

FARID HADDAD

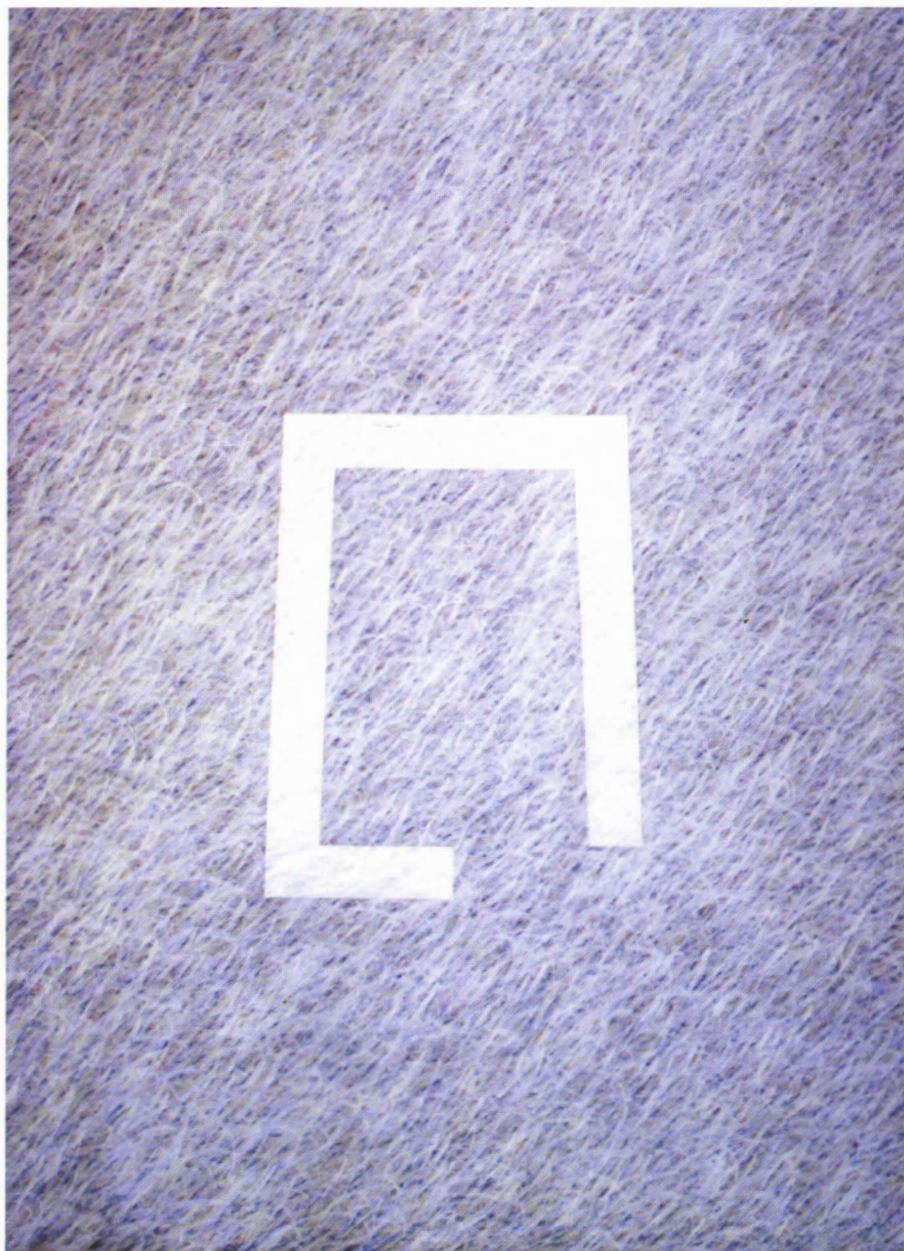
Behold a New Farid Haddad

Sustained and controlled, as though sitting through a high mass as many psalms, his forty oils and gouaches which make up this collection have a proper air; they are discrete and quiet (except for the squares), and not clamoring for attention. No more splash and drip and accident, no more directing the brush with the indulgence of a certain moment's emotive whim. Today – and for this while at least – Farid Haddad wanted to show us that he could behave himself, that for a little while he could control his fidgeting and sit still.

