

PRESS RELEASE



Cool Summer, 1962, oil on canvas, 69 3/4 x 120 inches (177.2 x 304.8 cm). Collection: Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, New York.
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Provincetown Art Association and Museum Presents *Abstract Climates: Helen Frankenthaler in Provincetown*

July 6–September 2, 2018

Provincetown, MA – This summer, Provincetown Art Association and Museum (PAAM) presents *Abstract Climates: Helen Frankenthaler in Provincetown*, an exhibition of paintings by one of the most influential abstract artists of her time. The focus of the exhibition—one of the largest in PAAM’s history—is the work Helen Frankenthaler (1928–2011) created in Provincetown between 1950 and 1969, offering a new perspective on this aspect of her oeuvre.

Curated by Lise Motherwell, a stepdaughter of the artist and PAAM Board President, and Elizabeth Smith, Founding Executive Director of the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation (HFF), the exhibition is on view from July 6 through September 2, 2018.

PAAM Executive Director Christine McCarthy states, “A major part of PAAM’s mission is to bring works created in Provincetown back to where they were made, and to identify the threads that link the artists who made them with America’s oldest continuous art colony. This significant body of Frankenthaler’s work represents an important period in American art history, and we are thrilled to be working with the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation and museum collections from around the country to make the exhibition a reality.”

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

In 1950, at the encouragement of art critic Clement Greenberg, Helen Frankenthaler studied briefly in Provincetown with Hans Hofmann. Following her marriage to Robert Motherwell in 1958, she spent more than a decade of summers living and working there. *Abstract Climates: Helen Frankenthaler in Provincetown* presents key examples of Frankenthaler's work, beginning with those made in that first summer at Hofmann's studio school, but focusing on the period from the late 1950s through 1969, shortly before her marriage to Motherwell ended.

The exhibition includes intimately scaled works Frankenthaler made while studying with Hofmann and large canvases that reference the sea and landscape of Provincetown, painted in her various studios there. It also features photographs, letters, and memorabilia that shed light on the artist's process, with an emphasis on the meaning of the place and its impact on her development as a painter.

Lise Motherwell and Elizabeth Smith added, "We are extremely pleased to bring work Helen Frankenthaler created during her Provincetown summers to PAAM. Provincetown's relaxed atmosphere and extraordinary landscape provided a place to enjoy family and friends and the time and space to move her experimental painting practice in new directions. The works and archival materials we have brought together reveal how Frankenthaler's Provincetown summers stimulated her artistic creativity and influenced her developing style."

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with a foreword by Christine McCarthy; essays by the exhibition's curators, Lise Motherwell and Elizabeth Smith; art historian Daniel Belasco; and Alicia Longwell, Chief Curator, and Terrie Sultan, Director, Parrish Art Museum. Also included is a chronology of Helen Frankenthaler's years in Provincetown. Published by PAAM, the catalogue will be distributed by Yale University Press.

An expanded version of the exhibition will travel to the Parrish Art Museum, in Water Mill, New York, where it will be on view from August 4–October 27, 2019.

ABOUT HELEN FRANKENTHALER

Helen Frankenthaler 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. Her work is represented in museum collections worldwide and has been the subject of numerous national and international exhibitions and substantial publications.

ABOUT THE CURATORS

Lise Motherwell is a retired psychologist who had a clinical practice for more than 25 years. She is President of the Board of PAAM, Vice President of the Board of the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, and immediate Past-Chair of the Board of the Northeastern Society for Group Psychotherapy Foundation. A daughter of Robert Motherwell and a step-daughter of Helen Frankenthaler, she recently co-curated an exhibition for PAAM entitled *Motherwell: Beside the Sea*, and has written articles and essays on various artists.

Elizabeth Smith, Founding Executive Director of the New York-based Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, is an art historian, curator, author, and educator. She formerly held curatorial positions at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Throughout her career, she has organized exhibitions, published, taught, and lectured widely in the visual arts and architecture.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Slated for July and August, PAAM will present a series of public programs in conjunction with the exhibition. These will include gallery talks and lectures by scholars of Frankenthaler's work and others who knew her. The series will be launched on July 7, at 3pm, with a lecture titled *Helen and High Water*, by John Elderfield, Chief Curator Emeritus of Painting and Sculpture of The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Distinguished Curator and Lecturer at the Princeton University Art Museum; and Consultant for Special Exhibitions at Gagosian Gallery.

Other speakers will include Phyllis Tuchman, independent curator, scholar, and art critic: *Helen Frankenthaler: From the Heart*, July 14, 3pm; Mary Gabriel, author of *Ninth Street Women: Lee Krasner, Elaine de Kooning, Grace Hartigan, Joan Mitchell, and Helen Frankenthaler, Five Painters and the Movement That Changed Modern Art*, to be published by Little, Brown and Company in September 2018, July 17, 6pm; Lise Motherwell, exhibition co-curator: *Frankenthaler in Context*, July 31, 6pm; and Avis Berman, writer, curator, and historian of American art, architecture, and culture: *Helen Frankenthaler: Voices from the Archives*, August 11, 2pm.

Also featured will be a screening of the 1978 Perry Miller Adato film, *Toward a New Climate*, first broadcast as part of the WNET Channel Thirteen series, *The Originals: Women in Art* (date to be determined); and a free opening reception on Friday, July 6, at 8pm.

ABOUT THE HELEN FRANKENTHALER FOUNDATION

The Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, established and endowed by the artist during her lifetime, became active in 2013, on the closing of Frankenthaler's estate. The Foundation is dedicated to promoting greater public interest in and understanding of the visual arts. It supports the artist's legacy through a variety of initiatives, including exhibitions, loans of artworks, research and publications, conservation, grants, educational programs for the public and the scholarly community, and the publishing of a catalogue raisonné. As the principal beneficiary of Frankenthaler's estate, its holdings include an extensive selection of her work in a variety of mediums, her collection of works by other artists, and original papers and materials pertaining to her life and work. For additional information: www.frankenthalerfoundation.org.

ABOUT PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM

Provincetown Art Association and Museum was established in 1914 by a group of artists and townspeople to build a permanent collection of works by artists of outer Cape Cod, and to exhibit art that would allow for unification within the community. Through a comprehensive schedule of exhibitions of local and national significance and educational outreach, PAAM provides the public access to art, artists, and the creative process.

The PAAM Membership is a vibrant community of over 1,800 individuals. Whether you're an artist or you simply love the arts, a PAAM Membership opens the door to programs and events that enrich and inspire.

PAAM, located at 460 Commercial Street, is open October–May, 12 to 5pm, Thursday–Sunday, and also by appointment; and daily at 11am, June 1–September 30. General admission, \$10. Free to members and children 12 and under. For more information, please call 508.487.1750 or visit www.paam.org.

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For additional press information about PAAM or the exhibition,
please contact Annie Longley, alongley@paam.org.

For press information about Helen Frankenthaler or the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation,
please contact Jeanne Collins, press@frankenthalerfoundation.org.