

Frederick Hammersley

Out of the Blue

11 May - 15 July 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 2022

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Seedling, 1967

Silk screen in artist-made frame
Framed: 17 1/8 x 15 1/4 in. (43.5 x 38.7 x 2.5 cm)

Top image:

Engagement, #13 1964

Oil on cardboard panel in artist-made frame
Framed: 25 1/2 x 29 3/4 x 1 in. (64.8 x 75.6 x 2.5 cm)

Venice, CA — L.A. Louver is pleased to present *Frederick Hammersley: Out of the Blue*, a survey exhibition of the artist's work from 1945 through the mid-1980s. The exhibition includes a wide range of medium: painting, drawing, collage, printmaking and photography, and a focus on hard-edge and organic abstraction. Drawn from six private collections, many of the works are being shown publicly for the first time.

Heralded as “one of the most sophisticated painters to emerge in post-war Los Angeles,” (Hunter Drohojowska-Philp) and his paintings “the best-kept secrets in the art world and easily the most ravishing... full of rigor and cosmopolitan wit,” (Dave Hickey), this exhibition encapsulates the rich diversity of Hammersley's creativity. *Berlin Street 1945*, photographed by the artist while stationed in Europe at the end of WWII, sets the stage with its graphic composition. Early hard-edge paintings, including the large-scale (49 x 37 inches) *Seed*, #16 1962, notable for its subtle palette, *Inside*, #8 1962, and the distilled essence of the diminutive (4 x 3 7/8 inches) *Clinch*, #10 1963, demonstrate Hammersley's sensitive eye and masterful use of color. As with all the artist's hard-edge works, Hammersley developed composition through careful planning: making notebook drawings and color test studies prior to the execution of each painting. In 1964, with a burst of creative activity, Hammersley moved away from hard-edge and towards intuitively derived abstractions. Five works represent this fertile year including *Engagement*, #13 and the eponymous *Out of the blue*, #15, both stunning examples of the artist's approach to organic composition. They are exhibited alongside two “cut-ups”: *A la carte*, #32c and *Quarter final*, #33c in which the artist took his own painted abstractions, literally cutting up the painted boards, and rearranging the segments to make fresh compositions. Hammersley's openness to materiality is also evidenced by the exhibition's inclusion of a rare collage titled *Small clatter*, 1964.

The 1970s were marked by a return to the geometric, energized by the artist's embrace of the early software program *Art I*. In 1968 Hammersley moved from Los Angeles to Albuquerque, New Mexico to teach at the university and there encountered the potential of its mainframe computer. Hammersley's series of computer drawings created over a fourteen-month period led to a more reductive palette and a decade of hard-edge works, such as *On & of*, #4 1972. However, the organics make an appearance once more in 1984 when Hammersley approached them in modest scale; four paintings represent the mid-1980s.



Quarter final, #33c 1964

oil on four cardboard panels in artist-made frame

Framed: 16 7/8 x 14 1/4 x 1 1/2 in. (42.9 x 36.2 x 3.8 cm)

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While making his abstractions, Hammersley continued to draw the figure and paint still-lives. This practice fed his eye with color, shape, form and texture; and the exhibition features several of these studies, including a remarkable single line self-portrait in ink. And irrespective of subject or medium Hammersley would consider each work complete only after he had given it a frame of his own making, and a title selected from a list he maintained of favorite words and sayings.

Born in Salt Lake City, Frederick Hammersley (1919 - 2009) studied at the Chouinard Art Institute, Los Angeles. In 1942, he was drafted into the army, and spent several formative years in Europe, before returning to the US in 1946 to resume his studies, subsidized by the GI Bill. Hammersley went on to teach (at Jepson, Pomona College, Pasadena Art Museum and Chouinard), and throughout the 1960s exhibited widely in California. Recognized by curators Jules Langsner and Lawrence Alloway, Hammersley was included in the landmark exhibition *Four Abstract Classicists*, which was seen at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; ICA, London, and Queens University Belfast. He went on to have solo shows at the Pasadena Art Museum, 1961; the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, 1962; and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1965 among others. In 1968, Hammersley accepted a teaching post at the University of New Mexico, and while he stayed at UNM for only three years, remained in Albuquerque for the rest of his life.

From the 1970s through the 1990s, Hammersley's presence on the national stage was rare. However, a traveling retrospective (Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe; University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque and the Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA) in 1999-2000 signaled renewed interest. Hammersley's participation in *Beau Monde: Toward a Redeemed Cosmopolitanism* at Site Santa Fe in 2002, curated by Dave Hickey, further augmented his reputation; a solo exhibition at Pomona College Museum of Art in 2007 received critical acclaim; and inclusion in *Pacific Standard Time: Crosscurrents in L.A. Paintings and Sculpture, 1950-1970*, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2011 (traveled) brought international attention. Among more recent exhibitions *Frederick Hammersley: To Paint without Thinking*, curated by James Glisson and Alan Phenix, was presented at The Huntington Library, Art Collection and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, CA and the New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe, 2017-2018. Public collections include Los Angeles Country Museum of Art, Santa Barbara Museum of Art and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA; Menil Collection, Houston, TX; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Museum of Contemporary Art, Buenos Aires; Centre National d'art at de culture Georges Pompidou, Paris; and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, among others.

Concurrently on view at Palm Springs Art Museum: *Frederick Hammersley: Selection of Works on Paper*, 20 January - 3 July 2022.

Concurrently on view at L.A. Louver: *Sculpture*, featuring the work of Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Edgard de Souza, Mark di Suvero, Toshikatsu Endo, Shirazeh Houshairy, Sui Jianguo, Ed Kienholz, John McCracken, David Nash, Olaf Nicolai, Ken Price, Alison Saar, and Peter Shelton.