He calls them Field Variation (the gouaches) and Color Field Variations (the oils). Actually, there is no difference except in size and medium. They are all suggestive of landscapes – soft, romantic Monet-stippled impressions of verdant fields and atmospheric skies. Nothing is neither harsh nor unexpected (except the squares); colors move from green to blue, from red to orange or yellow. Paint strokes are applied all in one direction, all of equal length and breadth, reminding me very much of the long line of rhythmic strokes produced in the penmanship class of a faraway childhood time. About these strokes, the typical Farid Haddadian remark was “Just imagine how many strokes I made! Thousands and thousands! I wish I had a chronometer or tabulator or whatever it is tied to my wrist to count the strokes!”

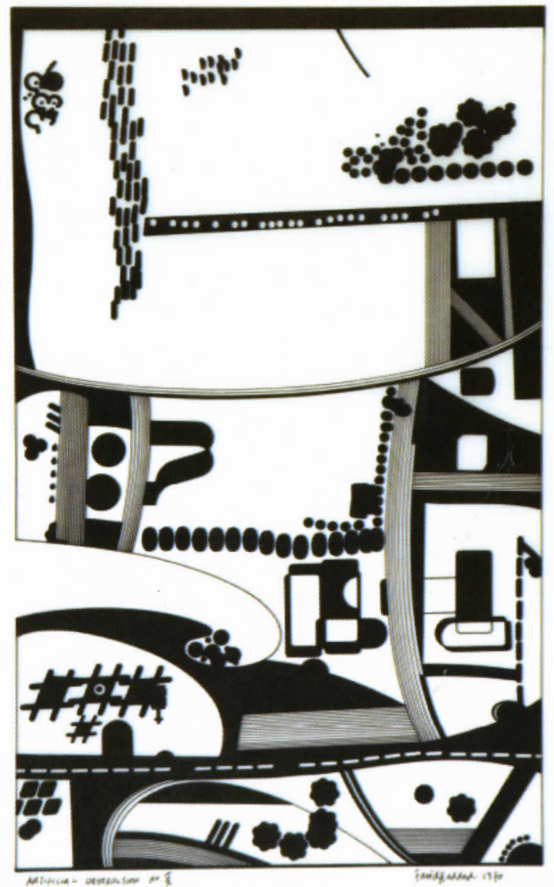
But you don't count strokes in painting like this – you look at the forest and forget the trees. The strokes all add up to a very satisfying whole, perhaps more dreamlike than Farid would want it to be, but still of a very nourishing substance, honestly and deeply felt. . . except for the squares.

The squares – and I asked him about them, these sudden intrusions into some of the canvases that, to my (maybe too evenly dispositional) tastes were disturbing. Why these squares ribboned in harsh white that appeared as one painting collaged upon the other, not harmoniously, but like perverse foreign bodies?



Providence III, acrylic on canvas, 174 x 126 cm, 1978

The researching artist in him had its own rational explanation: "I wanted to try one painting within another; there is a perversity in that square; it tortures me; I would love right now to be able to peel that square off, throw it away or move it around the picture as I wish. Anyway, it's the first time in my life that my paintings were conceived before

