

James Barron Art



Jan Müller and Bob Thompson: Outside of Time

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Jan Müller and Bob Thompson: Outside of Time

After graduating from high school in 1955 and briefly enrolling at Boston College as a pre-medicine student, Thompson transferred to the University of Louisville to study art. His paintings from this period demonstrate the influence of both mid-century abstraction and German expressionism; many of his professors were German refugees.

In 1958, Thompson radically transformed his work. Synthesizing figuration and expressionism, he began painting in his now-signature style: compositions influenced by Old Master paintings that have been transformed through the use of bold colors, faceless figures, and contemporary symbolism. Thompson developed this style after spending the summer of 1958 in Provincetown, where he met a number of other emerging artists, who all made figurative paintings despite the ongoing popularity of abstraction in New York.





Of particular importance was Jan Müller, who had died only months before Thompson arrived in Provincetown. Thompson was enamored with the artist's work, which had a formative impact on him; he even painted an imaginary funeral for Müller in homage to the mentor he never met. While in Provincetown, Thompson also learned from Müller's widow Dody Müller, who told him: "Don't ever look for your solutions from contemporaries—look at Old Masters."

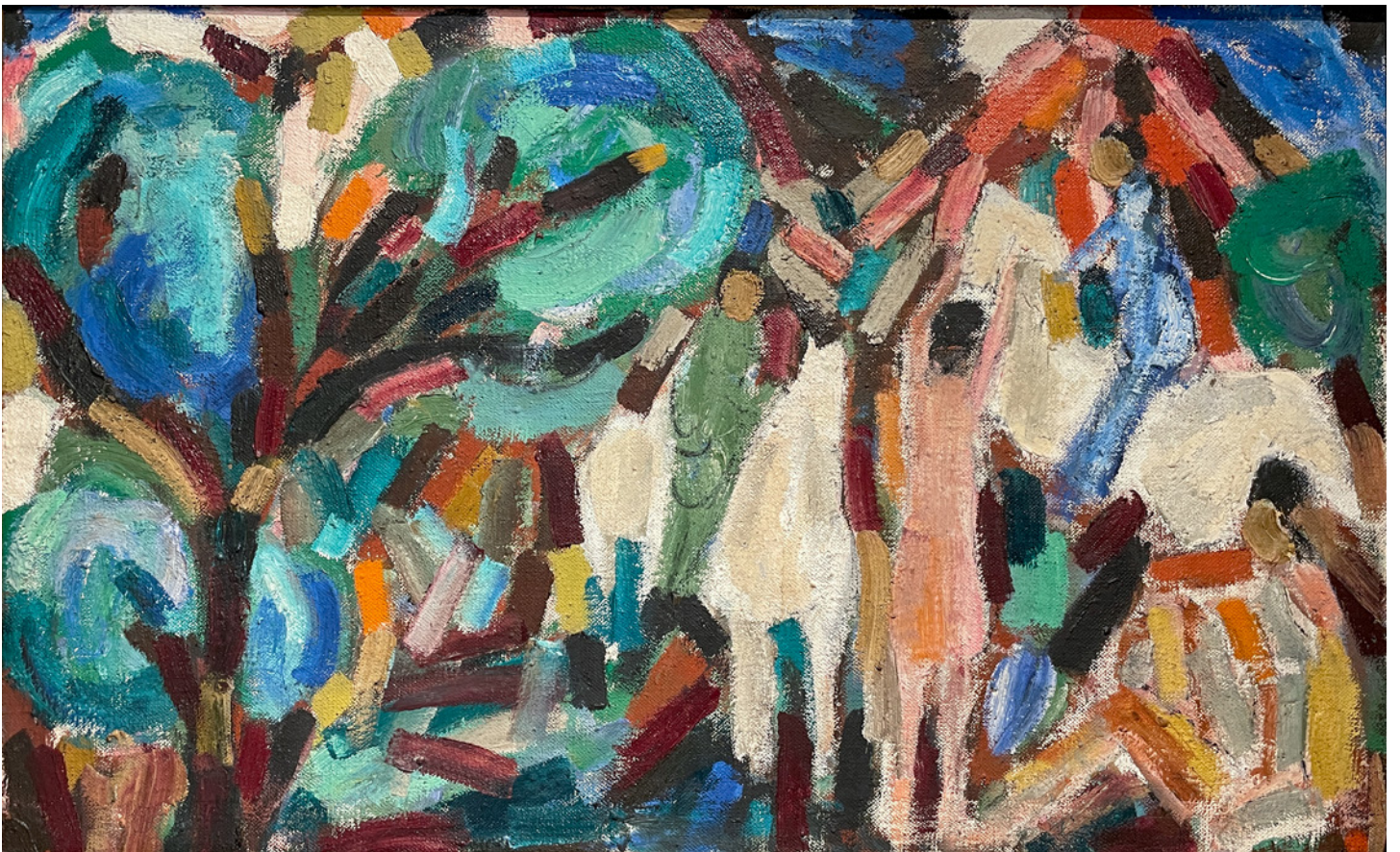
Our exhibition includes both a figurative Thompson painting and an earlier abstract painting, demonstrating the crucial shift in his work that occurred after his summer in Provincetown. It is fascinating to see these works in conversation with Jan Müller's *Encounter as Province* (1954). Thompson synthesized the influence of Müller, Old Master compositions, and contemporary social movements to create a brief but remarkable body of work that continues to influence artists today.

