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Canada

Hans Hofmann: A Painter's Teacher

An historical study into the life and pedagogy
of one of America's foremost teachers of painting

Sharon Sutherland

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

HANS HOFMANN: A Painter's Teacher

This thesis examines the life and pedagogy of Hans Hofmann and includes a review of his development and a study regarding his position as an artist-teacher in 20th Century Art. Hofmann's teaching at his Munich school and his role as an eminent artist-teacher in the New York art world of the 1930s and 1940s are examined and analysed. Historical factors are reviewed in the light of their affect on Hofmann's life choices both as a writer and as an artist-teacher. Sources used in this study are drawn from Hofmann's written work, from comments by his students and from contributions by American critics and prominent artists who were associated with his schools.

"The Artist must follow his inner direction more seriously than is done at present. Art teaching is not soap manufacture. The value in the artist is apt to be that of differences rather than that of likenesses."

Hans Hofmann

From "On the Aims of Art," trans. Ernest Stolz and Glen Wessels, Fortnightly (Campbell Calif. 1 February 26 1932)

"To be a teacher in the right sense of the word is to be a learner. Instruction begins when you, the teacher, learn from the learner, put yourself in his place so that you may understand what he understands, and in the way he understands."

Soren Kierkegaard

Acknowledgements

Hans Hofmann, the painter first came to my attention while viewing an exhibition drawn from the modern collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1978. The large, brilliantly coloured canvasses that I liked invariably turned out to be the work of Hans Hofmann. I have often heard of Hans Hofmann called a "painter's teacher" and wondered what that phrase meant. Why did so many artists I was reading about during the Abstract Expressionist period refer to him with such respect? What key did Hofmann's story hold for me, a practising painter just beginning to instruct art students?

I wish to thank Dr. Elizabeth Sacca who gave me the initial support to investigate the topic, and the research skills to begin it. Stan Horner guided the inspiration and Dr. Mark Cezer encouraged its fulfillment. The Andre Emmerich Gallery in New York and the Museum of Modern Art, offered important primary source materials. Abbeville Press granted permission to use the photographic material. I want especially to thank James Reed who taught me to love and cherish the process. This manuscript was typed by Michèle Gour.

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Introduction

Hans Hofmann's stature as an influential teacher was recognized during his lifetime. He was acknowledged as a master teacher by many of his former pupils. "His success as a teacher is suggested by the number of superstars in today's art scene who were his students" (Newbury, 1980, p. 1).

This thesis deals with Hans Hofmann's career in a socio-historical context, and looks at the critical factors which linked him to many significant art movements in the first half of the Twentieth Century. This thesis contends that Hofmann's role as an artist-teacher has implications for art training today.

The term artist-teacher which still has common usage today, stems from the period when many of the art academies on the Eastern coast of the United States were founded by European-trained artists, some of these being Robert Henri, Thomas Eakins, and Thomas Anschuth. "It would seem that most of the memorable artist-teachers in this country were professional artists first. The teaching developed as another facet of their personalities" (Byrd, 1963, p. 130). During his lifespan of eighty-eight years Hofmann was able to synthesize his personal experience of major Twentieth Century art movements into specific tools to develop the craft of painting. "What he learned along the way cannot be overestimated in its impact both on his own development and

on the development of modern art in America, where he lived from 1932 until his death in 1966" (Goodman, 1986, p. 7).

Hofmann developed his own glossary of terms which he used to teach his students. The following terms are quoted from Search for the Real and Other Essays edited by Sara Weeks and Bartlett Hayes (1948). They will be used extensively throughout this paper.

Nature:	the source of all inspiration. Whether the artist works directly from nature, from memory, or from fantasy, nature is always the source of his creative impulse.
The Artist:	an agent in whose mind nature is transformed into a new creation. The artist approaches his problems from a methaphysical standpoint. His intuitive faculty of sensing the inherent qualities of things dominates his creative instinct.
Creation:	a synthesis, from the artist standpoint, of matter, space and color; creation is not a reproduction of observed fact.
Positive Space:	the presence of visible matter.
Negative Space:	the configuration, or 'constellation' of the voids between and around portions of visible matter.
Color:	in a scientific sense, a particular state of light; in an artistic sense, the perception of plastic and psychological differences in the quality of light.

Vision: the stimulus of the optic nerve by light; artistically, the awareness of variations in the nature of this stimulus which enables one to distinguish positive and negative space and colour.

Empathy: the imaginative projection of one's own consciousness into another being, or thing. In visual experience, it is the intuitive faculty to sense qualities of formal and spatial relations, or tensions, and to discover the plastic and psychological qualities of form and color.

Expression Medium: The material means by which ideas and emotions are given visible form.

Each expression medium has a nature and life of its own according to which creative impulses are visualized. The artist must not only interpret his experience of nature creatively, but he must be able to translate his feeling for nature into a creative interpretation of the expression medium. To explore the nature of the medium is part of the understanding of nature, as well as part of the process of creation.

Picture: the plane, or surface, on which the picture exists.

The essence of the picture plane is flatness. Flatness is synonymous with two-dimensionality.

Plasticity: the transference of three-dimensional experience to two dimensions. A work of art is plastic when its pictorial message is integrated with the picture plane and when nature is embodied in terms of the qualities of the expression medium.

Spirituality: the emotional and intellectual synthesis of relationships perceived in nature, rationally, or intuitively.

Spirituality in an artistic sense would not be confused with religious meaning.

Reality: artistically, an awareness. There are two kinds of reality: physical reality, apprehended by the senses, and spiritual reality created emotionally and intellectually by the conscious or subconscious powers of the mind.

Review of Literature

Hofmann's views on art helped to condition the thinking and expectations of many art theorists, notably Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg (Ashton, 1972, p. 72). "It was in Hofmann's studio that Greenberg heard the first authoritative discussions of the strictly interior problems of painting" (Ashton, 1972, p. 79). This is confirmed in The Life and Times of the New York School by Dora Ashton who wrote, "Greenberg learned how to formulate his image of Cubism which was so important to his development as a critic. The lessons of picture analysis he learned in Hofmann's studio are really the fundamental tools of his trade" (1972, p. 79). She also emphasizes Rosenberg's debt to Hofmann whom she believes provided a pictorial language for the young critic, a new vocabulary and an approach which helped him to gain insights into current painting styles.

Major texts on Hofmann are by William Seitz who wrote Hans Hofmann (1963) and Abstract Expressionist Painting in America (1963). Sam Hunter wrote Hans Hofmann (1967). This

book evaluates Hofmann's original essay Plastic Creation (1932) and the Mystery of Creative Relations (1953).

Sam Hunter attributes Hofmann's success as a teacher to "a systematic instruction, analysis of student work, unified by a conceptual approach (1963 p. 13). An extensive biographical study by Cynthia Goodman, (1985) entitled Hofmann, provides extensive research on every aspect of Hans Hofmann's painting career from his European heritage until his death in New York on February 17, 1966. These three publications trace Hofmann's career from his early years in Europe, the friendships he formed with Americans through his Munich school, and the development of his art, until his growth as a major force in the New York art establishment.

The roots of American Abstract painting are charted by Lane and Larsen in Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America 1927-1944 (1983). Their book outlines the role Hofmann played in organizing the community of New York abstract artists in The Village of New York City. Cynthia Goodman's Ph.D. thesis (1983) looks at the transmission of Hofmann's European experience throughout his teaching career. Joseph Love in An Analysis of the Art Theory of Hans Hofmann (1967) analyzed Hofmann's writings and the subsequent influence of these ideas on his teaching methods. Roger Lee interviewed Canadian West Coast art educators in order to research Hofmann's influence on their art formation. These interviews

were published in The Theories of Hans Hofmann's and their influence on his West Coast Canadian Students (1977).

Seitz's Ph.D. thesis reviewed Hofmann's painting philosophy as revealed in Hofmann's written works. Allan Kaprow states that "modernism's greatest teacher arbitrarily isolated a theory of art from those important currents around him which could have destroyed him and his school" (1966, p. 21). Rosenberg called it "an antagonism to the prevailing mode" (1979, p. 107). But Rosenberg sees this isolationist quality of Hofmann as "performing his most important function as a teacher".

Maurice Tuchmann (1969, p. 18) in New York School: The First Generation, is helpful in allowing us to see what the major critics were writing about the art scene in the 1930s and the 1940s. He quotes Greenberg's detailed analysis of Hofmann as a painter. Sam Hunter agrees that "there was a high cost of selfless expenditure of time and talent in teaching." Ashton affirms that the "energy it took to run a real atelier was probed in the consistent effervescent quality that was particular to Hofmann" (1970 p. 70). Thomas Hess writes, "Teaching may have something to do with keeping his own work on ice" (1971, p. 109). Walter Barnard suggests in his book, Hans Hofmann, that the stylistic newness of his work hindered his public acceptance. "Hofmann was allowed his due as a teacher to ease dismissing him as an artist" (1976, p. 11). But Harold Greenberg attributed Hofmann's

belated public acceptance to the fact that "his Paris experience confronted him with two many 'faits accomplis' by artists his own age or only a few years older, and Hofmann had to wait until the art movements of those years and the interwar years were spent before making his own move" (1961, p. 191). Hunter sees the years of experimenting as providing more scope to Hofmann's choice of subject: "the difficulty with Hofmann's art has been both its diversity and its generality" (1963, p. 16).

Thomas Hess saw a resurgence of interest in Hofmann's painting. Because of this diversity in his career Hess attributed this interest to the fact that "it was a source of strength that Hofmann was able to embody many aspects of the modern tradition at once, with no sense of contradiction, without giving himself up to any one of them" (1971, p. 107). Greenberg saw this quality as essentially good, and called Hofmann a "virtuoso of inventiveness" but cautioned, "in art one cannot scatter one's shots with impunity and Hofmann has paid the price in terms of quality as well as acceptance" (p. 190). Sandler, in his article Synthetic Cubism, has Hofmann explain this propensity. "I insisted on painting in several styles at any one moment in my career. I hate to repeat myself." (Sandler outlines Hofmann's life-long ambition as an original synthesis in a non-objective manner of Cubist geometry and Fauve colour and texture" (1976, p. 105). This diversity was seen as positive by Hess. "Hofmann represents

somewhat of a special case in recent avant-garde art, he stands at the crux of the unsolved problem of defining the relationship between innovation and quality" (1970, p. 108). Bultman in The Achievement of Hans Hofmann (1962) also defends Hofmann's approach to painting as a "disregard of the corporate image of what an artist should be and do". (1962, p. 45). Fritz Bultman called this constant revolution in Hofmann's work, "absolutely modern and it's what makes Hofmann part of the future" (1962, p. 46). Rollo May proclaimed Hofmann's place in history by calling him a "venerable dean of abstract painters" (1975, p. 100) and "one of our most expert and experienced teachers in this country," (1975, p. 100). William Seitz collected fifty responses to a questionnaire he designed for the students of Hofmann who had exhibited as a group in an eclectic exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1963 entitled "Hans Hofmann and his Students". Many of the emulative responses have been requoted by Sandler (1976) and Rosenberg (1970).

Methodology

"The ability of history to employ the past helps us to gain a clearer view of the present" (Eisner, 1962, p. 157). The teaching of art has been dependent on standards and practices evolved in the training of professional artists. Therefore Hofmann's role as a leading teacher within the

Abstract Expressionist movement, and the development of the Second New York School may hold a key to present-day studio instruction.

This thesis on the life and educational contributions of Hans Hofmann adopts an historical research methodology, using the form of biography.

The material chosen for review was selected from primary sources, manuscripts written by Hofmann, (he wrote fifteen) and from eye-witness accounts of his teaching. Sources were also taken from newspaper articles written by people who came into contact with Hofmann at his 9th Street studio. Secondary sources about the life and times when Hofmann lived in New York will be drawn from survey studies on the growth of American abstract art after the First World War, and from several university research papers about his life and writing.

Louis Cohen and Mannion (1980) has listed problem areas of historical research one of which is: "an expression of personal bias, as revealed by statements lifted out of context, assuming a too generous or uncritical attitude towards a person or idea" (1980, p. 42). However in my reading of Hofmann's career I could find no criticism of his teaching, other than certain statements expressed in interviews with some female students who found his approach to women painters chauvinistic. For example, Canadian Alexandra Luke reports that he once said of her work, "that

is so good you would not know it was done by a woman!" (Munro, 1982, p. 201). On the other hand many distinguished second generation artists of the New York school were female alumni of Hofmann including Helen Frankenthaler, Grace Hartigan, Jane Freilicher, Marisol, Nell Blane, Ann Truit and Lee Krasner.

Hofmann's ability to articulate his pedagogy and to inspire a form of devout discipleship will be analyzed in the light of the forty-year period in which he taught. Does his model as a studio teacher have any message for art education today? Hofmann had evolved his own vision and urged his students to do the same, once the pictorial principles he set down were understood. He was an elitist in the sense that he believed his approach to plastic creation could provide an effective methodology for his students, and yet he was able to focus on individual concerns. He did not conduct his studio classes democratically. He operated the class like a "bürgermeister" (burgomaster) a master of the class and sole authority.

For Hofmann the identity and value of modern art was never in question. "Rather his two careers as artist and teacher which in the highest sense are inseparable from each other ... gave form to the intellectual environment in which we have been living during the last three decades" (Rosenberg, 1966).

Hofmann's profound belief that he had a "message" carries meaning today. He felt that he had something to communicate and "that if he didn't do it, something would be lost or misrepresented" (Russell, 1982, p. N1). If any one thing can be made of the art world today it is that ... "the best artists learn, and are not taught (Russell, N1). In place of the ancient hierarchy of master and apprentice, now there is "a free-floating molecular system of equals" (Russell, N1). Hofmann was concerned that the laissez-faire attitude of 20th Century Art had lost some of the authoritarianism of the art academies, and that the techniques and methods which are the foundations of visual language might be lost in the process.

