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Helen Frankenthaler, Untitled, 1991

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Helen Frankenthaler

American (b. 1928)

Untitled, 1991

Monotype

38 x 25 in.

Gifts of the Sybiel B. Berkman Foundation, 2000.24.3



elen Frankenthaler was born in New York City on December 12, 1928, to New York Supreme Court Justice Alfred Frankenthaler and his wife Martha. She graduated from Bennington College in 1949 and quickly established herself as an artist and teacher. Early on, Frankenthaler created compositions on large, often unstretched and unprimed canvases by experimenting with stain painting – a technique of applying oil paints thinned with solvents. Describing herself as “an artist of paint, making discoveries” (Carmean, 1998, p. 7), Frankenthaler’s work advanced the Color Field School of painting by influencing other artists such as Kenneth Noland and Morris Louis with an early painting, *Mountains and Sea*, 1952. As a second generation Abstract Expressionist, Helen Frankenthaler creates landscapes of inspired fields of color, tonality and gestured forms.

Other work in the Haggerty Museum’s collection by the artist includes *Tout à Coup*, 1987, a two-color etching, aquatint, and drypoint in orange and red, and two lithographs: *Composition* and *Yellow Jack*, 1987. The collection represents gifts from the Sybiel B. Berkman Foundation.

Untitled, 1991 gives no hint of what Frankenthaler had in mind in the title. We are left to wander in the abstract forms and challenge ourselves to trust our instincts. Its shapes and soothing colors layered over suggestions of engraved lines – or are they tree trunk rings - charmed and invited me to.....

Enter -

A waterfall of light in
Moiré patterned tiers
Through drapes of weighty taupe,
Pouring pools of luminescence -

Into -

Fresh quenching Nova Scotia blues
In hues of green and turquoise
Underlaid and waved.

Glints of white dance over the
watery suggestion
marking the turbulent froth.

Primeval luminosity,
Grounded in verdant swells,
Stained with the lifeblood of forest flowers,
Attend a lyric meditation.

Sharon Kayne Chaplock
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