

RICHARD FRANCIS HOFMANN

1954 – 1994



BIO

Born in Newark, New Jersey in 1954, Richard's unusual talents were evident early on, with his first watercolor show at the age of three. Educated at George Washington University and later earning a BFA in Painting from the Pratt Institute, he was also the recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant in 1989.

After moving to Avenue C in Alphabet City, Hofmann worked as an art installer and art assistant while continuing his own career as a fine artist. A familiar figure in the East Village art scene for many years, Richard's savage style of Neo-Expressionist figurative painting earned him a place among the "New Irascibles" showcased in Arts Magazine in 1985.

He worked in media such as film, sculpture, photo lithography, watercolors, collage charcoal and even clothing. His murals decorated clubs over the years such as Club 57, The Pyramid Lounge, Danceteria and the Roxy. But his forte was oil painting, and it is in the large 9x15 canvases that his technique is most evident and his message most revealing.

He was featured in solo shows at notable Lower East Side venues such as Limbo Gallery, ABC NO RIO and the Steven Adams Gallery. Hofmann participated in numerous group shows including "Pain and Pleasure" alongside Robert Mapplethorpe at Fashion Moda (1984), "Figures" at Green Street Gallery (1983) and "Famous and Infamous" (1983) at Gracie Mansion Gallery

A ceaseless and prolific painter, the art of Richard Hofmann provides an unflinching window onto the tragic world of the young gay artist caught up in the AIDS epidemic which devastated New York just at the time as this unprecedented art scene was blossoming.

A contemporary and personal friend of David Wojnarowicz and many other artists who suffered the same fate, Hofmann's work is a rare time-capsule of work whose bold colors and iconoclastic themes leap off the canvas perhaps even more today than back then.

His style has often been characterized as owing to the school of Neo-Expressionism, but his unique use of distorted figures and a multiplicity of baleful human faces is nowhere to be found except in his own work. One critic noted that Hofmann "tackled the larger questions of sin and redemption, religion and homosexuality, suffering and ecstasy with fervid brushstrokes and layers of intense color."

FIRST RETROSPECTIVE ONE-MAN SHOW AT THE BROOKLYN WATERFRONT ARTISTS COALITION. RED HOOK, SPRING 2017

Carefully curated as a chronology of his career, this retrospective evoked the heady events of Hofmann's time: both the ebullient 1980s East Village club years, and the sinister onset of AIDS in the gay community. A member of ACT-UP, his canvases juxtapose religious icons with lurid images of gay men, as he registered his protest against religion's stance on homosexuality and the public's denial of the epidemic.



Sensing a tragic ending for himself, his art also served as a means of survival. He continued to experiment with new media outside of oils through the end of his life, adapting his rich layering technique to prints, silkscreens and photomontages, even after his vision became affected in the end by the virus.

This important and powerful retrospective included over 150 pieces of work from Hofmann's extensive legacy: large oil paintings, mixed media pieces, watercolors, silkscreens, photomontages, etchings and woodblock prints. Also included were many of his preserved murals which decorated historic 80's clubs as The Pyramid, Limbo Lounge, Danceteria, The Roxy and The Saint.

A documentary on Richard's life and work will premiere this year entitled "Fear and Desire : Life + Death of Richard Hofmann".



FOUR PAINTINGS INCLUDED IN SPRING 2019 WRIGHTWOOD 659 EXHIBITION
“ABOUT FACE: STONEWALL, REVOLT AND NEW QUEER ART”

Link to the exhibition: <https://wrightwood659.org/exhibitions/about-face-stonewall-revolt-and-new-queer-art>



Link to the New York Times exhibition review of August 2, 2019 devoting a paragraph to discussing Richard Hofmann’s life and art:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/02/arts/design/chicago-overlooked-stonewall-art.html>

Original program from Limbo Gallery Solo Exhibition, 1984



GALLERY SHOW HISTORY

POSTHUMOUS EXHIBITIONS

2019

Wrightwood 659 Gallery, "About Face: Stonewall, Revolt and New Queer Art", Group Show, Chicago

2018

Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition Gallery, "Painting to Survive", Group Show, Brooklyn NY

2017

Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition Gallery, Curated Solo Retrospective, Brooklyn NY

2009

The Life Cafe, "Gone but not Forgotten," Group Show, NYC

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1985

Barbara Braathen Gallery, NYC.

Steven Adams Gallery, NYC

1984

Fashion Moda, "Visions of Heaven and Hell," NYC.

Limbo Gallery, NYC.

1983

ABC NO RIO, "7 Days of Creation," NYC.

Limbo Gallery, "Siren and Flytrap," NYC.

Terminal Show, "Michael Stewart Mural," NYC.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1990

Tent City Benefit Auction, Max Fish, NYC.
Ground Zero Gallery, NYC.

1989

Bratton Gallery, NYC.
Naked Eye Cinema, Detroit.
The New York Gay and Lesbian Experimental Film Festival, "Drag," NYC.
Anthology Film Archives, NYC.
Tim Stauffer Gallery, NYC.
Michigan Gallery, Detroit.
Leonard Beach Hotel Murals, Miami Beach.
Galaxy Gallery, Miami Beach.

1988

Nancy Lurie, Chicago.
Arthur Robbins, NYC.
HEAL Benefit, ABC NO RIO, NYC.
La MaMa E.T.C., "Trocadero Ballet Set," NYC.

1987

Cassus Toledo Oosterum, NYC.
The Kitchen, "Cloichina," NYC.
The Pyramid Night Club, "Swingin'," NYC.
ABC NO RIO, "NY Cultural Center," NYC.