Finally, Hofmann's ability to articulate his pedagogy and to inspire a form of devout discipleship will be analyzed. He was an elitist in the sense that he believed his approach provided an effective process through which students could focus on individual concerns. Yet he held the individual student's creative abilities as the highest, most important factor for creative work (Goodman, 1986, p. 73).

Biography

On March 21, 1880 Johann George Albert Hofmann was born to Theodor and Francisker Manger Hofmann, both of Protestant origin, in Weissenberg, Germany. His father was an official with the German government. "At home, his father was a severe disciplinarian, who had little contact with his children. The strongest influence on Hofmann seems to have come from Hofmann's mother and his maternal grandfather" (Newbury, 1980, p. 16). Hans, as he was called, and his brothers and sisters, loved to spend the summers at their grandfather's farm. His grandfather was a vintner and brewer in Bavaria, and Hofmann was very attached to him, and this elderly man took on the role of father substitute. "Hofmann credited his time spent with his grandfather with his growing interest in the nature of reality" (Newbury, 1980, p. 12).

In 1886, when Hofmann was six-years-old the family was transferred to Munich because Mr. Hofmann Sr. became a government official. Hofmann attended public school in Munich and excelled in mathematics and science. He learned to play the piano, violin and organ. Hofmann's love of nature was nurtured by vacation visits to his grandfather's farm on the River Main. During these visits Hofmann began to draw. By the age of sixteen in 1896, he had become an assistant to the Director of Public Works of the state of

Bavaria. There he was able to pursue his interest in mathematics and science by using the library facilities. During his youthful years science took up a great deal of his time, but he was still able to maintain his interest in the arts.

In his new position at the Public Works he learned mechanical engineering. The resulting use of the scientific approach and the development of his inventive personality are evident in his later writings and teachings. Through science he was able to survey nature broadly and objectively which later lead to further experiments.

Hofmann's involvement with innovations that were occurring in the art world dates from his first encounters with them in Munich. In an interview he stated:

> There was an extremely active modern movement in Germany as early as 1893. It was known as the Secessionist movement, and was a development of Impressionism. This group later split and neo-seccessionism was born; it spread throughout Germany and I exhibited in Berlin with them.
> (Art Digest, 1947, p.17)

Willi Schwartz, Hofmann's teacher at the Moritz Heymann School of Art, was profoundly impressed with Hofmann's versatility and intellectual capacity and offered to introduce his new friend to the nephew of a Berlin collector. The nephew, in turn, introduced Hofmann to his wealthy uncle, Phillip Freudenberg, a department store owner. In 1903 Freudenberg became Hofmann's patron and during the next ten

years, assisted him in setting up residence in Paris, a major centre of the art world during the crucial period, 1904-1914.

Hofmann attended evening classes at the Atelier Colorossi along with Matisse, and painted the same view of the Seine from the same balcony at the Hotel Bisson. Hofmann made the acquaintance of Robert Delaunay and frequented the Café Dome where he met Picasso, Braque, Karsten, Pascin and Carles. In 1910, Hofmann had his first one man show at Paul Cassirer's gallery in Berlin.

During the summer of 1914, Hofmann's sister became ill so Hofmann extended his summer stay in Bavaria into the autumn. Then the outbreak of World War I prevented his return to Paris and his patron Freudenberg was unable to continue the financial support. Hofmann was refused entry into the Kaiser's army because of an old lung lesion. Because his paintings were not bringing in enough revenue to cover living expenses, he decided to open his own school, Schule Für Modern Kunst, at 40 Geogenstrasse, Munich. In addition to the normal function of providing art instruction, the school also served as a treatment centre for shell-shocked soldiers. As Hofmann's teaching reputation spread, after the war, students from all over Europe and the United States began to attend his school. As part of an expanded programme Hofmann organised students on summer trips to Ragusa, 1924, Capri, 1925-27 and St. Tropez, 1928-29.

By 1929, the political climate in Germany was extremely sensitive. In 1930, Prof. Worth Rhyder convinced Dean H.L. Bruce of the University of California, that Hofmann was the most important teacher of painting in the world, and should be invited to teach a summer session at Berkely. The following summer Hofmann returned to Berkely but letters from his wife described the growing unrest in Germany and the rise of Hitler. In the Spring of 1931, Hofmann taught at the Chouinard School in Los Angeles. In 1932, Hofmann taught at the Art Students League in New York City, due to the influence of another Hofmann student, Vladimyr Vytlacil.

In Munich in 1921, Vytlacil became one of the most active members of the Hofmann class, as both student and friend. Hofmann pointed out the logical relationship between the art of Cézanne and that of the Cubists, urging him to consider the structural character of his work. In each institution that Vytlacil taught in the United States, he paved the way for his mentor, Hofmann.

> The controversial appointment of Hofmann in the autumn of 1932 was suggested by former student Vytlacil and by others such as Byron Browne who knew of him by reputation. Hofmann's appointment took place over the objections of Benton, Miller and Sloan, but Hofmann proved to be a superb teacher, who was supportive of a group of students, including Burgoyne Diller, Harry Holtzman and Albert Swinden. (Lane, 1983, p. 21)

Hofmann became Guest-Instructor at the Thurn School of Art, Gloucester, Massachusetts in 1933. In the fall of that

year he opened his own school on Madison Avenue in New York City, (Sandler, 70, p. 138).

After two years at the Art Students League and a trip to Bermuda to renew his visa Hofmann opened a school at 137 East 57th St. in the Autumn of 1933. The school later moved to 52nd Street. In 1935 he opened a summer school in Provincetown, Mass. and finally, in October of 1936 the school moved to 52W 8th St. Greenwich Village. He taught at this location until 1958, when he closed the school to use the premises for his own studio. In 1963 Mrs. Hofmann died, and in 1965, at the age of 85, Hofmann married Ranate Schmitz. Hofmann died February 17, 1966 at the age of 86, after a working day of painting.

The Formative Years

Henri Bergson. In Matter and Memory and the Creative Revolution Bergson wrote, "movement and constant change are the basic characteristics of reality" (Lee, 1966, p. 223). Hofmann absorbed the theory of movement from Bergson which held that "all that exists is in a state of constant change and transformation" (MMFA 1985, p.2). "Hofmann later employed this concept in his own theory of movement about the reality of the canvas, especially as it related to colour" (Lee, 1966, p. 225).

Hofmann was, in the words of an acquaintance during the Paris days, "un travailleur réservé" (Landau, 1976, p. 177), quietly absorbing the new scientific and philosophical ideas and their concurrence in art movements such as Cubism and Fauvism. He does not seem to have had much contact with Picasso or Braque other than in the cafés, he met these artists throught painter-friend Jules Pascin. In 1904, however, he was studying drawing in the life classes at Ecole de la Grande Chaumière, at the same time as Matisse (Varley, 1971, p. 15). "Others working in the same class as Matisse around that time remember Hofmann as offering something of a pedagogical attitude towards his mostly younger fellow classmates" (Landau, 1976, p. 179). Matisse especially tried to explain for his classmates the importance of understanding Cézanne to develop their faculties of composition. What Matisse found crucial about Cézanne was his refusal to distinguish in his paintings between colour and drawing, and

his system of modelling not with chiaroscuro but with oppositions of light and dark colours -- an idea later developed by Hofmann in his push-pull theories.

It was inevitable that Hofmann would hear about Cézanne. In 1904 the Salon d'Automne included 42 works by Cézanne. Hofmann was later to write, "at the end of his life and at the height of his capacity Cézanne understood push and pull as color's greatest in-dwelling secret" (Pollet, 1957, p. 31).

In 1917 Cézanne's watercolours were shown at the Galerie Bernheim and several articles about him were published in L'Occident and Mercure de France by Maurice Denis and Emile Bernard. Picasso noted that "in 1906 the influence of Cézanne penetrated everywhere". Matisse was also at this time tempering his own work with influences from Cézanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin; intuitively pitting strong hues against each other for expressive rather than descriptive purposes, often using colour to suggest a pictorial space without value gradation.

Although there are no available documents indicating the extent of Hofmann's contact with Matisse, there is evidence that he kept close contact with Hans Purrmann, a fellow German who was a friend of Matisse (Pollet, 1957, p. 32). Purrmann's relationship with Matisse is described by Alfred H. Barr in Matisse, His Art and His Public (Barr, 1951, p. 169). It was through Purrmann (one of the organizers of

Matisse's school in 1908) that Matisse met Freudenberg, Hofmann's patron. Frederick Wight implies that Matisse actually spoke to Freudenberg about Hofmann. "After Matisse saw a few of the paintings Hofmann had sent to Freudenberg, Matisse's enthusiasm had the convenient effect of encouraging Hofmann's patron to continue support" (Wight, 1957, p. 30).

Purrmann and Hofmann also had a mutual friend in Jules Pascin who had studied at the Moritz Heymann School in Munich with Hofmann (Pollet, 1957, p. 33). Hofmann and Pascin kept in touch in Paris. Through Pascin, Hofmann met Robert and Sonia Delaunay. Delaunay's wife, Sonia, had been married to a German art dealer Wilfel Uhde who often entertained both German and French painters in his apartment and gallery. Delaunay's ideas made an impression on Hofmann, providing further exposure to the potentialities inherent in Cézanne.

> Delaunay was one of those who, by following Cézanne's example, tried to express depth by the use of colour -- an example which later was to be exploited with great energy by Matisse and the Fauves. (Elgar, 1975, p. 269)

Delaunay provided Hofmann with an introduction to the scientific colour theories then current in France, theories which for the most part had not yet entered the mainstream of German art.

> German theories concerned with colour were oriented more towards optics or psychology than toward's colours' formal possibilities. Hofmann probably read the colour ideas of Runge and

> definitely knew those of Goethe which, in addition to Kandinsky's book, most likely provided inspiration for the material which Hofmann later included in his writings about the emotional and psychological connotations of colour. (Landau, 1976, p. 75)

Delaunay's ideas were very similar to those of Kandinsky, whose works Hofmann encountered later in Munich. Further substantiating, for Hofmann, the importance of this new approach to colour.

The Paris period was for Hofmann one of experimentation and deep struggle as he explored the radical new ideas that were emerging during the first twenty years of this Century. At this time he lived near Delaunay in the rue des Grands Augustins. "Delaunay was his closest friend, and his discovery of the expressive potential of pure color left its enduring mark on Hofmann" (Hunter, 1963, p. 11).

It is perhaps significant that Hofmann had little contact with the German Expressionists until the 1920's, when the course of his work had already been determined by the taste and outlook of the School of Paris. Although Hofmann's later work was to be linked to the Expressionists, they do not appear to have had any direct influence on him.

"Being so close to the primary sources of modern art may have had its inhibiting effect on Hofmann, for he passed a prolonged apprenticeship without any great productivity" (Sandler, 1976, p. 104). However, the ideas in this period were significant enough to be incorporated into his approach

to the teaching of painting, and served as a basis for his writings about art and pedagogy.

Many of the ideas that Hofmann expounded in the Munich school prospectus and the texts he published in America were drawn from ideas he had formulated in Paris.

> Hofmann spent his formative years as an apprentice to the idioms of the modern movement as they were developing in France in the early part of the Twentieth Century. He absorbed the general culture of the day as well as specific ideas endemic to the specific milieu of Paris in the heroic years. (Landau, 1976, p. 81)

The core concepts of Hofmann's theories revolve around the dynamics of movement in creative activity. He focussed on spatial tensions, forces, and counterforces, the two-dimensional physical reality of a painting; the expansive and limitless role of colour as an expressive agent: and finally, the mystery of creation itself. In subsequent years he would digest and elaborate on these notions.

Hofmann wrote, "The mystery of plastic creation is based on the dualism of the two-dimensional and the three dimensional" (Weeks, 1948, p. 47). In his teaching he consistently stressed the importance of the pictorial ideas underlying the art of Cézanne, the Cubists and Matisse. The sources of his major concepts, especially those related to colour that created space, came directly from the experiences and contacts of the Paris years. "I never adjusted to their

molds, I was nobody's student, I took what I needed" (Life, 1957, p. 74).

Editions of certain manuscripts that were published during Hofmann's stay in Paris and widely read and circulated at the time seem to have influenced his later writings. According to Landau (1976 p. 28) any thoughts Hofmann came to express about art came directly from Matisse's ideas found in Notes of a Painter, published in La Grande Revue in 1908 (Landau, 1976, p. 78).

Some of Hofmann's statements on lines and planes creating tensions appear to have been influenced by the essay on cubism published by Gleizes and Metzinger in 1912; it held that: "The science of design consists in instituting relations between straight lines or curves. A picture which contained only straight lines or only curved ones would not express existence" (Herbert, 1964, p. 9).

Gleizes and Metzinger also proposed in their essay that "there is nothing real outside of ourselves, there is nothing real except the coincidence of a sensation and an individual's mental direction." (Herbert 1964, p. 11) Hofmann drew one of his favourite statements about art from that quote. "All my life is a search for the real".

There is also a close connection between Hofmann's sense of colour and what he learned in Paris. Many of Hofmann's later directives on colour were related to Delaunay's

theories of Orphic Cubism, utilizing prismatic colour harmony with simultaneous colour contrast.

For Delaunay colour had become both form and subject. This can also be seen in a statement by Hofmann in 1941 in which he emphasized that: "In every great epoch of painting there is an indivisible relation between form and colour. This correlation between form and colour is the plastic basis of painting" (Weeks, 1948, p. 45).

Hofmann and his wife Miz regularly spent their summers in Germany while living in Paris. The outbreak of World War I caught Hofmann and Miz in Munich, thus leading to his decision to open himself to the teaching of painting. He got permission from the German Government to do so, provided he also treat shell-shocked soldiers with some form of therapy. "This led to the opening of perhaps the most famous art school of the epoch" (Hunter, 1963, p. 12).

