
H. A. Sigg: Abstract Rivers - Ephemera

H.A. Sigg: The Nature of Abstraction

2017

H. A. Sigg: Abstract Rivers Intro Panel

Fairfield University Art Museum

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H. A. SIGGG

Abstract Rivers

H. A. Sigg was born in Switzerland in 1924 and studied in Zurich and later in Paris, where he was especially captivated by the art of French Nabi painter Pierre Bonnard. Although his paintings of the 1950s adhere to a figurative idiom, he evolved a purely abstract style whose graceful, atmospheric and minimalist forms and motifs were inflected by aerial views of Southeast Asia, a vantage point he was afforded in 1968 when he was invited by Swissair to fly as “artist in residence in the sky.” From his privileged, sweeping view from the cockpit, he made sketches of the distant topography below. These became the inspiration and the source of the lithe and geometric abstractions suggestive of terraced fields and gently meandering rivers that characterize his work beginning in the 1970s. For H. A. Sigg, the river is perhaps the most iconic and resonant subject, a “mysterious force” with a spirit of its own, as he has averred, and a metaphor for the course of human life and the search for inner enlightenment. In formulating his river imagery, Sigg has pointed to the influence of Hermann Hesse’s novel *Siddhartha*, whose protagonist encounters the river as a changing yet constant, regenerating force, and a source of wisdom and renewal—tropes that inform his river-inspired imagery.

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