



January 18 - February 23, 2002

Binney & Smith Gallery

Banana Factory

Bethlehem Pennsylvania

# Hans Moller

works on paper

**W**hen it came to choosing an exhibition to christen the new Binney & Smith Gallery at the Banana Factory, I was excited about the possibility of showing work by Hans Moller, a renowned New York artist who chose to live in the Lehigh Valley. And, although I never met him when he was alive, in many ways I have come to know Moller well during the two-year planning and implementation of this show.

I am in the minority - it seems everyone I spoke to knew him. This is my misfortune since no one is able to speak about him without a smile and an anecdote. He clearly brought joy to many lives. In this exhibition, I have tried to capture many facets of the art, personality and humor that came alive for me as I learned more about this artist and his wife. The works in this exhibition cover most decades of Hans' life as an artist. The interspersal of self portraits, as well as portraits of Helen, or Leni, as he called his wife, companion and soul mate of 61 years, brings the couple's dynamic presence to the exhibition.

Hans Moller was born in Wuppertal, Germany in 1905. He was a student at the Art School in Barmen, Germany from 1919-1927 and continued studying art at the Berlin Academy from 1927-1928. In 1933, he met Helen Rosenblum, who would become his wife. During the anti-Semitic years before World War II, German men were discouraged from marrying Jewish women. Stating no one was going to tell them they could not marry, the Mollers left Germany for the United States in 1936.

Arriving in New York City with no money, Hans found work as a commercial artist and began a very successful career designing magazine covers for Fortune, surface designs for home furnishings and advertising designs for Upjohn Pharmaceutical. He never stopped painting, and in 1942 had his first one-person show at the Bonestell Gallery in New York. Emily Gensuer of The New York World-Telegram reviewed that exhibition: "His pictures are poetic, fantastic, modest, and tender. He has a superb taste and an intriguing sense of invention."

This was the beginning of a very successful career as an artist. By 1956, 20 years after his arrival in New York, Hans Moller had participated in 12, one-person New York shows. His paintings also hung in the Whitney, Corcoran, Chicago Institute of Art and the Pennsylvania Academy. In addition, he exhibited and was friends with many of the abstract expressionists working in New York during that time - Milton Avery, David Smith, Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollack. At the 1944 Chicago Institute Watercolor

Annual, Charles Gulver wrote in the Art Digest, "Pictures like William Tell by Hans Moller and Marc Chagall's Tree can be regarded as masterpieces of expressionist painting."

The Mollers began spending time in Maine during the 1950s, and beginning in 1958, they spent every summer on Monhegan Island. The influence of the light on the land and sea on Monhegan Island brought a vibrating sense of movement to the color in Hans' work, and the inspiration from these summer visits to Monhegan stayed with him and his painting throughout the year.

During the 1960s, friends from Monhegan introduced the Mollers to Allentown. Both Hans and Helen developed a fondness for the area. They moved from New York to Allen Street in Allentown in 1968 and resided there the rest of their lives, while still spending summers on Monhegan Island.

Hans' passion for art did not diminish after the move. He continued to have one-person shows in New York, primarily at Midtown Galleries, as well as in Allentown, Florida Maine, and other states. After viewing the Moller retrospective exhibition at the Allentown Art Museum in July 2001, Edward J. Spzanski of The Philadelphia Inquirer wrote: "The retrospective of (Hans Moller) work at the Allentown Art Museum includes a profusion of colorful paintings from the last three decades of his life. One could say, in fact, that the two best paintings in the show were made in old age...especially in the years after he moved to Allentown, he became a more stimulating painter..."

In 1996, Helen died and Hans painted much less. Following his death in October 2000, Myra Y. Outwater of The Morning Call stated: "After Helen died in 1996, Hans was a man bereft, coming alive only to talk about his art, his life and the long ago days in New York." He continued to have exhibitions at the Allentown Art Museum, Cedar Crest College and the Baum School in the late 1990s- primarily work done during his earlier career. This exhibition at the Banana Factory, Hans Moller: *Works on Paper*, parallels the work in the Allentown Art Museum exhibition and also brings to light several gouache works from the 1940s that have never been seen.