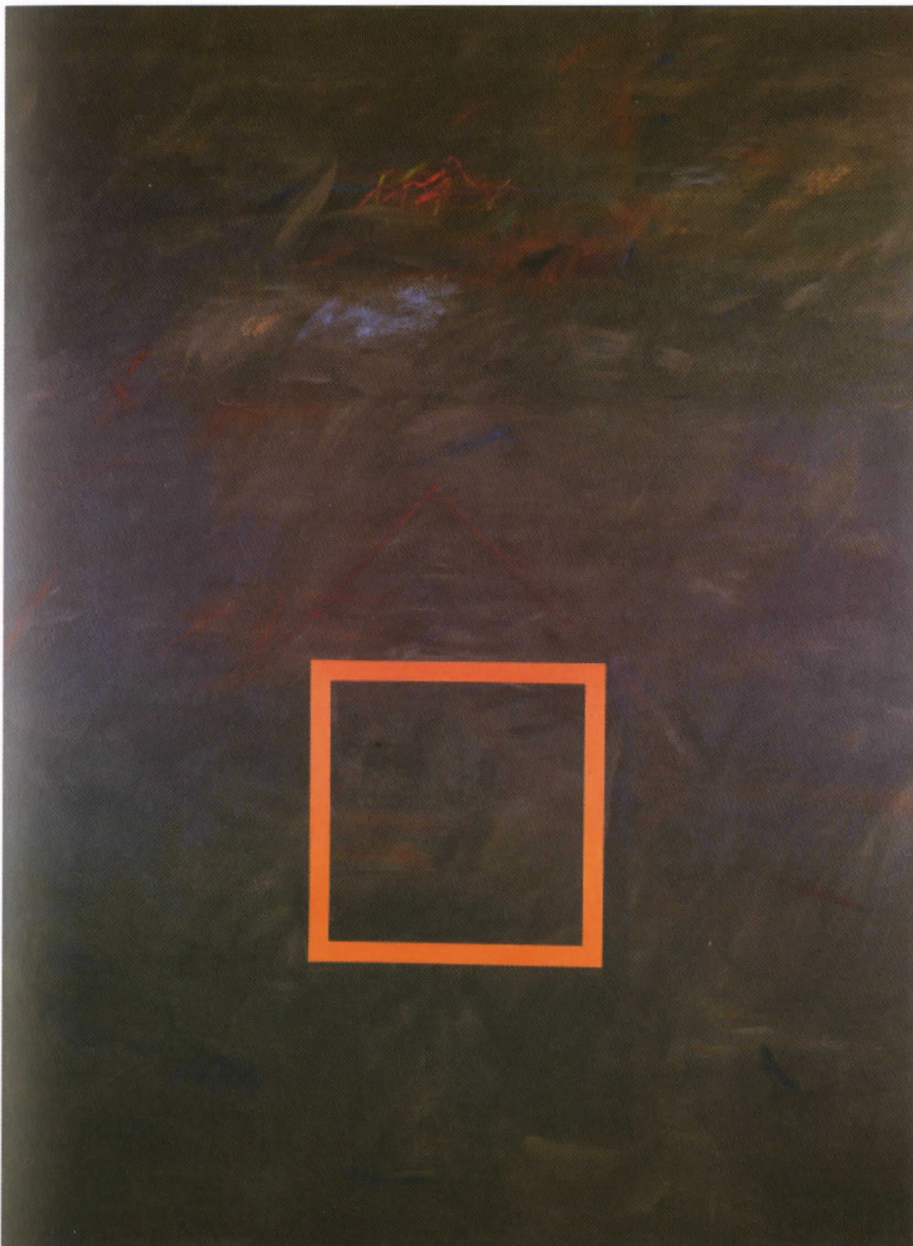


Untitled, ink on vellum, 27 x 21 cm, 1969

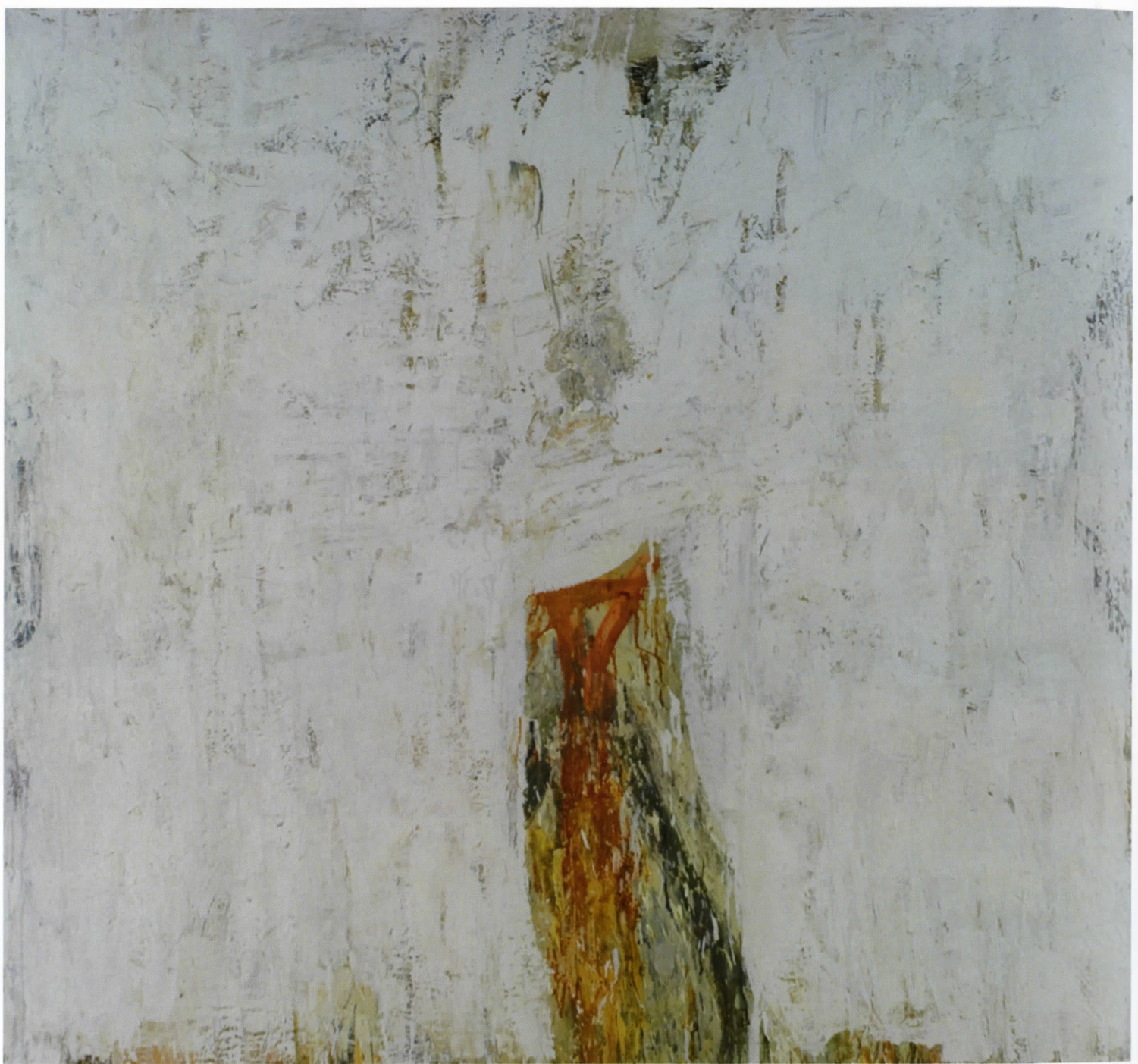
beginning the actual work. This time, I knew exactly what I wanted to do, not submitting myself to chance and the vagrancies of emotion. What I was trying to prove to myself, I don't know."

Proving or not proving, the paintings are good, within or without the squares, as good as anything can be when the talent like a good seed is there. The artist is still young, still exploring, but very, very promising. Whatever he does, we pay attention.

On May 24, 1979, Helen Khal wrote: In the work of Haddad, message becomes secondary, and a visual response to color and form takes precedence. His oils are color abstractions, with suggestions of figuration here and there. The compositions are open, relaxed statements that provoke the eye to enter – an initial seduction to the more intricate dynamic dialogue that is contained within. His