms," was gleaned from the other essays, lectures, diagrams, notes, and cryptic memoranda written to himself; headed by one of Hoffman's diagrams. It was a further distillation of his own definitions in the nature of a vocabulary. In the last 18 years of his life recognition was his; nationally and internationally; in proportion to the originality and depth of his thinking, his versatility and comprehensiveness, his productivity and vigor. His was a prophetic visual expression of action in a three-dimensional world on a vibrating two-dimensional surface. He was a dynamic teacher; the wide range of his influence is to be seen in the list of artists comprising an exhibition "Hans Hofmann and His Students," circulated in America and abroad during the three years before his death in 1966. Among the 32 painters and sculptors in this exhibition were students as varied in their developed personal idioms as Helen Frankenthaler, Larry Rivers, Louise Nevelson, Richard Stankiewicz, and Alan Kaprow. Running simultaneously and also shown in South America and Europe as well as in the United States, a one-man show of 40 major works initiated by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, is a testimony to the words of the "dean of the New York School of Abstract-Expressionist Painting."

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