

## **MAKING IT MODERN EXHIBITION**

### **Docent Summary Notes on ENERGY**

#### **Energy**

Modern artists sought to represent the emotional and psychological energy of their interior experience through physical gestures and dynamic juxtapositions. They created art objects that capture movement, harness it, and represent change. By simultaneously communicating and mirroring the relationship between action and stasis, artists give outward expression to the energy generated by the inner life of things. The **artists in this section of the exhibition developed a visual vocabulary to illuminate the many energetic forces that shaped the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**: explosive social movements that challenged political institutions, elemental discoveries in physics that suggested colliding realities, and unsettling redefinitions of self and the body that reflected psychological theories of the unconscious and identity.

In his work as well as his writing, **David Alfaro Siqueiros** (see-GEAR-rose) sought a **social realism** that at once hailed the proletariat peoples of Mexico and the world while avoiding the clichés of trendy "Primitivism". He **believed art should be public, educational, and ideological**. He painted mostly murals and other portraits of the revolution – its goals, its past, and the current oppression of the working classes. He painted the everyday people ideally involved in this struggle. In **Marcha Revolucionaria**, there is no escaping the energy and vitalism of the moment. The swirling movement of brush strokes and bold use of color capture an impassioned protest or a celebratory chant.

**Helen Frankenthaler** is best known as a pioneer of the **abstract expressionist** and **color field** art movements. She is identified with the use of fluid shapes, abstract masses, and lyrical gestures. Her work shows an emphasis on spontaneity. She stated, "**A really good picture looks as if it's happened at once.**" **Carousel** was painted following one of her excursions to Arizona. Many viewers are reminded of the vast and wild energy of Southwest landscapes in this work.

**Marino Marini** is particularly famous for his series of stylized equestrian statues featuring a man with outstretched arms on a horse. **Horse and Rider** is a fine example from the series. The evolution of the horse and rider as a subject in his works reflects the artist's **response to the changing context of the modern world**.

**Sam Francis** became loosely associated with the so-called **second generation of abstract expressionists** who were increasingly interested in the expressive use of color. According to Han-I Wang of Christies, a leading expert on Francis' work, "**Sam Francis is really about encapsulating the energy in nature. He was deeply inspired by the Chinese paintings where they're talking about freedom. He talked about how Chinese landscape painting became a true force in his own art making.**" In the early 1960's, he created several series of works consisting of biomorphic predominantly blue forms and drips. These works **referenced the pain that resulted from the renal tuberculosis that he suffered in 1961**. In 1965, he started a series of paintings that featured large areas of open canvas, minimal color and strong line. The three **Untitled** paintings on paper here are reflective of that distinctive style for which he is most recognizable.