

Helen Frankenthaler

Meyerovich

San Francisco

This intimate show presented five works made by Helen Frankenthaler in the 1980s. While her early Color Field paintings from the '50s feature thin washes of poured paint, banishing the brushstrokes in favor of the stain, these large works on paper play with the texture of layered pigments as well as juxtapositions of color.

Working with handmade paper and soft, dusky inks, Frankenthaler scored, pocked, and mottled the surfaces of the prints, occasionally building up simple lines and circles with wax. But unlike the aggressive process of her action-hero predecessor Jackson Pollock, Frankenthaler's gestures tended to reinforce the meditative mood of her pictures. In the 1980 woodcut *Cameo*, peachy blotches and striations hum over a quiet blue backdrop, but it's the blue that keeps drawing the eye back in. Next to those sparse disturbances on the surface, the unmarked expanses of color somehow feel the most full.

The show's standout piece was the cast-copper bas-relief *Bird of Paradise* (1986-89), which leaned against a wall. Towering over the room at just over eight feet tall, the work heightened the tension between form and fluidity, strategy and release, that lurks in Frankenthaler's paintings and prints. Like a giant sculpture landscape, the work is covered in thick strokes of warm, rosy copper, pushed and molded like wax or clay. Frankenthaler made every inch, from the soft all-over crosshatchings to the piece of pipe lodged in the lower left corner, luscious and tactile, treating metal as substance as pliant and expressive as paint. Although the selection here was almost too small for a show, it's a credit to Frankenthaler that her rich surfaces reward even the longest looks.

-Lamar Anderson



Guadalupe, 1989, relief on handmade paper, 69" x 45"