LARRY ZOX (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."[i] 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."[ii] 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.[iii] 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 20th 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."[iv]

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."[v] 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."[vi] 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

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.
Berry Campbell, New York, *In Focus: Larry Zox, Lyrical Abstraction*, 2025.

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 Algus 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, 57th Street: America's Artistic Legacy, Part I, 2018.
Alpha 137 Gallery, New York, The Mid Century Modern Aesethetic, 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 50th 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
Gregory Allicar Museum of Art, Colorado State University, Fort Collins.
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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[i] John Goodrich, "Symmetry and its Violations," New York Sun, April 20, 2006.
[ii] Larry Zox, quoted in Barbara Rose, "ABC Art," Art in America (October 1965), p. 59.
[iii] James Monte, Introduction, Larry Zox, exh. cat. (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art), p. 10.
[iv] "This Week Around the Galleries," New York Times, February 23, 1964, p. X18.
[v] Peter Schjeldahl, "By Lonely, Difficult Evolutions . . . ," New York Times, February 18, 1968, p. 111.
[vi] Peter Schjeldahl, Larry Zox, exh. Cat. (Hanover: Jaffe-Fried Gallery, Hopkins Center, Dartmouth College), 1969.