

ART

Helen Frankenthaler

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With sweeping abstract vistas that recall the roar of waterfalls and crashing waves, as well as silent deserts, the canvases of **Helen Frankenthaler**, a titan of postwar American painting, seem even bigger than they are. The twelve works on view in “Drawing Within Nature: Paintings from the 1990s,” at Gagosian through April 15, were created some forty years after the artist’s consequential innovation: the soak-stain technique, which bridged Abstract Expressionism and color-field painting. The show proves that Frankenthaler, who died in 2011, at the age of eighty-three, was still at the height of her powers in her sixties—a mercurial colorist moving between pours and the palette knife, translucent washes and clotted impasto. The oceanic drama of the eight-foot-wide “Poseidon,” from 1990, is achieved with layered pools of thinned-out acrylic color in aqua and fog. A flat brush loaded with orange has been dragged across the surface, leaving a fiery trail. A similar line appears in the panoramic “Western Roadmap” (pictured above), from 1991, but it reads more like a dusky horizon, with purplish storm clouds looming over a near-empty expanse. By contrast, in two other pieces from 1991, the fantastic “Reef” and “Spellbound,” wild atmospherics emerge from black backgrounds.

—*Johanna Fateman*

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