

Art Basel

June 12–17, 2018

Alexander Gray Associates

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Represented Artists:

Polly Apfelbaum

Frank Bowling

Ricardo Brey

Luis Camnitzer

Melvin Edwards

Coco Fusco

Harmony Hammond

Lorraine O'Grady

Betty Parsons

Joan Semmel

Hassan Sharif

Regina Silveira

Valeska Soares

Hugh Steers

Jack Tworkov

Alexander Gray Associates presents recent and historic works by **Frank Bowling**, **Melvin Edwards**, **Sam Gilliam**, **Harmony Hammond**, **Lorraine O'Grady**, **Betty Parsons**, **Joan Semmel**, and **Jack Whitten**. Pioneering figures in their chosen mediums, these eight artists challenge conceptual and formal conventions in their work while examining the impact of social and political issues on individual lives and collective experience—diaspora and colonialism, gender and feminism, representation and identity. The Gallery has presented exhibitions and championed artists exploring the complex and intersectional matters of our time since its opening in 2006.

Frank Bowling, Melvin Edwards, Sam Gilliam, and Jack Whitten frequently exhibited together, including in the groundbreaking 1969 show *5+1*, curated by Bowling, at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Committed to expanding notions of abstraction, they insisted that a “black sensibility” informed their work. Often integrating political and personal concerns into their practices, they questioned the limits of painting and sculpture through formal and material improvisation. Their achievements are currently highlighted in the Tate Modern’s traveling exhibition *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*, which celebrates the contributions of Black artists to contemporary art in America.

On view in the presentation, in *Yonder I* (1973), **Bowling** plays with the conventions of Color Field painting, crafting a rectilinear composition from collaged planes of hazy color. Meanwhile, **Gilliam**’s beveled edge paintings from the late 1960s and early 1970s advance painting techniques through their radical construction. Fundamentally questioning properties of color, light, depth, and form, the canvases project off the wall, propelling themselves into the viewer’s space. Also experimenting with process and material transformation, specifically with the medium of acrylic, in *Yellow, Black, and Red* (1980), **Whitten** juxtaposes a target—a reference to his Air Force ROTC training at Tuskegee Institute and topographical mapping—against scraped black paint, synthesizing political history and personal narrative. In **Edwards**’ politically charged sculptures, steel objects are welded into complex reliefs and tableaux, building a language of images and materials offering multiple perspectives and interpretations. In *Ventana a Isla Negra* (1973), he assembles a sculptural homage to the poet Pablo Neruda and responds to the 1971 Attica Prison riot; the work conjoins disparate materials and connotations, including barbed wire, a bullet hole riddled plaque, and a machete—an agricultural tool, as well as a symbol of violence and revolution.

Like Bowling, Edwards, Gilliam, and Whitten, who utilized abstraction as a means of critically reflecting on the nature of Black subjectivity, **Lorraine O'Grady**’s practice re-articulates the connection between art and identity. In her groundbreaking performance *Rivers, First Draft* (1982), produced with the support of the legendary New York gallery Just Above Midtown (JAM), O'Grady constructs a feminist account of her experience as a Black woman coming of age in the art world. The work outlines the conditions that led her to create her persona of *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire* (1980—1983) and anticipates the influential performance *Art Is ...* (1983), featured



Jack Whitten, Melvin Edwards, Frank Bowling and William T. Williams, 1987.



Works by Melvin Edwards, Martin Puryear, Sam Gilliam and Frank Bowling in the exhibition *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*, Tate Modern, London (2017)

prominently in *Soul of a Nation*. Similarly, **Harmony Hammond** and **Joan Semmel** draw on their defining contributions to Second-wave feminism in New York in the 1970s. Approaching abstraction from a material-driven perspective, Hammond mines craft traditions—“women’s work”—and Modernism to create abstract canvases that, in her words, “perform queerly” due to their utilization of “near monochrome” color. Paintings like *Chenille #1* (2016–2017) embed gendered content and physical presence into their formal and material experimentation—implying visual muscle memory. Through figuration, Joan Semmel’s work from the 1970s explores sexuality from a woman’s perspective in order to develop a feminist approach to representation and autonomy. In *Blue Back* (1973), she portrays the woman as the active lover whose vibrant passion outstrips that of her partner.

Betty Parsons remains best known as the founder and driving force behind her eponymous New York gallery, established in 1948, where she played a pivotal role in advancing post-war art, particularly New York School Abstract Expressionism. As the Gallery developed, she evolved as a champion of female artists and artists of color, providing a prominent platform for their work. Less known is that throughout her life she painted and exhibited her own work, refining a practice of abstract painting that set out to capture the “invisible presence” of life. Parsons’ canvases combine the flat formalism of Color Field painting with allusions to nature, time, and the ephemeral. In compositions like *Fall* (1964), she crafts lyrical images from thin layers of pigment that forward an impression of gestural immediacy.

Cumulatively, these eight artists chart a changing social and political landscape in the late twentieth-century United States. Responding to racial oppression, gender inequality, and sexual discrimination, they critically reflect on contemporary society. As Hammond states, “I see art-making, especially that which comes from the margins of the mainstream, as a site of resistance, a way of interrupting and intervening in those historical and cultural fields that continually exclude me, a ... gathering of forces on the borders.”



Joan Semmel and Harmony Hammond in a panel at the Brooklyn Museum, 1977.



Betty Parsons and Agnes Martin, n.d.. Photo: Ann Hall Davis.



