

# fall arts FESTIVAL

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JH Muse gallery  
62 S. Glenwood  
733-0555

## Evocative nature

Contemporary gallery hosts influential quartet



Four of the most influential artists of the 20th century will hang at JH Muse gallery, including Helen Frankenthaler who painted *Untitled 1999*.

In Jackson, we recognize nature's profundity – we live here to be immersed in it. Evoking this consciousness, a landmark show at JH Muse Gallery considers the nature assimilations of four of the most influential artists of the 20th century.

Influences of Nature on Abstraction features 15 works on paper by Milton Avery, Richard Diebenkorn, Helen Frankenthaler and Joan Mitchell. Fit for a museum, it instead formed for a six-week run through Oct. 14 at JH Muse Gallery.

"These are some of the most influential artists in the abstract expressionist movement," said Tayloe Piggott, JH Muse owner.

Their works rarely surface on the contemporary art market. Therefore, despite the recession, they retain, even appreciate, in value, she said.

A curatorial coup debuting these artists' works in Jackson, the show is the result of a unique collaboration: art consultant Camille Obering of Camille Obering Art Advisory worked with Piggott to organize and curate the show.

"Tayloe and I agreed that we wanted to present world-renowned artists in a show that would resonate with the Jackson Hole community," Obering said.

So Obering focused on work influenced by nature, a theme she knew would strike a chord here.

"By highlighting how these artists' works were inspired by nature, I felt like the show could help people in the community relate better to abstract painting and help open minds up to the beauty of this work."

The works open abstract windows on the natural world. Each piece reflects the artist's



**Milton Avery's Mexican Scene is an example of the seminal abstract pieces at JH Muse.**

reading of nature's resonance, its colors, light and lines.

The show channels different currents of abstraction, from Avery's early marriage of it with representation to Frankenthaler's work in color field and abstract expressionist painting.

"Avery was the seed," Piggott said.

Not concerned with creating depth, he instead explored landscapes as relationships of color – a style that garnered him the label of America's Matisse. The five of his works at JH Muse span nearly 25 years.

Diebenkorn's *Untitled (Landscape)* from 1956 comes at a cusp in the artist's career as he shifted from abstract expressionism to representation. A rare charcoal on paper, *Untitled (Landscape)* resonates as a study of lines – a precursor to his later, seminal series, "Ocean Park."

Frankenthaler made her debut as an American abstract expressionist painter with *Mountains and Sea*, a massive canvas inspired by a trip to Nova Scotia in 1952.

Her "soak stain" technique –

used by Jackson Pollock, among others – of diluting oil paints with turpentine and working on unprimed canvas or paper – lends luminosity, Obering said. To Jackson, Frankenthaler sent five recent works – all created in the 1990s on handmade paper with deckled edges. Frankenthaler is no longer producing new work; all five of the pieces in Jackson are part of her last major body of work. All came from her personal collection and have never been exhibited before, save for the 6-foot-by-6-foot *cosmos of Skytrail*, which was on display once before at a London gallery.

Equally expansive in scale, works by Joan Mitchell channel the force of nature. Striving in all of her works "to convey the feeling of a dying sunflower" through powerful brushstrokes, Mitchell clearly achieves this evocative goal in the Jackson piece, a color lithograph of *Sunflower I* (1992).

Influences of Nature on Abstraction orients Jackson on the international art market, a direction paved by Piggott's representation of nationally and internationally renowned artists like James Castle. While isolated from influence, the self-taught Castle created works that bear striking similarities to the abstract expressionists visiting the gallery, intrigue Piggott will present by displaying Castle pieces in a hallway.

Locally, the show advances the cultural conversation both Piggott and Obering feel is vital to the valley.

"Our mission has always been to enrich the cultural dialogue in Jackson and the West," Piggott said of her gallery, which specializes in 20th century and contemporary art. "This is another important step in building that cultural dialogue."