Chapter Three

Beginnings

Background

Hofmann set himself to the task of teaching with great enthusiasm. To this end he was utterly convinced of the validity of cubist principles. He had a scientific background to assist him in understanding the dynamics of canvas space that the cubists were searching for. He was able to synthesize these theories into an articulated programme of study. He committed himself totally to this programme. Hofmann had access to information largely unknown to the Munich art schools. Appropriately, the name of his first school was "Schule Für Modern Kunst".

"Among the first and for many years the only school in the world devoted to teaching modernism, the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Art was originally established in Munich in 1915" (Art Digest, 1945, p. 26).

> The unique role of Hofmann's Munich school is pointed up by the fact that prior to its establishment, there had been in Europe only one short-lived school of Modern Art, maintained by Matisse, and three others later, Ozenfant's (in New York) the Bauhaus and André L'Hôte's. (Wolf, 1951, p. 20)

Word of Hofmann's Munich Academy spread throughout Europe. One of the reasons for this is outlined by former student Glenn Weissels.

> I tried various schools in Paris and in Berlin but found Hofmann the only teacher who could or would answer questions about painting in a way satisfying to one looking for a broad aesthetic of painting. His teaching was broad in the sense that there was room for many different kinds of expression in his school -- more than some of his followers like to admit, (Weissels quoted by Seitz in "Hans Hofmann's Student Dossier", unpaginated, unpublished typescript, (1963).

Hofmann's instructional diagrams and drawings were simple and direct, and were effective in clarifying his ideas. Again, Weissels writes, "Many of us borrowed his diagrams and have used them ever since in our own teachings" (quoted in Seitz, 1963).

Several former students of Munich speak of Hofmann's ability to transmit the inner workings of pictorial structure. Carl Holty called this "a complete revelation concerning the movement in modern art." He writes that:

> There was a notable difference in my relationship to Hofmann in Munich, from that of the other Americans, because I spoke German fluently, and could understand what Hofmann said more easily than the others did ... my knowledge brought me in touch with what other Munich painters thought of Hofmann. The Germans, mostly contemporaries of Hofmann, were perhaps less enthusiastic about him than the Americans were, and this was understandable enough. What Hofmann had to say about the modern movement was a complete revelation to us, whereas the Europeans not being as green as we were, and

> acquainted with the idea of modern art (often enough not too intimately) were less easily impressed and besides they had the Old World reservations about the validity of "school" teaching as such. As I look back now I am inclined to think that the Americans were right in their estimation of Hofmann and the Germans superciliously wrong. (Seitz, 1963)

Hofmann's school provided him with financial stability, and enabled him to further develop the new ideas he had adopted in Paris. Throughout this post-war period Hofmann made frequent trips to Paris in order to maintain contact with new developments in modern art. His summer schools were such a great success that the fame of his teaching spread. With the influx of American students after the war, and his move to 40 Georgen Strassen, Munich, his reputation grew as an effective and sought-after teacher of modern painting.

Format of Hofmann's Classes in Munich

In Hofmann's Munich school students drew from the nude model in the mornings and from the costume-portrait model in the afternoon. According to Worth Rhyder, Hofmann would correct the drawings of each student twice daily. "His construction method was clear and exact" (quoted in Seitz, 1963). The portrait models were selected at random and the majority appeared commonplace and uninteresting. These were not types but rather people one would see on the street, such as old men or women in peasant garb. Hofmann liked to

demonstrate that any human head in all its "plastic complexity" was interesting and remarkable and he would construct likeness drawings that were always clear and exact.

During his time at the Munich school, Hofmann concentrated his thinking and teaching on an understanding of the plastic structure of the object. To illustrate these, he used German Gothic masters such as Durer, Cranach or Holbein. In conducting the advanced class in painting and composition Hofmann would sometimes become engrossed with drawing. He is quoted as saying, "Once we had really gotten into the whole world of drawing, we wouldn't even want to paint for a long time" (Holty, quoted in Seitz, 1963). On other occasions the painting classes were set up around a still life. Students were made to adjust colour harmonies by pinning little spots of coloured paper onto their canvas. When they found the appropriate colour combination they would remove the paper and paint the appropriate colour into the vacant spot.

Students would usually paint a new study, using their work of earlier canvasses as guides. "Thus the creative process was put into slow motion" (Seitz, 1963). Hofmann sometimes used a scientific orientation involving pointilism, in order to have the students understand, study and develop their sensibilities by recognizing colour relativity in the smallest detail. The phrase which became the signature of his teaching: "Work from nature in all her glory" (Holty, quoted in Seitz, 1963), shows his continued fascination with

the natural world in both science and art. "Being inexhaustible, life and nature are a constant stimulus for a creative mind" (Hofmann, 1957, p. 12).

Sources of Hofmann's Teaching Beliefs

It seems clear that Hofmann regarded nature as the source and cubist structure as the means. He spoke of cubist structure as "the knowledge necessary for a pictorial approach -- a kind of basic grammar" (Holty, quoted in Seitz, 1963). By means of this approach he could demonstrate to his students the plastic meaning in apparently formless blobs of paint. "He could find a common ground in a great variety of seemingly contradictory works, and therefore he opened a world of possibilities for his students through his demonstrations and his theories" (Lee, 1966, p. 25).

Hofmann's ideas about the creative process took shape through his teaching programme at the Munich Academy. His beliefs, which he began to write about in 1915, informed his teaching, and developed and changed over a long period of time. For example, a comparison of his The Prospectus for the Munich School (Seitz, 1963) written in 1915 with later writings, shows that Hofmann's theories and teachings evolved throughout his entire career. His initial statement," does not consist in the objectified imitation of reality",

(Hofmann, quoted in Seitz, 1963, p. 56) helps us to make the connection between Hofmann and Cézanne.

During the Munich period, Hofmann presented a coherently formulated theory of art that he synthesized from the Parisian contacts. His ability to synthesize these ideas attests to his enormous sensitivity and insightfulness. The theories he absorbed were expanded and articulated to meet the demands of his teaching. It was his inquiring, scientific mind that produced a logical and articulate verbalization of these ideas. His approach interested American students who were eager to find an organized methods of contemporary art-making.

The Prospectus for the Munich School (Seitz, 1963) was Hofmann's first written formulation of what he had learned in Paris. In this document Hofmann discusses the definitions of form and nature, creative expression, the artist and the work of art. He believed that form in painting was initiated by nature, though it was not bound to it through objective imitation. Nature was the source of inspiration but it needed to be transformed in order to develop a painting.

> Creative expression is thus the spiritual translation of inner concepts into form, resulting from the fusion of these intuitions with the artistic means of expression in a unity of spirit and form, brought about by intuition which in turn results from the functioning of the entire thought and feeling complex accompanied by vigorous spiritual means. (Hofmann, 1915, p. 56)

The above passage written in 1915, is characteristic of Hofmann's enigmatic style; it means in essence, that a painting is the result of a dialogue between nature (intuition) and the artistic medium. This implies that nature inspires a thought pattern in the artist which results in spirit, and shapes the form of the painting. These two qualities (spirit and form) are then combined with the medium and the inspiration from the medium, all under the control of the mental processes.

> These result in a fusion of a mental process with the physical means of expression. A work of art is in spirit a self-contained whole, whose spiritual and structural relationship permits no individual parts despite the multiplicity of depicted objects. (Hofmann, 1915, p. 56)

> Hofmann defines art as a combination of the two systems of the organism, the first system being the organic whole in which every element in it implies every other .... an alteration or removal of any element would alter every other element or even destroy the whole system. (Quoted in Pepper, 1942, p. 300)

The above statement was important because once Hofmann mentioned one aspect of the theory, it could not be thought of as complete until the other facets were fused with it. This organic structure of Hofmann's theory of art is an undercurrent that informs his complicated style of writing.

Hofmann's teaching centered on helping his students develop their own approach from intensive studies of nature.

His stated intention for these students was that "they evolved a personality of their own" (Seitz, 1963, p. 5).

"The Hofmann School in Munich became a pulpit from which Hofmann preached the artistic creed he helped formulate" (Sandler, 1973, p. 80).

> Hofmann clarified principles by which the best art had been generated. He made clear the reality of the picture plane and the means of control of spatial effects upon it... often by revision of drawings over the student's work. This technique had a positive effect on his students. We were confronted on our own work with an example plastically much stronger than our own vision. (Rhyder, quoted in Seitz, 1963)

Hofmann believed that art was something that could not be acquired without a struggle. He spoke of the development of "flache", "bewegung" and "spannung" (plane, movement, and tension) as the challenge of the artists, as opposed to what he referred to as the easier imitative representation of an object. (Sandler, 1973, p. 82)

> In any case there is no doubt that Hans Hofmann was the first to give many original and dedicated young artists the sense of involvement that is necessary to bring forth works of real merit. (Seitz, 1963, p. 72)

"Hofmann maintained an intense atmosphere of work in his studio; he was easily available to his students and often invited them out to restaurants and to his home for social contact or for week-ends in the mountains" (Seitz, Rhyder, 1963. Hofmann continued to visit Paris, but the political

situation in Munich was very unstable and unsettling for German intellectuals and artists -- especially those of the Hebrew faith. The rising power of the Nazis held these groups highly suspect. Hofmann felt himself vulnerable and looked for another place to settle his school.

When the war ceased in 1918 the fame of 40 Georgenstrasse was carried abroad to America. Students came in great numbers, perhaps to learn what was not being taught by traditional schooling methods in the United States, or perhaps because for artists a European training brought authenticity to new ideas.

Hofmann accepted an invitation from the University of California in 1930 and in so doing began a new life in the United States where he was to remain until his death in 1966.

In the summer of 1931, he taught again at Berkeley and in that same year the California Legion of Honour gave him his first American show.

Hofmann's decision to remain in the United States was guided mainly by the political climate in Germany. The First World War had forced his evacuation from Paris, leading to a consolidation of his ideas about modern painting in the laboratory of his fledgling school. Twelve years later he was to bring these ideas and that commitment to art to America.

> What induced him to permanently transfer his school to the United States after a few terms at the University of California and the Art

> Students League was Hitler's coming to power and the subsequent outrages against neighbours and friends about which his wife Miz wrote to him in detail from abroad. (Rosenberg, 1964, p. 132)

Hofmann's move was based on events at that time. Hofmann found the United States lacking in artistic awareness and he decried the emphasis on material wealth. He called for government support for the arts and the art schools. "America now suffers spiritual poverty and art must come more fully into American life before her leisure time can become culture" (quoted in Weeks, 1948, p. 56). Having decided to reside in the United States, Hofmann found a new mission. To that end he worked continuously to develop an artistic consciousness among his students.

What kept Hofmann in America was his unshakable commitment to art. He had developed strong convictions about the nature of the picture plane and how the creative process could be realized through art. "This conviction of art for art's sake, strongly grounded in cubist and Fauvist doctrines, made Hofmann very attractive to the young American painters who were looking for a way out of the socially conscious painting of the thirties" (Sandler, 1970, p. 21). Hofmann, through his considerable knowledge and explorative example, was to bring support and inspiration to the emerging American vanguard.

"The foundation of all teaching is sincere conviction," wrote Keiler, (1960, p. 37). "For Hofmann art was the

supreme activity; whatever else might be required for a man's need, art was required the most" (Rosenberg, 1964, p.130).

Hofmann's arrival in America at the time also helped bolster his position in the art community. Both for his students and his contemporaries, Hofmann possessed "the impressive aura of history" (Sandler, 1973, p. 43). When Hofmann spoke of a systematic technique to achieve deepening of the canvas area without sacrificing the two-dimensional surface, he spoke from experience; he had acquired his theoretical basis first hand, in Paris. Hofmann was, therefore, able to provide a technique and a convincing rationale to validate it. His approach came from a belief that "painting was a process of conscious choice and he urged his students to adopt a clearly defined procedure for the construction of a painting" (Zemans, 1984, p. 18).

The following chapter examines events which placed Hofmann's school in the forefront as an important force in the Abstract Expressionist movement in New York, and his own role as its greatest contributor.

Chapter Four

America Discovers Hofmann

Artistic Environment of New York in the Thirties

Up until 1945, American painting remained in what can best be described as a "colonial situation" (Russell, 1974, p. 293). It was dominated by "other times, other places" (Sandler, 1973, p. 291). America already had a literature of its own, one which had a stamped and defined tradition. Walt Whitman, Thoreau, and Emerson were indisputable giants, greats who did not have to look to the capitals of Europe for inspiration, but drew heavily on the American experience in order to create their works. "If an American painter looked around with the equivalent ambition of these writers, he saw only what had been done in Venice, in Paris and even in London" (Sandler, 1973, p. 293). Even Mexico proved rich in inspiration to Americans like Jackson Pollock. This sense of artistic inferiority grew out of a youthful aesthetic that was still governed by the pioneering spirit. Russell suggests that the only salvation for American painters of the twenties and thirties lay in what was the original strength of America - "space, its vast and largely uncorrupted landscapes" (1980, p. 294). But developments were taking place that would change this widely held opinions about what was "American" i.e. indigenous in art. There was no

patronage system in the United States as in Europe. There were no art establishments that artists of the avant garde could look to for support.

