

Waterman Galleries, July 8, 2017

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Joan Mitchell
American, 1926-1992
Mooring, 1971
Oil on canvas
Gift of Bayard and Harriet K. Ewing 1992.124

This work presents abstract fields of light and dark colors to evoke the atmosphere of the boat-docking site alluded to in the title. (Blue and green areas give a sense of the meeting of water and land, while black masses and lines variously connote shadows or the edges of docks or boats.)

Mitchell painted *Mooring* soon after she settled in Vétheuil, France, a town on the river Seine where impressionist Claude Monet often worked. Known as one of Mitchell's "Territory" paintings because of its exploration of a particular place, this work is distinguished by its interplay of textures, ranging from dense impasto to thinly painted areas.



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Ad Reinhardt
American, 1913-1967
No. 18, 1956
Oil on canvas
Gift of Richard Brown Baker 1996.11.43

No. 18 comprises rectangles that vary just enough, on close scrutiny, to become distinguishable bands of black and deep blue. The use of color fields and the seeming absence of brushstrokes create an effect that encourages intense visual concentration. Reinhardt's statement that "there is a black which is old and black which is fresh . . . lustrous black and dull black, black in sunlight and black in shadow" is exemplified by *No. 18*'s presentation of different shades of color, leading us towards a deeper consideration of tone, affect, and how we perceive the world.



Betty Parsons
American, 1900-1982
Eared Chapel,
Painted wood
Bequest of Richard Brown Baker 2009.92.61

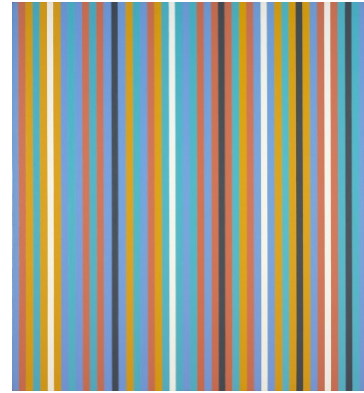
Eared Chapel is one of many works Parsons created by painting and assembling pieces of found wood. These materials retain much of their original form, but she transformed them by adding basic colors and arranging them to suggest other phenomena—in this instance a chapel imbued with human attributes. Parson is better known as an art dealer who championed Abstract Expressionism in its early stages, and the raw, rough-hewn quality of *Eared Chapel* suggests a shared affinity between her work and that of the artists she supported as a gallerist, including Jackson Pollock and Richard Tuttle.



RISD MUSEUM

Bridget Riley
British, b. 1931
Gather, 1981
Oil on linen
Bequest of Richard Brown Baker 2009.92.68

This painting is characteristic of Bridget Riley's exploration of how color and simple geometric forms combine to create particular optical effects. The measured variation of blue, ochre, orange, teal, brown, and white stripes suggests a pattern that never seems to materialize, prompting us to appreciate the harmony of the colors while we try to determine the system that brings them together.



Riley is strongly identified with 1960s Op Art, which explored the ability of abstract painting and sculpture to affect the viewer visually and psychologically. In *Gather* and her subsequent works, Riley uses pattern and color in a more nuanced way than the more dazzling, effects-driven work associated with the Op Art movement.

Ryan Wallace
American, b. 1977
Untitled (Tablet, Aluminum 11.12), 2013
Enamel, ink, Mylar, crystalina, PVA, artists tape, and metalized Mylar tape on canvas
Museum purchase: gift of The Mark & Hilarie Moore Family Trust in memory of Timothy A. Fallon 2016.48

In this painting, a silver-colored field is framed by a rough-textured border. Wallace's use of both traditional and unconventional materials simultaneously positions the work in relation to the history of abstract painting while evoking a more contemporary sensibility. The composition and title allude to electronic tablet devices, which have become ubiquitous in current culture.

Agnieszka Brzeźańska
Polish, b. 1972
Untitled, 2007
Oil on canvas
Gift of Avo Samuelian and Hector Manuel Gonzalez 2017.19.7

I think that people have much better access to the deeper meaning of things if we stop verbalizing and overly describing things with words.
—Agnieszka Brzeźańska

This painting features intersecting arcs and fields in differing shades of blue, gray, and white. Brzeźańska evokes a wide range of forms, from the treble-clef music symbol to shifting cloud patterns. The work



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reflects the performative nature of its production, both in the movement implied by the painted gestures on the canvas, and its use of abstract imagery as a form of communication.

