

## LARRY ZOZ (1937-2006)

A painter who played a central role in the Color Field discourse of the 1960s and 1970s, Larry Zox is best known for intensely colored geometric abstractions that brim “with arguments about symmetry and its violations.”<sup>i</sup> Zox stated in 1965: “Being contrary is the only way I can get at anything.” To Zox, this position was not necessarily arbitrary, but instead meant “responding to something in an examination of it [such as] using a mechanical format with X number of possibilities.”<sup>ii</sup> What he sought was to “get at the specific character and quality of each painting in and for itself,” as James Monte stated in his introductory essay in the catalogue for Zox’s 1973–74 solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art.<sup>iii</sup> Zox also at times used a freer, more intuitive method, while maintaining coloristic autonomy, which became increasingly important to him in his later career.

Zox began to receive attention in the 1960s, when he was included in several groundbreaking exhibitions of Color Field and Minimalist art, including *Shape and Structure* (1965), organized by Henry Geldzahler and Frank Stella for Tibor de Nagy, New York, and *Systemic Painting* (1966), organized by Lawrence Alloway for the Guggenheim Museum. In 1973–74, the Whitney’s solo exhibition of Zox’s work gave recognition to his significance in the art scene of the preceding decade. In the following year, he was represented in the inaugural exhibition of the Hirshhorn Museum, which acquired fourteen of his works.

Zox was born in Des Moines, Iowa. He attended the University of Oklahoma and Drake University. While studying at the Des Moines Art Center, he was mentored by George Grosz, who, despite his own figurative approach, encouraged Zox’s forays into abstraction. In 1958, Zox moved to New York, joining the downtown art scene. His studio on 20<sup>th</sup> Street became a gathering place for artists, jazz musicians, bikers, and boxers. He occasionally sparred with visiting fighters. He later established a studio in East Hampton, a former black smithy used previously by Jackson Pollock.

Zox’s earliest works were collages consisting of pieces of painted paper stapled onto sheets of plywood. He then produced paintings that were illusions of collages, including both torn- and trued-edged forms, to which he added a wide range of strong hues that created ambiguous surfaces. Next, he omitted the collage aspect of his work and applied flat color areas to create more complete statements of pure color and shape.

From 1962 to 1965, he produced his *Rotation* series, at first creating plywood and Plexiglas reliefs, which turned squares into dynamic polygons. He used these shapes in his paintings as well, employing white as a foil between colors to produce negative spaces that suggest that the colored shapes had only been cut out and laid down instead of painted. The *New York Times* noted in 1964: “The artist is hip, cool, adventurous, not content to stay with the mere exercise of sensibility that one sees in smaller works.”<sup>iv</sup>

In 1965, he began the *Scissors Jack* series, in which he arranged opposing triangular shapes with inverted Vs of bare canvas at their centers that threaten to split their compositions apart. In several works from this series, Zox was inspired by ancient Chinese water vessels. With a mathematical precision and a poetic license, Zox flattened the three dimensional object onto graph paper, and later translated his interpretation of vessel’s lines onto canvas with masking tape, forming the structure of the painting.

The *Diamond Cut* and *Diamond Drill* paintings followed. In these, he used regularized formats as a means of revealing how color can change our perception of shape. In a single work he often combined industrial epoxy paints with acrylic to set up tensions between colors that would not exist otherwise. At the time, Peter Schjeldahl observed in the *New York Times*: Zox “is one painter who shows an ability to play by the rules without cramping at all an essentially romantic and exuberant sensibility.”<sup>v</sup> In an essay for an

exhibition at Dartmouth College Schjeldahl elaborated: “Zox has clearly adapted Post-Painterly procedures and Minimal pictorial conventions to the demands of a free-wheeling, lyrical sensibility.”<sup>vi</sup> His art of the period was equated with that of Frank Stella and Kenneth Noland.

In the late 1960s, Zox’s paintings, such as in his Gemini series, became brushier; he often incorporated powdered mica into his paints to increase their visual effect. He explored a variety of new means of applying paint early in the following decade, including using squeegees and other large tools. With these means, he moved away from preconception, while introducing a drawing procedure in which the outside limits of a painting were determined by cutting or cropping the canvas.

In the mid-1970s, Zox created a series of paintings in which he explored lateral tensions, leaving the centers of his works blank. He continued to stretch Color Field limits in the 1980s, combining the detachment of paint staining with gestural brushwork balanced between intuition and intentionality. He created more fluid yet still rigorous paintings in the early 2000s that were receiving critical praise when he died in 2006 from cancer.