Marcel Duchamp, arriving in New York from Paris, was instrumental in establishing the Société Anonyme in 1920. Together with the support of Katherine Dreier, Duchamp introduced the works of Miro and Klee to the art circles of that city. In 1924, J.B. Neumann opened a gallery specializing in German Expressionism. The Brooklyn Museum held an international exhibition of modern artists that same year. From 1927 to 1943 Albert Gallantine's Museum of Living Art was housed in the library of New York University, where it was accessible to local artists, most of whom lived in the vicinity of the Village. The collection included the works of Cézanne, Braque, Seurat, Picasso, Léger and Juan Gris. Néo-plasticist and Constructivist works by Piet Mondrian, Naum Gabo, and El Lissitszky were also included. Because of its location and its concentration on abstract works, the Gallantine collection of paintings was more important in the artistic development of many local artists than the Museum of Modern Art. The Wassily Kandinsky collection of paintings owned by the museum of Non-Objective Art was on display in the years 1936, 1937 and 1938. These modern paintings were of an inestimable value in giving American artists an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the developments of international painting. "It was vitally necessary and

important for them to overcome their provincialism, and for this reason the opening of the Museum of Modern Art in 1929, the presence of the Gallatine Collection and the arrival in New York of artists like Léger and Marcel Duchamp helped to promote an atmosphere of interest in the development of modern schools of painting" (Sandler, 1970, p. 14). For the artists who needed an intellectual basis for a modernist approach to art, this was found: in the newly opened classroom of Hans Hofmann who began to teach in New York in 1932.

Hofmann's arrival in New York was judiciously timed. He encountered a thriving interest in modern ideas on the part of American artists. They were already searching for new theories to revive their work, a way to bypass the derivative formulations of the past. They sought a way to revitalize their own experience, and embody it in a contemporary form. The emerging artists who were later to be labelled Abstract Expressionists, were unwilling to continue in conventional directions. To keep up with recent trends the American vanguard studied art magazines, especially those from France. They looked to artists living in France who for the most part were not appreciated in Europe, notably Kandinsky and Mondrian whose works were on view in New York at that time.

During this period of the thirties and forties, North American artists were busy assimilating the philosophic and plastic ideas of modern art. "The need to align themselves

to a common cause helped push forward the idea of an artists' society devoted to the cause of American abstract art" (Sandler, 1970, p. 12). These developments would greatly contribute to Hofmann's validity as a teacher of significant import in the New York art world.

Role of the Work Projects Administration

It took great courage on Hofmann's part to begin instructing in painting with his limited grasp of the English language. But there was a sense of the new and the free in New York which appealed to Hofmann's exploratory nature. In addition, a climate of acceptance existed at that time among the artists of New York's Greenich Village. During the 1930's when most of the Abstract Expressionists began their painting careers, the prevailing aesthetic viewpoint of social realism was being shaped by economic, political and social calamities. The Great Depression, ushered in by the stock market crash of 1929, left widespread financial insecurity in its wake. Abroad, Hitler's rise to power, the Spanish Civil War, the Moscow trials, and in 1939, the outbreak of the Second World War, all contributed to social unrest (Sandler, 1970, p. 5).

Responding to the temper of the times, artists on the whole chose to work in socially-oriented styles. The Social Realists, motivated by Marxist doctrines and dogma, depicted

workers engaged in a class struggle against the bourgeoisie. The Regionalists such as Thomas Hart Benton, and Grant Wood embraced a rightist-isolationist ideology and tried to recapture the glory of America's agrarian past. In New York where conditions were getting worse for artists, a number of them joined together to form the Unemployed Artists Group.

In December 1932, Roosevelt set up the Public Works of Art project. "This was born of a shift in emphasis from a desire for works of art to a concern for the artists need to work" (Sandler, 1970, p. 4).

This meant that artists could receive monthly subsidy from the government. "For the first time artists were a part of a society that cared if they were alive or dead" (Russell, 1982, p. 299). This created a climate of exploratory experimentation, a camaraderie among artists and a search for a deeper meaning in their art. During the five months of its existence, the project hired 3,749 artists who produced 15,633 works of art for public institutions (O'Connor, 1966, p. ii). In August of 1935 the Project organized itself under the title of Works Progress Administration. Unlike its predecessor which supported artists who could show proof of professional accomplishment the Project did not demand evidence of artistic qualification or accomplishment, thus making younger and less-known painters and sculptors eligible for financial aid. "They received an average of $95 monthly, and in return, they were required to work 96 hours or -- if

in the easel division -- to submit pictures periodically painted in any style in their own studios" (Sandler, 1970, p. 5).

The WPA played a vital role in the development of American Art by paying artists to paint, thereby enabling them to devote their energies to art with little distraction. Young painters such as Arshile Gorky, Jackson Pollock, Wilhelm de Kooning, William Baziotes, Mark Rothko and Phillip Guston were able to experiment freely and concentrate on painting. In this way the dedication of developing artists to art was deepened by a change in their social recognition.

The very existence of the WPA was partly responsible for a change in the social role of artists, since it indicated that the national government recognized their value in society. The art community benefitted most from the WPA in two ways. Firstly, artists who tended to be loners were thrown together out of necessity. "Daily meetings on the job encouraged contacts that cut across aesthetic positions and produced a constant exchange of ideas, similar to that in the Paris Cafés" (Sandler, 1970, p. 7). "This centered in New York where 60% of all artists working on the WPA were based" (Lane, 1983, p. 22).

At the same time the emerging group of artists was very susceptible to influence from the Communist party, and to the influence of the ideas of socially-involved Mexican painters David Siqueros and Diego Rivera. However, the artists were

soon repelled by the hardening of the Communist party line which insisted on treating art as a propaganda tool. Artists increasingly recognized that if they were to renew art they would have to rely on their own experience and embody it in contemporary forms, that they would first have to overcome provincialism and master the traditions of modern art.

Hofmann arrived in New York in 1932 (the same year that Roosevelt set up the WPA). "In that decade of ideologies -- New Deal, Facist -- it was plain that Hofmann's teachings offered a key" (Rosenberg, 1964, p. 131).

Development of the American Abstract Artists Association

By the mid-thirties, as the various social circles of abstract painters and sculptors in New York became increasingly aware of one another, the idea of forming an alliance similar to Abstraction-Creation in Paris began to take shape in several quarters. In 1935 Rosalind Benglesdorf, Byron Browne, Albert Swinden and Ibram Lassaw met in Bengelsdorf's studio at 230 Wooster Street to discuss the possibility of holding a group exhibition. By January 1936, a larger group met at Lassaw's studio, including Bengelsdorf, Browne, Burgoyne Diller, Harry Holtzman, Gertrude and Balcombe Greene and George McNeil. The group met to explore the possibility of an exhibition at the Municipal Art Gallery, only to learn that a minimum of

twenty-five exhibitors were required by the WPA which operated the gallery. As a result the members of the group began circulating among their colleagues to present the concept of a cooperative exhibiting society for abstract artists (Lane, 1983, p. 36).

When Hofmann arrived at the Art Students League in the winter of 1932 after a short stay in Bermuda, his reputation as a stimulating teacher had preceded him. His students past and present met one another at the League, and later at his Fifty-Seventh Street School. Hofmann encountered a handful of young painters at the League who were seriously involved in non-objective art. Burgoyne Diller, Harry Holtzman and Albert Swinden were frequent companions at this time, united by their mutual interest in non-objective art.

Diller began an important friendship with Hofmann, based on respect for his ideas and work. Diller had studied informally at the League with Hofmann and later at Hofmann's school. "Most intimately involved with the Hofmann classroom at the League was Harry Holtzman, then twenty-years old, who became for a time Hofmann's teaching assistant" (Lane, 1983, p. 28). Upon Holtzmann's return to New York in 1935 he shared with Diller the important post of assistant supervisor in charge of abstract painters in the mural division of the WPA Federal Art Project. He also resumed his activities as Hofmann's classroom assistant, thus bridging the gap between

the group of artists working on the WPA project and Hofmann's studio.

Hofmann's teaching approach with its emphasis on pictorial structure, also seems to have had an impact on Diller's work, for he "overlapped the major vertical and horizontal lines of the Neo-Plastic grid and reintroduced spatial recession and figure-ground relationships" (Lane, 1983, p. 28). Diller's emphasis on a dynamic reciprocal elements recalls Hofmann's oft-stated thesis on the importance of spatial tensions (Lane, 1983, p. 38).

Holtzman was instrumental in assembling a large group of artists to discuss the matter of forming a society of abstract artists. On January 8, 1937, they met in Albert Swinden's studio at 13 West Seventeenth St. and decided to call themselves the American Abstract Artists, acknowledging the open-ended nature of the meaning of the abstract in art.

The AAA did much to promote the current issues of American abstraction. "In the most dramatic move in its history, the American Abstract Artists organized a picket line outside the Museum of Modern Art's 1940 exhibition, Art in Our Time (Lane, 1983, p. 38), to protest the museum's policies and to distribute a provocative pamphlet entitled "How Modern is the Museum of Modern Art?". The signatories of the pamphlet were seeking a constructive dialogue with institutions and critics, not on the question of abstraction as an issue in and of itself, but to make finer and more

productive discriminations. In fact, the next generation of critics would not address abstraction as a separate issue. "The entire structure of critical discourse would also change dramatically, passing over the purist non-objective style of the American Abstract Artists in favor of the surrealist-based abstract art of Gorky, de Kooning, and the emerging group of American Abstract Expressionists" (Lane, 1983, p. 29). Harold Rosenberg and Clement Greenberg, two frequent visitors to Hans Hofmann's school, spearheaded a new direction in art criticism.

By 1940 a flood of émigrés artists reached New York. "An astonishingly high proportion of gifted refugees came to the United States at some point between 1933-1942" (McCabe, 1976, p. 102). These refugees produced a volatile, heady new mixture of art and ideas. Prominent abstract painters, notably Léger, Mondrian, and Moholy-Nagy arrived in New York in the late thirties and early forties. Surrealist art and poetry attracted a larger audience as André Breton, Max Ernst, André Masson, Roberto Matta and Yves Tanguay took up resident in New York. The Museum of Non-Objective Painting, containing the Soloman R. Guggenheim Collection, opened in 1939 as the WPA drew to a close. With all these developments the sense of community engendered by the AAA was playing a less prominent role. Intent on keeping abreast of European avant-garde, the AAA produced art work that was becoming largely derivative and eclectic. This was in large part the

reason for their decline. Other contributing factors were internal dissension and the disruption caused by World War II during which many artists joined the armed forces, including Ilya Bolotowsky, Ibram Lassaw and Ad Reinhardt. "The AAA shows and pamphlets cultivated an appreciation for abstract art in enough people to provide an audience and buying public" (Sandler, 1970, p. 20). None of the innovators of Abstract Expressionism belonged to the AAA although they shared in its main purpose, i.e., to enter the mainstream of modern art. They were friends and neighbours to AAA members, who had met at the Art Students League, Hans Hofmann's Studio School or in the vicinity of the Village. Small groups began to develop in New York's art scene to discuss the "modus vivendi" for achieving their goal.

Beginnings of the Abstract Expressionist Movement

Three loose groupings of painters formed in New York in the early forties: first, "The Ten" founded by Adolphe Gottlieb and Mark Tobey; second, the painters who formed working relationships through the school of Hans Hofmann, and third, a group that included Stuart Davis, Willem de Kooning, John Graham, and David Smith (Sandler, 1970, p. 257). Picasso was the artist most admired by the two latter groups.

After a few years in New York, Hofmann's influence as a teacher began to make an impact on the art community as a

whole. "Almost half the charter members of the AAA had studied with him" (Sandler, 1970, p. 20). A young artist learned about him from teachers who had studied with Hofmann in Munich. Vladimir Vytlacil, who later taught at the Art Students League, influenced his students and, indirectly, students of his students, about the worth of Hofmann as a teacher thus passing on the heritage that results from studying with a "master teacher" (Lane, 1983, p. 16). Vytlacil influenced his pupils profoundly. To give an example, Nell Blaine came from a small town in the South seeking entrance to the Hofmann school because her high school art teacher, Worder Day, praised the name of Hofmann. Day had studied with Vytlacil after he had returned from Munich. Many Canadians including Don Jarvis, Tak Tanabe, Joe Plaskett and Alexandra Luke went to New York because of what they had heard about Hofmann from their peers.

Milton Avery also played a central role in transmitting Matisse's concepts of colour to young artists, such as Rothko and Gottlieb (Sandler, 1979, p. 19). Then, in 1935, the latter two helped provide the push towards what they projected an increasingly American expression.

This they did by organizing "The Ten", a group of artists favourably disposed to modern European art, especially to the work of Matisse, Picasso, Soutine and Rouault, and above all American artists such as Avery. The artists of "The Ten" were attempting to "combine a social

consciousness with an abstract expressionist heritage thus saving art from being mere propaganda on the one hand, and mere formalism on the other" (Lawrence, 1936, p. 12).

In the Autumn of 1933 Hofmann opened the first Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts in the United States, located at 444 Madison Avenue. He moved his school twice before finding a permanent home at 52 West 8th Street in the village, the heart of the Bohemian Quarter in 1938. "As a result of the activities of various museums, the AAA, Hans Hofmann's school, The Ten, John Graham and Milton Avery, the vanguard in New York became the most knowledgeable in the world" (Sandler, 1970, p. 23).

This body of knowledge provided a common ground of interest among New York vanguard artists. They came from diverse artistic heritages - Graham was an Englishman, Gorky an Armedian, De Kooning a Dutchman and Hans Hofmann a Bavarian. Hofmann alone among them possessed an impressive aura that was derived from his historically important presence in Paris during the beginnings of the Cubist experience, Hofmann's theories about modern painting were acquired first hand. His skill in imparting the principles of Picasso was widely respected in New York. "Hofmann attempted to merge compacted Cubist structure with explosive Fauvist colour, and later he introduced ideas suggested by Kandinsky's early improvisations" (Russel, 1974, p. 300). His first hand knowledge of developments in France helped

make him more secure in his conventions of cubism but it also helped him to establish his popularity as a teacher and his role as a spokesman of the New York avant garde. He taught the basics of the Cubist approach in his classes. He participated in meetings at "The Club" where issues of modern art were vociferously debated. Hofmann wrote for the Newsletter that was an outgrowth of these meetings, and it was through that newsletter that the artistic community came to appreciate the soundness of Hofmann's theories about the nature of the picture plane and the construction of a plastically-oriented painting.