Hans Moller: *Works On Paper* captures the spirit of Hans and Helen Moller, the enthusiasm and delight of an artist who loved his work, and also the essence of what was occurring in modern art in America throughout Hans' lifetime. It is a pleasure to open the new Binney & Smith Gallery with this exhibition, continuing to further the mission of the Banana Factory - to kindle support, and celebrate the artistic, cultural, and creative spirit of the Lehigh Valley. I would like to extend my deep appreciation to the collectors of Hans Moller who loaned pieces of their collection to this exhibition. The addition of these works enhances the exhibition and helps to create a richer and more personal show.

**Diane LaBelle**  
Director, Banana Factory



*"His pictures are poetic, fantastic,  
modest and tender.  
He has superb taste and an  
intriguing sense of invention."*

EMILY GENSUER, NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM, 1942

*"For his new pictures at the Borgenicht Gallery, ...  
Hans Moller turns to gouache, a medium which he seems to master as easily as oil.  
Nor has the delicacy of his feeling for color diminished. It is as rich and delectable as ever.  
Moller's way is to shatter an image into angular facets of flat color and then to  
reassemble these, laced together by heavy dark lines looping in  
and out, producing rather stiff but pleasing presences."*

STUART PRESTON, NEW YORK TIMES, 1953

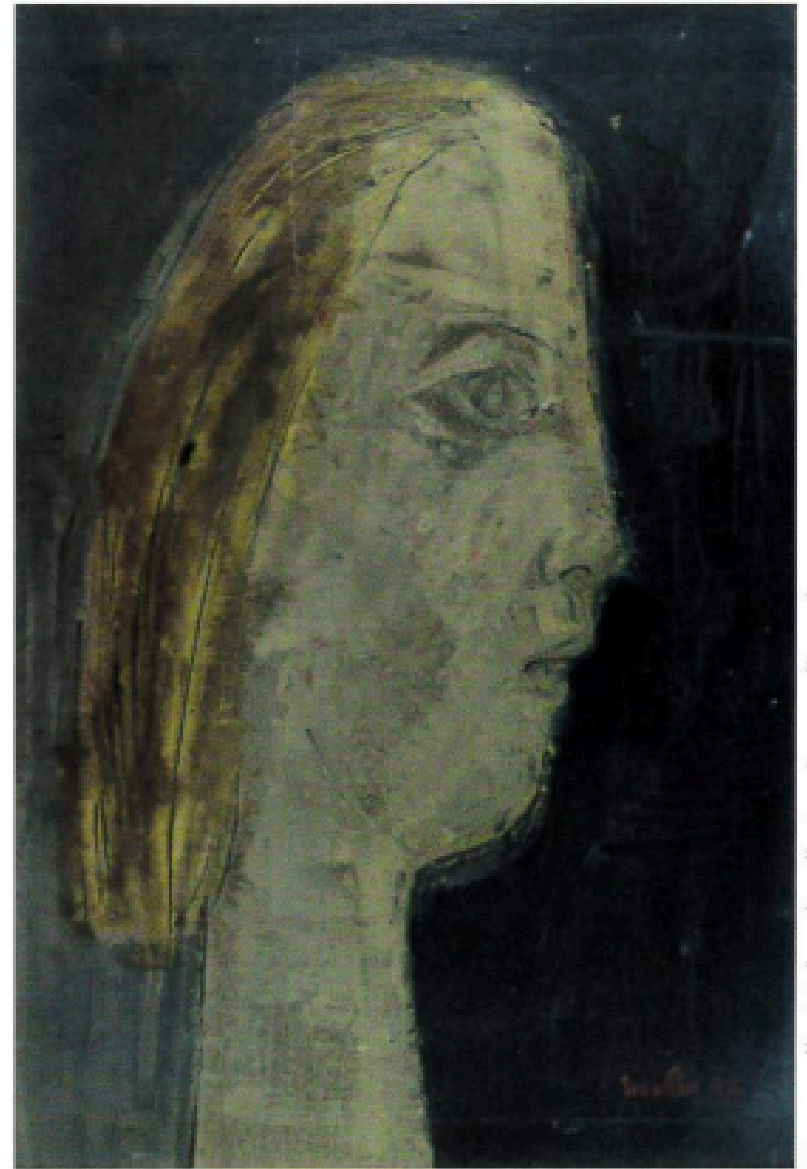
*"Though subject matter and style vary, all his work in this exhibition is distinguished by patterned surfaces and superb technical control. Moller striving for pattern always employs reality as a starting point for his semi-abstractions. In his landscapes... he employs a transparent, fluid style while in the still life he handles his pigment opaquely, using deep-toned, rich colors on a darker ground."*

