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Frederick Hammersley: Paintings of the 1960s
October 15 - November 13, 2004
Opening reception: Friday, October 15, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Venice, CA – L.A. Louver is pleased to present the exhibition Paintings of the 1960s by Frederick Hammersley.

Hammersley first received critical attention in 1959 with his inclusion in the exhibition Four Abstract Classicists, curated by Jules Langsner, which was presented at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and traveled over three years, to the San Francisco Museum of Art; ICA, London, England; and Queen's University, Belfast, Ireland. This landmark exhibition placed Hammersley's work in the company of paintings by Karl Benjamin, Lorser Feitelson and John McLaughlin. It introduced the four artists and their paintings as the "hard-edge" movement, and marked the beginning of a particularly creative time for Hammersley during the decade that followed.

Through the 1960s, Hammersley developed his abstract paintings by exploring geometric shapes in a playful combination of color. Hammersley conceived his ideas as small sketches in a notebook, which he then translates into paintings, applying oil onto linen, canvas or wood using a palette knife. Through this process, he created a symmetrical framework within which he built and balanced positive and negative space in a variety of eye-catching visual inversions. The cool forms and apparent hard lines are counterbalanced by a sense of wit, whimsy and easy virtuosity. The forms are not intended to evoke specific shapes, but exist autonomously. Each work is completed when Hammersley finds a title that suits the piece – often a pun or double entendre – that Hammersley describes as a "wedge into the painting."

Born in Salt Lake City in 1919, Hammersley studied art in San Francisco, and later in Los Angeles at the Chouinard Art Institute. In 1942 he was drafted into the army, but returned 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 '60s exhibited widely in California, with solo shows at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1961; the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, and Occidental College, Los Angeles in 1962; and the La Jolla Museum of Art in 1963. In 1968, Hammersley accepted a teaching post at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, where he lives to this day. During the 1970s through the 1990s, Hammersley's presence in L.A. was rare. However, with the exhibition "I've Been Here All the While" at L.A. Louver (December 2, 1999 - January 8, 2000), coupled with a traveling retrospective at the Laguna Art Museum (January 22 - March 25, 2000), a diverse West Coast audience re-engaged with his work. Hammersley's inclusion in Beau Monde: Toward a Redeemed Cosmopolitanism (July 14, 2001 - January 6, 2002) at Site Santa Fe, curated by Dave Hickey, further augmented his reputation. Hammersley has more recently taken part in the Modern Art in L.A. symposium at the Getty, February 6, 2003, and has made an oral history of his life with writer Lawrence Weschler, which will enter the UCLA archives. Hammersley's paintings will also be included in the forthcoming exhibition The Los Angeles School of Painting: Karl Benjamin, Lorser Feitelson, Frederick Hammersley, June Harwood, Helen Lundeberg and John McLaughlin, November 13, 2004 - January 22, 2005 at The Ben Maltz Gallery at Otis College of Art + Design, curated by Dave Hickey.

For further information and visuals please contact Elizabeth East, telephone 310-822-4955; fax 310-821-7529; e-mail elizabeth@lalouver.com.

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