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Four Works by Six Different Artists



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## Carl Robert Holty (1900 – 1973)

Carl Holty was awakened to his interest in art as a child through visits to the Layton Art Gallery of Milwaukee, and began painting lessons with Friedrich Wilhelm Heine at a young age. Though born in Freiburg, Germany in 1900, he was raised in Wisconsin and enrolled at Marquette University. Before long, Holty abandoned his pre-medical studies in order to pursue art. He spent a summer at the School of the Chicago Art Institute in Saugatuck, Michigan, and set off for New York in 1920. He then studied at the National Academy of Design under Francis Coates Jones.

Holty continued his studies abroad, and at the recommendation of friend Vaclav Vytlacil enrolled at the Munich Academy with Hans Hofmann. Hofmann became a major influence, and encouraged Holty's life-long curiosity in abstraction. Holty moved to Paris in 1930, and became close to Piet Mondrian, whose work he greatly admired. He also was drawn to the flattened imagery explored by cubists Juan Gris and Roger de la Fresnaye. Robert Delaunay nominated him to become the second American member of the Abstraction-Creation artist group, following Alexander Calder.

Upon his return to New York in 1936, Holty became part of a group of modern artists that included Joan Miró, Edvard Munch, Gino Severini, and Brassai. Critic Harold Rosenberg championed his work, and Holty became a founding member of the American Abstract Artists group, serving as their second chairman. He also lectured widely, with numerous artist-in-residence positions. At the American Artists' School in New York, Ad Reinhardt was among his students. He became a Professor Emeritus at Brooklyn College, after entering the art department there in 1964. His talents also extended to the written word, completing a brief memoir of Mondrian and discussions of painterly creativity. Together with Romare Bearden he published "The Painter's Mind."

Holty exhibited consistently until his death in 1973, including numerous showings at the Whitney Museum of American Art. His work underwent many stylistic shifts over the years, though he maintained a vibrant and arresting color palette. In the 1940s he became more interested in biomorphic shapes, transforming his compositional approach to a more visually rhythmic style. His abstract creations maintained references and sometimes titles which alluded to the natural world. With his many experimentations and shifts in technique, Holty demonstrated a belief in the pliability of modern art to suit many types of visual expression.

