

# HOLLIS TAGGART

## Hollis Taggart to Present Focused Exhibition of Irene Monat Stern's Ethereal Paintings from the 1970s

### *Irene Monat Stern: I Cast My Own Shadow* On View October 17 – November 16, 2024

**September 25, 2024** – Hollis Taggart is pleased to present a focused exhibition of ten works by Irene Monat Stern from the 1970s, during the artist's fruitful period of artistic production following her move to Southern California in 1965. Combining her knowledge of Color Field painting with inspiration from the light and flora of her new surroundings, Stern's works from the 1970s demonstrate her masterful ability to layer translucent colors into rippling forms that stun with their lightness and fluidity. Shown here together for the first time, *Irene Monat Stern: I Cast My Own Shadow* also presents poems and writings by the artist, shedding light onto the psychology of an artist who witnessed unspeakable suffering in her early life but was able to find solace and regeneration in nature and creativity. The exhibition will be on view on at Hollis Taggart from October 17 through November 16, 2024, with an opening reception on Thursday, October 17, from 5 to 8 PM.

Irene Monat Stern was born in Poland in 1932. A young Holocaust survivor who lost most of her family during World War Two, Stern moved to Paris and then New York before settling in California in the 1960s. In New York City, she and her husband, the sculptor Jan Peter Stern, studied art at the New School for Social Research while she also pursued creative projects including watercolor painting. It wasn't until the Stern family moved to California and their two sons were older that she was able to focus on painting professionally, transferring her knowledge and skills with watercolors to acrylic paint. Making use of her new spacious studio, Stern began working on a larger scale while drawing inspiration from the organic phenomena she was able to observe and appreciate on the West Coast. The paintings on view at Hollis Taggart hint at various natural occurrences, from the movement of waves and formation of clouds to blossoming flowers and changing foliage.

Stern's brushwork is both highly skilled and intuitive, resulting in canvases that are technically advanced but also imbued with a spiritual quality, almost as if the artist was a conduit for showcasing acrylic paint's innate ability to appear weightless and ethereal. This interplay between the human and spiritual realms was also of interest to Stern in her poetry and other writings, some of which are published for the first time in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition. They reveal an artist seeking to find beauty and solace in the natural world: "I am looking / For that magical water / That sings," Stern wrote in one poem, and "Only the dew on the grass / And the strong smells of the earth / Remain the same" in another.

It was in the 1970s and 80s that Stern's career flourished, with major museums including the Hirshhorn Museum and the National Gallery of Art acquiring her work. Her paintings drew comparisons to the work of Morris Louis and Helen Frankenthaler, with critics noting that while there were similarities in these artists' approaches, Stern's ability to make acrylic paint seem diaphanous and luminous was unparalleled. While she had numerous solo shows throughout her career – as well as joint exhibitions with her husband – Stern's artistic output has yet to be studied in depth, particularly as it relates to her writing. *Irene Monat Stern: I Cast My Own Shadow* aims to encourage this endeavor.

# HOLLIS TAGGART

## About Hollis Taggart

Founded in 1979, Hollis Taggart presents significant works of American art, showcasing the trajectory of American art movements from the Hudson River School to American Modernism and the Post-War and Contemporary eras. Its program is characterized by a deep commitment to scholarship and bringing to the fore the work of under-recognized artists. The gallery has sponsored several catalogue raisonné projects, most recently for the American Surrealist artist Kay Sage, and has been instrumental in advancing knowledge of such artists as Alfred Maurer, Arthur B. Carles, and more recently, Theodoros Stamos, Marjorie Strider, and Michael (Corinne) West. In the summer of 2019, the gallery announced the formal expansion of its primary market business and focus on the presentation of contemporary work. It continues to expand its roster of contemporary artists, focusing on emerging and mid-career talents. With more than 40 years of experience, Hollis Taggart is widely recognized by collectors and curators for its leadership, expertise, and openness, on matters of art history, market trends and opportunities.

###

For press inquiries, please contact Aga Sablinska at [aga.sablinska@gmail.com](mailto:aga.sablinska@gmail.com) or 862-216-6485.