Zox taught at the School of Visual Arts, New York, in 1967–68, 1977, and 1980. He was artist in residence or guest artist at many universities such as Yale, Syracuse, Cornell, and Dartmouth. His honors include a Guggenheim Fellowship (1967) and awards from the National Council of the Arts (1969) and the Adolph Gottlieb Foundation (1985). Throughout his career, Zox had annual solo shows in galleries in New York City and elsewhere. In addition to the Whitney exhibition of 1973–74, he had solo shows at the Hopkins Center, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire (1970), the Akron Art Institute (1971), the Des Moines Art Center, Iowa (1974), and the Marsh Gallery, University of Richmond, Virginia (1993). He participated in many notable museum and college gallery exhibitions at venues including the Whitney; Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York; the Palm Springs Desert Museum; the Guggenheim; the Charles H. MacNider Museum, Mason City, Iowa; the Des Moines Art Center; the Blanden Memorial Art Museum; and the Muscatine Art Center, Iowa.

Zox is represented in over one hundred museum collections. In addition to the Hirshhorn, his work is included in the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York; the Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Tate Modern, London; the Neues Museum, Bremen, Germany; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts.

Lisa N. Peters, Ph.D.

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## CV

1937, born, Des Moines, Iowa

2006, died, Colchester, Connecticut

1955, University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

1956, Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa

1956, Des Moines Art Center (studied with Geoge Grosz)

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

Kornblee Gallery, New York, 1962

Kornblee Gallery, New York, 1964

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Kornblee Gallery, New York, 1965  
Kornblee Gallery, New York, 1966  
JL Hudson Gallery, Detroit, Michigan, 1967  
Colgate University, Hamilton, New York, 1968  
Galerie Rolf Ricke, Cologne, Germany, 1968  
Kornblee Gallery, New York, 1968  
Kornblee Gallery, New York, 1969  
Hopkins Center, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, 1970  
Akron Art Institute, Ohio, 1971  
Andre Emmerich Gallery, New York, 1973  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1973  
Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa, 1974  
Janie C. Lee Gallery, Dallas, Texas, 1974  
Rush Rhees Gallery, University of Rochester, Rochester, New York, 1974  
Andre Emmerich Gallery, New York, 1975  
Daniel Templeton Gallery, Paris, 1975  
Andre Emmerich Gallery, New York, 1976  
Medici-Berenson Gallery, Bay Harbor Islands, Florida, 1978  
Allen Rubiner Gallery, Royal Oak, Michigan, 1979  
Ivory/Kimpton Gallery, San Francisco, California, 1981  
Hokin Gallery, Palm Beach, Florida, 1981  
Meredith Long & Co., Houston, Texas, 1981  
Salander-O'Reilly Gallery, New York, 1982  
Rubiner Gallery, West Bloomfield, Michigan, 1985  
Images Gallery, Toledo, Ohio, 1986  
Percival Gallery, Des Moines Iowa 1987  
Percival Gallery, Des Moines Iowa, 1989  
Images Gallery, Toledo, Ohio, 1990  
Rubiner Gallery, West Bloomfield, Michigan, 1990  
Gallery One, Toronto, Canada, 1991  
Percival Gallery, Des Moines, Iowa, 1991  
Robert Stein Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri, 1992  
Harnett Museum of Art, University of Richmond, Richmond, Virginia, 1993  
CS Schulte Gallery, Millburn, New Jersey, 1994  
Percival Gallery, Des Moines, Iowa, 1995  
Percival Gallery, Des Moines, Iowa, 2000  
Olson Larsen Gallery, Des Moines, Iowa, 2002  
Olson Larsen Gallery, Des Moines, Iowa, 2003  
Stephen Haller Gallery, New York, 2005  
Stephen Haller Gallery, New York, 2006  
Stephen Haller Gallery, New York, 2007  
Rocket Gallery, London, 2007  
DTR Modern Galleries, Boston, Massachusetts, 2007  
Stephen Haller Gallery, New York, 2008  
Stephen Haller Gallery, New York, 2010  
Stephen Haller Gallery, New York, 2011  
Stephen Haller Gallery, New York, 2013

Berry Campbell Gallery, New York, 2017

Berry Campbell Gallery, New York, *Open Series (1972-1975)*, 2019

Berry Campbell, New York, *Larry Zox: Gemini*, 2023.

#### SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

The American Gallery, New York, 1963

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, 1964

Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1964

Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, 1965

Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York, 1965

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1965

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1966

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1967

Riverside Museum, California, 1968

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1968

Vassar College Art Gallery, Poughkeepsie, New York, 1969

Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts, 1969

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1970

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1972

Palm Spring Desert Museum, Palm Springs, California, 1973

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1973

Andre Emmerich Gallery, New York, 1975

Edmonton Art Gallery, Alberta, Canada, 1977

Allen Rubiner Gallery, Royal Oak, Michigan, 1979

Ryngwood, Old Brooklyn, New York, 1979

Maryland Institute of Art, Baltimore, 1980

Meredith Long & Co., Houston, Texas, 1980

Meredith Long & Co., Houston, Texas, 1980

Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Massachusetts, 1981

Richard F. Brush Art Gallery, St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York, 1981