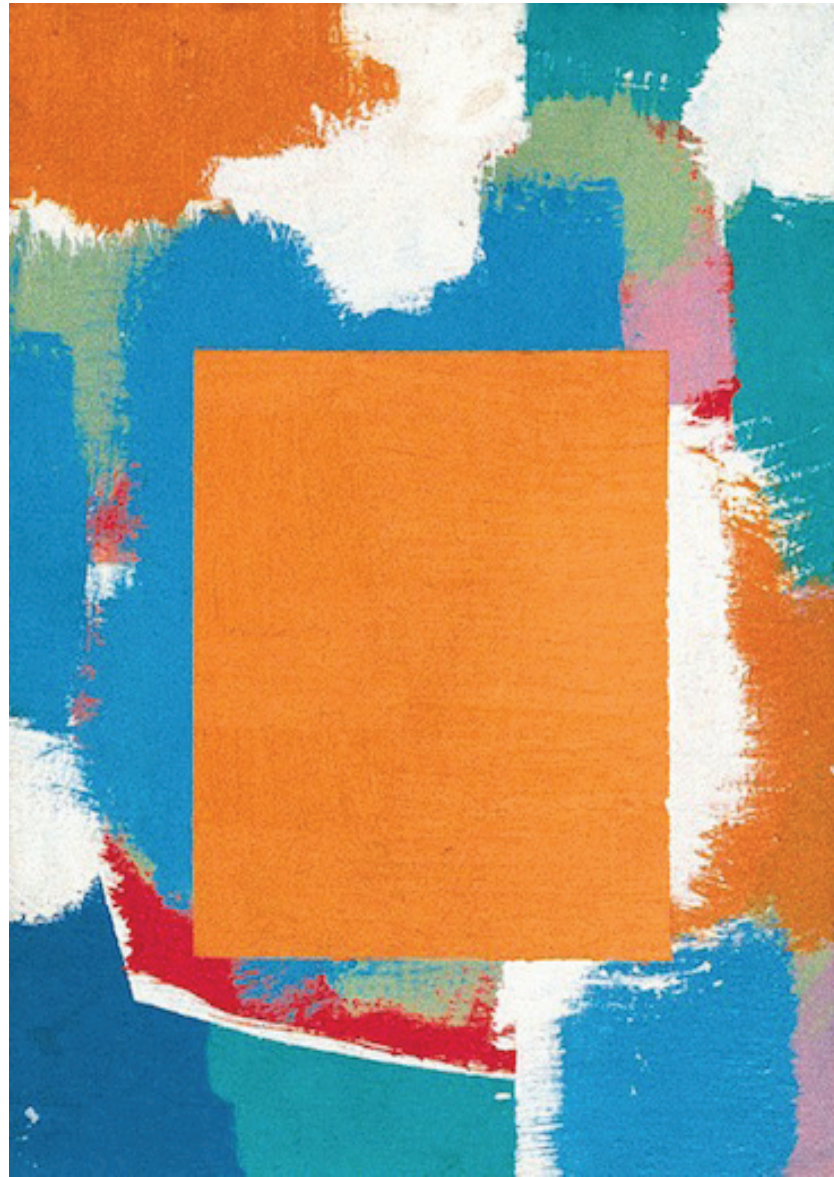


**Carl Holty**  
*Female Bather by the Sea* (1935)  
 Oil on masonite, 11" x 14"



**Carl Holty**  
*Untitled/Tree in Landscape* (c.1947)  
 Oil on canvas, 20" x 24"





**Carl Holty**  
*Untitled Expressionist Abstraction* (c.1960)  
 Oil on canvas, 12" x 9"



**Carl Holty**  
*Untitled Abstraction* (c.1955)  
 Oil on canvas, 18" x 24"



## Vaclav Vytlacil (1892 – 1984)

It was apparent from an early age that Vaclav Vytlacil had an extremely artistic bent. Born in 1892 to Czechoslovakian parents in New York, Vytlacil and his family moved to Chicago while he was still a very young child. At the age of twenty-one he received a scholarship to study art at the Art Students League in New York. There, under the tutelage of the famous portraitist John C. Johansen, Vytlacil learned to paint as an Impressionist. After graduation, Vytlacil returned to the Midwest to join the faculty of the Minneapolis School of Art.

By 1921 he had saved enough of his earnings to travel to Europe to study the works of Cezanne and other artists. Eventually he enrolled at the Royal Academy of Art in Munich, Germany. When fellow classmate Ernest Thurn withdrew from the Academy in order to enroll at Hans Hofmann's school, Vytlacil soon followed suit. In Hans Hofmann, Vytlacil found a cutting-edge, exciting instructor as well as a friend. Vytlacil and Thurn went on to organize Hofmann's summer school on the island of Capri. They became influential advocates of Hoffman's modernist teaching which promoted drawing as the basis of painting, followed by the application of color to influence spacial relationships.

Many critics agree that Vytlacil's work contained elements of an emerging modernism prior to the time he spent in Europe. His use of color allowed his representations of space to become both compressed and balanced. His landscapes and cityscapes in the 1930s show the influence of Cubists principles of space. Vytlacil joined these principles with the abstract expressionist approach to line and color. He was a founding member of the American Abstract Artists Group.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Vytlacil moved away from the structure of form and focused on how to portray the energy of his subjects. Whether landscape, still life, or human figure, Vytlacil's work at this point became more expansive than his previous paintings.

