Oli Sihvonen
Energy Fields, Life as a Painter
Selections from His Career

Opening Reception: Friday, February 10, 2012, 5:00-7:00 pm
Exhibition Dates: February 10 – March 24, 2012
Contact: James Kelly: jim@jameskelly.com

James Kelly Contemporary is pleased to present an exhibition of paintings by Oli Sihvonen (1921-1991). This exhibition will be the second presented by the Gallery, the first being a 2007 show of “Ellipse Paintings from the 1960s.”
**Oli Sihvonen** was born in 1921 in Brooklyn, NY of Finnish ancestry. He attended classes at the Art Students League, New York, from 1938 to 1941, before serving in the U.S. Army in WWII. Upon his return to the U.S. after the war, Sihvonen entered the important Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where he met and became lifelong friends with people such as architect Buckminster Fuller, composer John Cage, dancer/choreographer Merce Cunningham and poet Robert Creeley.

At Black Mountain College, Sihvonen studied with Josef Albers, former instructor at the Bauhaus, whose color theories had a lifelong influence on the artist’s work.

In the late 1950s, Sihvonen moved to Taos, New Mexico, and became an influential member of the group of painters known as the Taos Moderns. He remained in Taos for more than a decade, after which he returned to New York where he lived and worked until his death in 1991.

Sihvonen's work is a kind of Hard-Edge painting, indebted to Albers and Piet Mondrian on the one hand, but also to Pierre Matisse. The artist’s fascination with the way every color affects the colors around it is obvious in his paintings, beginning with those he made in New Mexico in the 1950s and 1960s.

During the 1960s and 1970s, his paintings were exhibited in the “Geometric Abstraction in America” show at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; “The Formalists” exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Washington D.C.; and at the Betty Parsons Gallery, New York. In 1965 one of his “Ellipse” paintings was acquired by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, for their 1965 exhibition “The Responsive Eye.” He received a number of commissions, and his work was purchased by a number of important corporate collections and he received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Yaddo Artist Colony, and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation.

While Sihvonen's work was influenced by Albers, it has been linked to Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, Hard-Edge and Op-Art. The architectural, geometric precision of form and their startling combinations and juxtapositions of pure colors create brilliant and shocking paintings.

Sihvonen's paintings in this exhibition, “Energy Fields, Life as a Painter,” include works from the “3 x 3 Series” done in the 1970s, as well as selections from the “Ladder Series” completed in the 1980s.

As critic Paul Goodman, wrote in 1956, "Sihvonen's loving attention to the precise millimeter and the precise hue on the spectrum pays off in a floating and exciting calm and emotion; the picture is in motion, the colors leave their forms and come back changed. The canvas seems to generate its own light, not otherwise than in a bright noonday sun or in a mysterious moonlight; there is a fullness of light."

The sheer visual power, subtlety and elegance of his work stake a claim for his place in the history of twentieth century painting.

**Oli Sihvonen's** work has been exhibited and purchased by major institutions such as the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington D.C.; The Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA; Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA; The Art Institute of Chicago; Dallas Museum of Art; Albuquerque Museum of Art; and the New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe.
James Kelly Contemporary is located at 550 S. Guadalupe St., Santa Fe, NM 87501. Gallery hours for the duration of this show are Tuesday through Friday from 10:00-5:00 p.m. - Saturday from 11:00-5:00 p.m. - Monday by appointment. Please call the gallery at 505.989.1601 - fax 505.989.5005 - email jim@jameskelly.com for more information.

- high resolution images available upon request -