Founding of "The Club"

The Artists who founded "The Club" met in the thirties while on the Federal Art Project, or at meetings of the Unemployed Artists Union, or in Hofmann's school. During the Second World War, the Waldorf Cafeteria on 6th Avenue became a neighbourhood gathering place for downtown artists. Feeling they were unwelcome there, however, they decided to find their own meeting place. In the Fall of 1943 the members met at Ibram Lassaw's studio where the "Subjects of the Artists" lecture series was set up. When this group closed (in 1946), the Friday night lectures by visiting artists were in jeopardy. Tony Smith and Hal Woodruff, along with some of their students at New York University, took over

a loft, named it Studio 35 and continued the Friday night gatherings. These meetings continued until April 30th, 1950.

The atmosphere at The Club (Studio 35) was meant to be informal. It provided a place where artists could escape the loneliness of their studios, meet their peers and exchange ideas. Speakers came on Friday nights, and round-table discussions were organized for the members on Wednesday evenings. Many of these sessions were recorded by Robert Motherwell and published in a newsletter circulated by the Club. Many of Hofmann's theories appeared in this newsletter and were avidly read by the art community and by his own students.

Hofmann's Lectures

The existence of the Hans Hofmann's School of Art helped to sustain the spirits of many young artists. "It brought to America for the first time the highly professional imperturbably art for art's sake urbanity" (Rosenberg, 1964, p. 131). Hofmann, the very model of a maestro, never for the slightest moment doubted the power of art to survive. "His influential series of lectures during the 1938-39 school year were well attended not only by students, but by many who later became prominent artists and critics, notably Arshile Gorky, Willem de Kooning, Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg" (Lane, 1984. p.71). Greenberg responded to these

lectures in his writing: "For myself, just beginning to see abstract art, these lectures were crucial. At no time, then, or since, has anyone understood cubism in this country as thoroughly as Hofmann did". (Greenberg, 1961, p. 232).

Hofmann's keen sense of analysis, and his sense of drama made him an effective speaker. These lectures helped to establish his status as a major teacher and spokesman for modern abstraction as it developed in New York during the thirties and forties. A further outcome of his presence, was the second generation of New York Abstract Expressionist painters, (such as Larry Rivers, Grace Hartigan and Helen Frankenthaler), more of whom studied with Hofmann than any other teacher in the United States or Europe.

Hofmann's Painting

In considering Hofmann's contributions as a teacher and his place in the American art scene, it is necessary to examine his development as a painter in the decades following his arrival in the United States. His growth as an artist paralleled his development as a teacher. He was an artist-teacher in that he continued to explore his art and brought these discoveries to the classroom. Up until 1936 he devoted himself to writing, drawing and to establishing the Hofmann School on 8th Street. Only after accomplishing this did he return to painting in earnest. As early as 1943 he began

pitting one area of highly-keyed colour against another, deriving form from the tensions created by colours interacting. In 1948 Bartlett Hayes introduced Hofmann and his work to the Eastern seaboard by organizing the first Hans Hofmann retrospective at the Addison Gallery of Art. This historic exhibition included a wide selection of Hofmann drawings, and many ink drawings from the thirties and forties which were largely unknown to the public. Hofmann was 68 years-old at the time, and was mainly known for his reputation as a teacher.

The drawings, rapidly executed in pen and ink were done during Hofmann's first glimpse of the California coast in 1930. During his early years in the United States Hofmann did not paint in oil, but drew constantly.

According to Hofmann, "simplification is the essence of abstraction from which objective values are not necessarily eliminated" (quoted in Weeks, 1948, p. 65). It was through drawing that Hofmann mastered the art of simplification. A process that he felt needed a long period of gestation. His relationship with the European Expressionist tradition, as he experienced it in the secissionist teachings of Willi Schwartz, created extra difficulties for him in his pursuit of an abstract style. Younger New York painters did not have Hofmann's dilemma. They had not been trained to record observations in a figurative way. Hofmann said that he must

"sweat out cubism" and his solution was to abandon colour and deal exclusively with drawing.

In the end however in order to develop as an abstract painter Hofmann had to disengage himself completely from academic drawing. To deal with the abstract, he felt that he had to first become a cubist painter, for Cubism was for Hofmann the only style that held a potential for abstraction.

Until the late thirties Hofmann continued to use drawing in a descriptive way thereby making his change to abstraction difficult. It was only through the cathartic process of drawing in black and white that he was able to disengage drawing from its illustrational role, and to treat line as an autonomous and increasingly abstract element. "The line as such, is not the creative element, the line is only a further development of the plane" (Hofmann, 1932, unpaginated). This conception of the line as independent of its representational function was vital to Hofmann's emergence as an abstract artist. Because he persisted working mainly in black and white during the decade of the thirties, he gradually acquired the ability to isolate shapes in space, and use line as a means of expressing rhythm and movement. This ultimately gave Hofmann greater power to use colour as an emotional expression in his later painting of abstractions.

Chapter Five

Teaching the Foundations of Modern Art

Hofmann's theories developed through nearly fifty years of teaching and painting, and became a substantial contribution toward much of contemporary theory about abstract art. Hofmann taught the history of painting as a source of timeless values. Although the revolution that sparked these values had long reached its zenith in Europe, his American students received his message with a contemporary enthusiasm as if it were something very new.

Hofmann's educational aim was to avoid pinning down the students in any style or movement. He wanted to maximize for them the valid possibilities of their style.

> Absorbing the School's systematisation of the Hofmann pictorial approach, the students could start in whatever time-direction he was prompted to by his temperament or by his mood, always assured that he remained inside the canon of modern art. (Rosenberg, 1964, p. 134)

Hofmann, reflecting upon what had been his intentions when he first arrived in the United States, stated, "When I came to America I presented myself not as a painter of a certain style but through the fame of my Munich School" (Kuh, 1960, p. 119). Hofmann used cubist concepts to create form

on the canvas space. Unlike Renaissance painters he did not create the illusion of a hole in the wall of the canvas and place forms within it. He tried to solve the problem of the picture plane by using the maxim, "form exists in space ... What exists in form must also exist in space." Space and form are interrelated in that "space in an object incorporates the objective world in its limits and space in front and behind the object, infinity" (Hofmann, 1937, p. 37). The relationship between form and space was "the conception of vacancy, the unfulfilled space is therefore an object". The unity of form and space "exists in three dimensions which correspond to the two dimensionality of the picture plane" (Hofmann, 1932, p. 10).

During the late forties, fees at the Hofmann school averaged twenty to thirty dollars a week for full-time students. Hofmann attended day or night class at least twice a week either to discuss or criticize or set up the model for the week. This is how Nell Blane described the effort and care Hofmann put into his teaching.

> He'd spend hours putting the still-life together, those set-ups, using cloth and objects to delineate movements in space. They were rhythmic, they were never academic or stiff. (Munro, 1977, p. 265)

But Hofmann seemed aloof to his students and it was difficult to become acquainted with him. Because of this impression and the enigmatic style in which Hofmann expressed

himself, the students developed a vigorous interchange among themselves. The class spirit developed around, not in spite of Hofmann. Hofmann would work on his students' drawings.

> Frequently Hofmann demonstrated his compositional principles by drawing Cubistic diagrams in the margins of his students' compositions, a practice begun when he started teaching in Munich in 1915. At first he corrected their drawings rather literally, but later he started "to draw only diagrammatically because so many students copied his style without understanding it". Unlike his discussions of art, which sometimes seemed unnecessarily obtuse. Hofmann's instructional diagrams and drawings were simple and direct, and for many students they were most effective in clarifying his ideas. (Goodman, 1985)

This proved to be an invigorating experience for some, such as artist Michael Goldberg, who recalls,

> Hofmann would work on the drawings which was wonderful because you got an idea of how things could be composed. What was really vitally important were the other students in the school and the fact that almost everybody sooner or later would drop in - John Grillo, Milton Resnick, Jan Mueller and a lot of other people. (Goldberg, quoted in Seitz, 1963)

Although the students who attended the Hofmann school had different backgrounds and different levels of enthusiasm for art; "Hofmann was able to bring out the true artist and the individual in each of his students" (Jarvis, quoted in Lee, 1966, p. 94). He was able to establish a sympathetic climate in the studio -- to stimulate lesser talents in spite of his somewhat intimidating manner.

According to Rosenberg, Hofmann could capture the attention of his students, less through lecturing or instructing, than through demonstrating, critiquing and through his own inimitable authoritative personality and presence. Students were either in awe of him, or inspired by him. "They would all stand up when he entered the room, then one of them would take his hat and coat" (Lee, 1966, p. 95). "Hofmann would work and rework a piece to the extent of ripping it up and repiecing it together in order to reveal new possibilities" (Seitz, 1963, Freilicher).

An important factor to the growing reputation of Hofmann's school was the existence of monthly criticism sessions. They were an important event. Artists who did not attend the school were often present. "In Provincetown artists and other visitors from all over the Cape congregated on Fridays to watch this theatrical event" (Goodman, 1986, p. 29). At these sessions Hofmann would pick everything apart through demonstration or gesture in his halting English. "People that could not take it left the school" (Sutherland, interview, Freilicher, Dec. 1983).

Hofmann's summer school in Provincetown had much the same class organization and approach as his New York school. In both, the students drew directly from the model, or from still-life. "In New York the models were more diverse and interesting according to Don Jarvis" (Lee, 1966, p. 96). Provincetown models tended to be Rubanesque figures. At the

summer school models were only employed for the morning session. Landscape and still life subjects could be developed by the students in the afternoon (Lee, 1966, p. ?).

In Provincetown nightly critiques were held on the day's work. These sessions, except for Friday night, were less theatrical and more intimate. Smaller classes permitted a more personal exchange between Hofmann and his class. Hofmann was known to invite his students over to his home in the evenings. The art critic Harold Rosenberg said that there were many spinsters who attended the summer school. Jane Freilicher also corroborated that these students developed "crushes on Hofmann, but there were only a few of them" (Sutherland interview, Freilicher, 1983, N.Y.C.). She suggested that the majority of the students were very serious.

Hofmann's message was "enthusiasm, for the artist as a human type and for art as a style of feeling" (Rosenberg, 1964, p. 17). This, any of his students could grasp, whatever else they missed of his message, merely by being near him. As the disciple of the Chassidic Maggid said, "there is meaning in how he tied and untied his shoe laces" (Rosenberg, 1964, p. 148). Beyond the Cézannesque formulas of depth in the picture plane, and his own concept of push-pull, there was Hofmann's ability to exemplify his vision. Hofmann was

> content to think with his back to the life of the times because everything in front of him was bursting with life. Below Hofmann's analytical style lay a species of animism that endowed an independent life to every element an artist handled or contemplated. (Rosenberg, 1964, p. 20)

"Pictorial life is not imitated life; it is, on the contrary," stated Hofmann "a created reality based on the inherent life within the medium of expression, we have only to awaken it" (quoted in Weeks, 1948, p. 70). This was the "feeling into" aspect of the teachings of Hans Hofmann which complimented the drawing aspect. When Hofmann spoke of "seeing" to his students he was referring to visual awareness. "I am supposed to have contributed my share as an artist and as a teacher by the offering of a multiple awareness. This awareness I consider to constitute a visual awareness and a pictorial creation" (quoted in Tuchman, 1967, p. 83).

For Hofmann, seeing without awareness as a visual act was just short of blindness. "Seeing with awareness is a visual experience" (quoted in Tuchman, 1967, p. 83). This was stressed in his classes through the continuous use of the still-life and the model: a structured form of seeing. This approach he drew from Cubism. "We must learn to see," he said, "The interpretation in pictorial terms of what we see is another art" (quoted in Tuchman, 1969, p. 83).

Hofmann's ultimate goal was to give his students freedom based on knowledge. The first problem in which Hofmann instructed his students was the problem of how the eye views a painting. This he called, "optical experience, experience of nature" (Hofmann, 1932, p. 4). He diagramed that appearance as absolutely parallel to the axis of the eye.

> The mystery of plastic creation is based on the dualism of the two dimensional and the three dimensional reality is different than it appears to be. Reality is three dimensional, appearance is two dimensional. (Hofmann, 1932, p. 1)

Representation, Hofmann explains in Plastic Creation (1932) is two-dimensional. He tried to teach his students to see the presentation of a three-dimensional reality as if it were a two dimensional appearance. Hofmann taught that mere mechanical vision not backed by a spiritual projection leads to a spiritless imitation (Hofmann, 1932, p. 2).

Hofmann describes pictorial creation this way:

> Pictorial creation is based on:
> 1. eyesight
> 2. visual experience
> 3. plastic interpretation of visual experience
> 4. pictorial realization of the entire visual experience
> 5. awareness of the inherent laws of the picture surface, the medium employed to create the picture surface. (Hofmann, 1932)

Source of Inspiration

If "visioning", for Hofmann was a creative act, his model of creativity was nature. For Hofmann, all art must begin with nature. Nature acts as the creative stimulus, as a visual model. It was on this premise that he advocated the importance of the use of the human figure and the still life as basis for drawing. The master stressed continuously that the object was not there to be rendered as a photographic image.

Nell Blane, who studied with Hofmann and influenced many younger artists like Larry Rivers and Jane Freilicher, stated, "Hofmann helped you to see what was false, to know the difference between organic and static. He had the insight to know what you were trying to do and help you with it" (Blane, quoted in Seitz, 1963).

The above quotation signifies Hofmann's ability to see into, to emphasize with the direction in which a student was going. As Hofmann explained, empathy was the primary quality needed not only to produce art, but also "to experience art, to enjoy art, and particularly to criticize art" (Hofmann, 1931, p. 13). One of his most enduring qualities was the intellectual stimulation students derived from his lectures, and critiques. The work produced had to be more than decoration. Students had to harmoniously utilize all the aspects of good painting - seeing, feeling and drawing.

