

Carl Holty (1900-1973)

Holty was a pivotal member in the history of the development of abstraction in this country. He was a founding member of the American Abstract artists Association, usually referred to as the New York School. Known for his floating, luminous, highly-colorful forms, Carl Holty belongs to the school of pure geometric abstract artists, none more renowned than Piet Mondrian.

Holty, a native of Germany, came to the United States as an infant and grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and the National Academy of Design in New York, and then went to Munich to enroll in the Hans Hofmann School where he was exposed to Abstract Expressionism. Holty's early work also shows the influence of Fauvist colors and the work of French artists Maurice de Vlaminck and André Derain.

In Europe, Holty began featuring more biomorphic forms in his work and elements reflective of the Organic Surrealism of Joan Miro. By the late 1950s, he had developed his enduring subject matter large, soft-edged color forms that mix with, and float on, a lush chromatic stain.

Always dedicated to abstract art, Holty found greater artistic acceptance in Europe than in the United States. When he returned to the United States in 1936, he became an important advocate of modern art, helping to establish the American Abstract Artists organization in New York.