Yonder I, 1973, detail

Frank Bowling

Yonder I, 1973

For over five decades, Frank Bowling's practice has been defined by its integration of autobiography and postcolonial geopolitics into abstraction. Born in British Guiana in 1934, Bowling moved to London in 1953 and studied painting at the Royal College of Art from 1959–62. Emerging at the height of the British Pop movement, his early work emphasized the figure while experimenting with expressive, gestural applications of oil paint. In 1966, Bowling moved to New York to immerse himself in Post-War American Art. It was in this environment that Bowling became a unifying force for his peers. In 1969, he curated the seminal exhibition *5+1*, which featured his work alongside pieces by Melvin Edwards, Al Loving, Jack Whitten, William T. Williams, and Daniel LaRue Johnson. In addition, he was a frequent contributor to art publications, including *Arts Magazine* where he became a contributing editor and wrote incisive texts on race and artistic production. At the same time, his long friendship and intellectual sparring sessions about painting and politics with the renowned critic Clement Greenberg helped refine his approach to art-making.

In *Yonder I* (1973), Bowling plays with the conventions of Color Field painting, creating a work whose rectilinear composition is made up of layered, collaged planes of soft color. He created the canvas after having a series of conversations with Greenberg that encouraged him to abandon the politically-informed personal content of his *Map Paintings* and experiment with non-objective painting and post-painterly abstraction. Recalling the work of Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko—two painters Bowling was heavily influenced by—the work marks the artist's embrace of pure abstraction and his transition away from the semi-figurative imagery that had defined his practice up until that point.



Yonder I, 1973, acrylic on canvas, 70.1h x 66.5w in (178h x 169w cm)