In conjunction with his artistic career Vytlacil was an influential teacher at many institutions including the University of Berkeley, the Arts Student League, Queens College, Black Mountain College, and The College of Arts and Crafts. In the final portion of his teaching career he returned to the Art Student League where he worked until his retirement in 1978. He passed away at the age of 91 and his daughter Anne donated his home and studio to the Art Student League. The League has used the space to establish the Vytlacil School of Painting and Sculpture.





**Vaclav Vytlacil**  
*Abstraction* (1938)  
 Tempera and gouache on board, 4 3/4" x 5"



**Vaclav Vytlacil**  
*Untitled Abstraction* (1938)  
 Casein tempera on board 18" x 24"





**Vaclav Vytlačil**  
*City Scene with Faces* (1932)  
 Casein tempera on canvas, 20" x 24"



**Vaclav Vytlačil**  
*Still Life II* (1946)  
 Tempera on paper, 9" x 11 1/2"





## John Von Wicht (1888 – 1970)

Johannes Von Wicht was born in Germany and began studying with the artist Gerhard Bakenhus when he was still in elementary school. He continued to study art at the Royal School of Fine & Applied Arts in Berlin, where he was very influenced by the avant-garde art scene. During his service in WWI he was wounded and partially paralyzed; while recovering he worked on book designs and illustrations. He immigrated to the US in 1923 and found work at the US Printing and Lithography Company.

Von Wicht's first attempt at abstraction came in 1937 when he created his "Force" series, which commemorated Juliana Force, the first director of the Whitney Museum of American Art. This group of paintings was clearly influenced by Kandinsky's geometrical abstractions. By 1950 Von Wicht was painting full-time and able to explore his personal expression of abstraction as a mature artist, returning to drawing in order to solve problems of content and composition. Far Eastern calligraphy was a major influence for Von Wicht, moving his works into a more vertical format.

As he became more established as an abstract artist, Von Wicht began to experiment with a variety of themes. In the mid 1950s he created a series of musical symphonies using elements of abstraction to provide a spiritual analysis of the music itself. He created innovative works on rice paper while spending a winter at the McDowell Colony, an artist-in-residence program in New Hampshire. He attempted automatic sketching as a direct translation of inner movement to find equilibrium within his work.

After his first European show in Paris in 1959 he went on to have other shows in Brussels, Liege, and Belgium. When he returned to the US he worked on several large canvases which gave a feeling of immense freedom through various concentrations of color.

During the last years of his life Von Wicht worked on compositions with themes of the four seasons. These pieces were quite similar to the impressionist's technique of observing different light and form under various circumstances and times of day. The decisive geometric elements that were hallmarks of his earlier work shifted as he matured. Von Wicht's later pieces touched on the spiritual and natural realms of being, using color to reach viewers emotions directly though pure form. Von Wicht died of pneumonia on January 20th, 1970 in Brooklyn and was remembered by those who knew him as an "artist's artist."



**John Von Wicht**  
*Conflict* (1941)  
 Gouache on paper, 20" x 12"



**John Von Wicht**  
*Harbor Abstraction* (c.1955)  
 Gouache and watercolor on paper, 25" x 37"





**John Von Wicht**  
*Harbor Abstraction* (1956)  
 Gouache and watercolor on paper, 24" x 34 1/2"



**John Von Wicht**  
*Red's Moving* (c.1955-60)  
 Oil on canvas, 24" x 32"



## Ed Garman (1914 – 2004)

**S**outhwestern American abstract painter Ed Garman was well-known for his unique style of dynamic painting and his association with the Transcendental Painting Group. Garman dedicated his life to the study and production of abstract painting. As a part of the Transcendental Painting Group, Garman sought to produce apolitical, non-representational paintings. In depth study of Cubist, Post-Impressionist, and Bauhaus as well as Platonic theory led Garman to an increasingly reductive approach to painting across his lifetime. He worked to create paintings that he believed would not only achieve a type of spiritual beauty, but would provide the basis for an emotional exchange between viewer and painting.