1986

Steven Adams Gallery, "Gallery Artists," NYC.

1985

The Pyramid Night Club, "Historica Pagentia Fashionia," NYC.
Danceteria Night Club, NYC.
ABC NO RIO, "The First Five Years," Exhibition/Auction, NYC.
The Roxy Night Club, "NY for NY," NYC.
Instant Museum, "Ground Zero Stencil Show," Boston.
NADA Gallery, "The Cracked Mirror Show," NYC.
ABC NO RIO, "Five Years of NO RIO GRAPHICS," NYC.
Tower Gallery, "Avenue C by the Sea," Southampton, NY.
Civilian Warfare, "Getting Off," NYC.
Steven Adams Gallery, "The Adams Family," NYC.
ABC NO RIO, "The Possibilities of Limitations," NYC.
8BC Night Club, Life Cafe Auction, NYC.
Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires.

1984

University Art Museum, University of California "Neo York, Santa Barbara, CA.
New Math Gallery, "In Vogue," NYC.
Fashion Moda, "Pain and Pleasure," NYC.
P.S.1, "New Portrait," NYC.
Cleveland Art Spaces, Cleveland, OH.
Limbo Gallery, "Sculpture Jungle," NYC.
Vinnie Salas Food Stamp Parlor, Food Stamp Show, NYC.
Gracie Mansion Gallery, Auction, NYC.
Fashion Moda, "Food for the Soup Kitchens," NYC.

1983

Middle Collegiate Church, "Resurrection," NYC.

ABC NO RIO, "Wish You were Here," NYC.

Green Street Gallery, "Figures," NYC.

Piezo Electric Gallery, "The Wild West," NYC.

Terminal, "Aesthetics of War," NYC.

Gracie Mansion Gallery, "Famous and Infamous," NYC.

ABC NO RIO, "Extremist Manifesto," NYC



REVIEWS

Flickering between horror and beauty, Richard Hofmann's paintings burn their way into the mind of the viewer as if they were lit by an inferno... here emotional volatility is laid over the serene, almost classical composition in skeins of warm oil paint. Each successive layer is more violent, expressive and colorful. **Richard Hofmann Solo Exhibition at Limbo Gallery (1984) by Richard Sarnoff**

Richard Hofmann's work... is aligned to the scope of ...Neo-Expressionism ... in its savage distortion of color and form to reveal subjective truths. Hofmann's exclusive vehicle of expression is the human figure, often dwarfed, elongated ... to accommodate the dimensions of the canvas. The spiritual attributes that these grotesques acquire in biblical works like Angel and Pietà are carried over to arcane autobiographical subjects... Two Brothers with Dog dog depicts the nude and partially clothed siblings drifting in a flood of discordant blue, orange and red. Echoing the apparent weightlessness of the bodies are the arms, up-raised in gestures of divine presentation. The anguished face of the figure on the right is embraced by a golden halo while his brother, separated by the hovering amorphic mass of the dog, appears to stare and hum in a trance... the emotional charge of Hofmann's painting stems not from the subject but from the fervidly scrawled brushstrokes and layers of intense color. By outlining the brightest hues with somber tones (a favorite device of the German Expressionists), illusory depth is denied and color becomes the structural agent of the work. The First Time I Ever Touched the Flesh of Samir exhibits a decisive move away from an impastic use of paint in favor of a controlled use of color. The visage of the right figure in this work particularly recalls the mastery of pure color found in Jawlensky's early portrait studies... **ARTS MAGAZINE (Dec 1984), by Ron Warren.**

Hofmann's style is an explosive orgy of painterly expression...Hofmann's subject matter loses its tangible identity in the frenzy of its physical appearance, as baroque forms congeal out of a seething mass of wildly independent brushstrokes. [COCA FOLIO \(1985\), review of NeoYork/Seattle show.](#)

The work of thirtyish painter Richard Hofmann presents us with a dilemma: how far can Neo-Expressionism go without completely flipping back into the past, into the halcyon days (of a sort) of European Expressionism and its adherents? The question arises out of Hofmann's gift: he is an almost spookily authoritative Expressionist in the classic mode of Kokoschka, skillfully steering his talent away from the kindergarten cut-ups of so many East Village painters into a world of his own and his forebearers. His Expressionism is truly grave, truly frightening. But the question nags: hasn't this been done before, if not better done before? It would be hard to better Hofmann, however, who paints up what may be the meanest American Expressionist storm since the youthful days of de Kooning. Indeed, he outdoes de Kooning in his singular grasp of the subject matter really at hand in all Expressionism: the "Big questions" of life and death, heaven and hell, sin and exoneration, grace and judgement. Capturing an Angel-- the title of a painting of a man in very color of he Expressionist rainbow with this arms around an "angel" of roiling tubes (or so it seems) -- could in truth serve as the title of the entire show... Hofmann's is an immensely sophisticated vision, while at the same time a primitive one. Only a sophisticated naive could bring such credulous intensity to his subjects, such brooding passion. A Doctor's Visit, though relatively pacific in its oranges and reds and pinks in the painting of the face, could still only spell doom to the hapless patient. [Richard Hofmann at Steven Adams Gallery \(1985\) by Gerrit Henry](#)



SELF PORTRAIT

WEBSITE, VISUAL AIDS GALLERY AND FURTHER INFORMATION

- Official Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/RichardHofmannArt/>
- A survey of his work is available on the VisualAIDS.org website:
www.visualaids.org/artists/detail/richard-hofmann
- The Artabolic Arts Management website: www.artabolic.com