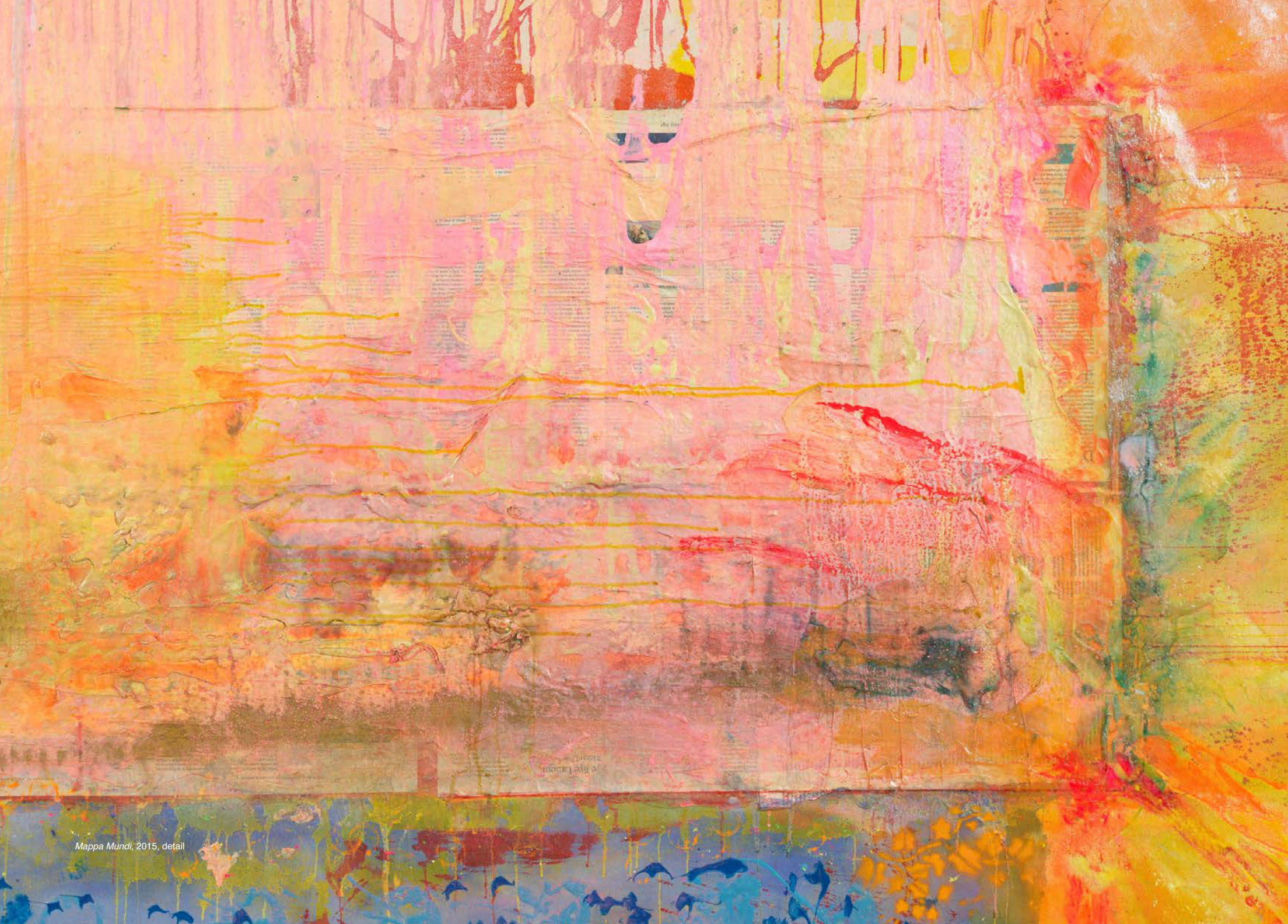
Frank Bowling

Mappa Mundi, 2015

Since the 1960s, Frank Bowling's painting practice has been defined by an integration of autobiography and postcolonial geopolitics into abstract compositions. In recent works like *Mappa Mundi* (2015), Bowling plays with texture and color to communicate a visual experience of sensuous immediacy. Expressive and emotive, Bowling draws on a myriad of different techniques to create this work's layered composition, including pouring, staining, scattering chemicals across the canvas, and even affixing pages from the *London Review of Books* onto the painting's surface. A cacophony of drips and color, while the work's title references a medieval map of the world, the painting's intricate composition reads as a cartographic lexicon of Bowling's approach to abstract mark-making—a map of his painting practice. For example, the streaks of color that radiate outwards from the central bar composed of pages from the *London Review* expand on the gestural bravura Bowling began to develop in his *Poured Paintings* while the collaged elements of the work refine the artist's approach to relief, which he started to experiment with in the 1980s, and the title recalls his *Map Paintings* from the 1960s. A raucous celebration of color and form, *Mappa Mundi* reveals Bowling's ongoing tireless investigation into the nature and possibilities of painting.



Mappa Mundi, 2015, acrylic and mixed media on collaged canvas, 69h x 119w in (175.26h x 302.26w cm)



Mappa Mundi, 2015, detail

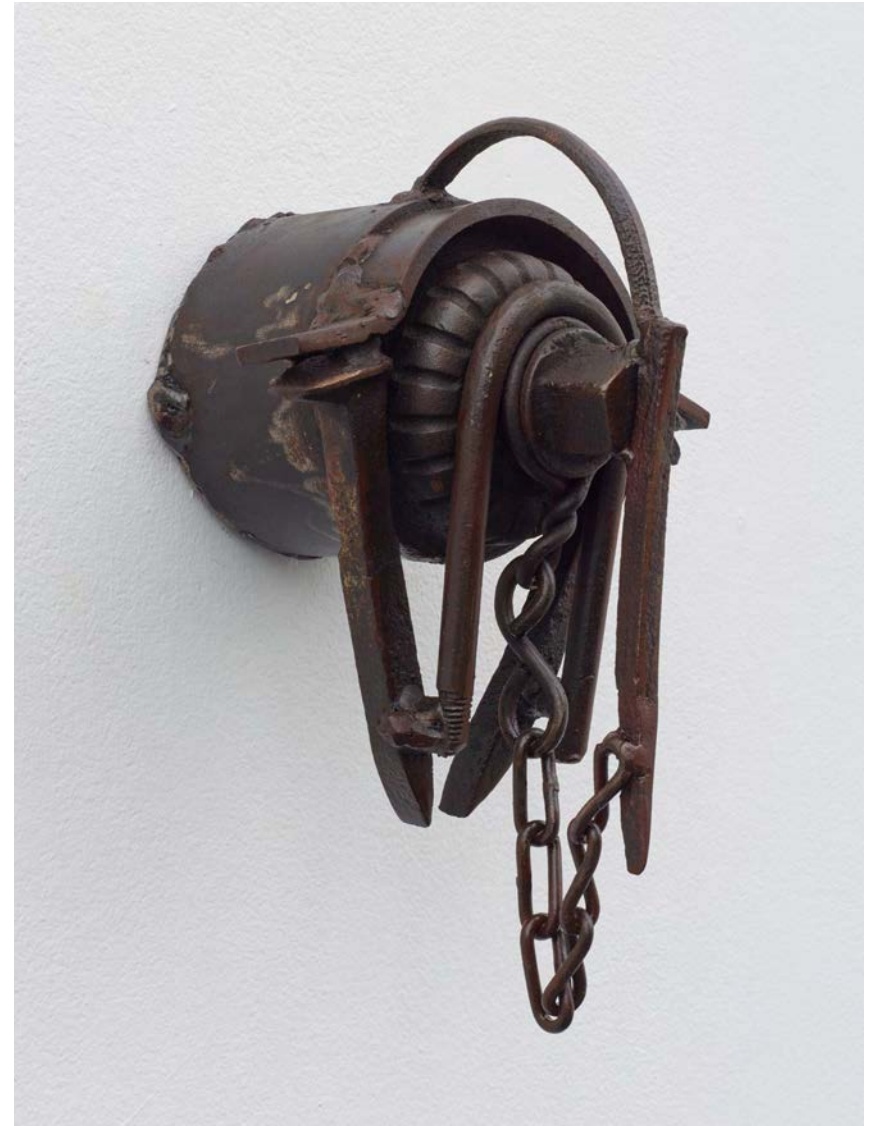
Melvin Edwards

Lynch Fragments Series, 1960s–present

Melvin Edwards is best known for his sculptural series *Lynch Fragments*, which spans three periods: the early 1960s, when he responded to racial violence in the United States; the early 1970s, when his activism concerning the Vietnam War motivated him to return to the series; and from 1978 to the present, when he began honoring individuals, exploring notions of nostalgia, and investigating his personal interest in African culture. As small wall reliefs, the *Lynch Fragments* bridge a gap between painting and sculpture. The works often incorporate bases of solid, geometric shapes that create stable visual foundations for complex forms rendered from welding objects such as chains, hammers, nails, padlocks, scissors, spikes, and wrenches together. The dimensions and placement of the works are crucial to their effect. Hung at eye level, they confront viewers, suggesting the human head and the attendant complexities and nuances of identity, both personal and—with their suggestion of African masks—political.