He was born on July 4, 1914 in Bridgeport, Connecticut and raised in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania. After relocating to the Southwest to attend the University of New Mexico, he began to develop an interest in abstraction and structural forms. In 1938 Garman married fellow student Coreva Hanford. Hanford, a philosophy major, introduced him to Platonic philosophy which greatly influenced his abstract approach to painting.

Raymond Jonson became Garman's mentor, and encouraged him to explore the potential for spiritual beauty in abstraction, a major tenet of the Transcendental Painting Group. Garman later became Jonson's biographer, publishing *The Art of Raymond Jonson, Painter*. The Transcendental Painting Group's radical approach to abstraction was influenced in part by the theories and paintings of two of Garman's favorite artists, Kandinsky and Mondrian, as well as a range of philosophical and occult teachings such as Theosophy, Zen Buddhism, and Dynamic Symmetry. Their approach to art—which emphasized abstract elements such as form, color, line, and shape over representation—remained brazenly at odds with New Mexico's popular realist style of the era.

The Transcendental Painting Group was forced to discontinue because of World War II and Garman put his artistic ambitions on hold. He was drafted into the United States Navy and relocated first to San Diego to train and later to San Francisco and served from 1943 to 1945. In the Navy he found little time to pick up a paintbrush, but was able to sustain his love of painting and develop his abstract ideologies through occasional trips to museums. Garman's experiences resulted in his theory of "dynamic painting," which argued that painted representations of movement and stillness could evoke compassionate responses.

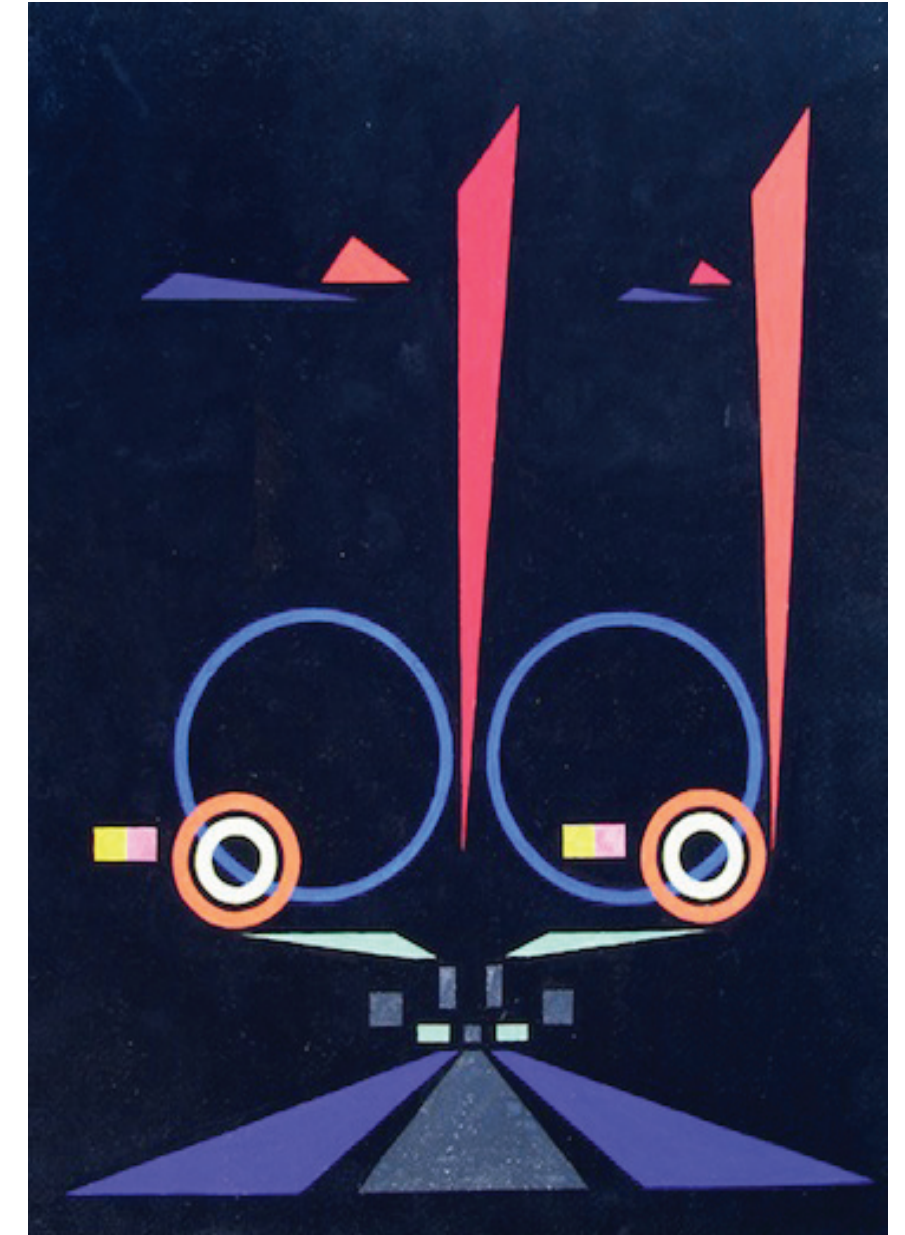
Garman continued painting until his death in 2004. His vision and purpose, to create connections between his artwork and his audience, never altered.





