

June 8, 2017

For Immediate Release:

OTTO ROGERS: *RECENT PAINTINGS*

Opening reception: Saturday, June 8, 2 – 4 p.m.

Exhibition dates: June 8 – July 8, 2017

Gallery Jones is pleased to present Otto Rogers, one of Canada's most celebrated senior abstract painters, in a solo exhibition *Recent Paintings* from June 8- July 8, 2017. Roger's paintings bend shape and colour into uniquely balanced geometric abstractions, guiding the eye around the canvas while inciting the imagination.



*Trumpet's Song, acrylic on canvas,
54 x 48 inches*

Rogers' work takes its origins in the abstract painting movement of the 1960's and '70's in Saskatchewan, during which time Rogers (with artists like William Pehudoff and Eli Bornstein) explored the visual correlations between the prairie landscape and abstracted forms. Out of the artistic nucleus of the Emma Lake Artists' Workshops in Saskatoon, Rogers emerged as a nationally recognized painter in the 1970's, exhibiting in Toronto, Montréal, Paris and Milan. For nearly thirty years between 1959 and 1988, he taught art at the University of Saskatoon, mentoring artists including Douglas Bentham, Robert Christie, and Jonathan Forrest. Since then, extended periods of time living abroad and in isolated Canadian communities somewhat limited Rogers' public attention, but continued to cultivate his individual style.

Through a muted palette, Rogers' paintings present the viewer with shapes and textures that hint at content, whispering at the creative sensibility behind each work. In this way, his paintings are able to achieve the non-referential character of North American modernist artworks, while departing from the strictness of the Greenbergian aesthetic.

We use the word "modernist" in relation to Rogers with some caution. His work demonstrates strong Cubist influences, producing pictorial flatness through collage and the stacking of planes. Within this restriction, he expertly achieves a sense of spatial harmony without the stabilizing effects of figure and ground. And though Rogers developed and refined his style in close relation to the Abstract Expressionists, his work is imbued with a distinct sense of utopian idealism that moves past pure expressionism into the realm of the spiritual.

Rogers' works can certainly be read in relation to the prairie landscape, but their expansive interpretive potential points further and deeper into an area we may tentatively entitle "the self". Rogers' outlook on art-making is one of deep spiritual significance: he describes the process of artistic expression as "devotion" or "supplication." Highly influenced by the teachings of the Baha'i faith, Rogers' regard of artistic expression can be best described in his own words:

All art, by any definition, gives expression to the human condition; thus the high purpose of art is to elevate that condition and bring it into harmony with an all-loving Creator. – Otto Donald Rogers, 2007

Rogers' spiritual perspective is manifest in the explorative quality of his abstract works: in them, the conscience is not only examined but excavated in pursuit of expressive truth. The paintings do not intend to depict a landscape or a still life scene, but within the parameters of a frame and the mediums used, they strive for transcendence through the elemental relationships of form, colour and light.