Recognized as a pioneer in the history of contemporary African-American art and sculpture, Edwards began welding in 1960 while studying at the University of Southern California. Drawn to making assemblages from disparate elements, he noticed that the objects suggested forms, reinforcing the relationship between material and image. This relationship has since become a foundation for his practice. Capitalizing on the potential of materials to communicate meaning, Edwards utilizes steel industrial and agricultural objects to lend varying cultural, social, and political connotations to his sculptures' modernist structures. As the artist remarks, sculpture "seemed to me a more direct way to deal with the inner subject. Sculpture allowed me to put in, in a more natural way, things that people were saying you weren't supposed to put in art, like race and politics. It allowed me to think more literally in those ways but have it come out in the work abstractly."

The series includes work across five decades and highlights the artist's exploration of intersectional identity, social justice, and political awareness. As curator Michael Brenson noted, "Being an abstract sculptor enables Edwards to be specific, yet move in many directions at once. It enables him to weld into the history of art the particular histories that touch him and at the same time argue for the need to transform the world and liberate the imagination." While each *Lynch Fragment* is representative of its original function, its significance multiplies as the objects acquire compositional vitality; everything destructive signifies the possibility of liberation and creation. Edwards' prolonged incorporation of chains and barbed wire into his sculptures speaks to this notion. These forms connote both slavery and oppression and the links between people—the act of storytelling from one generation to another—and cultures, which the artist also evokes through his use of African agricultural tools that simultaneously reference his life in America.



NYC, 1980, welded steel, 8.25h x 10.5w x 8.63d in (20.95h x 26.67w x 21.91d cm)

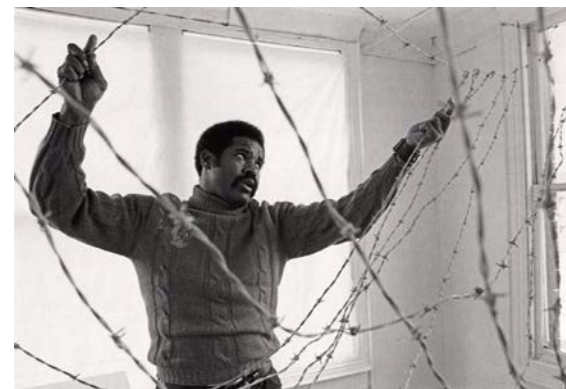
Melvin Edwards

Ventana a la Isla Negra, 1973

Melvin Edwards created this work in homage to the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, who died in Isla Negra, Chile in 1973. Edwards was interested in Neruda's poetry, as well as his political engagement, and made this work while reflecting on the 1971 Attica Prison Riot, one of the most famous and important riots during the Prisoners' Rights Movement. Among the familiar forms incorporated into this work, two point to the politics that framed the time in which Edwards produced *Ventana a Isla Negra*. Edwards incorporates a plaque sourced from collected scraps from a military base on the bottom right side of the work with a hole made from a bullet shot. To the top left, Edwards includes a machete, which he began incorporating in sculptures in 1973, and which he continues to use in his Dakar studio, as a formal and symbolic element in his works. In West Africa, machetes are used as agricultural tools, and Edwards recognizes this daily utilitarian object as "another shape of steel that already exists." At the same time, the knives connote violence and stand as important symbols for social movements such as the revolutions of Haiti and Cuba.



Ventana a Isla Negra, 1973, welded steel and barbed wire, 44.4h x 48w x 20d in (112.78h x 121.92w x 50.8d cm)



Edwards in his 209 East Second Street studio, New York, February 20, 1970.



Melvin Edwards in his studio, Oklahoma City, 2016



Melvin Edwards in his studio, Oklahoma City, 2016

Sam Gilliam

Soft Melting, 1972

Soft Melting belongs to Sam Gilliam's series of beveled-edge "slice paintings," his first signature style that began in the late 1960s. Soon after moving to Washington DC from Los Angeles in the early 1960s, Gilliam encountered the work of Washington Color painters, including Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, and Thomas Downing, and began his enduring investigation of color that expanded upon pouring, staining and soaking techniques to include scrubbing, rubbing, and mopping paint onto canvases that he would subsequently roll fold, and crumple.

To make *Soft Melting*, Gilliam laid the canvas on the floor, turning it into something more like a tarp, which he worked from all four sides by initially soaking and splattering the lightest colors of the composition—yellows, pinks, and greens—followed by the application of darker hues of oranges, reds, and blues, creating a translucent effect. The canvas was then folded back and forth on itself and left to dry in a heap on the floor. When the work was still in a pile, Gilliam applied paint one last time to its exposed surface area, to give it texture and punctuate the composition in ways that only became known to him later, when the work was spread out and examined. By fundamentally questioning the techniques of paint application, Gilliam also came to investigate the framing properties of artwork and explore properties of color, light, depth, volume, and form. Using a beveled stretcher enabled Gilliam to heighten awareness of his painting's relationship to the wall and how the space shared by viewer and picture figures into the experience of the art. As curator Jonathan Binstock remarked, "Gilliam's beveled edges charge the gap between the work and the wall with a distinctive energy." *Soft Melting* bridges the gap, positioned as an object resting heavy on the wall, at once integral to it and emerging from it.



