



ARNULF RAINER **"HANDPAINTING" 1984-85**

Arnulf Rainer, Handmalerei [hand painting],
1984-85, oil, gouache and charcoal on
paperboard, signed

The present work belongs to the group of so-called Hand Paintings, a technique developed by Arnulf Rainer in 1973. Marking a decisive departure from the traditional use of the brush, these works foreground the direct use of the artist's body, replacing the conventional tool with immediate physical engagement.

Rainer himself described the emergence of this method as an impulsive, almost eruptive incident: during the summer of 1973, his brush broke in the midst of painting. In response, he began applying paint directly with his hands, striking, smearing, and rubbing it onto the surface. This physical intervention quickly evolved into an autonomous artistic principle. The resulting traces were understood by the artist as expressions of immediate, uncontrolled gesture, almost imprints of traumatic gestures, driven by an unconscious, bodily impulse. Rainer often worked to the point of exhaustion; according to his own accounts, even blood occasionally mingled with the paint, underscoring the visceral intensity of this practice.

The present work exemplifies this approach with particular clarity. The black paint, applied in fan-like movements, reveals distinct traces of individual fingers. The dense, impasto surface preserves the dynamism of the creative act, rendering the physical energy of the process directly perceptible. At the edges, clear fingerprints further attest to the immediacy of the artist's touch.

Beneath the dominant black layer, subtle underlying strata of color emerge. Hints of green, orange, and turquoise shimmer through in places, suggesting a layered, process-driven construction. The painting thus reads not merely as a finished composition, but as a record of an intense, performative act of painting.