Hofmann articulated his belief that the goal of a painter was to explore intuitively. He wanted his students to discover the communicative secrets by which nature affects their sensibility. His students were the recipients of that knowledge and they in turn helped to form the cultural climate of the New York School in its early development. "The feeling into quality as Hofmann described it, must have involved immense dedication and concentration on the part of the student and his work" (Sawin, 1982, p. 101).

"Perhaps no other single force has had as much influence in the formation of our present abstract expressionist idiom as Hans Hofmann" (Seitz, 1963, p. 70). This willingness to pay homage, echoes the remarks of many of Hofmann's former students, whose reflections of Hofmann as a teacher are an essential part of any attempt to understand his contribution.

Views of the Students

Perhaps the essence of Hofmann's genius as a teacher can be best expressed by the reactions of his painting students.

> The great majority of people have the means to plastic beauty as part of their natural equipment. The teacher can develop their natural endowment as Necessity, the greatest teacher has developed speech. (Weeks, 1948, p. 53)

Hofmann did not underestimate the role of the teacher, who must go beyond instruction in craftsmanship.

> As a teacher I became aware that while talent is everywhere, it does not make the artist. It is often a handicap because it invites cleverness, which always chooses the easier solution. It is paramount for the artist that his search and his efforts are constantly weighed by doubt and modesty. (Wilson, 1983, p. 1)

Hofmann saw the role of the art teacher as having great power and meaning in the society as a whole.

> The problem of art is not limited to the problems of artistic development but includes the problem of how to produce artists, comprehending teachers, art understanding in general and art enjoyment in particular. (Weeks, 1948, p. 56)

Hofmann believed that the results of this kind of teaching depended on the context in which the talent was developed.

> It must be influenced from the outside. You are the result of time. You are also the creator of this time, which all goes hand in hand to make your work significant. (Jaffe, 1971, p. 35)

Hofmann believed "that the teacher of painting must function as a giver of the freedom of creativity. He cannot be a director, trainer, or indoctrinator" (Weeks, 1986, p. 21). The teaching of painting appears to be, for Hofmann, closer to what might be called instructing. Instructing for him, involved a kind of conversation, the object of which was to give reasons, weigh the evidence and justify, conclude and explain. Hofmann seemed to engage in this process a great

deal. The following statement clarifies what Hofmann felt he should accomplish as a teacher, and it seems to correspond to many of his students' descriptions of his style of teaching. "He gave example, force, direction and flavor -- and in so doing revealed himself as a generous teacher based on freedom rather than meddling" (Seitz, 1963, p. 101).

Hofmann believed that freedom was the reward given to students who were first willing to learn the lessons of the picture plane.

> The allowing of unlimited freedom in art eduction will either bring out the real talent or it will kill all mediocrity and all false mystification of one's real nature. I must however admit, that the allowing of unlimited freedom in art education can be as bad for a half-talent as it is good for a real, original talent. It depends on the individual involved and on the other dualities he offers as a human being. Only professional integrity, rigorous self-discipline and complete knowledge of one's self will form the master. (Hofmann, 1959, p. 226)

Hofmann's key seems to have been a combination of discipline and self-knowledge.

> His theories were not as vital as he was - through himself and his painting, art was revealed as a reality of living worth a lifetime effort. The basic subjects of his curriculum were himself and the excitement of art. (Seitz, 1963, p. 57)

Hofmann's advocacy of the worthiness of art stirred many of his pupils into a sense of destiny about their lives.

> We were put in touch with a notion foreign to our soil that our work was a Destiny, but one that had a time-honoured practical method, rigorous but clear and in no way antithetical to the idea of the New. Thus, at one stroke we were confronted with a metaphysics and a technique, a sense of the living past and an involvement with the moment. (Kaprow, 1966, p. 1)

"Hofmann had a knack of instilling in his students a sound judgement in technical principles but he was most helpful in encouraging students to search for the unknown and see what comes out" (Seitz, 1963, Goodnough). Robert Goodnough describes the essence of Hofmann's teaching this way. "He made his students feel that it was necessary to find out what was basic in what they do rather than be satisfied with the appearance or technical aspect of their work" (Goodnough, quoted in Seitz, 1963).

> In the rough treatment he sometimes gave to their work, wiping out drawings or painting over what might be nice, he showed that results could not come easily and that one should forget preciousness and try for the clearest expression he could achieve. (Freilicher, quoted in Seitz, 1963, unpaginated unpublished)

There are many documented statements by Hofmann's former students which corroborated this important goal of experimentation and discipline. "Hofmann's ability to stimulate enthusiasm and excitement and encourage original and independent thinking was phenomenal" (Blâne, quoted in Seitz, 1963).

Jean Follet felt that Hofmann was "absolutely the only teacher (extraordinaire) in our generation in the way of visual arts" (quoted in Seitz, 1963). She attributed the fresh and vital quality of art in America solely due to the influence of Hans Hofmann" (Follet, quoted in Seitz, 1963). His method was to urge his students to:

> Be not afraid, trust yourself, and your deepest impressions and put forth your statements with all the vigor at your command so that the large over-all impact will be overpowering. (Follet, quoted in Seitz, 1963)

This description by Follet seems a little overwhelming. But analysis of these former students' statements reveals that Hofmann taught his students how to think, and how to engage in the active relation of one part of a painting to another and the courage to experiment and recognize new discoveries. The nature of Hofmann's pedagogy was to find and deal with the forces within nature and that pictorial creation was the essential aim in their search.

> Every work of art represents a new Reality which exists nowhere else outside of its one existence. It is always a spiritual reality, and as such it represents another - a new - pearl in the string of human cultural documentation. It comes into existence by growth like everything in nature. A work of art is documented by a common denominator. This common denominator is the personality of the artist - his soul and his mind, his sensibility and his temperament. Through it "experience" is summarized into pictorial language - that is to say, into a pictorial message. This message is

> of deepest concern to the artist. (Hofmann, 1952, p. 200)

Fifty students, who were interviewed by William Seitz, for a retrospective of Hofmann's students in the Museum of Modern Art in 1963, all remember Hofmann's teachings. "He revealed to me invisible forces which exist in nature and showed me how to conquer them in a formal and informal way" (Freed, quoted in Seitz, 1963). "All was discovering," said Nell Blane, "He did not impose a personal style but allowed students to pursue their own vision" (quoted in Seitz, 1963).

The use of geometrical shapes to outline the forces within the still-life or model were a basic tenet of Hofmann's instruction of composition. "Hofmann's persistent use of triangles, rectangles, and directional arrows were the impersonal system of analyzing movement outside the still-life and model, and were always connected to nature and its forces" (Rhyder, quoted in Seitz, 1963).

Student comments reveal that Hofmann had both a rationale and a philosophy for the new approach to pictorial creation and an uncanny perception and grasp of their problems, whether it was psychological or compositional. , "It was his gift to help you see what was false," remarked Grace Hartigan (quoted in Seitz, 1963, p. 100). "He treated everyone as an individual, saw your needs and really had insight to know what you were trying to do and help you with it, that was the great gift he had" (Munro, 1971, p. 226).

While it may be true that only students who were successful responded to questionnaires, we have no way of knowing.

Many of the students who came to Hofmann's classes were already serious artists. Hofmann was a catalyst for many different kinds of people. For Myron Stout, Hofmann's very presence, the simultaneously sensuous and analytical ideas about art that emanated from Hofmann's critiques, helped him to unlock his potential. "He was an exemplary teacher, and I think respect seems to best sum up what he gave to Stout" (Schwartz, 1980, p. 64).

Language of Modern Painting

The creative power of Hofmann's precepts lay in "supplying principles to back up those paintings when they and the spirit that produced them seem threatened with oblivion" (Rosenberg, 1964, p. 145). In its technical aspect this insistence had to do with a student learning how to organize forms in relation to one another on a single plane of the picture surface rather than causing them to recede through illusory devices of perspective. Depth and the suggestion of depth were two expressions that Hofmann used often and they meant something essential to the new glossary of painting terms. For Hofmann they also encompassed psychological dimensions of the artist. "Art is a reflection of the spirit, a result of introspection which

finds its expression in the nature of the picture medium" (Weeks, 1948, p. 70). The painter's sense of volume, as Hofmann taught it, was contained in two-dimensional picture space, from which he elicited depth. This apprehension of intrinsic values and the power to feel into the nature of things was the axis of Hofmann's entire pedagogy.

> Rooted in the German philosophical tradition, Hofmann defined empathy as "the intuitive faculty to sense qualities of formal and spatial relations, or tensions, and to discover the plastic and psychological qualities of form and color." (Goodman, p. 67, 1985)

When Hofmann explained his ideas about the picture plane, he seemed able to explain the secret of the whole painting. The same held true whether he was discussing interactions of positive-negative space or colour-movement relation. Thus a student having difficulties might hear about the awareness of space and its relationship to things in nature. "A plethora of visual forms was provided by his choice of nature as the touchstone of artistic inspiration" (Goodman, 1985, p. 103).

In form, Hofmann's concept of teaching remained substantially the same as it was in his Munich days. But after World War II these concepts had been transformed by the references supplied by the new American painting which seemed to be designed specifically for his teaching as much as his teaching seemed designed for it. In the emergence of Action

painting the student could see in operation Hofmann's intuition of forces, conflicts, explosions of energy. The new works were based on a division of surface, and the juxtaposition of planes, which revivified much of what Hofmann had been teaching. Hofmann dedicated himself to translating the terms he had worked out as guidelines, through which his peers and students could understand and evolve their own painting. In emphasizing the forces beneath the act of painting, he did not preclude a finished image for his students. For Hofmann, the forces of nature, the act of painting and the process of teaching all seemed to be metaphors for each other; each reality kept the others on fire. Terms that Hofmann used in his pedagogy became a lexicon of principles for understanding and explaining the new art. Both Harold Rosenberg and Clement Greenberg utilized his phraseology in their earlier art criticisms. "His views of pictorial space were echoed by Greenberg in his earliest criticisms" (Ashton, 1972, p. 82).

Hofmann approached the problems of painting with an immediate physicality which was very attractive to his audiences in New York.

> In life, Hofmann was a very large man with a commanding manner, by the mid-thirties, 20 or more years as a teacher had reinforced his inborn powers of persuasion: artists and critics alike were deeply impressed when he got to his feet. (Russell, 1974, p. 300)

Hofmann introduced an element of bodily involvement in which painting became "an affair of prodding and pushing, scoring and marking, rather than simply inscribing and covering" (Russell, 1974, p. 301). Tensions were translated into push-pull theory. Convinced of the verity of the laws which existed as a basis for structuring the picture plane, he included Cubist principles into his modernist experimentation; and his directions paralleled much of the contemporary work being done in New York. Hofmann's beliefs were echoed in the canvasses of Pollock and the Action painters. "In so far as any one man could set up the conditions for the new American painting that man was Hans Hofmann" (Russell, 1974, p. 302).

Between the objective pictorial grammar derived from Cubist sources and the subjective metaphysics from Kandinsky and Klee lay ample territory for American students to explore. The terms which Hofmann originated in his studio talks were soon to be common language of art students and critics. Such phrases as positive space and negative space were easily adapted into criticism, and the idea that the picture plane was "inviolable" was especially appealing to critics wishing to defend the new abstract painting. Depth in the pictorial sense was not created by the arrangement of objects one after another toward a vanishing point in the sense of the Renaissance perspective, but, on the contrary, in the creation of forces in the sense of "push and pull".

> Plasticity was created by the forces that Hofmann referred to as "push and pull", a phrase he used so often that it became nearly synonymous with his style of painting. The analogy he used to explain "push-pull" was that of a balloon being pressed on one side and consequently expanding on the other. In a painting, the visual movement of one plane forward must be counteracted by the movement of another plane back into depth in order to restore the two-dimensional balance. Each time the picture plane is stimulated, it "reacts automatically in the opposite direction to the stimulus received." According to the artist's most succinct explanation, "Push answers with Pull and Pull with Push." (Goodman, 1985, p. 41)

Hofmann's description of spiritual (invisible) forces in the canvas space, was one of Hofmann's greatest contribution to the language of modern painting.

Importance of Drawing

All the students who entered Hofmann's atelier were instructed to draw from the model. Hofmann constantly stressed the value of drawing. Through the medium of drawing he was able to have his students incorporate the concepts he wished them to grasp about the nature of the picture plane. Through exercises involving a still-life and the model he could help them become aware of certain vital principles which governed plastic creation. "The creative process lies not in imitating," he said, "but in paralleling nature -- translating the power from nature into the medium of

expression, thus vitalizing the medium" (Weeks, 1948, p. 55).

For this reason he stressed the importance of drawing exercises. Through a Cubistic approach he could have his students explore the plastic significance of the picture-plane as a two dimensional reality. He could teach them to shift from a "line" to a "plane". Using the model as a representation of reality rather then attempting to draw appearance. The figure gradually becomes a vehicle primarily for describing the relationship of solids to voids. Through drawing and redrawing the model, his students, he hoped could grasp the concepts underlying all creative work: "If things are other than they appear, then the limited capacity of our sense must be united through an inner vision" (Weeks, 1948, p. 62).

The continuous use of a model enabled Hofmann to set up a situation in which his students could comprehend the object as located in space, and this process was designed to dissolve for them the false antithesis between abstract and representational values in art, to give them scope to be informed by both sources.