Soft Melting, 1972, acrylic on canvas, 71.5h x 75.5w in (181.61h x 191.77w cm)



Soft Melting, 1972, detail



Yellow, Black and Red, 1980, detail

Jack Whitten

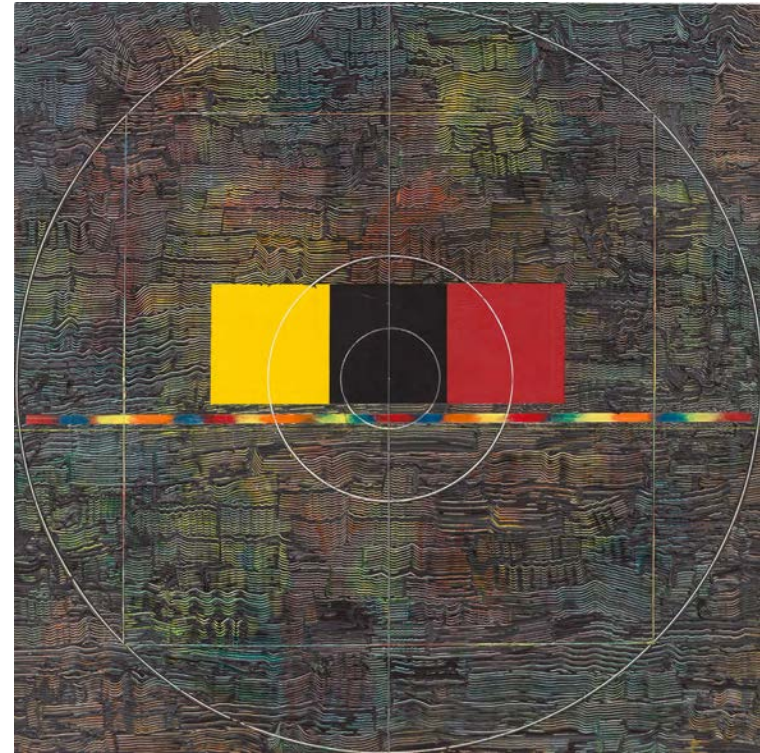
Yellow, Black and Red, 1980

A pioneer of abstract painting, Jack Whitten pushed the boundaries of the medium with innovative materials, methods, and processes. In *Yellow, Black, and Red* (1980), he continues the formal experimentation he began in the 1970s, expanding on the techniques that he first developed in his early “slab” paintings, as well as the gestural control and reductive palette of his *Greek Alphabet* series. Playing with texture and alternative approaches to paint application, the work adopts a collage-like approach to painting and features a target incised over geometric forms and thickly applied black paint scraped with an Afro pick into lines and ridges.

Part of a larger series of target paintings, which includes *Dead Reckoning I* (1980) in the collection of the Studio Museum in Harlem, *Yellow, Black, and Red* references Whitten’s past as a cadet in the Air Force ROTC at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Recalling the navigation strategies he learned there, the target imagery suggests topographical mapping. As the curator Kathryn Kanjo expands, the circular forms allude to “a process of calculating how to get from one point to another with limited knowledge. It is the effort to determine one’s best possibility of survival: figuring out how to reach your destination based upon what you know of where you’ve been.” The target motif, in particular, resonated with Whitten during the early 1980s because he was uncertain about the direction of his practice. “I know a lot of stuff about painting, and I’m realizing that there’s a lot of stuff I don’t know,” Whitten elaborated in an interview about the decade. “Again, doubt comes in. What do I want? What do I do? So I make a calculation. The only way I can deal with this is to continue. Survival depends on it.”

As a symbol of “survival,” the target allowed Whitten to further refine his painterly trajectory. Constructing an easel, he abandoned working on the floor to paint standing, using various tools to mark and carve into the surface of the canvas. At the same time, the autobiographical nature of the form reflects Whitten’s experience coming of age during the struggle for civil rights. While a student at Tuskegee, Whitten met Martin Luther King Jr. and, after transferring to Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, participated in a march. Overwhelmed by the vitriol and hate aimed at him and other peaceful protestors, Whitten fled the South and became an art student at Cooper Union in New York. Remembering this period, Whitten asserted, “I’m a product of American apartheid. There’s no other way to put it. You’re talking to someone who grew up in straight segregation.”

By incising this experience and, by extension, the history of the civil rights movement into the canvas, *Yellow, Black, and Red* speaks to a pivotal time in American history and ongoing racial inequality. Whitten’s use of color further underscores this connection. Combined with the green in the polychrome ground, the yellow, black, and red of the central squares allude to Pan-African flags while recalling the segregation the Tuskegee Airmen faced serving in World War II. Concurrently, the squares’ colors and forms also invoke the history of modernism and the reductive compositions of abstract pioneers like Kazimir Malevich.



Yellow, Black and Red, 1980, acrylic on canvas, 64h x 64w in (162.56h x 162.56w cm)



Jack Whitten in his Crosby Street studio, c. 1976–78

Lorraine O'Grady

Rivers, First Draft, 1982/2015

Lorraine O'Grady combines strategies related to humanist studies on gender, the politics of diaspora and identity, and reflections on aesthetics by using a variety of mediums that include performance, photo installation, moving media, and photomontage. A native of Boston, MA, her work involves her heritage as a New Englander and as a daughter of Caribbean immigrant parents. After she graduated from Wellesley College in 1956, where she studied economics and Spanish literature, she served as an intelligence analyst for the United States government, a literary and commercial translator, and a rock music critic. Turning to visual arts in the late 1970s, O'Grady became an active voice within the alternative New York art world. In addition to addressing feminist concerns, her work tackled cultural perspectives that had been underrepresented during the feminist movements of the early 1970s.

