

IN PERSPECTIVE

Art-world news and market updates, exhibitions and events.

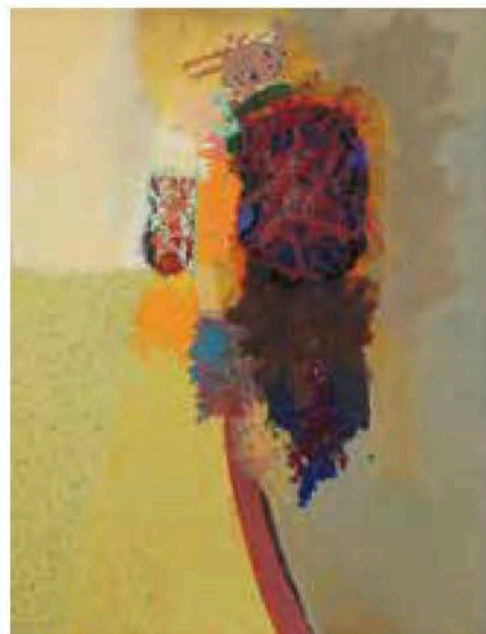
An Expansive Vision

JOHN FERREN'S reach was wide-ranging. The painter was a founding member and president of "The Club," the lifeblood of the emerging New York School and the Abstract-Expressionist movement of the 1940s. But he was also one of the only members of the New York School who had been a fixture in the Parisian avant-garde and Gertrude



Stein's inner circle throughout the 1930s. His connections extended to the California art scene and even Hollywood film productions, as well as to East Hampton and its thriving community of influential artists.

Born in 1905 on the Blackfoot Indian Reserve in Pendleton, Ore., Ferren was part of a military family that moved frequently. They settled in San Francisco in 1911. There, he briefly attended the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute) and apprenticed as a stonecutter, producing portrait busts. Traveling to Paris in the late



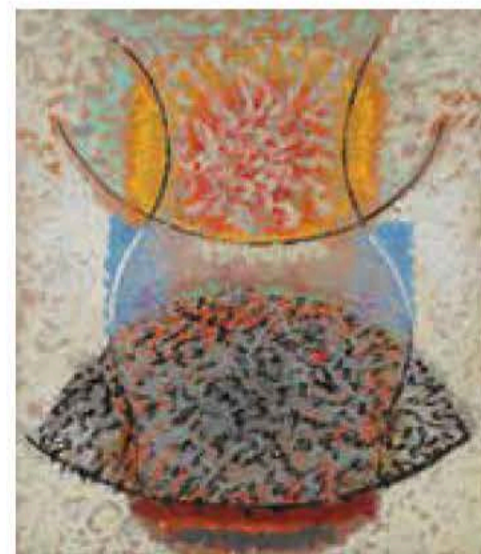
1920s, he attended classes at the Sorbonne and Académie Ranson and began publishing influential articles on abstraction and art theory. He fell in with the Parisian avant-garde, which included an international coterie of artists like Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Henri Matisse, Joan Miró, Piet Mondrian, Alberto Giacometti, Hans Hofmann, and Pablo Picasso (legend has it that Ferren helped Picasso stretch the canvas for *Guernica* in 1937).

Ferren moved to New York in 1938 and became involved with the founding of "The Club" and the emergence of Ab-Ex. He began teaching in the late 1940s at Coo-



per Union and the Brooklyn Museum Art School and went on to hold positions at Queens College and UCLA, among other institutions.

While maintaining a hearty painting practice, Ferren collaborated with Alfred Hitchcock in the 1950s (he created, among other things, the pivotal *Portrait of Carlotta* for 1958's *Vertigo*) and traveled to Beirut as the first U.S. State Department Artist-in-Residence in 1963–64. In the late 1950s, he and Willem de Kooning purchased land from sculptor Wilfred Zogbaum in



East Hampton, and after his return from Beirut, he split his time between the artistic enclave and his Spring Street studio in New York City.

On October 4, Findlay Galleries opens "John Ferren: From Paris to Springs" in its New York location. The show is the artist's first solo exhibition in more than a decade and concentrates on his "Vase paintings" of the 1950s and grounded abstractions of the 1960s.

The former group, which



uses the curvilinear forms of vases as structures for abstract and technical exploration, prompted Elaine de Kooning to accuse Ferren of "betraying" Ab-Ex. These works, like the sublime and pulsating *The Vase* (1956, oil on canvas), are hardly works of treachery but rather expansive examinations of style, line, and color. Ferren's facility with dynamic color and explosive line and form are exemplified by other works in the show like *Dog Walker* (1958, oil on canvas) and *Blue Season* (1961, oil on canvas). *Sand Picture*, a 1950 painting that employs geometric forms and subtle textures, points to Ferren's time in 1930s Europe, while the lively, eruptive line work of *A Rose for Rae* (1962, oil on canvas) showcases the artist's Ab-Ex roots.

