

The American artist Mary Heilmann is recognised as a leading figure in contemporary abstract painting. While her work remained relatively unknown to the wider art audience for a long time, it gained the respect and admiration of her fellow artists. Born in 1940 in San Francisco, Heilmann established her position as a painter after moving to New York in 1968. Going against the dominant trends within art at that time, she opted for this traditional medium in order to develop her own pictorial language, creating abstract paintings that not only communicate personal experiences but also evoke visual pleasure.

Heilmann is known for her inventive explorations of fundamental painterly concerns, her expressive handling of paint and distinctive use of colour and form. While her art contains elements of abstraction and Colour Field painting, and at times recalls Hard-edge painting or Minimalism, it also incorporates pop-cultural motifs such as surfing and the ocean, or driving and the open road. Having been interested in ceramics since her student days, Heilmann has also practised forms of applied art and referred to craft traditions throughout her career.

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