> Hofmann, however, made himself most clear by demonstrating his concepts, not by talking about them. As Larry Rivers has recalled, "There was always a nude model in some pose which would make Hofmann's push and pull magic on Tuesday and Friday a more discernible reality." (Goodman, 1985, p. 41)

Hofmann believed that artists who work independently of the superficial chance-aspect of nature use the accumulation of experience gained from nature as the source of their inspiration. "Thus, it makes no difference whether [an artist's] work is naturalistic or abstract; every visual expression follows the same fundamental laws" (Weeks, 1948, p. 63). The school produced a distinctive version of drawing not at all like that of the Cubists. "The student was asked to focus his attention on the model, and try to comprehend that it was not the model as an isolated figure that was of primary interest but the energies meeting and clashing that gave form to the space she was occupying" (Rosenberg, 1963, p. 136).

The students' studies reflected planes and shapes as intersections of forces. "All movements are of a spatial nature. The continuation of movement throughout space is rhythm. Thereby rhythm is the expression of life in space" (Hofmann, quoted in Weeks, 1948, p. 66). This sense of rhythm, which was initiated through a study of nature in the drawing medium, became the underlying cohesive force informing a visual language of painting.

Importance of Colour

After 1943 Hofmann turned his attention seriously to the use of colour in his work. After that he placed a greater

emphasis on colour theory in his lectures and teaching. "Hofmann found the fulness of colour and surface in the direct process of painting" (Lee, 1966, p. 58).

Hofmann treated colour relationships as an independent system which had to be co-ordinated by the artist with the other formal aspects of composition. Hofmann tried to convey a sense of meaning and importance to colour. Colour was not only a plastic means of expression, but, properly used, could reveal the deepest, the most mystic qualities of life. Hofmann taught that:

> Colour is an agent to give the highest aesthetic enjoyment. The emotion-releasing faculty of colour related to the formal aspect of work becomes a means to awaken in us feelings in which the medium of expression responds analogically when we attempt to realize our experience creatively. (Hofmann, 1932, p. 18)

In his manual, The Painter and his Problems from which the above quotation was taken, Hofmann discusses the effects which can be made through simultaneous contrast between juxtaposed colours. The colours, he says, react as intervals. "Intervals were colour harmonies produced by spatial relationships and he differentiated between formal tensions and colour tensions in the same way we differentiate between counterpoint and harmony" (Weeks, 1946, p. 57). Hofmann explains how colour appears differently in different situations and creates intervals at its edges. Equal areas of black and white on the same plane appear to be different

in size. This same principle underlies the artist's perception when painting with colour. Different coloured squares will appear to be different in size. This also occurs when a number of squares are looked at in different lights, as Hofmann demonstrated. He emphasized that the artist must experience the different appearances of the various colours and learn how to utilize them in building compositions.

Hofmann analyzed colour as basic to our psychological perception;

> The creative possibilities of color are not limited to plastic expression: although the composition of color is one of the most important factors in determining the qualitative content of a painting, the reciprocal relation of color to color produces a phenomenon -- of a more mysterious order. The new phenomenon is psychological. A high sensitivity is necessary in order to expand color into the sphere of the surreal without losing creative ground. Color stimulates certain moods in us. It awakens joy or fear in accordance with its configuration. (Quoted in Weeks, 1948, p. 45)

Hofmann further developed the notion that colour functions in interaction with plane, line and texture to create the sensation of volume and depth. For him, the greatest luminosity of colour creates the greatest volume.

In addition to the formal and psychological aspects of colour Hofmann was interested in its mystical qualities which resulted from his view of nature. "In the act of predominance and assimilation, colors love and hate each

other, thereby helping to make the creative intention of the artist possible" (Hofmann, 1915, p. 10). The painter was to begin visualizing volumes and voids in nature, then to translate them into planes of colour in accord with the nature of the picture surface.

Hofmann's use of colour depended increasingly on seeking and defining relationships in space. He taught his students to begin by the academic process derived from the work of Cézanne, of building form through colour. Hofmann seems to parallel aesthetically the outlook of modern scientific philosophers who "conceive of the relative, interdependent existence of matter and space" (Lee, 1966, p. 65). "We must force color to become a creative means," stated Hofmann.

> We do this in sensing the inner life by which colors respond to one another through the created actuality of intervals. An interval is analogous to a thought emotion fragment in the creative process through which an idea is communicated. (Hofmann, quoted in Weeks, 1948, p. 71)

Through his lessons about colour including its psychological association with the inner feeling of the artist, Hofmann made connections which would help his students perceive their inner selves through their painting: that is, to understand the "élan vital" which can somehow be touched. Hofmann taught that the force of colour could be used to that end, and that the interrelationship of all the plastic elements in the picture, in harmony with the artist's

inner vision, could produce a "creation". His theories on colour and its uses (Form und Farbe in der Gestung) were translated by former student Glenn Weissels into a Textbook for Instruction in Art (1931).

The Meaning of Composition

Hofmann's sources of compositional structure came directly from the Cubists work. It was the basis of his own painting. Composition for Hofmann was perhaps the most essential formation to be taught. To organize a picture demanded certain underlying principles. The concept of two-dimensionality can be traced to his insights as a student in Paris and to the discoveries of the Impressionists. Even Hofmann's theories concerning the push-pull theory are rooted in his Parisian studies. Barbara Rose writes, "Hofmann's understanding of Cézanne's conception of pictorial space was that it required an art of active focusing -- of empathy on the part of the spectator rather than a passive acceptance of depicted flatness" (Rose, 1978, p. 14).

Nell Blane, a student who absorbed Hofmann's theories of pictorial composition writes: "He was simply trying to be extraordinarily explicit about where something was positioned in space" (Blane, quoted in Seitz, 1963).

> He would say, "Where is this? and tell me where this is?" And then, it's true he'd be annoyed if you didn't know, if you weren't dealing with

> the problem, because he had worked so hard to set up the still life. I guess my sense of composition was greatly influenced by Hofmann. (Blane, quoted in Munro, 1979, p. 257)

Pictorial space for Hofmann was "real magic". Movement and countermovement resulted in tensions. Tensions were expressions of forces. Forces were the expression of actions. The empty paper was transformed by the simplest graphic means into a universe of action. However, when the two-dimensionality of the picture was destroyed, it fell into parts and created naturalistic space. This meant that it represented only a portion of what was felt about three dimensional experience. The expression of the artist's experience was thus incomplete and therefore ineffective. Throughout his teachings Hofmann consistently referred to and reiterated the notion that

> the artist must not "poke holes" in the surface. To keep this under control the artist must understand that a line, as a concept alone, cannot control pictorial space. The sense of movement on a flat surface occurs through a shifting left and right, up and down. Thus, the plastic depth is never static, but, like nature itself, is always active. From this the artist creates a sense of animation in the picture plane. The composition comes alive when forces work in relationship with something else. (Quoted in Newbury, 1980, p. 139)

In composition, Hofmann placed his emphasis on pictorial, as opposed to naturalistic space. He demonstrated this when he would "literally tear up the student's drawing into a number of pieces, and then rearrange them in relation

to the picture plane" (Seitz, 1963, Freilicher). "By revising and redrawing a composition Hofmann revealed his own vision of the space in the subject. He drew with a masterful skill and fury, explaining his concepts of composition with unmistakable clarity" (Seitz, 1963).

During the New York years Hofmann was particularly concerned with the difficult concept of creating pictorial space with "shifting" planes. These "shifting" planes became the highest aim in his painting. "The shifting concept also offers the most profound understanding of the plastic space of Mondrian" (Lee, 1966, p. 80).

As a result of these insights, student Erle Loran published a study of Cézanne's paintings based on Hofmann's technique of diagramming forces in a composition. He wrote,

> Hofmann's aesthetic concepts constitute the most comprehensive and practical approach to teaching painting and drawing that has been achieved. For example, if you put Leonardo's treatise of painting into practice you get only the worst aspects of the study of anatomy, lights, shades and perspective. Leonardo gives no clues to the basic problem of composition. It was only through their great intuition that Renaissance artists were able to counteract and transcend the painful limitations imposed by the mechanical rules of perspective. Hofmann formulated a vast program of aesthetic principles that does not constitute a set of rules but opens up to the creative man the most unlimited possibilities for exploiting the imagination and the purely intuitive levels of creative thought. For this reason I can reach only one conclusion: that Hans Hofmann is the greatest teacher of painting and composition who has appeared since the Renaissance. (Quoted in Seitz, 1963).

Writings

The basic premise of Hofmann's aesthetic philosophy was a unique combination of mysticism, introversion, faith and intellectual precision. Hofmann invoked duality, ambivalence and dialogue in his writings. In Hofmann's Plastic Creation published in the Art Students League Magazine (New York, Winter 1932-33) he states, "The mystery of plastic creation is based upon the dualism of the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional" (Hofmann, 1932-33). The possibility of maintaining two totally different painting expressions continued to be an interest throughout his writing career. This investigation was contemporary with much of the new approach to painting developing in New York at the time. A connection developed between those paintings that pursue the idea of a pure and rational plasticism and those "spontaneous inventions that arise from an unconscious response to the means of art" (Fritz Bultman, 1963, p. 43). Hofmann saw this dynamic in all of life, but especially in the "fusion created by friction of opposition" (Bultman, 1963, p.54). It was through this basic antagonism of forces, that Hofmann saw a new order being created. This process led to a special quality that was the real goal of his aesthetic.

"Significant pictorial realization demands on the part of the artist a constant weighing of quality against quality"

(Hofmann, Spring 1915, p. 1). This was an important basis for his writings and his pedagogy. Hofmann wrote,

> the problem of art teaching is not limited to the problem of artistic development itself. It is evident that art may be taught only upon the basis of a highly developed sensitivity for quality (Weeks, 1948, p. 49).

"Hofmann's impact is still being felt, both by second generation artists who were students of his own students and by those artists at first unfamiliar with his theories with a sense of mystery through his quite extensive writings on the theory of art" (Lee, 1966, p. 7).

Hofmann wrote "that an idea has a certain specific medium through which it can be expressed" (Weeks, 1948, p. 46). Hofmann attempted to express this as a spiritual quality in art.

Hofmann did not teach a formula for the creation of work of art, but rather a basis for the making of a work of art, in his fostering of the creative process. "These ideas are not the definitive writings on the creation of a work of art but rather what Hofmann expected each individual artist to develop from such concepts as he himself had done" (Lee, 1966, p. 126). The spirit that Hofmann tried to elaborate in his writings is a non-physical yet living reality derived from the artist.

> That spirit in a work of art is synonymous with its quality. The real in art never dies because

> its nature is predominantly spiritual. (Hofmann, quoted in Weeks, 1946, p. 70)
>
> Hofmann's volubility was an asset to the community. To the end of his long life, he continued to express in words what he knew about the language of painting. (Russell, 1974, p. 303)
>
> The significance of Hofmann's theory - in a tradition that includes the writings of Malevitch, Kandinsky, Klee and Mondriann - is comparable to that of his painting and like his painting it opens the door to a truly spiritual view of art and life. (Seitz, 1963, p. 8)

Teacher-Student Relations

Of all the tributes to Hofmann made by his former students, the most numerous ones attest to Hofmann's ability to see the individual in his classes as unique and teachable.

"He gave so much to the people who could use it, treated everyone as an individual, saw your needs and really had the insight to know what you were trying to do and help you with it" (Munro, 1979, p. 166).

Empathizing, or feeling into the picture, was an intrinsic part of Hofmann's pedagogical process. He utilized that intuitive process in the teaching of his students, and this characterized Hofmann's classroom style. He had time for people, and took all newcomers and their work seriously. His primary aim was

> to draw the student whether through reason or feeling into the universe of the canvas. This could only be done through a one-to-one contact with the student. The ability of Hofmann to

> place himself in the student's shoes and think along with him was an ability he developed over many years of teaching. When he first opened the Munich school, he gave art lessons to shell-shocked soldiers returning from the Great War. (Newbury, 1980, p. 63)

It was for this reason that the German government had granted permission for a school. In this school he utilized the arts of drawing and painting as therapy (Newbury. 1980. p. 63). "He developed a theory that the act of creation enabled a disturbed personality to rebuild itself" (Newbury, 1980, p. 64). This knowledge led him to take a personal interest in his students on a one-to-one basis. "I think that he could read his individual students profoundly, and with some establish a rapport without in any way diminishing his imposing stature or his authority" (Stankiewicz, quoted in Seitz, 1963).

Hofmann believed in "the quality of Geisigkeit -- this spirituality was for Hofmann a sixth sense ... the ability to see or look into things in depth, to discover the inner life" (Jaffe, 1970, p. 35). Ann Tabachnick summarized this quality as "a great gift for seeing what each one of his students could see, and forcing us to go a little further, each day, in our own direction - toward the goal" (quoted in Seitz, 1963).

Hofmann was genuinely concerned about his students' progress in assimilating his approach to pictorial creation. Yet, although he was sometimes an overbearing authoritarian

figure, he insisted that his students stand fast to their vision. Dorothy Heller relates,

> He did not give himself to his students, he simply was. At school he was very much the Master. One day while painting, I consciously deviated from his "unprofessed" method and introduced a different set of forms. He saw my canvas from a distance, charged over to it like a mad bull and exclaimed that if I wanted to leave I could do so. He then picked up a brush, dipped it in paint, and was about to attack the canvas when I asked him not to touch it. He surprisingly complied to my wishes and later that day, when I met him out walking said, in discussing the incident, that I could go on with my own vision and he would try to respect it. (quoted in Seitz, 1963)

The substance of Hofmann's interaction with his students was a persistent faith in art and beyond art in the human being as artist. "His own being produced the substance of a living human exchange. Above all else, Hofmann endeared himself to his students because he presented a teacher-father figure that wanted them to get ahead and to do so on their own and in their own way" (The Gazette, Dec. 24, 1983, p. A-14). "As important to students was Hofmann's ability to criticize the work of each student in its own terms from within its intentions and premises" (Sandler, 1973, p. 53).

> I suppose the most remarkable thing to me about his instruction was his phenomenal capacity for sympathy and empathy with his students which enabled him to address each individual in a way most pertinent to that individual (Dansler, 1969, p. 52).