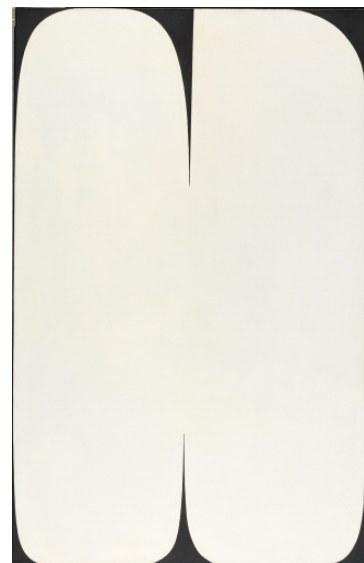
Paul Cowan
American, b. 1985
Untitled, 2012
Acrylic and fishing lure on canvas
Gift of Avo Samuelian and Hector Manuel Gonzalez 2017.19.9

This work presents a blue painted canvas with a fishing lure attached to its surface at the upper left. The reductive use of color and form extends the legacy of artists who played pivotal roles in the development of abstract art in the 1950s and 1960s, including Ellsworth Kelly, Ad Reinhardt, and Mark Rothko (whose works are also on view in these galleries). Their paintings explore colors and elementary geometric forms and encourage us towards spiritual and philosophical considerations. This composition is similarly reductive, but Cowan's gently satirical inclusion of a mass-produced object associated with outdoor recreation suggests a more ordinary appreciation of how colors and forms are experienced in everyday life.



Ellsworth Kelly
American, 1923 - 2015
Pole, 1957
Oil on canvas
The Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection of 20th-Century American Art
68.053

The subject and title of this painting derive from the artist's interpretation of a shadow cast by a telephone pole. The work also evokes the more general notion of opposite poles, with a compositional emphasis at the top and bottom. The white areas represent the pole, and the black indicates the shadow. The expansive white shapes, which seem to go beyond the limits of the canvas, highlight the clean borders between elements. Characteristic of the style known as hard-edge painting, this work emphasizes flatness and intentionally avoids the effect of spatial relationships between forms.



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Cy Twombly

American, 1929 - 2011

Untitled, 1968

Oil and crayon on canvas

The Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection of 20th-Century American Art
69.060

Here, white crayon applied on gray oil paint creates layers of scrawls reminiscent of a school chalkboard. These rhythmic scribbles suggest both the development of a narrative and a record of the artist's gestural performance.

Twombly's experience as a cryptologist in the U.S. Army prompted a fascination with drawing and calligraphy that is evident in *Untitled* and other works from his Blackboard paintings, created between 1967 and 1971.



Mark Rothko

American, 1903-1970

Untitled, 1954

Oil on canvas

Museum purchase in honor of Daniel Robbins: The Chace Fund, The Collectors' Acquisition Fund, Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund, Mary B. Jackson Fund, Walter H. Kimball Fund, Jesse Metcalf Fund, Museum Gift Fund, and gifts of Mrs. George Harding, Mrs. Lewis Madeira, Mrs. Malcolm Farmer, Mrs. Frank Mauran, George H. Waterman III, Mrs. Murray S. Danforth, Mrs. Russell Field, Mrs. Albert Pilavin, Mr. and Mrs. Bayard Ewing, Mr. and Mrs. Tracy Barnes, Mr. and Mrs. William Boardman, Mr. and Mrs. Roy Neuberger, Mrs. Lee Day Gillespie, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Haffenreffer, and Richard Brown Baker 71.091

If you are only moved by color relationships, then you miss the point. I'm interested in expressing the big emotions—tragedy, ecstasy, doom.

—Mark Rothko

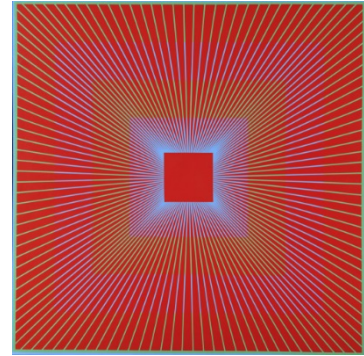
Soft-edged rectangles glow and dissipate, hovering over this deeply saturated red canvas. Rothko explored variants of this composition for more than two decades, staining, blotting, and layering paint with delicate brushstrokes to build expanses of atmospheric color. Purely abstract, lacking hard lines, and with no identifiable narrative content, this work expresses the artist's profound concern with the spiritual, symbolic qualities of color.



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Richard Anuszkiewicz
American, b. 1930
Primary Hue, 1964
Acrylic on canvas
Gift of Richard Brown Baker 72.098

Primary Hue creates an optical illusion of nested squares in differing shades of red, yet only a single color underlies the radiating lines. The lines alternate green and blue as they travel from the center to the painting's edge, causing a seeming transformation in the red background.



Anuszkiewicz is identified with the Op Art movement of the 1960s and 1970s, as was Bridget Riley, whose work is also presented in this gallery. That movement emphasized the abstract use of geometric forms to develop dynamic, visually deceptive compositions.

Robert Mangold
American, b. 1937
Distorted Circle within a Polygon II, 1972
Acrylic and graphite on shaped canvas
The Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection of 20th-Century American Art
73.018

Distorted Circle within a Polygon II is one in a series of works Mangold made in the early 1970s that create a tension between two basic geometric forms: the line painted on the picture plane and the shaped canvas that forms the work's ground and structure. The conflict between these opposing shapes is tempered by use of flat, muted color, in this instance a grayish-green. Mangold's work differed from other Minimalist practice of the 1960s and 1970s in his emphasis on subtle irregularities—note the distortion of this circle, within an irregular polygon. These differences imbue his work with a more "human" quality.

