

Record Breaking Ab-Ex Exhibition Closes with a Celebration at the Katonah

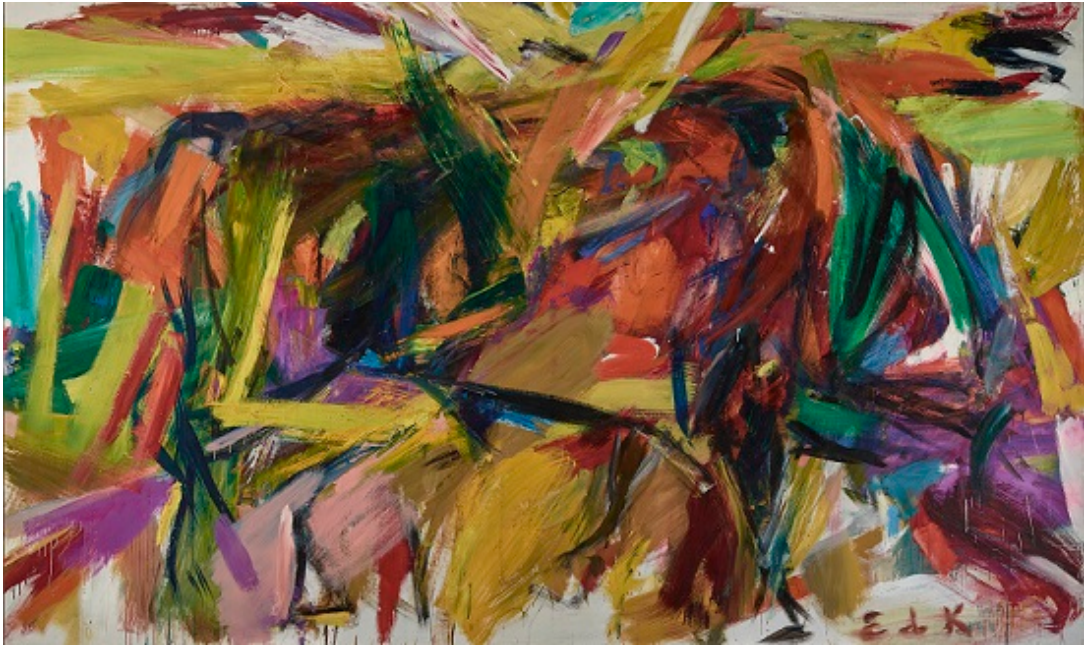
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by Pat Rogers

Female Abstract Expression artists get their due in an exhibition at the Katonah Museum of Art in Westchester County, NY, but not for very much longer. “Sparkling Amazons: Abstract Expressionist Women of the 9th St. Show” is heading into its final weekend, when it will close with a flourish. A “Last Look Closing Party” will be held on Sunday, January 26, 2020, from 3 to 5 p.m., and features a farewell toast and refreshments.

“Sparkling Amazons” broke attendance records for the Katonah Museum of Art with its Opening Weekend Preview drawing the highest attendance in memory, according to the art museum. To accommodate the continued interest in the show, the museum added staff for the uptick in weekend visitors and devised creative solutions to handle groups requesting private tours of the show, according to Caroline Holder, Marketing & Communications Manager for the Katonah.

The reason for the intense interest is the art and the artists themselves. The exhibition features female Abstract Expressionism artist and their contribution to the significant roles they played as bold innovators within the New York School during the 1940s and 1950s, explained the museum. “Sparkling Amazons” highlights the 11 women who were part of the historic “9th St. Show,” which features over 60 artists and helped launch Abstract Expressionism into acceptance. Organized by the artists themselves with the help of emerging gallerist Leo Castelli in 1951, all of the exhibiting artists had been shut out of museum and galleries because of their radical new approaches to art.



"Bullfight" by Elaine de Kooning, 1959. Oil on canvas, 77 3/8 x 130 1/2 inches (197.7 x 331.47 cm). Denver Art Museum Collection: Vance H. Kirkland Acquisition Fund, 2012.300. © Elaine de Kooning Trust, Photography courtesy of the Denver Art Museum and the Katonah Museum of Art.

The exhibition title is pulled from arts writing by Thomas Hess, an art critic and editor of ArtNews, who referred to the exhibiting female painters as "sparkling Amazons." Exhibiting artists include Lee Krasner, Joan Mitchell, Elaine de Kooning, Helen Frankenthaler, Grace Hartigan, Perle Fine, Anne Ryan, Sonia Sekula, Day Schnabel, Jean Steubing and Guitou Knoop.

"Sparkling Amazons: Abstract Expressionist Women of the 9th St. Show" presents a mix of masterpieces loaned from American museums and private collections and works that have never been publically exhibited. Highlights include *The Seasons* by Lee Krasner, 1957, *The Bullfight* by Elaine de Kooning, 1959, *Cedar Bar* by Grace Hartigan, 1951, and *The City* by Day Schnabel, 1956.



“The Seasons” by Lee Krasner, 1957. Oil and house paint on canvas, 92 3/4 x 203 7/8 inches (235.6 x 517.8 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Purchase, with funds from Frances and Sydney Lewis by exchange, the Mrs. Percy Uris Purchase Fund and the Painting and Sculpture Committee 87.7 © 2019 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy the Katonah Museum of Art.

The exhibition is curated by Katonah Museum of Art Associate Curator Michele Wijegoonaratna, PhD. “Everyone knows who the famous women of Abstract Expressionism were, but it was interesting for us to tease out what these other women were making and how they fit into the context of their more well-known contemporaries,” she wrote.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with support from The Pollock-Krasner Foundation.

Also on view is abstract art by Israeli artist Rotem Reshef. In her solo show, “Arcadia,” Reshef exhibited paintings suspended from the walls that were made by pouring painting and painting with collected organic materials on monumental rolls of unstretched canvas. Referencing the natural world in gesture and palette, the contemporary abstract paintings push the boundaries of abstraction and expression, according to the museum.

BASIC FACTS: “Sparkling Amazons: Abstract Expressionist Women of the 9th St. Show” is on view through January 26, 2020 at the Katonah Museum of Art in A “Last Look Closing Party” will be held on Sunday, January 26, 2020, from 3 to 5 p.m. The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and on Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for seniors and students. Museum Members and children under 12 years old are free. The Katonah Museum of Art is located at 134 Jay Street, Katonah, NY 10356.

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