

Recent Acquisitions: A Selection

1986-1987



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

---

RON JANOWICH

American, born 1948

*Johanna*

1985

Oil on canvas

102 × 60 in. (259.1 × 152.4 cm.)

George A. Hearn Fund, 1986

1986.230.3

---

Ron Janowich is one of a growing number of contemporary abstract painters who seek to introduce greater spatial depth and expressive content into the Minimalist idiom. The conventional way of conveying illusionistic space in painting is to depict objects in perspective. These artists, however, are attempting to solve this problem without benefit of representational imagery.

For Janowich, the answer is found in his choice of materials and in his painterly style, exemplified by the Museum's large, arch-shaped canvas *Johanna*. In this work, and in a series of much smaller canvases (13 by 9 inches) that preceded it, the artist experiments with a black-oil medium (traditionally a mixture of linseed oil and white lead cooked at high temperatures) that produces extremely defined and lucent brushstrokes. Janowich uses the direction of the brushstrokes, the luminous atmosphere, and the subtle differences in hue to project a sense of space, however ambiguous and undefined it may be. His reiteration of the arch motif in the center "doorway" and its darkened interior imply recession. He also suggests a spiritual or religious content without traditional narrative or symbolic devices by evoking church architecture and altar paintings in the shape of the canvas and by creating an image requiring contemplation. Color is monochromatic—primarily blacks and browns, through which orange-red patches are visible, adding further mystery to this painting.

LMM

