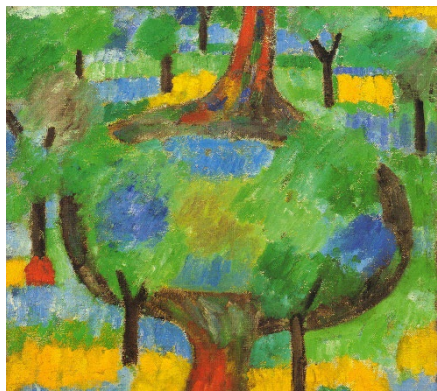


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan Müller: Landscapes & Paths

November 3 – December 16, 2022



Jan Müller, *Single Circular Path*, 1955, Oil on canvas, 26 x 28 inches. (BP#JM-3281)

Bookstein Projects is pleased to announce an exhibition of landscape paintings by Jan Müller. This is the artist's fifth solo show with Bookstein Projects.

Painted predominately in the penultimate years of Müller's lifetime - the artist died in 1957 - the "path" paintings represent an attempt to introduce symbolic content into the unpopulated landscape. The art historian Martica Sawin explains: "double or single paths, each dividing to leave a circular island and coming together to reach an eventual impasse, or simply traveling straight up from the lower edge of the canvas to become abruptly blocked, are seen as two-dimensional shapes against a receding landscape. Apparently for him these paths were equated with vision, which has its limits of penetrations and which likewise may operate in perspective that is at variance with pragmatic experience; they also might describe an agoraphobic complex or refer to his own mortal intimations, for he lived constantly with the sound of the artificial valve in his heart which marked his lifebeat."¹ Indeed, the shape of the path paintings seem to resemble heart valves themselves. The circular path paintings lead to nowhere, thus evoking unachievable goals and deceptive paths of attainment.

The earlier landscapes recall the artist's time in Provence when he and his family settled there after fleeing Germany. These pastoral scenes are often framed by a distant aqueduct in the background. Others depict bucolic landscapes with small white farmhouses on the hillside. Sawin notes, "their yellow-greens interrupted by a distant aqueduct or a white-walled house on a hillside; these, together with the dark groves suggestive of the German forests, also furnish the setting for his mysterious allegories, giving them ancient pagan roots and involving them in the complex fabric of Mediterranean mythology and Northern Medieval romance."² Often painted from a far-away perspective, the distance in these landscapes seems to suggest a sense of longing, if not confusion between the physical and the metaphysical.

Jan Müller was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1922. His father was a political activist who fled from Hitler in the 1930s, emigrating with his family to the U.S. in 1941. Müller studied painting under Hans Hofmann from 1945-50. In 1954, Müller underwent heart surgery during which a plastic pacemaker was implanted. This constant reminder of the passage of time is perhaps, in part, responsible both for the fury with which he painted until his death in 1958 and the urgency with which he made the radical and courageous shift from abstraction to figuration. Jan Müller's work has been included in exhibitions at the Whitney Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, The Jewish Museum, and the 1962 Venice Biennale among others. The artist regularly showed with the Hansa gallery, of which he was a founding member, until his untimely death at the age of thirty-five.

Jan Müller: Landscapes & Paths will be on view from November 3 – December 16, 2022. Gallery hours are Monday through Friday, 11:00 am to 6:00 pm. The gallery will be closed from November 21st through 25th in observation of the Thanksgiving holiday. For additional information and/or visual materials, please contact the gallery at (212) 750-0949 or by email at info@booksteinprojects.com.

¹ Martica Sawin, "Jan Muller: 1922-1958," in *Jan Muller: Major Paintings, 1956-1957* (New York: Oil & Steel Gallery, 1985), n.p.

² *Ibid.* n.p.