Salander-O'Reilly, New York, 1981

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1981

Rubiner Gallery, West Bloomfield, Michigan, 1985

Percival Gallery, Des Moines, Iowa, 1987

Charles H. MacNider Museum, Mason City, Iowa, 1988

Muscatine Art Center, Iowa, 1988

Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts, 1991

CS Schulte Gallery, Millburn, New Jersey, 1993

Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts, 1994

Mitchell Albus Gallery, New York, 1994

Percival Gallery, Des Moines, Iowa, 1995

Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts, 1998

Stephen Haller Gallery, New York, 2001

Elaine Baker Gallery, Boca Raton, Florida, 2005

Guild Hall, East Hampton, New York, 2006

Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio, 2006

Terrain Gallery, New York, 2006

Boca Raton Museum of Art, Florida, 2009

Munson Williams Proctor Museum of Art, Utica, New York, 2009  
Price Tower Arts Center, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, 2009  
Stephen Haller Gallery, New York, 2009  
Stephen Haller Gallery, New York, 2009  
Deutsche Guggenheim Museum, Berlin, Germany, 2010  
Donna Beam Gallery, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2010  
Loretta Howard Gallery, New York, 2010  
Stephen Haller Gallery, New York, 2010  
Steven Kasher Gallery, New York, 2010  
Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain, 2011  
Museum Gallery of Modern Art, Sofia, Bulgaria, 2011  
Museum of Modern Art Weserburg, Bremen, Germany, 2011  
Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, California, 2011  
Leepa-Ratner Museum of Art, Tarpon Springs, Florida, 2012  
Stephen Haller Gallery, New York, 2012  
Stephen Haller Gallery, New York, 2012  
Art Miami, Miami, Florida, 2015.  
Berry Campbell, New York, Summer Selections, 2015.  
Berry Campbell, New York, Summer Selections, 2016.  
Eric Firestone Gallery, East Hampton, Montauk Highway: Postwar Abstraction in the Hamptons, 2017.  
Berry Campbell, New York, Summer Selections, 2017.  
Cavalier Galleries, New York, 57<sup>th</sup> Street: America's Artistic Legacy, Part I, 2018.  
Alpha 137 Gallery, New York, The Mid Century Modern Aesthetic, 2018.  
Berry Campbell, New York, Summer Selections, 2018.  
Eric Firestone Gallery, East Hampton, New York, Montauk Highway II: Postwar Abstraction in the Hamptons, 2018.  
Alpha 137 Gallery, New York, Staff Favorites, 2018.  
Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock, Annual 50<sup>th</sup> Collectors Show and Sale, 2018-2019.  
Berry Campbell, New York, Summer Selections, 2019.  
Rollins Museum of Art, Rollins College, Orlando, Florida, Line, Color, Shapes, and Other Stories, 2022.  
Upsilon Gallery, New York, *Hard-Edged Geometric Abstraction*, 2022.  
Ashawagh Hall, East Hampton, New York, *Community*, 2022. (Organized by Berry Campbell)  
Kinosaito, Verplanck, New York, *Kikuo Saito and Friends: New York City Downtown and Beyond, 1970s and 1980s*, 2023.

#### MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts  
Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio  
Akron Art Institute, Ohio  
Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois  
Baum Gallery of Fine Art, University of Central Arkansas, Conway  
Boca Raton Museum of Art, Florida  
Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York  
Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida  
Dallas Museum of Art, Texas  
Daimler Art Collection, Stuttgart, Germany  
Daum Museum of Contemporary Art, Sedalia, Missouri  
Des Moines Art Center, Iowa  
Empire State Art Collection, New York

Fred Jones Jr Museum of Art, Norman, OK  
Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts  
Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York  
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC  
Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire  
Indianapolis Art Museum, Indiana  
Kresge Art Museum, East Lansing, Michigan  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY  
Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts  
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas  
Museum of Modern Art, New York  
The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC  
Neues Museum Weserburg Bremen, Bremen, Germany  
Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida  
Oklahoma City Museum of Art, Oklahoma  
Palm Springs Desert Museum, California  
Picker Art Gallery, Colgate University, Hamilton, New York  
Portland Art Museum, Oregon  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York  
Tate Modern, London  
University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor, Michigan  
University of Kentucky Art Museum, Lexington  
University of Virginia Art Museum, Charlottesville  
Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

**AWARDS/GRANTS**

Guggenheim Fellowship, 1967  
National Council of the Arts, 1969  
Adolph Gottlieb Foundation Grant, 1985

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<sup>i</sup> John Goodrich, "Symmetry and its Violations," *New York Sun*, April 20, 2006.

<sup>ii</sup> Larry Zox, quoted in Barbara Rose, "ABC Art," *Art in America* (October 1965), p. 59.

<sup>iii</sup> James Monte, Introduction, Larry Zox, exh. cat. (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art), p. 10.

<sup>iv</sup> "This Week Around the Galleries," *New York Times*, February 23, 1964, p. X18.

<sup>v</sup> Peter Schjeldahl, "By Lonely, Difficult Evolutions . . .," *New York Times*, February 18, 1968, p. 111.

<sup>vi</sup> Peter Schjeldahl, Larry Zox, exh. Cat. (Hanover: Jaffe-Fried Gallery, Hopkins Center, Dartmouth College), 1969.