"[Thompson] exists outside of time. He brings to his work a profound understanding and relentless curiosity about what it takes to put a composition together. I think that is the reason that so many artists return to the work, live with the works, and want to continue to turn the work over in their minds."

Diana Tuite

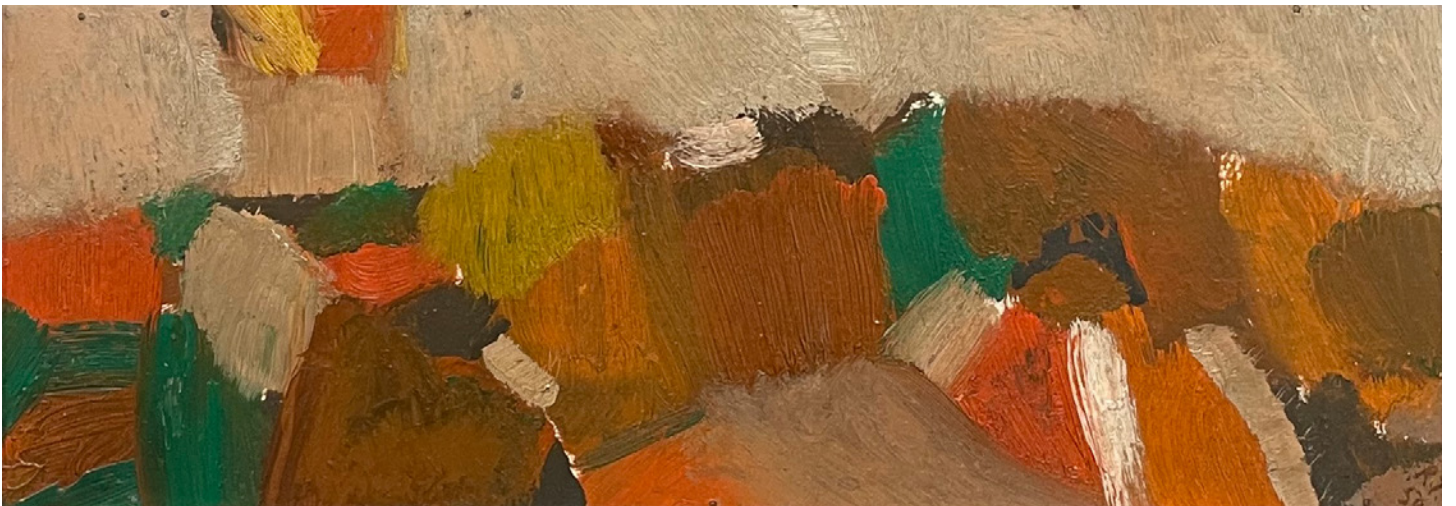
JAN MÜLLER

Encounter as Province, 1954
oil on burlap canvas
22 x 36 inches
(55.9 x 91.4 cm)



BOB THOMPSON

Landscape (Abstraction), 1959
oil on wood panel
7 x 19 inches
(17.8 x 48.3 cm)



BOB THOMPSON

Untitled (Figures in a Landscape), 1960
oil on plywood
6 x 22 inches
(15.2 x 55.9 cm)

