

PREVIEWING UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS, EVENTS, SALES AND AUCTIONS OF HISTORIC FINE ART

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The Art of Tomorrow

The Museum of Non-Objective Painting: The Birth of the Guggenheim is on exhibition at the Leila Heller Gallery in New York City

Through March 4

Leila Heller Gallery

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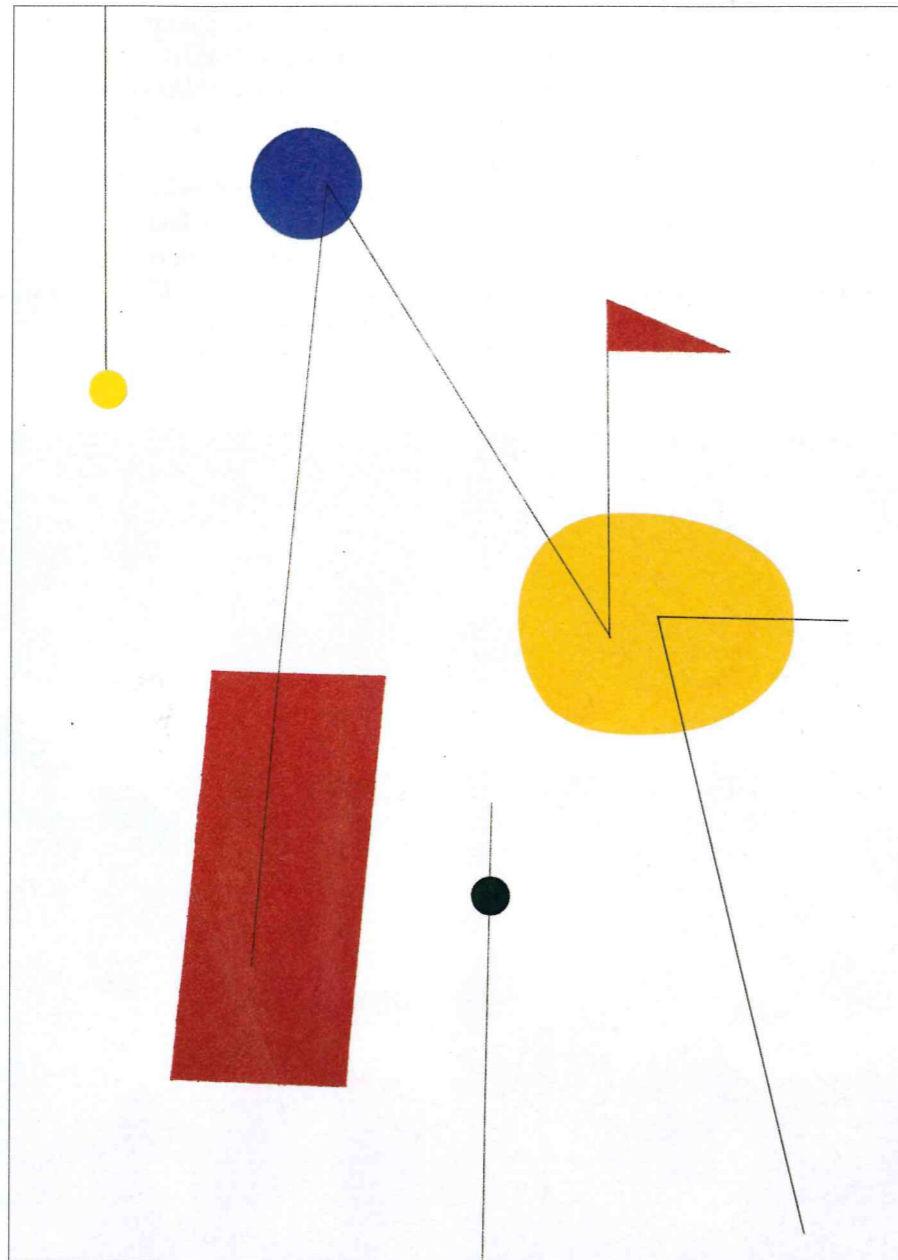
by Joshua Rose

In 1929, Hilla Rebay, an artist and baroness from Germany, immigrated to New York City. Rebay had studied at the famed Académie Julian in Paris in 1910 and 1911 before moving to Munich. In 1915, Rebay met Hans (Jean) Arp in Zurich and was introduced to works by artists such as Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Franz Marc and Rudolf Bauer.