In 1982, O'Grady staged her first major performance piece in Central Park, *Rivers, First Draft*. Created for *Art Across the Park*, a public art program curated by Gilbert Coker and Horace Brockington, the work was seen by a small audience composed mainly of the artist's friends from the Black avant-garde gallery Just Above Midtown (JAM). Identifying the performance as her most personal, O'Grady describes it as a "collage-in-space" with different actions occurring simultaneously. The work is structured around three separate narratives, represented by three versions of O'Grady's self: a young girl (the Little Girl in a Pink Sash), a teenager (the Teenager in Magenta), and an adult woman (the Woman in Red), and is about uniting her two different heritages: Caribbean and New England. Writing about the piece, O'Grady states, "It was a three-ring circus of movement and sound that, unlike the randomness of Futurists attempting to shout each other down, played more like a unitary dream."

Emerging as a feminist account of O'Grady's experience as a Black woman in the art world, *Rivers, First Draft* charts her journey in the 1970s as she enters the New York scene through the characters of the Debauchees, manifestations of her life as a rock critic. The pivotal moment of the performance occurs after O'Grady, represented by the Woman in Red, has been ejected by the Black Male Artists from their studio. She descends to the stream bank where she sees a white stove and claims it by painting it red, thereby announcing her artistic transformation. Shortly after this act, the work ends in an image of acceptance and reconciliation as O'Grady's selves—the girl, the teenager, and the woman—help each other navigate the Loch stream. The figures are guided by a representation of New England (the Nantucket Memorial statue) while the female symbol of the Caribbean, the Woman in White, continues to endlessly grate coconut. Tracing O'Grady's artistic development, *Rivers, First Draft* outlines the conditions that led her to create the persona of *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire* (1980–1983) and anticipates the later influential performance *Art Is ...* (1983) at Harlem's African-American Day Parade.



Rivers, First Draft: She descends to the stream where the white stove is standing, 1982/2015, digital C-print from Kodachrome 35mm slide, 16h x 20w in (40.64h x 50.80w cm)



Rivers, First Draft: The Woman in Red starts painting the stove her own color, 1982/2015, digital C-print from Kodachrome 35mm slide, 16h x 20w in (40.64h x 50.80w cm)



Rivers, First Draft: The stove becomes more and more red, 1982/2015, digital C-print from Kodachrome 35mm slide, 16h x 20w in (40.64h x 50.80w cm)



Rivers, First Draft, 1982/2015, installation view, Alexander Gray Associates (2015)

Harmony Hammond

Pink Weave, 1975

Pink Weave (1975) belongs to Harmony Hammond's *Weave Paintings* (1973–1977), which embody an intersection of painting and sculpture that remains central to the artist's practice to this day. With this series, Hammond broke new ground, claiming an oppositional space in process-based abstract painting at the height of second-wave feminist activism.

Harmony Hammond moved to New York City in 1969 where she, along with a group of female peers, rejected the historically male-dominated site of painting. Utilizing found fabrics, her earliest works from this period were unstretched acrylic paintings on domestic textiles such as bedspreads and curtains. These gradually developed into sculptural assemblages of painted cloth that hung on the wall or out in space. Hammond was a co-founder of A.I.R., the first women's cooperative art gallery in New York (1972) and *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art & Politics* (1976). It was during this early period of advocacy on behalf of female artists that she consciously introduced gendered content into the painting field, with her series of weave paintings. To make these paintings on stretched canvas, Hammond applied successive layers of oil paint mixed with Dorland's wax, incising the still wet surface with three-dimensional weave patterns that include points and burrs of paint. These pieces can appear dangerous to the viewer's touch but are actually quite fragile. Hammond's process of layering and marking the painted surface results in objects that reference and subvert textile traditions in craft and Modernism—from Anni Albers' Bauhaus experiments to native North American basket-weaving. Hammond writes, "Weaving, of course, implies the grid, and the grid can suggest weaving. If you think of stitching as marking, and marking in gridded space, then before you know it, you are into pattern and decoration...I was always very interested in the notion of the stitching as a repetitive gesture - reflecting the repetition in women's lives - and a connective gesture - a means of piecing together or building 'wholes' out of fragments."

Hammond's creation of tactile surfaces in works such as *Pink Weave* result in what she calls "fugitive" color that is fluid and difficult to place. She asserts these paintings "perform queerly" due to her utilization of mutable and inexact "near monochrome." In her practice, abstraction does not preclude social engagement; her weave paintings epitomize an integration of political content into rigorous formal experimentation, an approach that art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson describes as "the space of the between." As the artist describes, the skin-like surface "was lumpy and bumpy, irregular – presencing the body. When you're incising into the painting surface, you're incising into the body... What was happening on the painting's surface with its subtly curved edges, was mirrored in the shape." Hammond's recent near-monochrome canvases that are pieced, punctured, sutured, wrapped and bandaged, expand upon the incised patterned surfaces of these pioneering earlier "Weave Paintings."