PICTURES ON EXHIBIT



*"Hans Moller makes something very delectable out of abstraction. He does not abandon the object. His are topical pictures, mountains, still-lives, clowns. Forms are flattened, fragmented, simplified into a congeries of triangular and circular shapes. The colors are combined with such good judgment that they reach the eyes with an excitement corresponding with beautiful musical harmonies."*

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, 1953



Woman's Profile, 1942, from the collection of Hans Moller Studio



Collage by Hans Moller, 1957, from the collection of Hans Moller Studio

*" especially in the years  
after he moved to Allentown,  
he became a more stimulating  
painter. He composed with  
bold strokes and passages of  
the most vibrant colors available."*

EDWARD J. SOZANSKI, THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER, 2001



*"Summer Sun colors, flowers, and landscapes show quite exuberantly.  
Up close they are mosaic islands of pigment, each surrounded by white. The full  
strength bright colors are offset by the white, which provides the same sparkle that razor  
blade-scraping of darks does in a transparent watercolor."*

THOMAS F. POTTER, 1987



Alvin Shredt, 1974, from the collection of Hans-Melker Studios



Orange Harbor, 1976, from the collection of Carol Koenig





Don Quixote and Falling Stars, 1978, from the collection of Larry Milley

*"Hans Moller, an artist of unquestionable talent... is abstract in the way Picasso is; that is to say he has a subject and the subject is discernible, but he plays with it fancifully and decoratively and in short has style. One of his best is the "Don Quixote" in rich browns."*

HENRY MCBRIDE, THE NY. SUN, 1947



Lobster Traps III, 1960. From the collection of Hans Moller Studio

*“Although Monhegan has its annual influx of artists, poets and professors, the year-round residents are, for the most part, lobster fishermen. As a painter of the life he experiences on the Island, the lobster trap, too, has served as a motif. Within the austere restrictions of asystemic motif he has, in “Lobster Traps”, created spatiality through a play of diagonal patternings against an expansive view of the sea.”*

CAROL B. WOKRISER, 1969

*“Once you work with stained glass you can never go back to mixing colors. To me, mixing pigments just doesn't give you that freshness. (Georges Seurat's paintings were beautiful, for instance, but they were a little dusty, a little subdued.”*

HANS MOLLER

*"All I am really interested in  
is shape, color and light and  
(at Monhegan) the light  
changes every minute,  
vibrating off of the water and  
the ocean turns black to blue."*

HANS MOLLER



Island Trees II, 1980, from the collection of Robert Taft

*"Monhegan has a stark and breathtaking natural beauty with its  
rugged coast line, tall graceful mysterious evergreens and the profusion of flowers.  
The ships, the sailboats, and the piles of lobster traps offer endless possibilities  
for Moller to experiment with color."*

MYRA GOLDFARB, 1980

*"... that estimable painter Hans Moller... follows the abstract line up to a certain point, flattening out, as if with an iron, his subject matter into a mosaic of angular color patches which make lovely surprising harmonies. Moller has a far more genuinely abstract feeling for form and color than do many of the totally abstract painters whose work, unlike Moller's, is frequently devoid of either decorative or emotive merit"*