When Rebay arrived in New York City, she was asked by Solomon Guggenheim—then a collector of mainly works from the Barbizon School—to paint his portrait. Rebay worked in the style of the non-objective artists she had known in Europe so politely declined. However, after a little prodding by Guggenheim, she soon conceded and agreed to paint his portrait.

Rebay invited Guggenheim to her studio above Carnegie Hall and, while sitting there, he looked up and saw a small watercolor by Bauer.

“He fell in love with it,” says Rowland Weinstein who has spent the past five years curating the exhibition *The Museum of Non-Objective Painting: The Birth of the Guggenheim*, on show currently at the Leila Heller Gallery in New York City. “And that was the launching pad for the journey into non-objective art that eventually

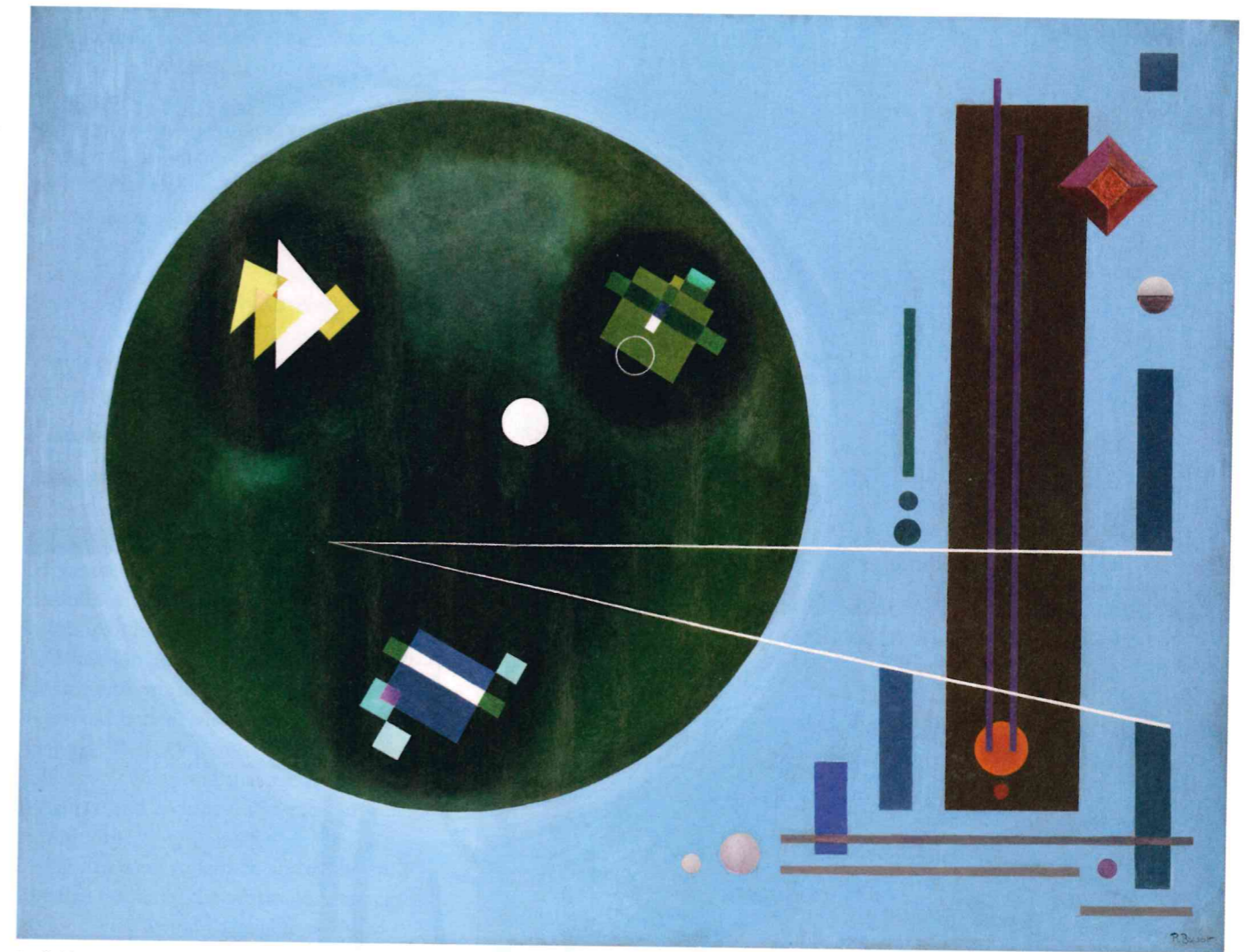


Charles Green Shaw (1892-1947), *Cosmic Composition*, 1940. Oil on canvasboard, 30 x 22 in. © Estate of Charles Green Shaw.

became the Guggenheim Museum, which was first called the Museum of Non-Objective Painting.”

