



## GALLERY PREVIEW: NEW YORK, NY

### Back to Abstract

An exhibition at Helicline Fine Art explores one facet of James Daugherty's diverse career

#### On view now

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James Daugherty (1889-1974) studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts with William Merritt Chase, absorbed the ideas of European modernism at

the 1913 Armory Show, had a studio next to Arthur B. Frost Jr. who had formed the synchromist movement with Morgan Russell and Stanton Macdonald-Wright, painted murals for the WPA and was an award-winning children's book writer and illustrator.

Helicline Fine Art in New York City focused on one of the aspects of Daugherty's varied career in the exhibition *James Daugherty: Abstract Color Paintings & Pastels from the 1950s & 1960s*.

The gallery notes, "In 1953, Daugherty once again began to create

abstract paintings. The first of these works, small images with relatively stable compositions and subdued palettes, suggest the influence of the work of Piet Mondrian. By the end of the decade, Daugherty had expanded to larger formats and had broken from the grid to create increasingly complex designs. In the years that followed, he alternated modes, often joining his old rectilinear format of vertical and horizontal with circles and frequently using a lighter, more refined painterly touch and layered, almost transparent color planes that recall the color veils of



James Daugherty (1887-1974), *Abstraction*. Oil on panel, 11¼ x 13¼ in., estate stamp verso.

Opposite page: James Daugherty (1887-1974), *The Joy of Red*. Oil on panel, 30 x 18 in., estate stamp verso.

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Mark Rothko's art.

"By the mid-1960s Daugherty's work reached a peak of size, complexity and color intensity. The explosive energies of these paintings put into physical form what Daugherty called the 'out rushing forces of the cosmos' in an 'ever expanding infinitude.' Fusing the old and the contemporary, Daugherty referred both to early modernism and to the abstract illusionism developed by younger artists in the 1960s such as Frank Stella, Al Held and Ron Davis."

At around the time of the Armory Show, Daugherty discovered C. Lewis Hind's book *The Post Impressionists*, published in 1911. He then "went modern with a vengeance," he said. He later adopted a more figurative style and went into illustration. He would do a dozen or so preliminary drawings before setting out on the final painting but realized: "the first half dozen lines have everything in it. It has the essence."

His motivation for returning to abstraction in 1953 isn't known, but he continued to paint, to experiment and to find ways through his painting to "restore meaning to life and announce its beauty and capacity." He referenced his early work as well as the principles of synchromism and pushed it further. The synchromists created form and space with color. Mondrian wrote, "Everything is expressed through relationship. Colour can exist only through other colours, dimension through other dimensions, position through other positions that oppose them. That is why I regard relationship as the principal thing." As the gallery notes, Mondrian's influence is evident in Daugherty's *Abstraction*, which isn't dated. In *The Joy of Red*, he celebrates color itself. In the 1940s, Daugherty said modern art in general, is "liberating and expansive, rousing and freeing human consciousness from materialism to infinite possibilities of living, creating universal harmony, energy and renewal."

Works in the exhibition are from the artist's estate. ■



James Daugherty (1887-1974), *Untitled*, 1967. Pastel on paper, 15 x 21½ in., signed lower left.



James Daugherty (1887-1974), *White Whale*. Oil on panel, 24 x 20 in. Signed on verso by Charles Daugherty, the artist's son; estate stamp verso. All photos by Noah Morgenstein.