This ability to deal with students on a one-to-one basis and to give each one the direction needed was a kind of elasticity rarely seen in art schools at that time. This commitment by Hofmann to foster the personal qualities of each student gave rise to a proliferation of styles.

> There was so many different approaches to painting and drawing going on side by side and you had the feeling that anything was possible. Hofmann breathed that feeling through his one-on-one instruction - How and why I couldn't describe - but surely it was the key to the excitement of the school. (Seitz, 1963, p. 72)

Foundations for Exploration

Hofmann had a tight control over his students through a consistent pedagogy that eliminated any form of experimentation until the basic lessons of his pictorial approach had been mastered.

Hofmann did not espouse the theory that art could be done without the feelings of the artist present in the work. Yet he had a strong desire to give his students the tools in order for them to proceed with their own vision.

> Hofmann's metaphysics conceived of a painting achieved by the push-pull process as a metaphor for the workings of the universe... Hofmann visualized the universe as an organic field of forces or motion galaxies all suspended in tension. (Sandler, 1973, p. 52)

Hofmann's analysis of student work, based on an approach to the picture plane as a two dimensional entity, were combined with his stern refusal to allow students to do "their own thing" until they had mastered this basic premise.

> Every detail that would miss its relation to the spatial totality would only downgrade the entire totality. The artist must therefore master the potentialities inherent in the means of expression as the basis and plastic justification of his created image. (Hofmann, 1915, p. 1)

> Everyone more or less, has talent, a little bit. It then depends on the teacher how the talent is developed. I say, it must develop through work not through a teacher. That means he cannot permit himself to become sentimental or something like that. He must know what he is doing. (Hofmann quoted in Jaffe, 1971, p. 36)

This message by Hofmann was foremost in his approach to his students. Freilicher said that he expected professionalism above everything else from his students (Sutherland, interview, N.Y.C., 1983, p. 7). Hofmann was against early experimentation and many times he was negative and discouraging to the less committed students. He did this for the express purpose of discouraging students from making "nice pictures". But he was a professional and "made those who stuck it out with him also professionals" (Goldberg, quoted in Seitz, 1963). "My warmest memory of the school was the great feeling of professionalism and love of art and life generated by Hofmann. He reached out and included us all, if

we were willing to work very hard at achieving his lessons"
(Goldberg, Seitz, 1963).

Chapter Six

Conclusions

Hofmann's artistic search began as a scientific study of the natural world. He was a creator, an inventor, and the motivation for his scientific experiments was a desire to improve the human condition. As an artist, Hofmann was nurtured by a desire to discover the mysteries of creation and he had a great curiosity about the creative spirit within himself. It can be said that Hofmann tried to deliberately direct his own fate. He was very aware through the Secessionist movement in Munich of the revolutions occurring in modern art. Paris was the centre of the art world at that time (1904) and he wanted to be at the forefront of artistic change. Although Hofmann's search for the "meaning of reality" was not bound by any sense of time, his philosophical position always reflected his adjustment to the changing tides of historical circumstance.

In New York, Hofmann's commitment to the importance of an international community of artists, and to the sense of a spiritual meaning in modern art motivated a number of influential figures in the New York art world. It was in Hofmann's studio that Greenberg developed his views on

pictorial space. Harold Rosenberg also attributes much of his knowledge of the grammar of painting to Hofmann.

Hofmann's vision of the inherent necessity of art in a culture was a major source of devotion among his students. They spoke of him as a "cause", their devotion was "not only to the man who was a large, genial, fatherly figure, but also to the grand culture which he made accessible to them" (Ashton, 1972, p. 80). Aside from his theories he made art glamorous. "He had his finger on the most important thing in an artist's life, which is the conviction that art has an existence and a glamorous one at that" (Larry Rivers, quoted in Seitz, 1963).

Hofmann was successful in many aspects of his long career as a pedagogue. Hofmann's students created a community of believers in "modern art" within the New York art scene undoubtedly due to Hofmann's ability to encourage freedom and communication among his students. This small group of students was also important as a support group for modern work being done outside the Hofmann studio. Clement Greenberg doubts if the Abstract Expressionists would have done as well as they did if not for "the small but sophisticated audience provided by the students and graduates of Hans Hofmann's art school in New York" (Greenberg, 1961, p. 269).

Hofmann stimulated his students and through them helped enhance the artistic level of individual consciousness within

the collective art community. Perle Fine became a teacher of painting and drawing at Hofstra University. She described Hofmann as "the most important teacher I've ever had" (Fine, quoted in Seitz, 1963). Alexandra Luke, a Canadian painter from Oshawa, returned many summers to Provincetown, "accompanied by a number of Canadian artists including Jock MacDonald, who were inspired by her devotion to Hofmann and, his teaching. It was most certainly Luke and her Hofmann connection which provided the first significant contact between Toronto and the New York Abstract Expressionists" (Zemans, 1984, p. 16).

Hofmann influenced Canadian West coast artists Lionel Thomas and Donald Jarvis in their pedagogical outlook. "Thomas was greatly influenced by Hofmann's role as an educator" (Lee, 1966, p. iii). Takao Tanabe said that he rejected Hofmann's theories but Hofmann expected his students to first evolve and then rebel. "The concepts of my school," Hofmann said to Rosenberg the evening before he died, "are fundamental, but a true artist could violate them all" (Rosenberg, 1966, p. 21). This devotion to principle, while placing the creative individual above all principle, represents the essence of Hofmann's pedagogy. Joe Plaskett was an enthusiastic teacher of Hofmann's theories after he left New York to teach at the Winnipeg School of Art. Plasket found Hofmann ruthless "in breaking down our academic and naturalistic vision, pushing us to see them in terms of

the plane and of space dimensions. The intellectual demands Hofmann made on his students were enormous" (Plaskett, 1953, p. 59).

Hofmann's influence extended through and beyond his students. Patrick Landsley recalls the revolutionary effect that Plaskett had on him as a student at the Winnipeg art school.

> Plaskett was not an excitable teacher but he was very committed to what he had learned from Hofmann. He was like a breath of fresh air. I learned so much from him. I found myself using the principles that Plaskett taught us in my own studio teaching. (Sutherland, interview. Montreal. 1985)

Hofmann's teaching methods were perpetuated by his former pupils because it was evident that his theories were based on a solid theoretical foundation of first hand experience. Hofmann could provide both a technique and a convincing rationale for its use. His aims were "the logical consequence of convictions" and his curriculum was "the blueprint for attaining these goals" (Kaelin, 1960, p. 4). Through rigorous, vociferous experimentation and through analysis, Hofmann was able to convey the knowledge he had gathered into a structured, comprehensive curriculum for teaching painting. He also demanded in his classes that certain stages be reached before going on to the next ones. When individual problems arose he was able to provide the

means whereby each student could work towards a unique resolution.

Hofmann also created an atmosphere in his studio that drew people to him. When he discussed "tensions" in a painting he would gesture with his six-foot frame and wave his arms. He had a booming voice that seems to have continued both the love and terror that students felt in his presence. Harold Rosenberg describes the physicality that emanated from Hofmann the teacher.

> I watched him in one of the last years of the school of Provincetown go from easel to easel and literally hurl himself into the drawing of the student, no matter how mediocre, as if through his own concentration he could snatch out of it some perception, which though barely on the border of consciousness, might, once grasped, set that plodder on the road to a developing vision. The teacher emerged from the session, dripping and exhausted like a Channel swimmer. (Rosenberg, 1964, p. 151)

Hofmann's physical presence in the studio created a dynamic that was direct and immediate. His students could get a sense of his message through his pedagogy by merely being present in his classes even if they could not grasp the intellectual content in all its complexity. Hofmann also communicated an important quality of enthusiasm that permeated his teaching. "Many students recalled that Hofmann's greatest contribution to their education was his ability to create a charged atmosphere" (Sandler, 1973, p. 52). Hofmann's seemingly absolute faith in art as the

revelation of a spiritual and universal reality caused him to teach with a powerful conviction, deeply impressing his students. His teaching process was to approach every student as an individual.

> Remarkably responsive and fluid as a teacher, Hofmann could recognize originality in widely varying forms, and much of his school's attraction lay in his ability to perceive the needs and talents of each pupil. (Collage, 1985, p. 1)

This was a major component of his pedagogy.

> He could be relaxed enough to beef up the timid hearts and pompous, blustering and egocentric enough to puff you up enough so that you could see your name in the long line of Michelangelo and Matisse. (Rivers, 1967, p. 52)

Hofmann's studio-as-context was his own creation. He had full control of the environment and kept a tight reign on teaching until he retired in 1958. His painting aesthetic was firmly grounded in structure which came out of many art styles spanning fifty years of modern art forms.

> He took up in sequence the usual art-school subjects, such as the picture plane, space, movement, light and colour, but he transformed all these ingredients of painting through his concept of a universal creative energy. (Rosenberg, 1970, p. 17)

While on the surface it appeared that Hofmann's school was not run on democratic principles, at a deeper level, for Hofmann, the freedom of art lay in the individual vision.

Hofmann created a tailor-made situation for himself as artist-teacher. He gave his analysis of student work at pre-determined times so he reserved a great deal of time for his own work. His teaching and painting were intrinsically bound together. "I approach my students purely with the human desire to free them of all scholarly inhibitions. And I tell them - painters must speak through paint not through words" (Hofmann, 1959, p. 10). Yet Hofmann produced an important body of written theory. His years of teaching gave him fertile ground to work out his aesthetic theories, seminating his ever-changing philosophy among his students" (Ashton, 1970, p. 50). Hofmann's teaching was conservative in the sense that he kept alive the ideas and attitudes which had been brought into play by the art movements of the early 20th Century and by artists like Matisse, Picasso and Cézanne.

Hofmann's contribution to art-education continues today because he had a sense of the moment in which he lived. He once said, "It [abstract art] means one thing to me: to discover myself as well as I can, but every one of us has the urge to be creative in relation to our time -- the time to which we belong may work out to be our thing in common" (quoted in Chipps, 1968, p. 564). His art seems to have communicated to each individual a profound openness based on a belief in a metaphysical sense of spirituality in the universe.

It was a major pedagogical achievement to initiate a studio situation which could inform the many different individual temperaments and still maintain a strong sense of group unity and discipline. Hofmann saw through the finished product to the process itself. He had a sense of his time and bequeathed to his students the vital importance of the creative process in art. Throughout his teaching career he stressed that every formal and technical aspect must have its equivalent in feeling, or it will result in superficiality. "The fear that his teaching might turn into a pantechnicon in the hands of artists, teachers and critics contemptuous of the stresses of creation haunted Hofmann throughout his teaching career" (Rosenberg, 1970, p. 17).

> According to Jean Follet Mr. Hofmann knew that above all he could teach best by example -- the example of himself within his own human person, not only by marks upon a page and the great example of himself, within his own person. His was truly inspired teaching. God himself could scarcely have done a better job. (Quoted in Seitz, 1963)

The genius of Hofmann's pedagogy lay in his profound understanding of the role of the art teacher. Undoubtedly Hofmann was one of the most important contributors to art-education because he left a legacy, a language of pictorial grammar, and a vision of the importance of commitment in art. His students carried this message forward into the various art departments being formed in universities across the

United States and Canada; for example, Allan Kaprow at the University of California, Irving Kaufman at New York University, Perle Fine at Hofstra, Sam Feinstein at Hunter, Mercedes Matter at the New York School of Painting, Paul Reseiker at the Parsons School of Design and Don Jarvis at the University of British Columbia. Terms that Hofmann developed to describe the basic technical elements have been incorporated into the art language of today - Push-Pull and positive-negative, tensions and the synonymous relation between the artists and the "creatif" as Hofmann pronounced it. The conceptual and structural basis for art provided by Hofmann paralleled if not supported the shift in studio training from the art school setting to that of the university.

In discussing the possibility of a complete theory of instruction, Richard Jones states that "the objective of instruction is to develop imagination, plus community, plus mastery, which produces creative learning and the ability to solve problems effectively" (Jones, 1968, p. 77). Hofmann was able to do this through a synthesis of the concepts of twentieth century modern art.

> By precept and by example Hofmann contributed more perhaps than any single artist towards making a revolutionary new style of painting and its underlying aesthetic principles, intelligible and accessible to American taste on a wide scale. (Hunter, 1963, p. 9)

My assessment is that Hofmann was indeed a master artist-teacher. Half the charter members of the American Abstract Artists Association were or had been his former students. Bloom points out in his research on Master teachers that "they are remembered primarily for their personal qualities and for the initial encouragement and motivation they gave their students to explore the field in a playful way" (1980, pl. 664). With most students, Hofmann had the ability to evoke this sense of spiritual sensibility that could be manifested in the students' art work. Through an exploratory search and the ability to view each student as an individual with unique needs, Hofmann became a powerful influence in the emergence of many skilled abstract painters. "The drive for artistic individuality is the cornerstone for art education. Hofmann's emphasis on each student's uniqueness is one of the most important ideas which he brought to academic art education." (Newbury, 1981, p. 100). Nowadays his methods have a widespread application.

> If Gustave Moreau's place as a "great guru" of the 90's is assured because of his pupils Matisse, Rouault, and the other Fauves, then Hofmann's record is more impressive. The sheer number and stylistic range of his former students is astonishing. That so many have achieved international distinction, some of them to the point of positively changing the course of art, is more than miraculous, it is sobering. (Kaprow, quoted in Seitz, 1963)

Hofmann's mastery of the principles of modern pictorial structure and his genius as an instructor present a model for the "artist-educator" of today. Hofmann was a forefather to modern studio instruction because he realized the value of experimentation built upon a solid foundation of instruction. Sandler called him a "pedagogical master" (1973, p. 49). Through his courageous persistence and commitment to the value of art for human growth, Hofmann led the way in redefining the artist-teacher's role.

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