The exhibition, which will be on

display at the Leila Heller Gallery through March 4, includes rarely seen masterpieces from Rebay, Bauer, Kandinsky, László Moholy-Nagy,



Rudolf Bauer (1889-1953), *Green Form*, 1936. Oil on canvas, 51¼ x 66⅞ in. © Rudolf Bauer Estate and Archive, San Francisco.



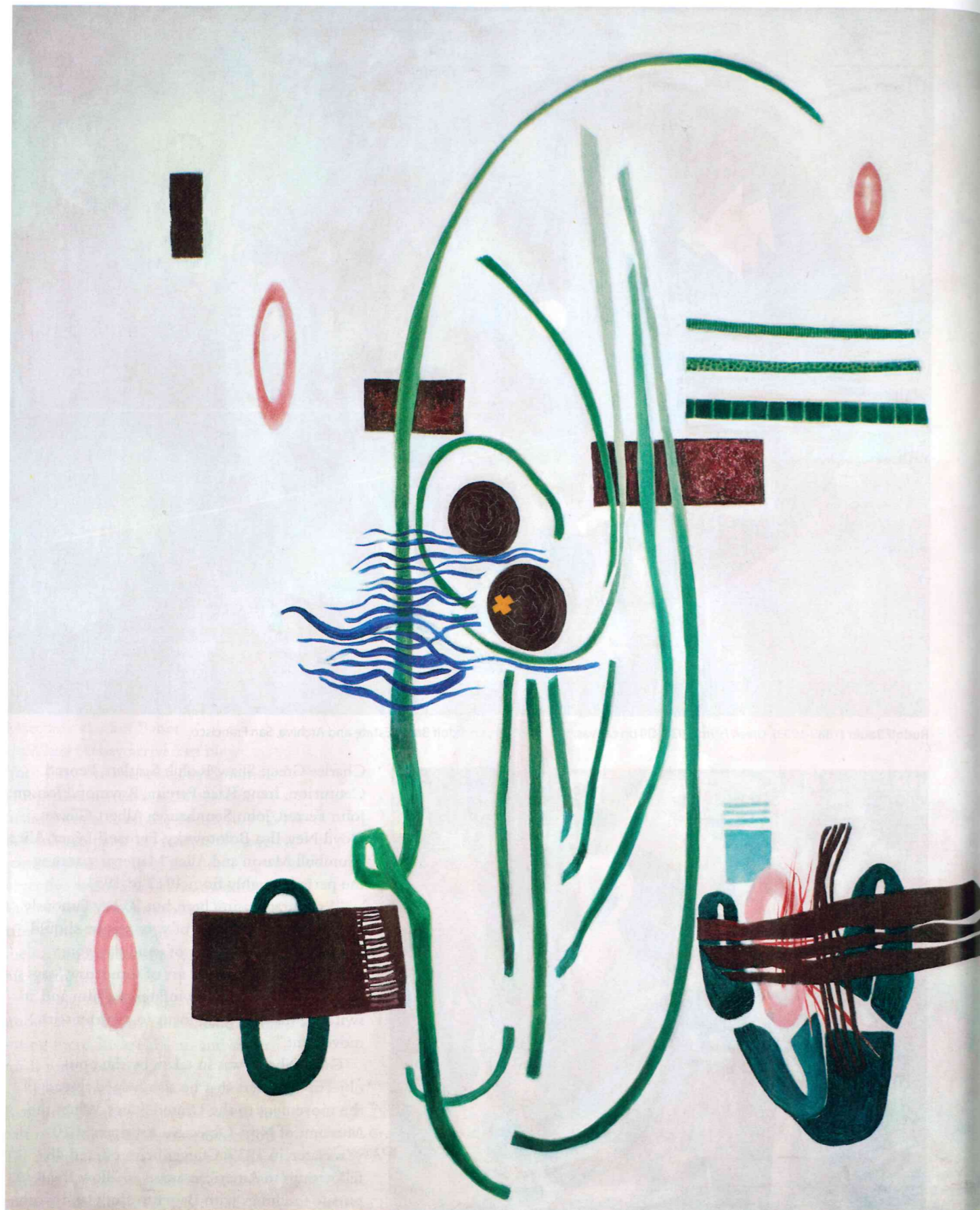
Rudolf Bauer (1889-1953), *Symphony*, 1919-1923. Oil on canvas, 37½ x 43½ in. © Rudolf Bauer Estate and Archive, San Francisco.

