The artist and intellectual Wolfgang Paalen (1905-1959) was an important trendsetter in art around the middle of the 20th century. Born in Vienna, he moved to Paris in 1929, where he affiliated with the Surrealists.

Paalen’s pictures and texts provided both support and inspiration for young representatives of American Abstract Expressionist painting such as Jackson Pollock, Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko.

The artist’s original contribution to Surrealism were his so-called ‘Fumage pictures’. In these he painted hallucinatory motifs using candle smoke, some of which he continued associatively with oil paint, others he left in their own right.

He went into exile in Mexico in 1939 on the invitation of artist Frida Kahlo, and from 1942 to 1944 he edited the influential art magazine DYN.

This catalogue is dedicated to all of the artist’s creative periods. His long-standing interest in collecting and researching the indigenous art of British Columbia and Mexico as well as his literary work are also illuminated in more detail.