NEW YORK TIMES, 1951



Last Supper, 1955, from the collection of Honis Moller Studio

## EXHIBITION

- 1 *Self portrait*, 1923, watercolor, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 2 *Helen sleeping*, 1934, drawing, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 3 *Self portrait*, 1935, drawing, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 4 *Woman's Profile*, 1942, gouache, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 5 *Nude in Blue Chair*, 1942, gouache, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 6 *Three Figures on Bench*, 1941, gouache, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 7 *Birds in Action*, 1946, gouache, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 8 *Still Life with Cherries*, 1949, gouache, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 9 *Harlequin*, 1942, drawing, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 10 *Child on Balcony*, 1942, gouache, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 11 *Church at Night w/moon*, 1942, gouache, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 12 *Woman Holding Fish*, 1942, gouache, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 13 *At Oisens*, 1949, gouache, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 14 *Clown with Mask*, 1943, gouache, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 15 *Portrait of Helen*, 1943, gouache, collection of Robert Taxin
- 16 *Don Quixote*, 1948, woodcut, private collection
- 17 *Leni with Recorder*, 1950, drawing, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 18 *Green Flowers in Glass*, 1952, gouache, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 19 *Yellow Landscape*, 1952, gouache, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 20 *Portrait of Leni*, 1952, gouache, collection of Larry Miley
- 21 *Collages*, 1954, collage, collection of Robert Taxin
- 22 *Collage-yellow*, 1957, collage, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 23 *Head*, 1959, India ink, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 24 *View from the Window*, 1967, watercolor, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 25 *Self Portrait*, 1968, watercolor, collection of Robert Taxin
- 26 *Self Portrait*, 1969, ink, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 27 *Sun in Fog*, 1969, pastel, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 28 *October Ocean*, 1969, pastel, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 29 *Morning Light*, 1969, pastel, collection of Margo & Steve Wiener
- 30 *Boats*, 1970, crayon, collection of Robert Taxin
- 31 *Harborview*, 1970, watercolor, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 32 *The Shepherd's Garden*, 1973, watercolor, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 33 *Farmers Garden*, 1973, watercolor, collection of Robert Taxin
- 34 *Allen Street I*, 1974, watercolor, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 35 *Near Christmas Cove*, 1975, watercolor, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 36 *Pines, Ocean, Sky, Blue Pines*, 1975, watercolor, collection of Nolan Benner
- 37 *Self Portrait w/ Red Background*, 1976, watercolor, collection of Raymond Holland
- 38 *Orange Horizon*, 1976, watercolor, collection of Carol Koenig
- 39 *Harbor*, 1977, watercolor, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 40 *Don Quixote and Falling Stars*, 1978, watercolor, collection of Larry Miley
- 41 *Blue Rocks and Pines*, 1978, watercolor, collection of Nolan Benner
- 42 *Garden in Spring*, 1979, watercolor, collection of Nolan Benner
- 43 *Montague Harbor*, 1979, watercolor, collection of Rev. and Mrs. Van Merle-Smith
- 44 *Loebster Traps III*, 1980, watercolor, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 45 *Island Trees I*, 1980, watercolor, collection of Robert Taxin
- 46 *Island Trees I*, 1980, watercolor, collection of Jim Musselman
- 47 *View from our Window*, 1981, watercolor, collection of Robert Taxin
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- 49 *Blowing Garden*, 1983, watercolor, collection of Margo & Steve Wiener
- 50 *Sun Set*, 1983, watercolor, collection of Debby Haight
- 51 *Lupines*, 1987, collage watercolor, collection of Hans Moller Studio
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- 53 *Night Sky*, 1989, watercolor, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 54 *Tide Pool*, 1989, watercolor, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 55 *Leni*, 1991, watercolor, private collection
- 56 *Einstein*, 1992, ink, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 57 *Clover*, 1993, watercolor, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 58 *Last Supper*, 1995, watercolor, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 59 *Window View*, 1996, watercolor, collection of Hans Moller Studio
- 60 *Peasant Woman*, 1996, ink on paper, private collection
- 61 *New York Personalities*, ink on paper, private collection



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*Banana Factory Mission:*

*To kindle, support and celebrate*

*the artistic, cultural and*

*creative spirit of the Lehigh Valley*

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Hans Moller: Works on Paper

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38. Orange Horizon, 1976, watercolor
39. Harbor, 1977, watercolor
40. Don Quixote and Falling Stars, 1978, watercolor
41. Blue Rocks and Pines, 1978, watercolor
42. Garden in Spring, 1979, watercolor
43. Monhegan Harbor, 1979, watercolor
44. Lobster Traps III, 1980, watercolor
45. Island Trees I, 1980, watercolor
46. Island Trees I, 1980, watercolor
47. View from our Window, 1981, watercolor
48. Setting Sun, 1983, collage
49. Blooming Garden, 1983, watercolor
50. Sun Set, 1983, watercolor
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