

MARK BORGHI

NEW YORK | BRIDGEHAMPTON | SAG HARBOR

Larry Poons (born 1937)

Untitled, 1984

Acrylic on canvas laid down on panel

16 x 33 inches (49.64 x 83.82 cm)

Signed and dated verso and inscribed 'To Val love Larry'

Ex-collection:

The Artist

Hokin Gallery, Palm Beach, Florida

Private collection, 1984-2018



An important American abstract painter, Larry Poons is well known for his radical pursuit of painting and became a prominent figure in Optical Art during his early career and later in the Color-Field painting. Born in 1937 in Tokyo, Japan, Poons first attended the New England Conservatory of Music before turning to painting, under the influence of Piet Mondrian's geometric forms, which led him to study at the Boston Museum School of Fine Arts in 1959.

His paintings of the 1960s were characterized by dots of color placed according to a horizontal vertical and diagonal grid against a rich colored ground. The effect was a sense of movement, and thus Optical Art. His first one-man exhibition was organized by Richard Bellamy's famed Green Gallery in 1963, and two years later, his work was included in MoMA's exhibition "The Responsive Eye."

Beginning in the 1970s, Poons began to work directly on his canvases. His works started to become more expressionist as he developed a highly idiosyncratic approach of painting by pouring, throwing, and splashing paint directly onto canvas surfaces. While Jackson Pollock is noted for dripping and pouring paint on unstretched canvas laid out on his studio floor, Poons tacks canvas of fifteen to twenty yards to cover three walls of his studio, then throws paint from a can weighting thirty pounds. By involving his whole body and particularly an athletic sturdiness of arms and shoulders, the paints are thrown with real force and these works often resemble waterfalls of color, as exemplified by *Untitled* (1984). Because of Poons' succession of throwing different colors to the canvas, the paints more or less intermingle and produce a thick fluid shroud that highlights an immediacy and velocity. His painting process usually takes weeks and as he completed the room-sized canvas, Poons will crop individual paintings from the original canvas.

Poons' "throw paintings" form a bridge from his earlier optical dot paintings for which he became well known and his very recent lyrical abstractions, redolent of Impressionism. The "throw paintings" remain Poons' unique contribution to Color-Field painting of the 1960s and 1970s. In spite of their radical nature and aggressive means, their amorphous quality makes them appear more and more akin to Monet's idyllic water lilies, anticipating Poons' most recent work.