

NEWS RELEASE
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**USF Contemporary Art Museum
Presents a New Exhibition**

***The Lyrical Moment:
Modern and Contemporary Abstraction by
Helen Frankenthaler and Heather Gwen
Martin***
June 17 – July 30, 2022

(TAMPA, FL – MAY 31, 2022) The USF Contemporary Art Museum, part of the Institute for Research in Art in the USF College of The Arts, presents ***The Lyrical Moment: Modern and Contemporary Abstraction by Helen Frankenthaler and Heather Gwen Martin***. Taking as a starting point a substantial award by the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, the USF Contemporary Art Museum has organized an exhibition that features elegant, hand-processed prints by pioneering artist **Helen Frankenthaler** and digitally-informed, pop-inflected canvases and gouaches by Los Angeles painter **Heather Gwen Martin**. Born of the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation's substantial gift of prints as part of their Frankenthaler Prints Initiative for university-affiliated museums, the exhibition brings together outstanding works on paper by a modern master with lyrical paintings by an accomplished contemporary artist whose colorful efforts invoke computational algorithms and twenty-first century screen culture.

Helen Frankenthaler (1928-2011), whose career spanned six decades, has long been recognized as one of the great American artists of the twentieth century. She was eminent among the second generation of postwar American abstract painters and is widely credited for playing a pivotal role in the transition from Abstract Expressionism to Color Field painting. Through her invention of the soak-stain technique, she expanded the possibilities of abstract painting, while at times referencing figuration and landscape in unique ways. She produced a body of work whose impact on contemporary art has been profound and continues to grow.

Frankenthaler experimented tirelessly throughout her long career. In addition to producing unique paintings on canvas and paper, she worked in a wide range of media, including ceramics, sculpture, tapestry, and especially printmaking. Hers was a significant voice in the mid-century "print renaissance" among American abstract painters. The generous gift to USFCAM of ten print editions and eight working proofs from the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation offers a simultaneously focused and broad window on her practice across a variety of print techniques and collaborations spanning the decades of her long career.



Helen Frankenthaler, *Untitled*, 1967. Screenprint, 25-3/4 x 17-7/8 in. Edition 86/100. © Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / Chiron Press, New York. Photography by Will Lytch.

For more than a decade, L.A.-based artist **Heather Gwen Martin (1977)** has been creating paintings that walk a tightrope between improvisation and deliberation, dissolution, and structure. While a full-time student at the University of California San Diego—where she studied with Pattern and Decoration pioneer Kim McConnell— Martin worked as a colorist for DC comics, adding color onto scenes and characters using computer technology. The experience had an unintended but profound effect on her painting.

Today, Martin’s canvases resemble splash pages for certain copyrighted film or screen-based entertainments. Nonetheless her vividly colored abstractions remain one hundred percent handmade, containing no high-tech aides or digital fillers. Denuded of figures, captions and word balloons, her sprightly landscapes distill reflection and sensation into loops of sinuous line and flat areas of color. While some canvases superficially resemble the livelier aspects of swipe-and-like looking—rounded emoji-like shapes and abrupt transitions between bright areas of color—they impress sensorially, like the taste of underripe fruit or a sharp intake of cold breath.



Heather Gwen Martin, *Fever Dream*, 2021. oil on linen, 60 x 56 in. © Heather Gwen Martin. Courtesy of L.A. Louver, Los Angeles and Miles McEnery Gallery, New York. Photography by Jeff McLane.

The Lyrical Moment is curated by Christian Viveros-Fauné, CAM Curator-at-Large; and organized by the USF Contemporary Art Museum. The exhibition is sponsored in part by the Gobioff Foundation; and the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture; and made possible by the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation’s generous gift to the USF Art Collection.

RELATED EVENTS

Friday, June 17, 2022

***The Lyrical Moment* Gallery Conversation + Opening Reception**

6:30pm – 9:00pm, USF Contemporary Art Museum

Join us to celebrate the opening of CAM’s summer exhibition, *The Lyrical Moment: Modern and Contemporary Abstraction* by Helen Frankenthaler and Heather Gwen Martin. At 6:30pm, USFCAM Curator-at-Large Christian Viveros-Fauné and exhibiting artist Heather Gwen Martin will tour visitors through the galleries while leading a conversation about the exhibition. An opening reception follows until 9:00pm. This event is free and open to the public.

Thursday, July 7, 2022

Art Thursday: Concert in the Galleries - *The Lyrical Moment*

7:00pm – 9:00pm, USF Contemporary Art Museum

Please join us for a Concert in the Galleries with USF School of Music students, alumni, and faculty joining forces with CAM to musically interpret ***The Lyrical Moment***, artworks by Helen Frankenthaler and Heather Gwen Martin. Featuring performances and compositions chosen in response to the artwork and contributions of these pioneering women, including the premiere of Stella Sung’s *Suite Ancienne* for flute, oboe, and bassoon. This event is free and open to the public.

Thursday, July 28, 2022

Art Thursday: Student Led Tour

10:00am – 11:30am, USF Contemporary Art Museum

Join us at CAM for a gallery tour of *The Lyrical Moment* led by USF student docents.

EXHIBITION WORKBOOK

A full color, 56-page workbook is available to exhibition visitors without cost, and includes essays by Shannon Annis, Curator of the Collection/Exhibitions Manager; Christian Viveros-Fauné, Curator-at-Large; and Ruth Fine, curator, lecturer and writer formerly with the National Gallery of Art.

ABOUT THE HELEN FRANKENTHALER FOUNDATION

Established and endowed by Helen Frankenthaler during her lifetime, the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation advances the artist's legacy and inspires a new generation of practitioners through a range of philanthropic, educational, and research initiatives. Since becoming active in 2013, the Foundation has continued to strategically expand its program, which includes organizing and supporting significant exhibitions of the artist's work, fostering new research and publications, and advancing educational initiatives in partnership with arts organizations around the world. As a primary resource on the artist, and a steward of her collection and archive, the Foundation holds an extensive selection of Frankenthaler's work in a variety of mediums, her collection of works by other artists, and original papers and materials pertaining to her life and work.

ABOUT USF CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM

USF Contemporary Art Museum (USFCAM) organizes and presents significant and investigative exhibitions of contemporary art from Florida, the United States and around the world. Serving as a teaching laboratory, USFCAM's curatorial and socially engaged initiatives and educational programs are designed to present the students, faculty, and community with current issues of contemporary art practice, and to explore the role of the arts in society. USFCAM publishes relevant catalogues, presents critically recognized traveling exhibitions and commissions new projects by national and international artists. USFCAM maintains the university's art collection, comprising more than 5000 contemporary art works.

CAM Hours: Monday-Friday 10am-5pm; Thursday 10am-8pm; Saturday 1-4pm; Closed Sundays and University Holidays (June 20, June 28, July 4); Special Hours June 17th 6:30-9pm. **Admission:** All events are free and open to the public.



Helen Frankenthaler Foundation



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