Pink Weave, 1975, oil and Dorland's wax on canvas, 24.5h x 24.5w in (62.23h x 62.23w cm)



Self-portrait with Weave Painting, 1976

Harmony Hammond

Chenille #1, 2016–2017

A pioneer of feminist and queer discourse, Harmony Hammond's recent paintings' focus on materiality and the indexical, suggesting topographies of the body, derive from and remain in conversation with her feminist work of the 1970s. *Chenille #1* (2016–2017) belongs to an ongoing series of Chenille paintings, which incorporate rough burlap and grommets into Hammond's signature layers of thick paint, suggesting the soft texture and domestic warmth of bedspreads. Chenille experts, like quilters, share an undervalued history of needlework and similar technique of puncturing fabric from the backside. In Hammond's collaged and layered painting, the chenille reference is visual—performed by paint and other materials on the surface of the canvas, rather than the puncture of a needle and thread. Emerging from Hammond's near monochrome paintings, which simultaneously engage with and challenge the narrative of modernist painting, *Chenille #1* invites content and positions painting as a site of negotiation between what exists inside and outside the picture plane.



Chenille #1, 2016-2017, oil and mixed media on canvas, 88.5h x 72.5w in (224.79h x 184.15w cm)

Joan Semmel

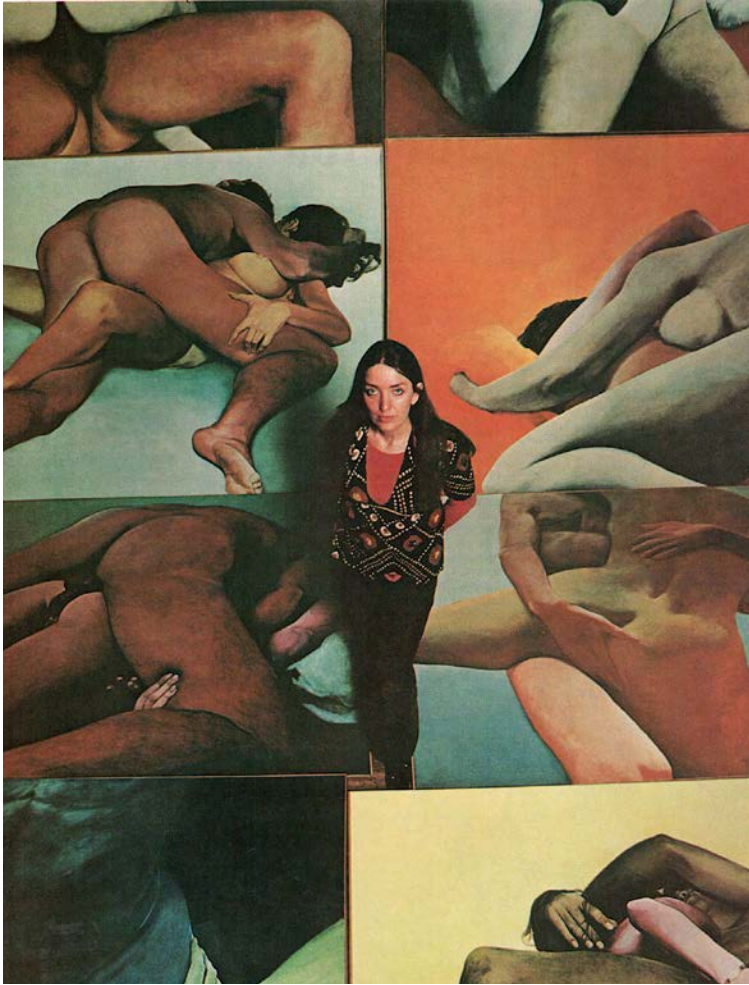
Blue Back, 1973

Joan Semmel has centered her painting practice around issues of the body, from desire to aging, as well as those of identity and cultural imprinting. She studied at the Cooper Union, Pratt Institute, and the Art Student's League of New York. In the 1960s, Semmel began her painting career in Spain and South America, where she experimented with abstraction. She returned to New York in the early 1970s, where she began to create figurative paintings, many with erotic themes in response to pornography, popular culture, and concerns around representation. Her practice traces the transformation that women's sexuality has undergone in the last century and emphasizes the possibility for female autonomy through the body.

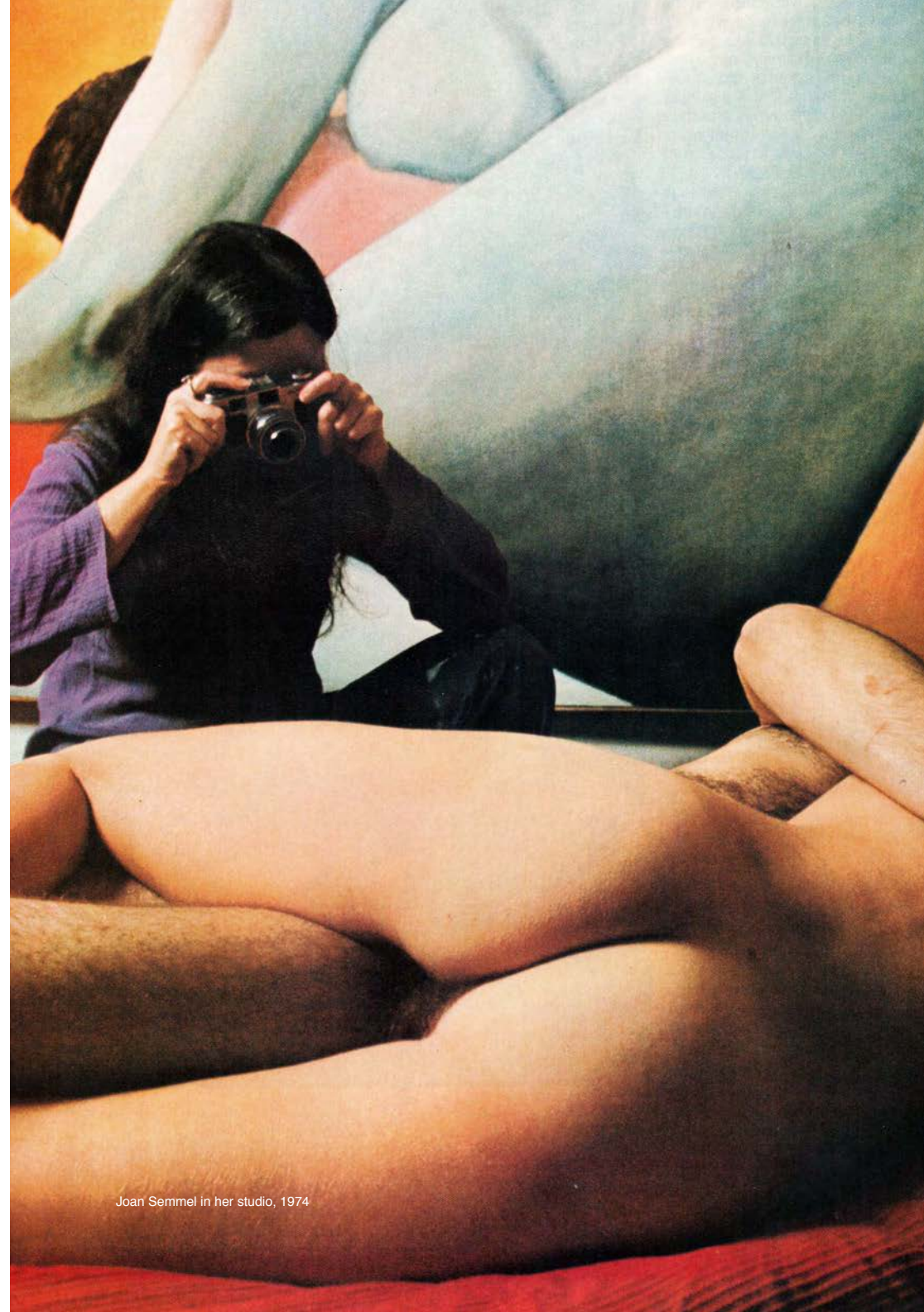
In the 1970s, Semmel began her exploration of female sexuality with the *Sex Paintings*, large scale depictions of couples entwined in various erotic positions. Liberating and reclaiming the female nude, her explicit paintings explored sexuality from a woman's point of view and resonated in a cultural landscape informed by Second-wave Feminism. Semmel's *Blue Back* (1973) from her *Sex Paintings* series features a cropped composition of a man and a woman locked in an erotic embrace. Utilizing expressionistic and symbolic color to distinguish her image from pornography, Semmel renders the male form in grisaille-like blue—his flesh contrasting sharply with the vibrant warmth of the arm and leg of the woman who holds him close. Portraying the woman as the active lover whose passion outstrips that of her almost colorless partner, Semmel's image represents a feminist approach to painting, representation, and autonomy. As Semmel says of her *Sex Paintings*, "I wanted to find an erotic visual language that would speak to women. I was convinced that the repression of women began in the sexual arena, and this would need to be addressed at the source."



Blue Back, 1973, oil on canvas, 22.75h x 20w in (57.78h x 50.8w cm)



Joan Semmel in her studio, 1974



Joan Semmel in her studio, 1974

Betty Parsons

Fall, 1964

Betty Parsons was an abstract painter and sculptor who is best known as a dealer of mid-century art. Throughout her storied career as a gallerist, she maintained a rigorous artistic practice, painting during weekends in her Long Island studio. Parsons' eye for innovative talent stemmed from her own training as an artist and guided her commitment to new and emerging artists of her time, impacting the canon of twentieth-century art in the United States. While her gallery's legacy is closely tied to that of Abstract Expressionists like Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko, Parsons also championed a diverse program of artists, showcasing work by women and artists of color, reflecting her liberal and inclusive values and eclectic tastes.

While Parsons didn't begin to experiment with abstraction until the late 1940s, she quickly developed an expressive and improvisational approach that reflected, in her words, "sheer energy" and "the new spirit." In *Fall* (1964), she crafts a lyrical composition from thin layers of blue, orange, and brown paint. At once emblematic of the flat formalism of Abstract Expressionism and color field painting while evoking the falling leaves of an autumnal landscape, *Fall* reveals Parsons' commitment to capturing what she called "the invisible presence," the abstract essence of life.



Fall, 1964, acrylic on canvas, 39.75h x 30w in (100.97h x 76.2w cm)



Parsons at her gallery, c.1960

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Printing: Puritan Capital

Through exhibitions, research, and artist representation, the Alexander Gray Associates spotlights artistic movements and artists who emerged in the mid- to late-Twentieth Century. Influential in cultural, social, and political spheres, these artists are notable for creating work that crosses geographic borders, generational contexts and artistic disciplines. Alexander Gray Associates is a member of the Art Dealers Association of America.

About Art Basel

Art Basel show brings the international artworld together, with 291 of the world's leading galleries showing the works of over 4,000 artists. A full program of artworld talks takes place each day. Exhibitions and events are also offered by cultural institutions in Basel and the surrounding area, creating an exciting, region-wide art week.

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