paintings hold a tremendous amount of plastic energy, a young spontaneity controlled and directed by a mature hand. In their emotional content, they are in sharp contrast to the organized geometry of his ink drawings. He uses a wide scale of color that in other less versatile hands could fail in a jarring danger. Haddad, however, does not jar. He provokes intellectually, and satisfies emotionally. ■



Cathedral, acrylic and pastel on canvas, 168 x 122 cm, 1979



Mahalia's Landscape I, oil on canvas, 102 x 107 cm, 2005

Born in Beirut in 1945, Farid Haddad is a painter and media artist. He earned his BA from the American University of Beirut and his MFA from the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.

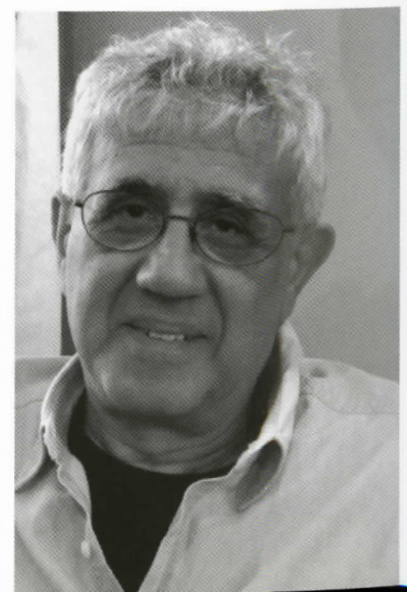
His early works (1970-77) dealt with color field painting, and in the early eighties he turned to an art based on experimental abstraction. He is a former Fulbright-Hays scholar (1972) and is

