

Julian Stanczak

Julian Stanczak (1928-2017) was one of the most innovative colorists of his generation. The painting shown on this card, *Desert Hue* (full painting on the front of the card; detail on the back), consists of approximately 30 colors, each meticulously mixed and painstakingly applied by Stanczak. He did not use studio assistants.

Stanczak was one of the founders of the Op Art movement, which took the art world by storm in the mid-1960s. The movement itself was named in response to Stanczak's first (1964) exhibition at the Martha Jackson Gallery in New York, which Jackson labeled (without Stanczak's knowledge) *Julian Stanczak: Optical Paintings*. The "optical paintings" title was shortened by art critics to "optical art" and "Op Art," and the label stuck. Although Stanczak's paintings consist of colors rigorously applied in geometric configurations, they transcend their formal properties and prompt viewers to look inwardly and to reflect. Following Stanczak's death in 2017, art critic Roberta Smith wrote in an obituary article in the *New York Times* that Stanczak "produced some of the most emotionally gripping paintings associated with the Op trend."

Born in Poland in 1928, Stanczak suffered various deprivations during his childhood. At the outbreak of World War II, Stanczak and his family were sent to a Russian labor camp in Siberia. Through a combination of beatings while at the camp, malnourishment, and disease, Stanczak permanently lost the use of his right (dominant) arm. After escaping from the camp, Stanczak wandered through the Middle East before reuniting with his mother and siblings in Tehran (present day Iran). He then spent his teenage years in a Polish refugee camp in British-occupied Uganda, Africa, on the equator. It was in the camp that Stanczak taught himself how to use his left hand to draw and paint. Following the war, Stanczak immigrated, first to London, then to the United States. After earning his undergraduate degree at the Cleveland Institute of Art, Stanczak attended Yale University, where he studied with famed colorist Josef Albers and with Conrad Marca-Relli.

Stanczak's work has been exhibited widely and is included in the permanent collections of approximately 100 museums. There were multiple exhibitions pertaining to Stanczak's work in 2019, including a major retrospective at the Fort Wayne (Indiana) Museum of Art (an exhibition held in conjunction with work by Stanczak's widow, the sculptor Barbara Stanczak), a group exhibition at the LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur (Münster, Germany), solo exhibitions at The Mayor Gallery (London) and Diane Rosenstein Gallery (Los Angeles), and a months-long solo exhibition at the lobby gallery located at 499 Park Avenue in New York City. Stanczak's third exhibition at Mitchell-Innes & Nash (New York) will take place during the 2020-21 exhibition season.