Charles Green Shaw, Rolph Scarlett, Penrod Centurion, Irene Rice Pereira, Raymond Jonson, John Ferren, John Sennhauser, Albert Gleizes, Lloyd Ney, Ilya Bolotowsky, Fernand Léger, Alice Trumbull Mason and Alice Mattern, spanning the period roughly from 1912 to 1951.

“I’m paraphrasing here, but Rebay famously said to Solomon, a man of your stature should not be collecting the art of yesterday, you should be collecting the art of tomorrow,” says Weinstein. “She strongly influenced him and switched his collecting focus to a current art movement.”

Guggenheim was so taken by the non-objective painters that he also helped spread the movement to the United States. When the Museum of Non-Objective Art opened 10 years later, in 1939, Guggenheim offered 48 fellowships to American artists to allow them to pursue teachings with Bauer to study and work in the style.

“Non-objective painting is not simply abstracting by another name,” says Weinstein,



Hilla Rebay (1890-1967), *Orange Cross*, ca. 1947. Oil on canvas, 44 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 37 in. © 2017 The Hilla von Rebay Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

but a distinct movement arisen from the desire to divorce abstract painting from its derivative reliance upon objects in the world, whose mundane existence was considered insufficient for manifestations of spiritual expression. Arguably reaching its apogee between the mid-1930s to mid-1940s, the movement of non-objective painting sought instead to lend color and form to the immaterial experiences of the musical and the mystical."

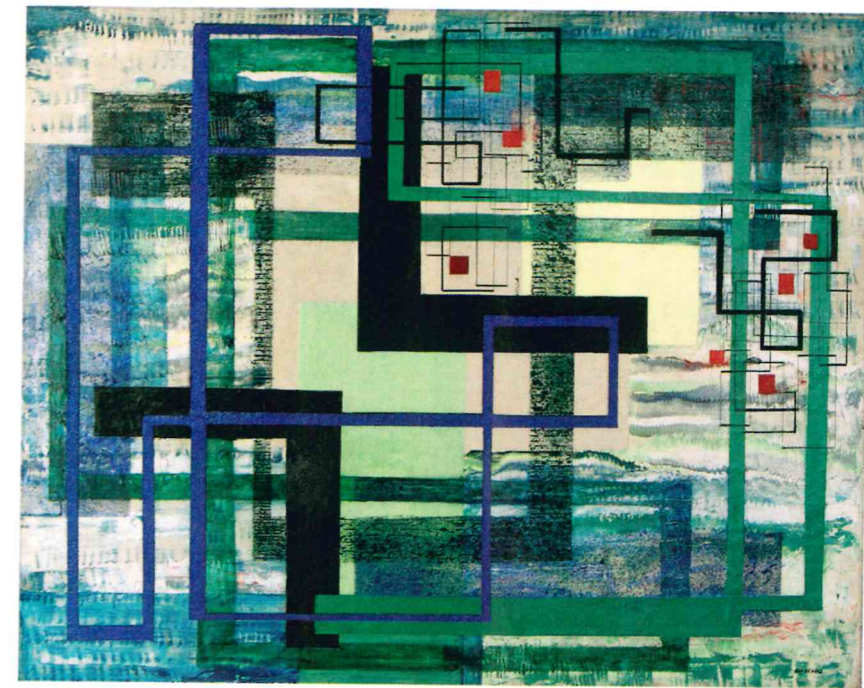
From 1929 to 1939, Guggenheim, led by Rebay's visionary approach, was on a mission of collecting these works by the non-objective painters. He amassed over 60 paintings by Scarlett, all the great works by Bauer as well as masterpieces by all the others. Having been deaccessioned by the Guggenheim in the 1980s and 1990s, many of those original masterpieces are featured in this exhibition.