**Ed Garman**  
*No. 382* (1947)  
 Gouache and watercolor on paper, 24" x 24"

**Ed Garman**  
*Invention - Study for Dynamic Synthesis*  
 Gouache and watercolor on paper, 20" x 15"





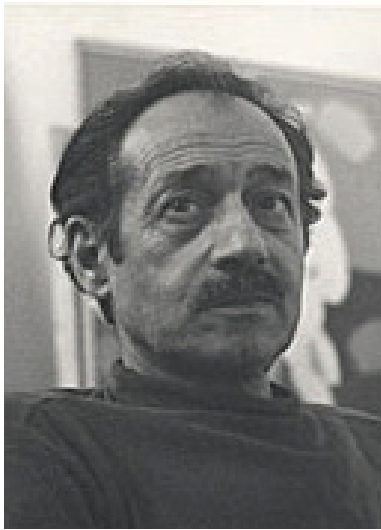


**Ed Garman**  
*Chromatic Accents* (c.1942-43)  
 Oil on masonite, 36" x 36"



**Ed Garman**  
 #243 (1946)  
 Gouache and watercolor on paper, 14 1/2" x 18"





## Gregorio Prestopino (1907 – 1984)

**B**orn in Little Italy in 1907, Gregorio Prestopino first set out to become a sign painter as the son of New York City immigrants. Instead, his talent provided a life-changing scholarship to the National Academy of Design, and for five years he studied drawing under C. W. Hawthorne. He spent the summer of 1934 at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire. His deep involvement with the Colony led him to later serve as its director in 1954.

Much of Prestopino's work was in the vein of social realism. During the 1940s and 1950s he became invested in portraying everyday Manhattan and Harlem scenes. His lively treatment of people and events revealed his affinity for sixteenth-century artist Pieter Breughel. Later in his career he produced unique and dynamic landscapes and portraits, while investigating the relationship between color and form.

Prestopino exhibited at several biennials at the Corcoran Gallery, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Museum of Modern Art. He was awarded a National Institute of Arts and Letter Grant in 1961, and in 1972 the National Academy of Design awarded him the Altman Figure Painting Award.

His artistic caché skyrocketed when Life magazine published his images from New York's maximum-security institution Green Haven as part of its "Prison Series" in 1957. That same year his paintings and sketches of urban life were featured in the short film *Harlem Wednesday*. Directed by John and Faith Hubley, the film included a jazz score from Benny Carter, and was the only prize-winning American entry to that year's Venice Film Festival.

