



ART REVIEW: Sampling Art History - Raymond Hendler at Quogue Gallery

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by James Croak

"Another Lower East Side artist from the '80s; probably hung out with Keith Haring," was my first take upon viewing the graffiti-like images from "Raymond Hendler—A Deeper Poetry" at the Quogue Gallery, on view through November 23. Except one painting is dated 1961, and Haring would have been only 3 at the time.



Keith Haring. Photo by Annie Leibovitz.

It would be hard to backdate the work of expressionist painter Raymond Hendler (1923–1998) because the date is often painted large on the surface as part of the work. The only other artist who comes to mind for having done this is the Japanese conceptualist [On Kawara](#), who endlessly exhibited the date as a painting. Other far-flung artists come to mind upon viewing Hendler's work, as he was clearly in the thick of the big names of the abstract expressionist movement.



"Oct 31, 1973 (Today Series, "Tuesday")" by On Kawara.



"Drawing (No. 18)" by Raymond Hendler, 1963. Magna on canvas, 58 x 80 inches.

Hendler had a colorful life and started with the major painters of the '40s living in Paris. He studied on the G.I. bill at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in the 6th arrondissement and thereafter began a cooperative gallery, also in Paris, titled Galerie Huit (Gallery Eight) with the resurgent

painter [Sam Francis](#) and fellow expressionists [Jules Olitski](#) and [Al Held](#), both of whose work often overlapped with Hendler's.

The artist became an academic to support himself and taught at the private Minneapolis College of Art beginning around 1955 and then moved to the public University of Minnesota as a professor from 1968 to 1984. There was some minor activity in Greenwich Village in the early 1950s, but mainly he was in the Midwest.



Raymond Hendler in the studio, 1978.

One pundit described abstract expressionism as a small party on 14th Street in New York City. It's therefore odd and revealing that Hendler, who was hip enough to study and show in Paris in the '40s, couldn't figure out that he needed to be in NYC in the '50s. And so—despite having the seminal ingredients of timeliness and talent—because of wrong geography, Hendler's work is undeservedly on the margins of art history.



"Port of Call" by Raymond Hendler, 1983 - 1985.
Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 33 inches.

Fortunately this crowd of painters is being reevaluated. Hendler's colleague from Galerie Huit, Sam Francis (1923-1994), suffered a similar fate by locating himself in the bone yard of Santa Monica, California, and also wound up on the periphery of the abstract expressionists. Lately Sam Francis has become a hot item in the art market, with works reaching \$2.5M at auction at Sotheby's. It's a small step to believe that Hendler's prices will be climbing as well.

The current show at the Quogue Gallery has a large assortment of paintings done with oil, acrylic, and crayon, created from the '50s right through the '80s. It is a singular and enjoyable exhibition; a fat slice of modern art history. The primary influence is Matisse, who died in 1954. The same influence did not go unnoticed by many of the abstract expressionist crowd, but thereafter it's impossible to parse who copied whom. We can see [Milton Avery](#), [Franz Kline](#), Al Held, and many others who undoubtedly imported and exported each other's imagery.



“No. 3” by Raymond Hendler, 1958. Oil on canvas, 36 x 44 inches.

Hendler moved to the East End of Long Island around 1986 with his wife, Mary Rood, residing and painting in the Northwest Woods of East Hampton. Thanks to the Quogue Gallery and others, his art is on still on display and Hendler is belatedly taking his proper place in the pantheon of those with whom he pioneered a major chapter of modern art.

BASIC FACTS: “Raymond Hendler—A Deeper Poetry” remains on view through November 23, 2014 at the Quogue Gallery, 44 Quogue Street, Quogue, NY 11959. The gallery is open Friday through Sunday and by appointment by calling 631-653-6236. www.quoguegallery.com