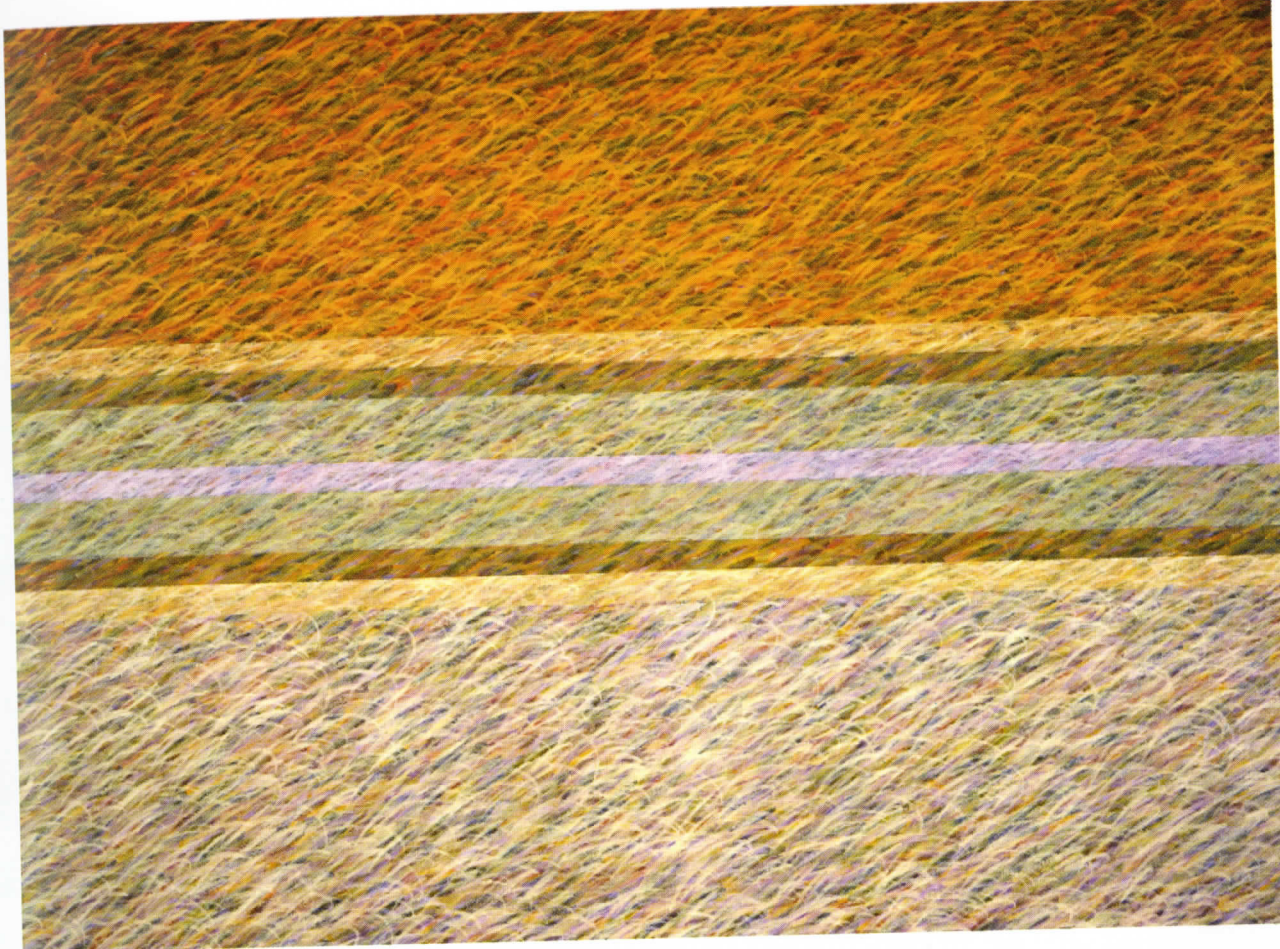
a recipient of two Individual Artist grants from the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts (1983 and 1984). He has taught painting and drawing at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee (1978-79), and since 1979 has been on the faculty of the department of art and art history at New England College in Henniker, New Hampshire, where he teaches the disciplines of two and

three dimensional design, seminars in contemporary art, and courses in media arts. He has had over twenty individual exhibitions and participated in more than fifty group shows in Europe, the Middle East, and North America.

Haddad lives and maintains his studio in Concord, New Hampshire, USA.

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Untitled, acrylic on canvas, 122 x 170 cm, 1977



Untitled, acrylic on canvas, 122 x 170 cm, 1977