Prestopino continued to pursue a long and vibrant art career until his death in 1984. He undertook teaching stints at the Brooklyn Museum School from 1946 to 1951, and at the New School for Social Research from 1950 to 1967. He additionally taught at the University of Roosevelt, the Philadelphia Museum School of Art, and as an artist-in-residence at Michigan State University.



**Gregorio Prestopino**  
*The Junkman's Serenade* (c.1935)  
 Oil on canvas, 36" x 26"



**Gregorio Prestopino**  
*The Happy Farmer* (c.1935-40)  
 Oil on canvas, 26" x 38"

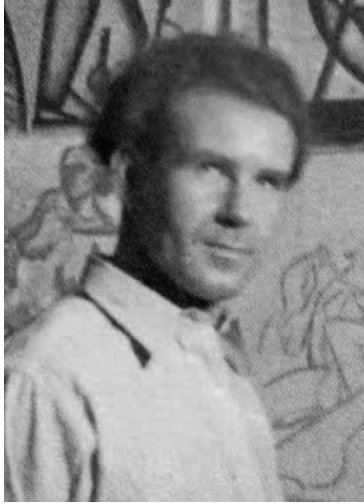




**Gregorio Prestopino**  
*Farmers & Tractors* (c.1945)  
Gouache on paper, 14" x 12"



**Gregorio Prestopino**  
*Peonies in Rural Landscape* (c.1945)  
Gouache on paper, 20" x 14"



## Hans Burkhardt (1904 – 1994)

**H**ans Gustov Burkhardt's art embodies a sensitivity to the human condition, especially in relation to wars. Born in Switzerland he and his siblings ended up in an orphanage, where they experienced the exhausting hardships of World War I. Eventually he joined his father and stepmother in America. Though he lacked any formal education, he studied art at the Cooper Union, where he excelled to the point that his professors felt there was nothing more they could teach him. In 1928 he enrolled at the Grand Central School of Arts where he met, studied with, and began a life-changing friendship with Arshile Gorky.

Throughout the Depression, Burkhardt supported himself working at a furniture factory. After a messy and financially-draining divorce he moved to California where he again worked as a cabinetmaker until he was drafted for WWII. After the war he continued his painting and his work often took on anti-war themes. During this period he also began showing his paintings at galleries, and was included in the 1945 Los Angeles County Museum's annual exhibition.

Burkhardt briefly moved to Mexico where his canvases focused on abstract images of cathedrals. Mexico's cultural views on life, religion, and death were an

inspiration to him. Upon his return to the US he was shocked to learn about the suicide of his former mentor Archile Gorky. This loss inspired Burkhardt to produce some of his most haunting artworks. The variations, entitled *Burial of Gorky*, were later shown at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Though he never attended college himself, Burkhardt began teaching at the University at Long Beach in 1958 on the recommendation of a friend. He went on to hold several teaching positions at various institutions, including UCLA, University of Southern California, Otis College of Art and Design, San Fernando Valley State College, California Institute of the Arts, and California State University at Northridge.

By the 1980s, Burkhardt's work had reached its full potential, turning from images of imbalance to tragedy. As the post-painterly Abstract Expressionist artists sought to expel tragedy, Burkhardt embraced it. In 1992 he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. His willingness to delve into the depths of human tragedy produced beauty and understanding unparalleled in Post-Modern art. He painted until the end of his life, continuing to address issues surrounding war and the human experience.





**Hans Burkhardt**  
*Ballerinas* (1949)  
 Oil on canvas, 26" x 20"



**Hans Burkhardt**  
*Fasnacht* (1954)  
 Oil on canvas, 20" x 24"





**Hans Burkhardt**  
*Still-Life* (1939)  
 Oil on canvas, 27" x 16"



**Hans Burkhardt**  
*Girl with Cat* (1935)  
 Oil on canvas, 38" x 26"





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