When Guggenheim first created a brochure to promote his new museum, he picked Bauer's masterpiece *Colored Swinging*, 1935, to represent the museum's collection. Weinstein managed to find the piece and included it in this current exhibition.

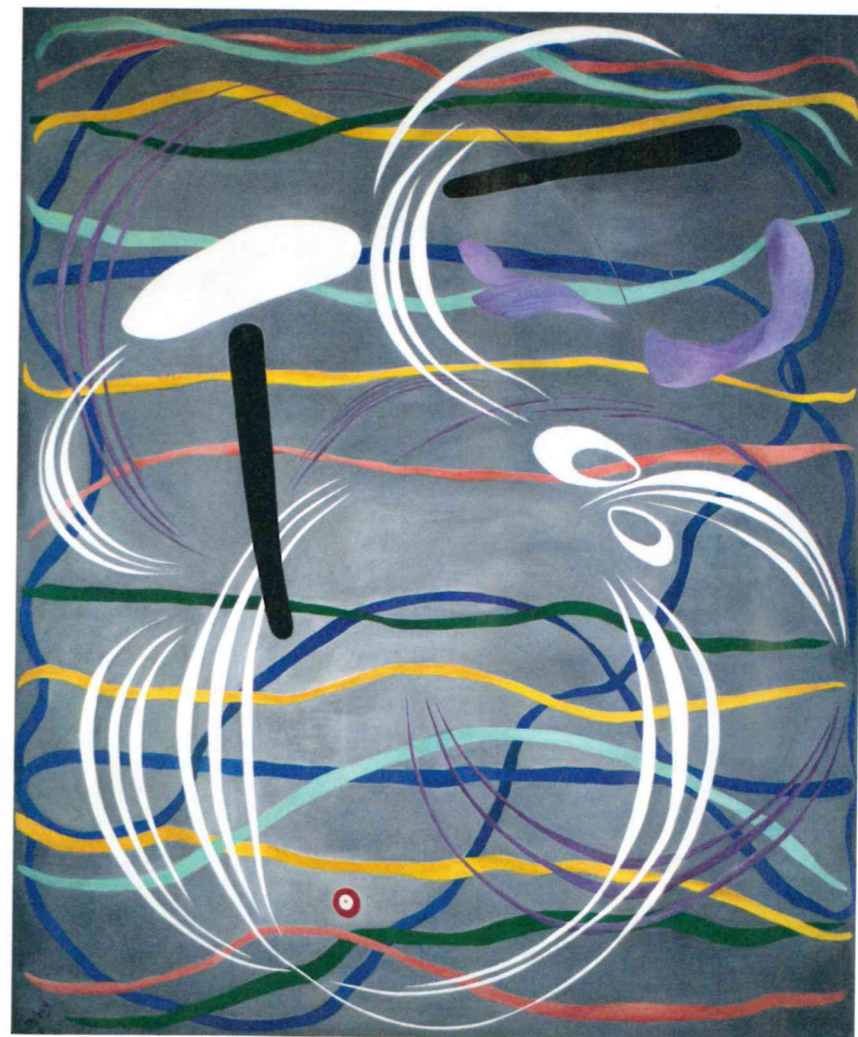
"If you were to launch an exhibition like this featuring the works of, say, Jackson Pollock, you wouldn't be able to show his masterpieces because they are all in museums so it should be shocking that we have this painting by Bauer," says Weinstein. "But with this exhibition, we've managed to get some of the greatest and most famous paintings that these artists have ever done."

When Guggenheim passed away, the museum bearing his name switched its focus from non-objective art to more modern and contemporary work so a vast majority of the non-objective paintings were put in storage. Thus, the reason why many of these artists are lesser known and don't receive the praise that the abstract expressionists received who came after them and were definitely influenced by their work.

"Pollock was an assistant framer at the Museum of Non-Objective Painting," says Weinstein. "He saw this work every day. And one of Barnett Newman's most famous sculptural works was directly influenced by a Rudolf Bauer painting. Other participants in the New York School also worked at the museum." ■



Irene Rice Pereira (1902-1971), *Seven Red Squares*, 1951. Oil and sand on canvas, 40 x 50 in. © Estate of Irene Rice Pereira.



Hilla Rebay (1890-1967), *Rondo*, ca. 1943. Oil on canvas, 94 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 78 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. © 2017 The Hilla von Rebay Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved.