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ABSTRACTION

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new england women painters  
1950 to now

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APRIL 7 - SEPTEMBER 17, 2017  
deCordova Sculpture Park & Museum

expanding  
ABSTRACTION

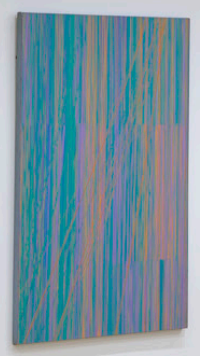
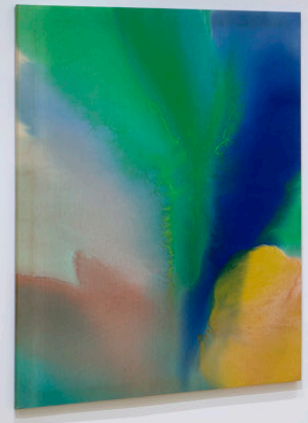
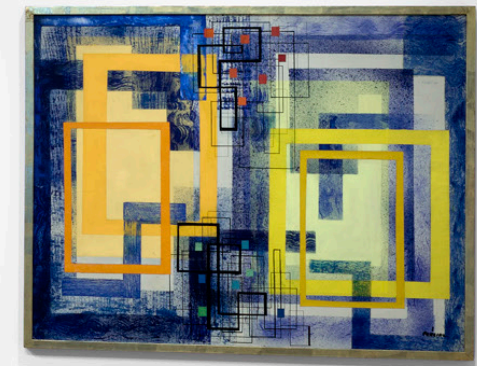
new england  
women painters  
1950 to now

This exhibition presents a vital yet lesser-known history of abstract painting in New England by showcasing the work of women painters with strong connections to the region. Despite their relative exclusion from mainstream and male-dominated conversations on postwar abstraction, these artists have made significant contributions to the field. Spanning from the 1950s to the present, the works on view here expand traditions of abstract painting and testify to the artists' unwavering productivity and creative innovation.

Drawn primarily from deCordova's permanent collection, this survey explores diverse techniques, processes, and concepts. The exhibition and interpretation also emphasizes the artists' contributions, connections, and reception within New England. *Expanding Abstraction* reveals the complexities of painting in the region and lays the foundation for a more inclusive understanding of abstraction through the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Organized by Jennifer Gross, former Chief Curator and Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs, with Sarah Morriss, Associate Curator.

Support for this exhibition was generously provided by Amy and Jonathan Parnes, Mary and Donald Shockey, The Mandylynn Hyatt Moses Fund, the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, the Deborah A. Hawkes Charitable Trust, Linda and George Kelly.



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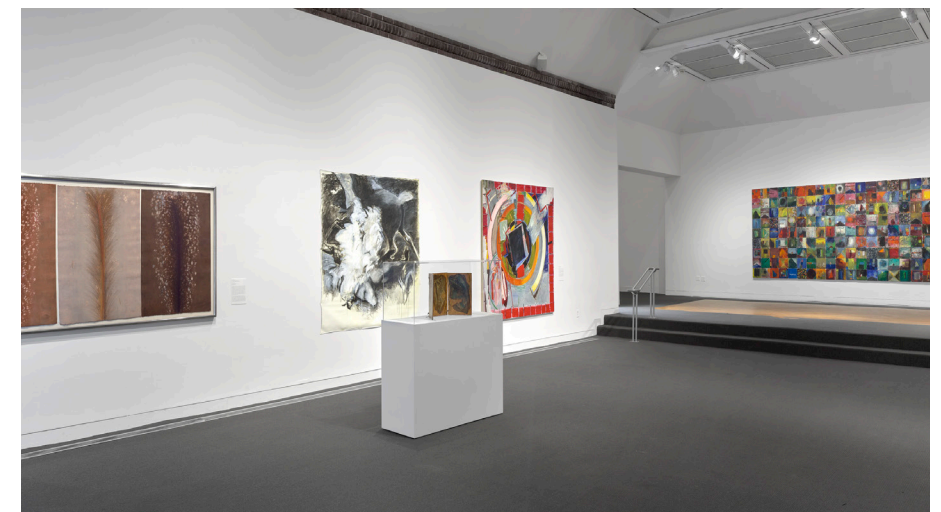


## Introduction

This online publication is an extension of the exhibition *Expanding Abstraction: New England Women Painters, 1950 to Now*, on view at deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum from April 7 to September 17, 2017. The exhibition presented a vital yet lesser-known history of abstract painting in New England by showcasing the work of women painters with strong connections to the region. Despite their relative exclusion from mainstream and male-dominated conversations on postwar abstraction, these artists have made significant contributions to the field. Spanning from the 1950s to the present, the works in the exhibition broaden traditions of abstract painting and testify to the artists' unwavering productivity and creative innovation.

*Expanding Abstraction* was drawn primarily from deCordova's permanent collection, with select loans from area institutions and private collections. By foregrounding diverse painting techniques, processes, and concepts, *Expanding Abstraction* revealed the complexities of painting in the region and lay the foundation for a more inclusive understanding of abstraction through the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. With the aim of deepening the study of post-war abstract painting, this online document serves as a resource for scholars and curators.

Narratives of abstract painting of the post-war period often commence with the physically and emotively expressive work of artists associated with Abstract Expressionism. *Expanding Abstraction* focused on less familiar pathways of abstraction that developed in advance of or parallel to such canonical artistic movements. Organized chronologically, the exhibition began with works by Irene Rice Pereira and Alice Trumbull Mason, both prominently recognized in their day for developing modes of geometric and lyrical abstraction. Pereira was one of the first women artists to have a solo retrospective at a major New York art museum (Whitney Museum of American Art, 1953). They were also vocal advocates for non-objective art: Mason was a founding member of American Abstract Artists (AAA), a group formed in the late 1930s in New York City that provided exhibition venues and enabled opportunities for critical discourse of abstraction. She later served as treasurer (1939), secretary (1940–45), and president (1959–63) of this organization. Likewise, Pereira published and presented at conferences on subjects pertaining to abstraction and the role of women artists. *Expanding Abstraction* also brought attention to unique formal experimentations made by women artists, such as Beverly Hallam, who pioneered the use of



Right and above: Installation view, *Expanding Abstraction: New England Women Painters, 1950 to Now*, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, MA. Photograph by Clements Photography and Design, Boston.





Above and right: Installation view, *Expanding Abstraction: New England Women Painters, 1950 to Now*, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, MA. Photograph by Clements Photography and Design, Boston.

acrylic house paint in the 1950s, and which she shared through public demonstrations throughout New England.

In addition to exploring the painters' innovations on the canvas, the show emphasized their inter-personal connections and critical reception, particularly in the New England region. Notable studio spaces, teaching appointments, and instances of mentorship were highlighted. Maud Morgan was a central agent in the Boston arts community, not only for her diverse approaches to abstraction, but as a role model and supporter of younger artists. The exhibition called attention to venues and institutions throughout New England that were noteworthy for their support of women painters since the 1950s. One prominent example is the fellowship program at the Radcliffe Institute for Independent Study (now the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study). Five artists in *Expanding Abstraction* were Radcliffe Fellows—Maggi

Brown, Jeanne Leger, Elizabeth Rosenblum, May Stevens, and Maxine Yalovitz-Blankenship. These examples of education, display, and reception provide an introductory map of the systems of support, both personal and institutional, that enabled the exhibiting artists' careers.

Some of this contextual research was integrated into a timeline that spanned the Museum's gallery walls and flowed into the educational and learning spaces. The timeline, also included in this online publication, listed many notable shows, publications, and events that featured artists in *Expanding Abstraction*. The first event is *Fannie Hillsmith-Abstract Paintings* (1951), which was deCordova's earliest solo exhibition of a woman artist and its first exhibition of abstract painting. Another significant touchstone was the publication of the March 1985 issue of *Art New England* that was devoted to the state of women in the arts, both regionally

and nationally. The issue included a text by the Boston-based artist Jo Ann Rothschild titled "The Invisible Woman Artist," in which she wrote candidly on the deep imbalance of opportunities to exhibit, teach, and sell artwork that were available to women artists in comparison to their male counterparts. Rothschild provided ratios and other statistics to support her findings. Inspired by her research, the curatorial team examined deCordova's exhibition history and permanent collection to better understand how and when our institution has supported women artists since its founding in 1950. Some of these findings are also included at the end of this document.

Through this exhibition and online publication, we hope to amplify the recognition of women painters with strong New England affiliations. Integrating their contributions into art historical narratives offers a more diverse history of post-war painting. We are very grateful to each of the artists in this exhibition, many of whom shared conversations, resources, and additional materials on this rich legacy of painting in New England. We additionally want to thank the art historians, curators, and critics who offered nuanced perspectives on the complexities of gender and abstraction through their exhibitions, interpretations, and reviews of these painters.

Sarah Montross, Associate Curator



## Acknowledgements

Exhibition organized by Jennifer Gross, former Chief Curator and Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs, with Sarah Montross, Associate Curator.

Additional research and writing was conducted by Martina Tanga, Koch Curatorial Fellow, Scout Hutchinson, Curatorial Assistant, Helen Lewandowski, former Koch Curatorial Fellow, Jana Herman, Curatorial Intern, and Clancy Taylor, Curatorial Intern. Lynn Traub, Registrar, Ross Normandin, Head Preparator, and Rory Beerits, Associate Preparator, expertly managed the exhibition's installation, loans, and other logistical concerns.

Emily Silet, Head of Learning Environments, organized the timeline in collaboration with the Curatorial Department. Julie Bernson, Deputy Director of Learning and Engagement, provided crucial advising, editing, and support surrounding all aspects of exhibition planning. Our gratitude extends to Executive Director John B. Ravenal for his ongoing support of critical exhibition projects such as this.

This online document was designed by Emma Kraner, Curatorial Intern, and Scout Hutchinson, Curatorial Assistant.

Support for this exhibition was generously provided by Amy and Jonathan Poorvu, Mary and Donald Shockey, The Meredyth Hyatt Moses Fund, the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, the Deborah A. Hawkins Charitable Trust, Linda and George Kelly, and James and Audrey Foster.

## Artists in the Exhibition

Natalie Alper  
Adria Arch  
Dorothy Arnold  
Melinda Ashley  
Kristin Baker  
Cynthia Bloom  
Maggi Brown  
Helen Frankenthaler  
Sharon Friedman  
Jacqueline Gourevitch  
Beverly Hallam  
Fannie Hillsmith  
Sherrill Edwards Hunnibell  
Reese Inman  
Elizabeth Saalfield Ives  
Yeffe Kimball  
Jeanne Leger  
Alice Trumbull Mason  
Maud Morgan

Anne Neely  
Roberta Paul  
Meg Brown Payson  
Irene Rice Pereira  
Ann Pibal  
Katherine Porter  
Terri Priest  
Elizabeth Rosenblum  
Jo Ann Rothschild  
Jo Sandman  
Sandi Slone  
May Stevens  
Barbara Takenaga  
Lois Tarlow  
Irene Valincius  
Barbara Weldon  
Lucy White  
Maxine Yalovitz-Blankenship

# *Expanding Abstraction* by Decade

## 1950s & 1960s

Certain innovations in abstract painting from the mid-twentieth century, such as Jackson Pollock's drip paintings and Mark Rothko's clouds of color, are well established in art history. Yet less familiar developments, like the architectural abstractions of Alice Trumbull Mason, also provided important avenues for explorations of line and space during the 1950s and 1960s. Artists working in these decades also frequently experimented with untested materials and techniques. Irene Rice Pereira used sheets of glass as an alternative to stretched canvases. Beverly Hallam pioneered a new synthetic medium, acrylic paint. Artists often translated personal experience—especially encounters with the natural world—into their paintings. Their interpretations, conveyed in rich fields of color and lyrical brushstrokes, capture the effects of natural phenomena such as light, weather, and seasonal shifts.



## Alice Trumbull Mason

Born 1904 in Litchfield, Connecticut  
Died 1971 in New York, New York

Mason was a founding member of the American Abstract Artists group in New York, which presented and published important theoretical support for abstract art in the United States. She began painting in a "straight-edge" abstract mode after viewing Piet Mondrian's work in the 1940s. As seen in *The Forest Floor*, she often decentralized her compositions by creating crisp, grid-based patterns.

Mason studied with Arshile Gorky at the Grand Central Art School in New York in the late 1920s, where she was introduced

to Analytic Cubism. A trip to Greece solidified her commitment to abstraction, after encountering the linear qualities and patterns in archaic Greek sculpture and Byzantine mosaics. She also studied at the printmaking studio Atelier 17 in New York, where many women artists working in abstraction found fertile ground for collaboration and support.



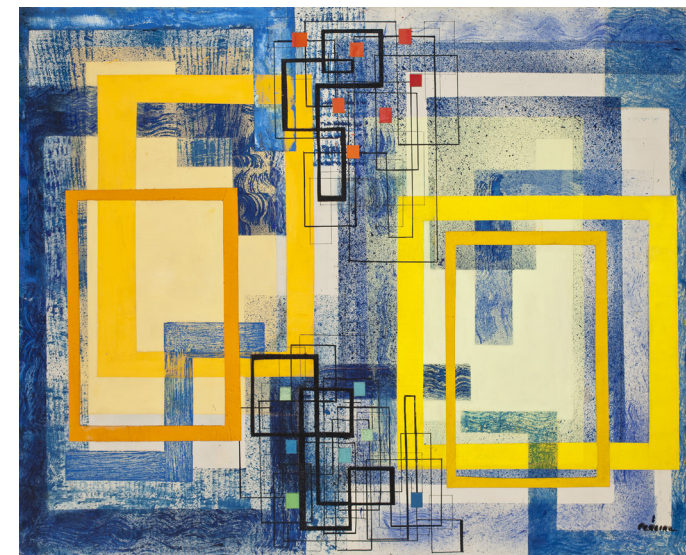
*The Forest Floor*  
1950  
oil on panel  
20 x 16 inches  
Private collection, New York  
Art © Estate of Alice Trumbull Mason/  
Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

## Irene Rice Pereira

Born 1902 in Chelsea, Massachusetts  
Died 1971 in Marbella, Spain

Pereira is known for her colorful geometric abstractions influenced by the Bauhaus, a German art school which integrated modern art, design, and industry. In the 1930s, she began experimenting with corrugated glass panels and paint mixed with metal and radium. *Sunrise, Sunset* came after an eight-month residency in gloomy Manchester, England, where Pereira became interested in the spiritual impact of sunshine. The overlapping yellow rectangles evoke the movement of the sun. Their intersection with the blue squares symbolizes "light penetrating space."

Pereira often signed her work "I. Rice Pereira" to avoid potential discrimination as a woman in the New York art world. In 1953, she was among the first women to have a retrospective at a major New York art institution (Whitney Museum of American Art). Her career soon after took a downward turn due in part to changes in her painting style, but also to the rising dominance of Abstract Expressionism, gender biases, and the painter's own distancing from the New York art world.



*Sunrise, Sunset*  
1951  
oil on canvas  
Worcester Art Museum / Gift of Mr. and  
Mrs. Harold Kaye / Bridgeman Images  
Image used by permission of Djelloul and  
Marilyn Marbrook, estate of Irene Rice Pereira

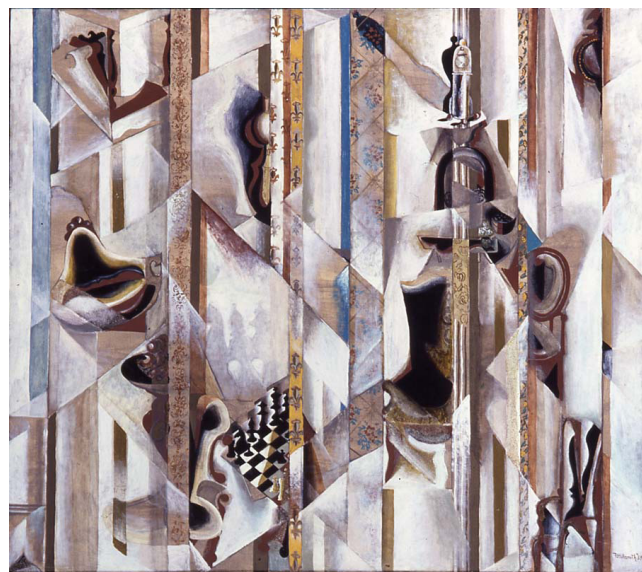
## Fannie Hillsmith

Born 1911 in Boston, Massachusetts  
Died 2007 in Jaffrey, New Hampshire

This painting's title refers to one of the oldest opening moves in the game of chess. A portion of a chessboard appears amid strips of wallpaper patterns that form the quilt-like ensemble. In the 1950s, Hillsmith combined the spatial fracturing of Cubism with references to domestic interiors. While Cubist painting may seem out of date by this time, some American artists continued to explore its possibilities. Hillsmith was then exhibiting in New York City alongside many Abstract Expressionist artists and at Peggy Guggenheim's seminal Art of This Century gallery. In contrast to the mural-sized works of some of her contemporaries, Hillsmith

created easel paintings that invite intimate contemplation.

Hillsmith was the first woman to have a solo exhibition at deCordova in 1951, a year after the Museum opened. She attended the Boston School of Fine Arts, which her grandfather helped found. She then joined the Art Students League in New York. Four years of study at Atelier 17, an experimental print shop established by Stanley Hayter, exposed her to Surrealism and Cubism. In 1944, she joined the American Abstract Artists, an organization that included Alice Trumbull Mason.



*The Queen's Gambit*  
1954  
50 x 56 inches  
oil on canvas  
Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts,  
gift of the Nathaniel Saltonstall Arts Fund  
Courtesy of the Estate of Fannie Hillsmith  
and the Susan Teller Gallery, New York, NY

## Cynthia Bloom

Born 1933 in St. Louis, Missouri  
Died 2008 in West Hartford, Connecticut

Bloom paints drips, splatters, and loose brushstrokes to suggest a windswept coastline and the dark skies of a brewing storm. Inspired by the landscape of Block Island, Rhode Island, she incorporated the natural materials and textures she found there into her work, including dried petals and butterfly wings. One critic said her painting was "clearly distinguished by its contact with nature which transcends, in her best canvases, into inspiration and imagination."

Bloom's first solo museum exhibition in the United States was at deCordova in 1961. She graduated from Washington University in St. Louis in 1954. Bloom later travelled on a Fulbright award throughout Europe, where she met American abstract painters who were also abroad, such as Joan Mitchell and Sam Francis. In France, she studied at the Paris location of the print studio Atelier 17.



*Winter's Robe*  
1960  
oil on canvas  
48 x 61 1/4 inches  
Gift of the artist



## Yeffe Kimball

Born 1904 in Kansas City, Kansas  
Died 1978 in Santa Fe, New Mexico

At the time Kimball began painting abstractions in the 1950s, she was married to a nuclear physicist, who owned a sample of "fused earth" from the first atomic explosion. Space exploration inspired her compositions, which recall clusters of stars and interstellar clouds. Kimball also introduced textural effects and innovative materials like acrylic resin into her work. So dynamic were her interpretations of astronomical phenomena that, in the early

1960s, NASA commissioned her to create new work.

Kimball worked mostly in New York City and spent summers in Provincetown, Massachusetts. She claimed to descend from the Osage tribe, and her early work depicted American Indian motifs. Though scholars later determined she was actually Anglo-American, she was an advocate for the rights and culture of American Indians.



*Blue Space Concept*  
1960  
acrylic on canvas  
84 x 120 inches  
The Dr. Beatrice H. Barrett Collection

## Helen Frankenthaler

Born 1928 in New York, New York  
Died 2011 in Darien, Connecticut

Frankenthaler, one of the seminal abstract painters of the twentieth century, is known for devising a "soak-stain" technique in 1952. Working on the floor, she poured turpentine-thinned oil paint directly onto an unprimed canvas. These large expanses of diluted color seeped into the fibrous material, uniting the image and canvas in a flat plane. Frankenthaler described her painting "as if it's happened at once. It's an immediate image." *Orange Shapes in Frame* marks Frankenthaler's ambition to continually innovate. During the 1960s, she began using acrylic paint and extended her compositions beyond the center of the canvas, filling the entire surface area with saturated color. Here,

swaths of blue, red, and yellow along the edges frame a central orange stain.

Although based in New York City, Frankenthaler had strong connections to New England. She studied at Bennington College in Vermont, and in the 1960s, spent summers in Provincetown, Massachusetts, with her then-husband, artist Robert Motherwell. For almost twenty years she had a studio and home in Shippan Point, Stamford, Connecticut. In 1998, she moved her home and studio to Darien, Connecticut, living there full-time. In 1972, Frankenthaler was the sole female artist in an important exhibition of contemporary abstraction, particularly Color Field painting, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



*Orange Shapes in Frame*  
1964  
acrylic on canvas  
94 ½ x 75 ¼ inches  
Tufts University Permanent Collection:  
Gift of Placido Arango  
© 2018 Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Inc.  
/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



## Jacqueline Gourevitch

Born 1933 in Paris, France

Lives and works in New York, New York

Gourevitch began her Cloud Paintings in the mid-1960s while living in Boston. Whether referring to the trailing wisps of cirrus clouds or dark, tempestuous storms, the works from this series capture the atmospheric elements that shape these shifting forms, such as wind, light, and temperature. Gourevitch remarks that "Observing the sky inevitably leads to reflection about the fugitive, the recurring, the abiding." Visual space and depth collapse in *Cloud Painting #19*, one of her early abstracted interpretations of the sky.

Rendered in diffused greys and blues, light smudges of paint suggest small patches of clouds over which a shadowy mass looms.

Gourevitch studied at the experimental Black Mountain College in North Carolina in the summer of 1950. She took a class there with famed critic Clement Greenberg, who emphasized the flatness of the picture plane as a means of achieving abstraction in painting. Gourevitch exhibited in several group shows at deCordova in the 1970s, including *New England Women* in 1975.



*Cloud Painting #19*  
1966  
oil on canvas  
50 x 43 1/2 inches  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Rigelhaupt

## Beverly Hallam

Born 1923 in Lynn, Massachusetts

Died 2013 in York, Maine

Hallam was an early adopter of acrylic paint in the 1950s, soon after it became commercially available. She experimented with the new fast-drying medium in both painting and printmaking. To create *Crossed Rock*, she thickened the synthetic pigment with a plasticizer and added powdered mica. Hallam used spatulas and sponges in addition to brushes to apply the mixture to canvas. *Crossed Rock* is inspired by the rocky Maine coastline, which Hallam would often photograph. She then magnified interesting patterns and structures, projected the images onto linen, and traced their contours.

Hallam studied art education at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston, in 1945, and earned an MFA from Syracuse University, New York, in 1953. She returned to MassArt, where she taught painting, drawing, and design until 1962. She had over forty-five solo exhibitions, including one of her first at deCordova in 1954. Hallam lived and worked on the southern coast of Maine from the 1960s onward, where she was active in the artistic community in Ogunquit.



*Crossed Rock*  
1966  
acrylic and mica on belgian linen  
20 1/8 x 35 1/4 inches  
Gift of Mrs. J. Scott Smart

## 1970s

In the 1970s, abstract painters moved beyond the flatness of the picture plane to advance the innovations of gestural and geometric abstraction. They sought an attenuated perception of uncertain atmospheric space, often rendered in saturated colors. During this decade, painters were also inspired by new artistic genres, including Performance, Conceptual, Earth, and Video Art. This opening of possibilities motivated artists to take the traditional medium of painting in bold directions through experimental materials, dynamic spatial relationships, and innovative processes. Natalie Alper embraced new techniques such as spray painting. Others approached the surface of their canvases in sculptural terms, including Jo Sandman, who carved away pigment or applied layers of lacquer.

## Maud Morgan

Born 1909 in New York, New York  
Died 1999 in Cambridge, Massachusetts

In the late 1960s, Morgan began making brightly colored, hard-edged paintings of primary shapes. This monumental painting combines such grid-based geometric abstraction with an exploration of pictorial depth. Some lighter squares seem to come forward in the picture plane, while others recede into the hazy yellow background. The picture plane is not flat, but animated by the energy produced by the vibrant pixelated composition.

Morgan separated from her husband in 1957 and by the 1970s, had established

an independent life as a Cambridge-based artist. She had a studio on Harvey Street where she worked for over twenty five years. Morgan was honored with many awards and achievements, including the establishment of the Maud Morgan Purchase Prize at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 1993. The prize celebrates a Massachusetts woman artist for creativity, vision, and significant contributions to the contemporary arts landscape.



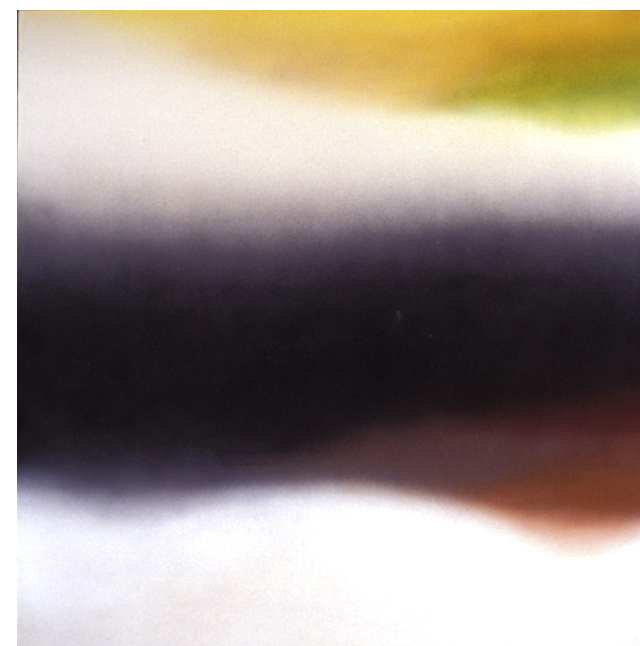
*Gold Coast II*  
1971-2  
oil on canvas  
80 x 132 inches  
Gift of Spaulding Investment Co.

## Natalie Alper

Born 1937 in the Bronx, New York  
Lives and works in Brookline, Massachusetts

Influenced by color field painting in the 1970s, Alper created bands of color using air brushes, rollers, and sponges on large, often elongated, canvases. Diffusion gives these works a luminous, ethereal quality and Alper's use of pigment creates absorbing visual effects, such as the expansion and contraction of colors when placed beside each other on a two-dimensional plane.

Alper studied painting at New York University and history at Boston University before travelling to Europe and the Soviet Union. She graduated from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1970 and a few years later became the first woman to teach painting there.



Untitled  
1972  
acrylic on canvas  
61 1/2 x 61 1/2 inches  
The Dr. Beatrice H. Barrett Collection





Natalie Alper  
Untitled  
1974  
watercolor on paper  
13 x 40 ½ inches  
The Dr. Beatrice H. Barrett Collection



Natalie Alper  
Untitled  
1974  
watercolor on paper  
13 x 40 ½ inches  
The Dr. Beatrice H. Barrett Collection



Natalie Alper  
Untitled  
1974  
watercolor on paper  
13 x 40 ½ inches  
The Dr. Beatrice H. Barrett Collection

## Terri Priest

Born 1928 in Worcester, Massachusetts  
Died 2014 in Worcester, Massachusetts

Drawing on her background as a graphic designer, Priest developed pulsing, optical effects in her paintings of overlapping vertical stripes that range from black-and-white to technicolor. In *Panoply: Summer Evening*, thin lines form a vibrant ground of turquoise, pink, and yellow, while loose diagonal strands resemble beams of light. Priest said her Op Art paintings were inspired by Claude Monet's atmospheric

portrayals of water lilies.

Priest's work was shown in numerous exhibitions at deCordova, including *Abstract Painting* in 1971, in which she was the only woman among fifteen artists. She took painting classes as a child at the Worcester Art Museum School and taught there from 1967 to 1976. She earned a BFA and MFA at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.



*Panoply: Summer Evening*  
1976  
acrylic on canvas  
66 1/8 x 48 inches  
Museum Purchase

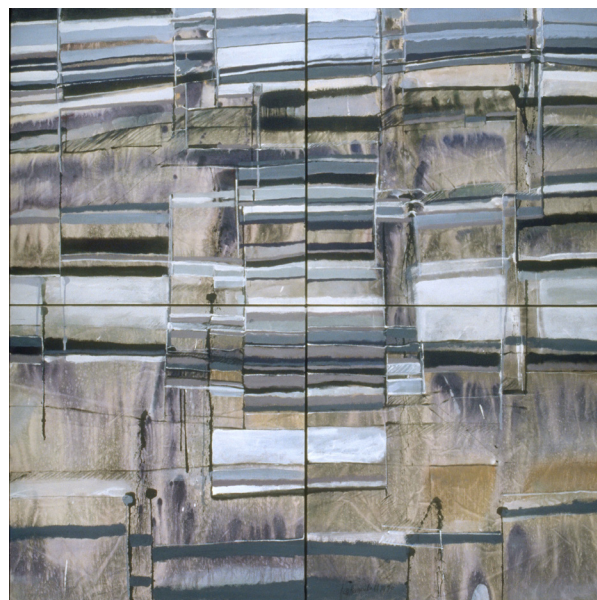
## Sherrill Edwards Hunnibell

Born 1942 in Providence, Rhode Island  
Lives and works in Rehoboth, Massachusetts

Hunnibell transforms observations of nature into abstract patterns in *Rangefinder in Four Parts*. Stacked and overlapping grey rectangles resemble rock striations or tree bark. The four sections also form the crosshairs of a manual camera's rangefinder, emphasizing the mechanical process of capturing an image. Reacting against conventional landscape paintings, Hunnibell has broken down the elements of fauna, flora, and found objects into primary colors,

shapes, and lines. This approach allows her to convey "visual and tactual sensations and rhythms similar to ones created by nature."

Hunnibell graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, with a BFA in 1964, and from Brown University, Providence with a Master of Arts in Teaching in 1966. In 2004, she received a Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellowship in Drawing and Printmaking.



*Rangefinder in Four Parts*  
1977  
acrylic on canvas  
60 1/2 x 60 1/2 inches  
NEA Museum Purchase Plan

## Sharon Friedman

Born 1945 in Lowell, Massachusetts  
Died 1990 in St. Croix, United States Virgin Islands

In the late 1970s, Friedman developed a painting method by pouring layers of pigment on the back of raw canvases. She tilted the canvas at varying angles to create ethereal washes of expanding colors. Her work extends earlier innovations, such as Helen Frankenthaler's dripping and staining methods. Friedman aimed to remove the mark of the artist's hand: "My painting is by definition indirect in style and concept. It is

meant to exist apart...without the stamp of the artist's involvement."

Friedman graduated from Boston University in 1967 with a degree in fine arts, painting, and sculpture. Throughout the 1970s she exhibited in notable group shows, including at the Museum of Fine Arts, the Institute of Contemporary Art, and Boston City Hall.



*Iris II*  
1977  
acrylic on canvas  
67 1/4 x 57 inches  
The Dr. Beatrice H. Barrett Collection





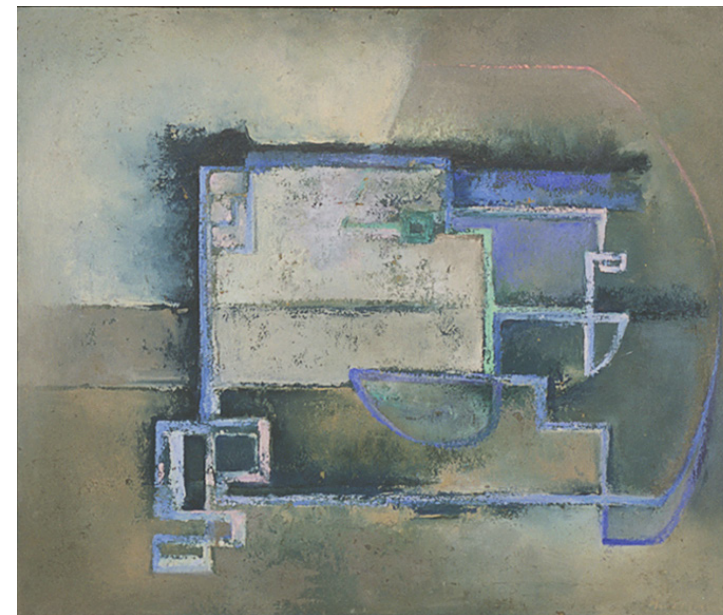
Sharon Friedman  
*Tiger Lily*  
1977  
acrylic on canvas  
67 1/4 x 57 inches  
The Dr. Beatrice H. Barrett Collection

## Maud Morgan

Born 1909 in New York, New York  
Died 1999 in Cambridge, Massachusetts

A visitor to Morgan's studio in the 1970s wrote in a letter to her: "I much admire, in each piece I saw, its movement into and out from struggle and harmony. The work all has such life force, such beauty...most fully to be explained by the most simple words: the experience of color. A most strange and intense experience, and as wonderfully spiritual as it is physical." In *Levels*, Morgan achieves

such an experience through saturated colors that counterbalance each other and are anchored by the central geometric composition. Seen from a distance, the painting resembles an architectural plan with clearly delineated spaces.



*Levels*  
1977  
oil on board  
35 x 41 inches  
Gift of Mr and Mrs. Robert Louis Smith



## Jo Sandman

Born 1931 in Boston, Massachusetts

Lives and works in Somerville, Massachusetts

*Kuan II* is one of Sandman's "removal drawings." It consists of overlapping waxy strips of industrial insulation paper, which Sandman scored with sharp tools, lifting the layers to reveal the beige backing. Rather than applying pigment to a surface, this minimal composition is created from a subtractive process. Sandman felt this made "the 'presence' of the work...come from the materials themselves." The title refers to a Zen Buddhist riddle or anecdote, such as "What is the sound of one hand clapping?", used to demonstrate the inadequacy of logical reasoning and to provoke enlightenment.

Sandman studied at the experimental Black Mountain College and earned a BFA in fine art from Brandeis University in 1952. That year she had her first solo exhibition at deCordova. From 1952 to 1953, she studied with Abstract Expressionist Robert Motherwell at Hunter College, New York, and at the Hans Hofmann School of Painting in Provincetown, Massachusetts. She subsequently earned an MFA from University of California, Berkeley, and a teaching degree at Radcliffe College. Among other teaching positions, she taught at Wellesley College and at Massachusetts College of Art and Design.



*Kuan II*  
1977  
removal collage  
40 1/2 x 87 inches  
NEA Museum Purchase Plan

## Barbara Weldon

Born 1931 in Yuma, Arizona

Died 2007, in Del Cerro, California Islands

Weldon's delicate abstract works overlap strata of watercolor paint and thin paper to form textured collages. Washes of warm, earthy colors balance cool blues and violets. Pasted strips of paper divide space into interconnected rectangles of varying sizes. The titles of her work often reveal music as a source of inspiration for the artist.

In the early 1950s, Weldon earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology from San Diego State University. After raising a family,

she studied fine art at the University of California, San Diego. Among her numerous awards, Weldon received the San Diego Women Together Organization Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Arts in 1997. Among several paintings on view in this exhibition, Weldon's work was part of a large gift to deCordova by Dr. Beatrice Barrett, a prominent art collector from Lincoln, Massachusetts.



*Jazz Expression*  
1978  
watercolor and collage on paper  
51 3/4 x 39 1/2 inches  
The Dr. Beatrice H. Barrett Collection

## Melinda Ashley

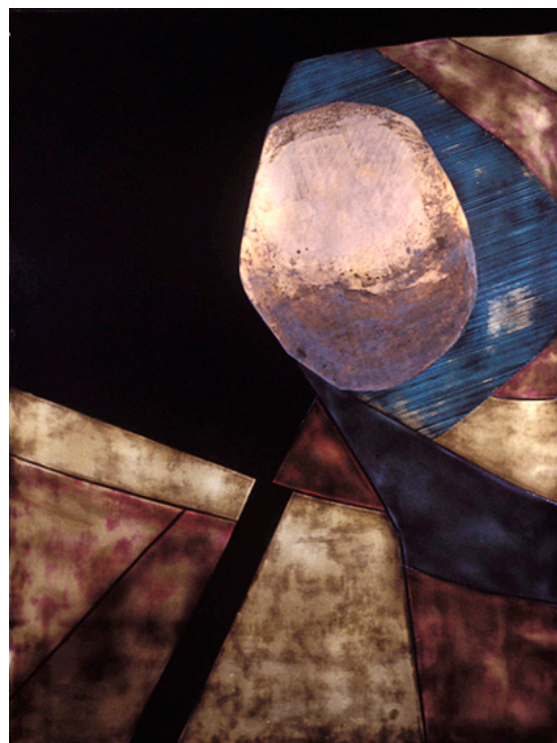
Born 1955 in New Jersey

Lives and works in Arlington, Massachusetts

Ashley's paintings, drawings, stained glass, and pottery often depict dancing female nudes, flowers, and still life objects. *Moonscape*, a rare foray into abstraction, consists of glossy lacquer on wood. After the lacquer was applied, the artist made deep incisions into its surface to delineate geometric shapes. The metallic, jewel-toned forms shift in hue; their lustrous colors suggest

panes of a stained glass window.

Ashley, a dual French-American citizen, studied ceramics in Paris in the late 1970s. She settled in the Boston area in 1980. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Art Institute of Chicago and the Boston Public Library.



*Moonscape*  
c. 1979  
lacquer on board  
47 ¼ x 35 ½ x 1 ½ inches  
The Dr. Beatrice H. Barrett Collection

## Jeanne Leger

Born 1934 near Lake Erie, New York

Died 1990 in London, England

During the 1970s, Leger created abstract compositions with a traditional glazing technique. Glazing involves applying multiple layers of nearly translucent paint to the canvas to create a luminescent effect. The vivid, swirling colors are built up incrementally, resulting in a whirlpool quality that recalls atmospheric seascapes by J.M.W. Turner. The palette and magnification of the whirl also resemble Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings of enlarged flowers. Like O'Keeffe and Turner, Leger took

inspiration from nature, capturing the fleeting movements of clouds, water, and wind with the fluidity of her brushstrokes.

Leger studied painting at Syracuse University, New York, earning a BFA in 1956. She moved to Massachusetts in the early 1960s. Among numerous awards, Leger received fellowships from the Radcliffe Institute at Radcliffe College (now the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study), Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1967 and 1968.



Untitled  
1979  
acrylic on canvas  
48 x 36 inches  
The Dr. Beatrice H. Barrett Collection

## 1980s

The paintings in this section are notably large-scale, expressive, and fearless in combining seemingly unrelated elements into a coherent whole. Some of the non-figurative painting created during this decade could be described as “impure” abstraction. These artists challenged the self-contained purity of abstraction by adding recognizable motifs or anecdotes from their personal lives into their work. Artists like Jo Ann Rothschild and Elizabeth Rosenblum integrate references to scientific, architectural, and art historical sources in their painting. Others, such as Sandi Slone and Natalie Alper, maintained their pursuit of expressive forms with personalized, calligraphic brushstrokes.



## Elizabeth Saalfeld Ives

Born 1942 in Akron, Ohio

Lives and works in Lexington, Massachusetts

Splashes of paint move across the surface of this energetic painting. Warm hues, from blushing magentas to striking oranges, contrast with the more subdued grey and white tones of the background. These marks move the viewer's eye diagonally across the work, slowing to observe the lively details of twirling marks. Although entirely abstract, the painting triggers a range of associations prompted

by visceral visual cues, while the title, *Hussy*, connects the sensual palette to the idea of a mischievous or coquettish woman.

Ives studied at New York University, and then the Art Students League in New York with Abstract Expressionist Theodoros Stamos. She earned a BFA from Connecticut College, New London, in 1964 and has been based in the Boston area since the late 1970s.



*Hussy*  
1980  
oil and acrylic on canvas  
53 ¾ x 58 inches  
NEA Museum Purchase Plan

## Dorothy Arnold

Born 1924 in Boston, Massachusetts

Lives in Boston, Massachusetts

Influenced by Abstract Expressionists Joan Mitchell and Jackson Pollock, Arnold created paintings that responded to the rhythms of the body and the landscape. *Abstract V* presents a central, vertical movement of a dynamic stroke of paint. This sweeping gesture varies in color, from watery gray to burnt orange, and regal purple. Curator Elisabeth Sussman wrote that Arnold's work "should be seen in the context of continuing debates around painting prevalent in Boston...[in] the mid to late 1970s." During that time "there [was]

strongest support for color field painting, which suppressed line in favor of a dominant expressive field of color."

While Arnold had been working as an artist for decades, she earned a degree in painting at age fifty-six from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1980. She was based in East Cambridge for many years, and her work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions throughout the United States and abroad. She received a Massachusetts Artist Painting Fellowship in 1990.



*Abstract V*  
1981  
acrylic and oil on canvas  
67 x 45 inches  
The Dr. Beatrice H. Barrett Collection

## Sandi Slone

Born 1939 in Boston, Massachusetts  
Lives and works in New York, New York/Islands

Slone began her "Mandala" series in the early 1980s, pouring paint directly onto the canvas in loose, swirling gestures. With her canvas on the floor, she spilled earth-toned hues onto a background of transparent washes to create the effect of a delicate yet large-scale watercolor. She added textured accents by removing pigment with a sea sponge. She notes that her "Flung-Ink method" originated from "Zen painting a thousand years before Pollock." The serpentine lines that arc along the edges of the canvas leave the center open

to create an inviting and meditative visual space.

Slone studied at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts (SMFA), Boston, and earned a BA in Art History from Wellesley College in 1974. She had a solo exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, in 1977, and was Professor of Painting at the SMFA from 1975 to 2004, where she taught with Natalie Alper. Alper and Slone also had studios in the same building in Boston's South End during the 1970s.



*Queen of the Night*  
1981  
acrylic on canvas  
68 1/2 x 101 1/2 inches  
Anonymous Gift

## Jo Ann Rothschild

Born 1947 in Chicago, Illinois  
Lives and works in Boston, Massachusetts

This painting was inspired by Edouard Manet's *The Execution of the Emperor Maximilian* (1869), in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Manet's historic painting represents the moment of the Emperor of Mexico's death before a firing squad. Rothschild's abstract painting conveys a similarly violent impression through color, gesture, and impasto brush strokes. She has said, "I wanted to get narrative into my abstraction. I wanted to tell stories, but I didn't want to have to illustrate them and I wanted them to be emotional rather than factual." She created this painting in the

eighties, during which she experienced "the wild prejudice against women," amidst other political and personal upheaval.

Rothschild earned a BFA from Bennington College, Vermont, in 1971 and an MFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1980. In the 1980s she joined an all-women cooperative, the Tudor Street Etching Studio, and published essays on the exclusion of women artists in museums and galleries in Boston. She was awarded the first Maud Morgan Purchase Prize in 1993 from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



*Execution on a Grey Day*  
1984  
oil on canvas  
64 x 118 1/4 inches  
Gift of Martin and  
Wendy Kaplan



## Dorothy Arnold

Born 1924 in Boston, Massachusetts

Lives in Boston, Massachusetts

Arnold captures expressive rhythms found in nature, such as those created by waves and wind. In this seascape, she appears to have fused the sky and sea, eliminating the horizon line and with it a sense of depth in the landscape. Only a few additions of dense white paint suggest the crests of crashing waves. Arnold painted

compositions across large canvases and then cut them into smaller fragments, a process she called "divisionism." In this triptych, Arnold's parting of the canvases disrupts the expansiveness of the ocean and directs attention to the process of painting rather than the subject represented.



*Ocean Patterns* #13, #14, #16

1986

oil on canvas

12 x 12 inches (each)

The Dr. Beatrice H. Barrett Collection

## Maud Morgan

Born 1909 in New York, New York

Died 1999 in Cambridge, Massachusetts

In *Outremer*, lively sparks of orange pepper a field of luminous cobalt blue. Intersecting lines provide playful rhythms across the composition. The painting's title means "overseas" in French and is often used to describe France's territories outside of Europe. The year that Morgan painted *Outremer*—at age 77—she traveled for six months to thirteen African countries, including

areas that had been colonized by France. In awe of the continent, Morgan recalled, "Before I went people said, 'If you really let Africa get to you, you are never the same again.' I let it get to me." After her trip, Morgan noticeably enlivened her color palette.



*Outremer*

1986

oil on canvas

50 x 60 inches

The Dr. Beatrice H. Barrett Collection



## Elizabeth Rosenblum

Born 1954 in New York, New York  
Lives and works in New York, New York

This painting features the golden outline of a spinning wheel based on a design by ancient Roman engineer Vitruvius. An inky black trail descending from the wheel resembles a human spine. Rosenblum compares her process of building images to the "Exquisite Corpse" technique of Surrealist artists, in which unrelated phrases or images join together to form unexpected compositions: "Images are stacked and superimposed....Puns, quibbles, and metaphysical conceits catch image to image

and give the painting 'meaning.'"

Rosenblum earned a BFA from Tufts University, Medford, in 1980, and a diploma from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1981. She was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities Visual Artists Fellowship in 1987 and received a fellowship from the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute at Radcliffe College (now the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study) in 1991.



*Rotate on My Axis?*  
1987  
ink, dye, oil, acrylic on canvas  
76 1/2 x 59 3/4 inches  
Gift of the Artist

## Irene Valincius

Born 1948 in Bonn, Germany  
Lives and works in Somerville, Massachusetts

Of Lithuanian descent, Valincius was born in a West German displaced persons camp after World War II and immigrated to the United States soon after. Influenced by the ambiguity of her nationality, her work addresses transitory experiences and fluid interpretations of identity, evoking atmospheric conditions that are constantly in flux. The surface layers of this painting are scratched and distressed, like an ancient city wall. A central column appears to

hover in front of a deep indigo backdrop, while touches of luminous paint highlight the weathered strata.

Valincius studied at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and earned a BFA from the University of Massachusetts, Boston, in 1978. She has taught at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston, and Montserrat College of Art, Beverly, Massachusetts.



Untitled  
1987  
oil on canvas  
62 x 43 inches  
Gift of George Lewis

## Natalie Alper

Born 1937 in the Bronx, New York  
Lives and works in Brookline, Massachusetts

During the 1980s, Alper moved away from using spray paint techniques and integrated drawing and calligraphic mark making into her painting. In *Events Without Witness*, thick brushstrokes in muted maroons and dense navy blues anchor the composition. Additional zig-zagging gestures in multiple directions suggest absent-minded scribbles. Compared with her earlier

luminous spray paintings on view upstairs, the handmade gestures in this work represent a renewed intimacy with the canvas. Alper summarized the catalyst for this evolution: "When I began in the '70's, my work was spare and reductive with no room for the idiosyncratic....I felt cornered! I needed to make work with a fuller range of feeling."



*Events Without Witness*  
1988  
acrylic and pencil on canvas  
72 x 96 inches  
Gift of Noel G. Posternak

## Maggi Brown

Born in Newark, New Jersey  
Lives and works in Boston, Massachusetts

Brown's paintings feature geometric shapes and architectural elements, such as columns and arched forms. To achieve her textural effects, Brown scraped and brushed paint onto the canvas, layered translucent glazes, and inscribed marks that read as arcane letters and symbols. The black-and-white checkerboard pattern is a frequent motif in Brown's work. It may relate to her interest "in the connection between things which are opposed, what they have in common, and what kind of visual statement they make when combined."

After raising a family, Brown returned to school and earned a BFA from Tufts University and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1983. In 1986, she was a fellow at the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute at Radcliffe College (now the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study). Her paintings have been exhibited at numerous greater Boston institutions, including the Institute of Contemporary Art, the MIT List Visual Arts Center, and the Rose Art Museum.



*Egyptian Jump Start*  
1988  
oil on canvas  
82 1/2 x 85 inches  
Gift of the Artist;  
Courtesy Barbara Krakow Gallery

## 1990s

In the paintings in this section, artists continue to allow their subjectivity and traces of the outside world into their abstract painting. Katherine Porter merged primary patterns based in the natural world with expressive brushstrokes and a bold color palette. Lucy White emphasized tactility across the surfaces of her compositions, inviting a desire to apprehend her work through touch as well as vision. In many of the works, abstraction and figuration hang in a counterbalance, as artists distill their perception of nature into near abstraction or draw inspiration from fleeting atmospheric effects, such as light and fire.

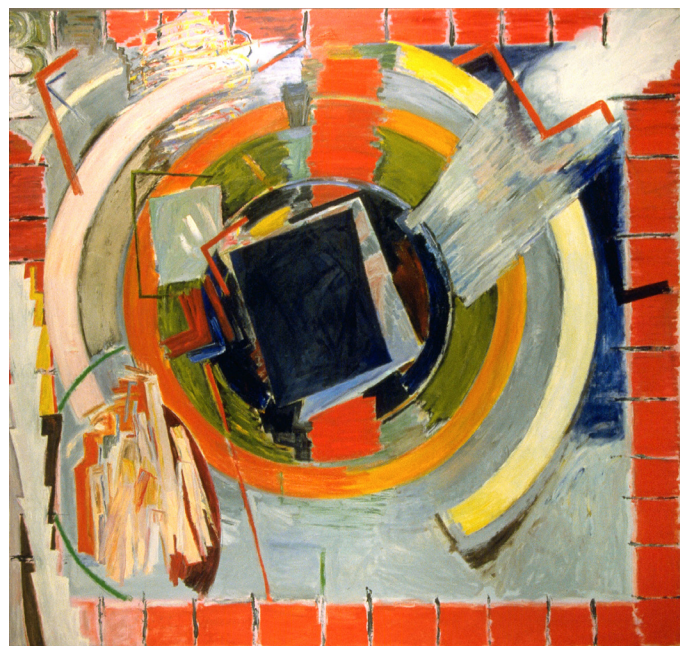


## Katherine Porter

Born 1941 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
Lives and works in Rhinebeck, New York

Porter's dynamic grids, chevrons, and discs seem to channel underlying forces of the natural world. Her work often takes inspiration from environmental phenomena, such as suns, stars, spiders, and trees. She concentrates these into loose, energetic patterns, like the concentric forms that radiate from the center of this painting. Vibrant, contrasting colors provide an added pulse.

Porter studied at Boston University in 1962 and earned a BA from Colorado College, Colorado Springs, in 1963. In the 1960s she joined The Studio Coalition in Boston's South End, a group of artists united around aesthetic, social, and political concerns. A highly influential abstract painter, Porter has had several museum retrospectives in New England and was twice included in the Whitney Biennial.



*Prague Afternoon*  
c. 1990  
oil on linen  
79 x 83 1/2 inches  
Donated by the late Seon Pierre Bonan,  
Jerome Lyle Rappaport, Theodore  
Shoolman, and all of the partners of  
Charles River Park B. Company

## May Stevens

Born 1924 in Quincy, Massachusetts  
Lives and works in Santa Fe, New Mexico

Known for politically charged paintings, Stevens began adding deeper personal content following the death of her son, artist Steven Baranik, in 1981. *Quemada II* evolved from Baranik's photographs of toy horses as they were lit on fire. Painted on unstretched canvas, this work shows the fleeting movements of the melting toys, recognizable by their kicking hindquarters. Stevens said that the "toy dioramas became metaphors for high drama, excruciating pain. But, at the same time...the story of a brilliant moment of life was illuminated."

Stevens studied painting at Massachusetts College of Art and

Design, Boston; the Art Students League of New York; and the Académie Julian in Paris. Active in civil rights and feminist art movements in New York starting in the 1960s, she was a founding member of the Heresies Collective, which included influential artists and critics such as Lucy Lippard. This painting was first shown in 1991 at deCordova in a two-person exhibition of work by Stevens and sculptor Civia Rosenberg. Both were fellows at the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute at Radcliffe College (now the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study) in 1988.



*Quemada II*  
1991  
acrylic on unstretched canvas  
72 x 72 inches  
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Philip Gold  
in Memory of Eric Kertzner, 1962-1989

## Adria Arch

Born 1953 in Niagara Falls, New York  
Lives and works in Arlington, Massachusetts

Inspired by spills, cracks, and other unplanned shapes in nature, Arch explores formal and textural qualities in her paintings, prints, books, and drawings. On this double-sided triptych, the artist abstracted the forms of shells through a monotype printing process. This technique involves applying paint or ink on a glass plate, pressing it onto the wood surface, and enhancing the transferred image with acrylic paint. Arch considers shells “metaphors for aspects of

the female form and psyche,” noting that “their weathered state suggests both physical and emotional stress and the will to survive.”

Arch earned a BFA from Carnegie Mellon, Pittsburgh, in 1974 and an MFA in painting at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston, in 1985. She has taught at Endicott College, MassArt, and Montserrat College of Art.



*Shell Triptych*

1993

monotype and acrylic on wood (triptych)

15 3/8 x 10 1/8 inches (left panel); 15 3/8 x 10 3/4 inches (center panel);

15 3/8 x 10 5/8 inches (right panel)

Gift of the Artist

## Anne Neely

Born 1946 in Greenwich, Connecticut  
Lives and works in Dorchester, Massachusetts

Focusing on a single element such as a leaf, feather, or stalk, Neely explores archetypal forms that reflect her deep involvement with nature. She reflects that while “[t]ending a summer garden, I notice the structure of this kingdom of color, flowers, then labyrinths of stems, stalks, and leaves and finally the earth filled with life and decay. At first I hold onto such familiar things my garden offers, but then when painting, I enter another kind of kingdom.” In *Plume*, a detail of a small section of a feather becomes a study in color and texture. Neely layered ink, wiped the paper with a cloth, and then scratched and scraped it with her fingers and a palette knife. Obsessively-

made dots create an airy halo of branches around a main stalk.

Neely studied at Colby Sawyer College in New London, New Hampshire, and earned a BFA at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1970. From 1974 until 2012, she taught at Milton Academy, Milton, Massachusetts. In 1993, she was featured in a solo exhibition at deCordova. An active printmaker, Neely worked at Rugg Road Prints and Papers, where a number of fellow women artists, including Maud Morgan, also practiced with new materials and methods in the 1980s.



*Plume*

1994

monotype on paper

44 1/2 x 91 1/4 inches

Anonymous Gift



## Maxine Yalovitz-Blankenship

Born January 9th in Rome, Georgia  
Lives and works in Waban, Massachusetts

This quilt-like mural is composed of over two hundred small canvases bearing abstract motifs and discernable images, including doors, windows, and boats. The grand scale and personal touches suggest an epic narrative. Yalovitz-Blankenship applies paint intuitively to her canvases, charging the surface with decisive, vigorous brushstrokes built up in layers. She also works with her hands, her fingerprints visible in the thick impasto, emphasizing a direct connection to her art.

Yalovitz-Blankenship created this work

as a fellow at the Mary Ingraham Bunting Institute at Radcliffe College (now the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study) in 1993-94. She earned a BFA from Atlanta College of Art, Georgia, and an MFA from Pratt Institute, New York. Yalovitz-Blankenship taught at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, and Simmons College. She has received numerous awards, including a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship in 1996.



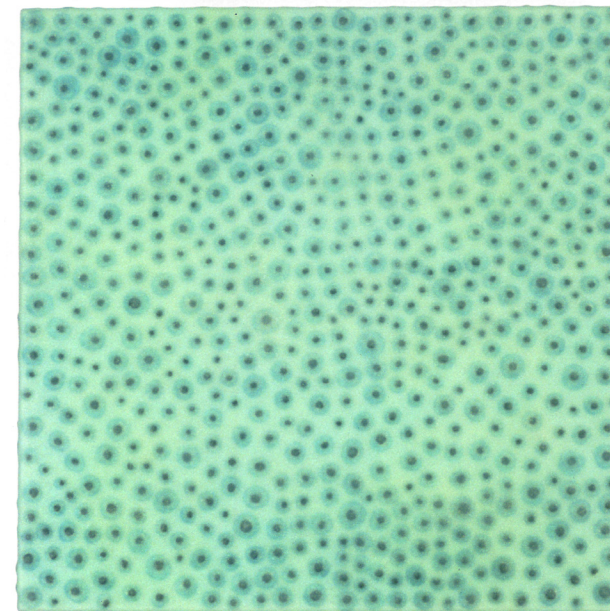
*Crossings*  
1994  
oil on canvas  
81 x 207 inches  
Museum Purchase with partial funds provided by Richard Florsheim Art Fund

## Lucy White

Born 1959 in Brunswick, Maine  
Lives and works in Boston, Massachusetts

Geometric structure meets playful whimsy in *Blue Eyes*. The artist applied tiny blue felt circles across a painted wood panel and coated them with clear resin. The dimples between the inlaid elements create a curious texture that bends around the edges, pulling them into the painting and blurring the line between illusion and object. This work reflects the unique form of abstraction White developed in the 1990s by merging the Minimalist grid with artifacts of suburban life, such as Handi-Wipe towels, Band-Aids, and dishcloths.

White earned a BFA in Painting from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minnesota, in 1981. Her work has been shown at the Hunterdon Art Museum, New Jersey, the Portland Museum of Art, Maine, and the Rose Art Museum, Waltham, Massachusetts. In 2006, she received a Massachusetts Cultural Council Grant in Painting.



*Blue Eyes*  
1996  
resin, felt, and acrylic on wood  
23 x 23 x 1 3/4 inches  
Museum Purchase with funds donated by Cathy England, James and Audrey Foster, Mary Levin Koch and William C. Koch, Joyce and Edward Linde, Blair L. and Charles W. Trippe, and an anonymous donor



## Lois Tarlow

Born 1928 in Brockton, Massachusetts

Lives and works in Newton, Massachusetts

Atmospheric mystery suffuses this painting as darkness shrouds the view of a tree canopy seen from below. Though the title refers to a recognizable subject, Tarlow disguises it in her black-on-black composition and textured surface, enhanced with wax and charcoal powders. She says, "However representational my paintings may appear, abstraction has always been a strong impetus."

Tarlow earned a BFA at Goucher College, Baltimore, in 1950. Next, she

studied with Karl Zerbe, Oskar Kokoschka, and Hyman Bloom at the Boston Museum School (now the SMFA). Tarlow had her first solo exhibition at deCordova, in 1956. She received two Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grants, in 1997 and 2002. Starting in the late 1970s, she published numerous interviews with fellow artists in *Art New England*, including several artists shown in this exhibition.



*Monkey Tree*

1999

acrylic, oil, wax, graphite and charcoal powders on canvas

56 x 66 x 3 inches

Museum Purchase with funds provided by the Joan Winer Charitable Fund

## 2000s & 2010s

Towards the end of the twentieth century, artists and critics questioned the relevance of abstract painting as they had done periodically throughout the century. With the arrival of the 2000s, however, abstraction experienced a resurgence, both within New England and the art world at large. Rather than pursuing formalist abstraction or reviving art historical references, some painters shown here were drawn to systems of nature, technology, and the human body. The meticulous brushwork and labor-intensive, accumulative processes employed by this new generation of abstract painters speak to a desire for creative control in the face of pluralism, globalization, and the digital revolution. These cultural shifts inspired a new visual language in which the use of repeated patterns and computer-generated algorithms act as a means of processing the overwhelming amount of information produced by our digital age. Their works strike a precarious balance between chance and control, chaos and order, embracing the tensions that are inherent in our contemporary world.

## Roberta Paul

Born 1956 in Monticello, New York  
Lives and works in Newton, Massachusetts

Paul's work often revolves around questions of memory and nostalgia. In the 1990s, her father began to suffer from a neurological brain disorder and was asked to draw the face of a clock as part of a diagnostic test. As his condition advanced, the clocks became increasingly warped. In 2000, Paul began incorporating this imagery into her work. In *Nude in a Blue Robe, Meme*, five of these amorphous clock faces appear on a clean white background. For Paul, "[t]he clock refers to

personal biography as well as the universal experience of aging and the uncertainty with which we regard the passage of time."

Paul studied at the Art Students League, New York, in 1978 and earned an MFA in Visual Arts from the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, in 1981. Her work appeared in a number of group exhibitions at deCordova since the 1980s. She teaches drawing and painting at the New Art Center in Newton, Massachusetts.



*Nude in a Blue Robe, Meme*  
2002  
gouache on panel  
49 x 38 inches  
Museum Purchase with funds provided by  
James and Audrey Foster

## Barbara Takenaga

Born 1949 in North Platte, Nebraska  
Lives and works in Williamstown, Massachusetts and New York, New York

The hypnotic patterns in Takenaga's luminous abstractions seem to radiate and pulse. Mandala designs and detailed patterns of symmetry as meditative aids inspire Takenaga. Her meticulously rendered paintings oscillate between expansive cosmic landscapes and depictions of cellular growth. In describing her relationship to abstraction she has said, "I think of the paintings as abstract....because I'm interested in flatness and shape and all the gestures one might think of as issues

of abstraction. The paintings all start out that way....but the thing is, they definitely have references to and allude to illusionistic things."

Takenaga earned an MFA at the University of Colorado, Boulder, in 1978. In 2013, she was elected to the National Academy, New York. She is a Professor of Art at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts, where she has taught since 1985.



*Tremolo #4*  
2005  
Acrylic on canvas  
60 x 45 inches  
Museum Purchase



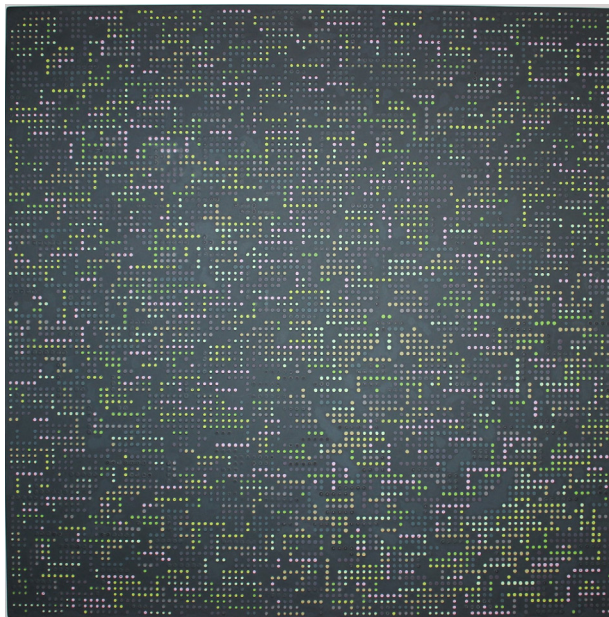
## Reese Inman

Born 1970 in Pittsfield, Maine  
Lives and works in Belfast, Maine

Drawing on her background in computer programming, Inman uses algorithms to determine the underlying structure of her abstract paintings. She inserts instructions into her computer, which randomly generates a pattern of dots from a set of colors. Using a printout of the code, Inman painstakingly paints each dot. The precision of the machine contrasts with the imperfections of the artist's hand. *Stringlattice II* refers to digital mapping, static, and data. Inman states that "[t]he underlying structure

of the grid reflects the ordered layout of LED displays, monitors and projectors, and the circuit boards that control them."

Inman earned a BFA in Visual and Environmental Studies from Harvard University in 1992. In 2004 she earned a diploma from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, receiving the school's Dana Pond Award in Painting in 2004 and 2005. In 2007 she was included in deCordova's exhibition, *Big Bang! Abstract Painting for the 21st Century*.



*Stringlattice II*  
2006  
acrylic on panel  
39 1/4 x 39 1/4 inches  
Gift of the Artist and  
Gallery NAGA Fine Art, Inc.

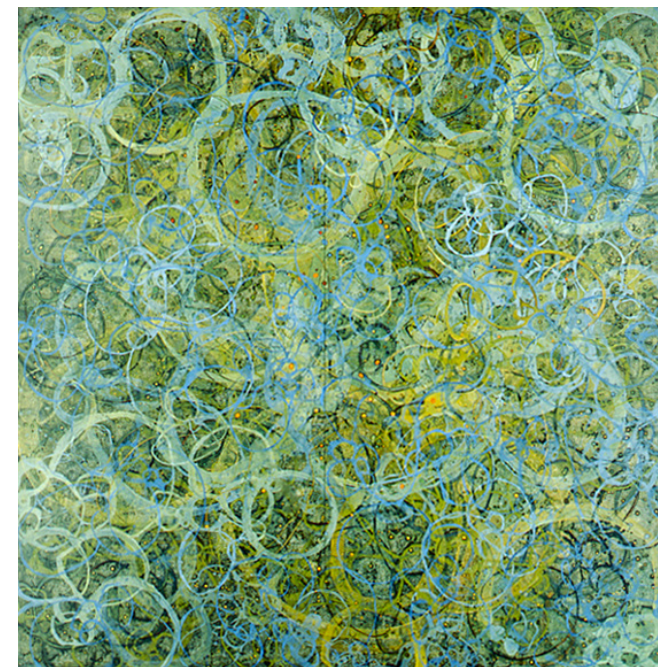
## Meg Brown Payson

Born 1953 in Portland, Maine  
Lives and works in Freeport, Maine

Working around a table, Payson used eyedroppers, razors, and sandpaper to drip, scrape, and spread acrylic paint on a panel. She refers to this process as "the search for a painting." The fluid circular forms are inspired by Celtic knots and Australian Aboriginal dream paintings. The finished work contains a tension between order and chaos, yet an overall balance emerges from the layers of color. Payson is

"fascinated by the human need to construct meaningful order in a world filled with too much information."

Payson graduated from the College of Fine Art at Boston University with a BFA in 1977 and earned an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts, Montpelier, in 1993. From 1995 until 2014, she was an Associate Professor at the Maine College of Art, Portland.



*Drift: 8/06*  
2006  
Acrylic on panel  
Museum Purchase,  
The Dr. Beatrice H. Barrett Fund

## Ann Pibal

Born 1969 in Minneapolis, Minnesota

Lives and works in North Bennington, Vermont and New York, New York

In *RPTD*, delicate lines of rich earth tones and blue pastels intersect on a dark background of broad brushstrokes. The thin lines mirror and repeat across the surface. Pibal says they suggest “movement, repetition, or something in the process of being built or, conversely, dismantled.” She notes that her work has “direct intersections with the very heavy patriarchy one deals with in painting—especially in geometric painting....There are only a small number of

women who have worked with hard edges in painting, and this is significant to me, as it was then, when I started.”

Pibal earned an MFA in Painting from Iowa University, Iowa City, and has been on the faculty at Bennington College in Vermont since 1998. Her work was included in *The 2012 deCordova Biennial*. In 2013, Pibal received deCordova’s Rappaport Prize and a John Simon Memorial Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship.



*RPTD*  
2011  
acrylic on aluminum  
14 x 17 ¼ inches  
Gift of the Stephen and Sybil  
Stone Foundation by exchange

## Kristin Baker

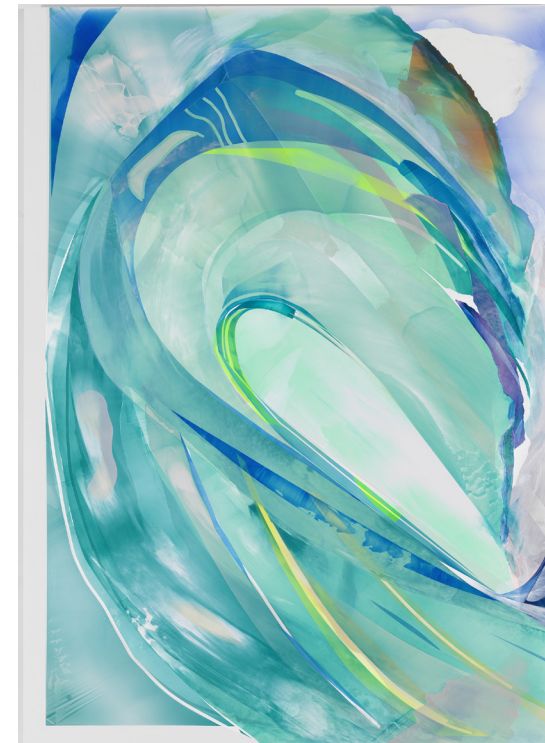
Born 1975 in Stamford, Connecticut

Lives and works in New York, New York and Torrington, Connecticut

Baker applies translucent glazes of color to create dizzying vortices and sweeping gestures in her saturated paintings. Rather than a paintbrush, she uses palette knives, tape, and squeegees to spread acrylic paint on sheets of plastic. Baker’s process of accumulating layers evokes a collage while the luminosity of her color recalls stained glass. *Diaphanous Leverage* suggests an ocean swell or

perhaps a tsunami, radiant even as it portends chaos.

Baker completed undergraduate studies at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Tufts University, Medford, in 1998. She earned an MFA in Painting at Yale University, New Haven, in 2002. A 2010 exhibition of her paintings at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, marked her first solo show at an American museum.

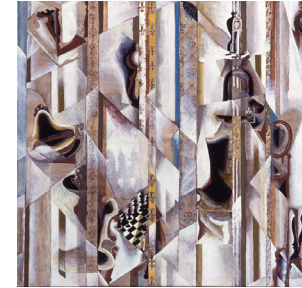


*Diaphanous Leverage*  
2016  
acrylic on PVC  
44 x 60 inches  
Gift of Mrs. Culver Orswell, by exchange



# Timeline

## 1950s & 1960s



1951

One year after deCordova opens, *Fannie Hillsmith-Abstract Paintings* is the first solo exhibition of a woman artist and its first exhibition of abstract painting.

1953

DeCordova holds a memorial exhibition for artist and dealer Margaret Brown, who championed abstract painting in Boston and exhibited artist Maud Morgan.



1957

*9 Women Painters* opens at Bennington College, Vermont, and includes work by Fannie Hillsmith, Alice Trumbull Mason, and Helen Frankenthaler, among others.



1960

In 1960, deCordova acquires its first painting by a woman artist, *Mooring*, by Jo Sandman.



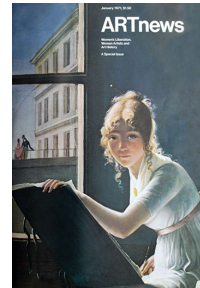
1963 & 1967

In 1963, the Fitchburg Art Museum opens the exhibition *Sixteen Massachusetts Women Painters*, including Beverly Hallam, followed by a Maud Morgan retrospective in 1967.





# 1970s

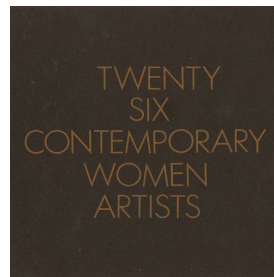


1971

Linda Nochlin publishes her influential essay, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in *ARTnews*, sparking a re-examination of the status of women in the arts.

1971

Lucy Lippard curates the important feminist exhibition, *Twenty Six Contemporary Women Artists* at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield, Connecticut.



1973

Natalie Alper is hired as the first woman painting professor at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, where she continues to teach until 1993.



1975

*New England Women* exhibition at deCordova includes paintings by Natalie Alper, Cynthia Bloom, Jacqueline Gourevitch, Beverly Hallam, Katherine Porter, Terri Priest, and Jo Sandman.

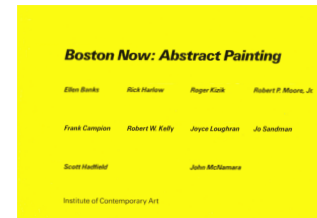


1977

Rose Art Museum Director Carl Belz invites emerging women museum professionals (Susan Ginsburg, Bonny Saulnier, Deborah Wye, and Sally Yard) to select the artists for the exhibition, *From Women's Eyes*, which includes Katherine Porter.



# 1980s

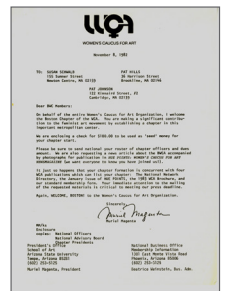


1981

The Institute of Contemporary Art launches its Boston Now exhibition series with *Boston Now: Abstract Painting*, which includes work by Jo Sandman.

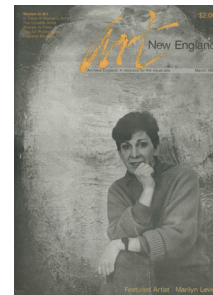
1982

The Boston chapter of the Women's Caucus for Art is founded by Patricia Hills, Patricia Johnston, and Susan Schwalb to increase opportunities, visibility, and recognition for women in the arts, joining the national organization founded in 1973.



1985

The March issue of *Art New England* is devoted entirely to the state of women in the arts, both regionally and nationally, and includes Jo Ann Rothschild's article "The Invisible Woman Artist."



1987

Maud Morgan receives the Women's Caucus for Art Lifetime Achievement Award at the WCA Boston conference.



Jamie Cope, *Maud Morgan, Artist*, 1983; printed 2001, silver gelatin print, 3/50, 9 5/8 x 12 inches, Gift of Arlette and Gus Kayafas

1987

The Women's Caucus for Art annual conference is held in Boston, accompanied by a wealth of exhibitions, events, panel discussions, and seminars. Countless women from across the art world joined forces to activate venues, like the Boston Public Library, throughout the city. Over sixty greater Boston museums, galleries, and alternative spaces showed the work of women artists in conjunction with the conference.



# 1990s



## 1990

May Stevens receives the Women's Caucus for Art Lifetime Achievement Award. In 1999, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, opens Stevens' *Images of Women: Near and Far*, the museum's first retrospective of a living female artist.

## 1993

Jo Ann Rothschild receives the inaugural Maud Morgan Purchase Prize from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, a biennial prize celebrating mid-career female artists in Massachusetts.



## 1993-4

Maxine Yalovitz-Blankenship is a fellow at the Bunting Institute at Radcliffe College, founded in 1960 as a postgraduate study center for female scholars and artists, and now known as the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University.



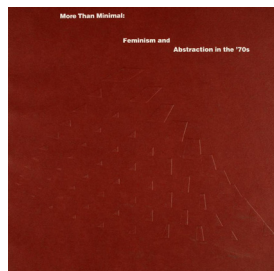
## 1994

The Guerrilla Girls present the annual Paul J. Cronin Memorial Lecture at deCordova. Founded in 1985 by outspoken women artists, the group anonymously yet vocally advocates for gender equality in museums, galleries, and the art world at large.



## 1996

*More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70s*, curated by Susan Stoops at the Rose Art Museum, features works by artists such as Lynda Benglis, Eva Hesse, and Hannah Wilke.



# 2000s & 2010s

## 2000

Jennifer Hall is the first recipient of deCordova's distinguished Rappaport Prize. Of the following 15 recipients, 10 are women: Annee Spileos Scott (2001), Debra Olin (2004), Sarah Walker (2005), María Magdalena Campos-Pons (2007), Ursula von Rydingsvard (2008), Liza Johnson (2010), Orly Genger (2011), Suara Welitoff (2012), Ann Pibal (2013) (left), and Liz Deschenes (2014).



## 2003

Dr. Beatrice H. Barrett donates her collection of nearly 170 art works to deCordova. The collection includes 14 of the paintings from *Expanding Abstraction*, including those by Natalie Alper, Dorothy Arnold, Melinda Ashley, Sharon Friedman, Yeffe Kimball, Jeanne Leger, Maud Morgan, and Barbara Weldon.



Bea Barrett with Yeffe Kimball

## 2007

*Big Bang! Abstract Painting for the 21st Century* exhibition at deCordova includes paintings by Barbara Takenaga, Meg Brown Payson, and Reese Inman for a total of 8 women artists in the 15-person exhibition.



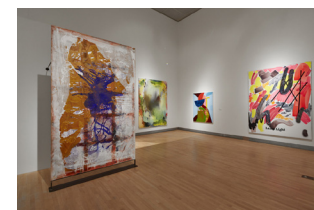
## 2010

The Linde Family Wing for Contemporary Art opens at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, with *Kristin Baker: New Paintings*, curated by Jen Mergel.



## 2015

Curator Katy Siegel organizes *Pretty Raw: After and Around Helen Frankenthaler*, at the Rose Art Museum, and uses Frankenthaler's work as a lens through which to re-examine the male-dominated history of modern art in America.



*Pretty Raw: After and Around Helen Frankenthaler* (install), 2015. Courtesy Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University. Photography: Charles Mayer

# Statistics

Percentage of solo or two-person exhibitions at deCordova that featured women:

1950s	31%
1960s	10%
1970s	5%
1980s	20%
1990s	48%
2000-16	47%



**48%**

OF THE ARTISTS FEATURED IN  
DECORDOVA'S BIENNIAL AND ANNUAL  
SHOWS SINCE 1989 HAVE BEEN WOMEN.

**65%**

OF DECORDOVA'S RAPPAPORT PRIZE  
RECIPIENTS SINCE 2000 HAVE BEEN WOMEN  
ARTISTS.

**33%**

OF ALL THE PAINTINGS AND PRINTS IN  
DECORDOVA'S PERMANENT COLLECTION  
ARE BY WOMEN.

**23%**

OF THE SCULPTURES IN THE PARK ARE BY  
WOMEN.

ACQUIRED IN 1993, BEVERLY PEPPER'S *SILENT PRESENCE*  
IS ONE OF THE FIRST SCULPTURES BY A WOMAN ARTIST  
TO ENTER THE COLLECTION.



Installation view, *Expanding Abstraction: New England Women Painters, 1950 to Now*, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, MA. Photograph by Clements Photography and Design, Boston.

