

## PRESS RELEASE

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## **Sparkling Amazons: Abstract Expressionist Women of the 9<sup>th</sup> St. Show Comes to the Katonah Museum of Art**

October 6, 2019 — January 26, 2020

*Sparkling Amazons* presents the often-overlooked contribution by women artists to Abstract Expressionism and the significant role they played as bold innovators within the New York School during the 1940s and 50s. Through the presentation of some 30 works of art, alongside documentary photography, the exhibition captures an important moment in the history of Abstract Expressionism. The catalyst for this project is the groundbreaking 9<sup>th</sup> St. show arranged by avant-garde artists, with the help of the fledgling gallerist, Leo Castelli, in 1951. The show became a pivotal moment for the emergence and acceptance of Abstract Expressionism. The artists of the 9<sup>th</sup> St. show had struggled to gain critical recognition, having been shut out by museums and galleries due to the radical nature of their work. Of the more than 60 artists in the show, including many who were to become prominent figures in Abstract Expressionism, only 11 were women. This is the first time works by these revolutionary women will be brought together since the 9<sup>th</sup> St. show took place 68 years ago.

These women were later referred to by Thomas Hess, a contemporary and noted editor and art critic for ArtNews, as “sparkling Amazons.” These women would neither have viewed themselves as “amazons” nor as feminists; they simply worked and lived as artists, pursuing their professions with the same dedication as their male counterparts even though the social stakes were much higher for them at the time. Several of the artists, including Lee Krasner, Joan Mitchell, Elaine de Kooning, Helen Frankenthaler and Grace Hartigan, went on to have distinguished careers and have found their rightful place in the art historical canon. Others — including Perle Fine, Anne Ryan, Sonia Sekula, Day Schnabel, Jean Steubing and Guitou Knoop — either enjoyed less critical and commercial success, or are yet to be recognized by art history, a fact that this exhibition addresses. Every work in this exhibition is a fine and rare example of each artist’s oeuvre and artistic development and has been selected to demonstrate the diversity of their careers.

This exhibition includes masterpieces from the most important American museums and private collections, as well as some previously unseen gems. Highlights include Lee Krasner's *The Seasons*, (1957), Elaine de Kooning's *The Bullfight*, (1959), Grace Hartigan's *Cedar Bar*, (1951) and Day Schnabel's *The City*, (1956).

The exhibition is curated by Associate Curator, Michele Wijegoonaratna, PhD, who notes, “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.” Katonah Museum of Art Executive Director Michael Gitlitz adds, “The Katonah Museum of Art has always been in the vanguard in presenting innovative exhibitions, and it is therefore not surprising that *Sparkling Amazons: Abstract Expressionist Women of the 9<sup>th</sup> St. Show* presents together, for the first time in 68 years, the work of these 11 artists.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with support from The Pollock-Krasner Foundation. Checklist and images available upon request.

Lee Krasner (1908-1984), *The Seasons*, 1957, oil and house paint on canvas, 92 3/4 x 203 7/8 in., 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, © 2015 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society(ARS), New York.

Also on View:

## Rotem Reshef: Arcadia



In *Arcadia*, Israeli artist Rotem Reshef, has collected organic materials, some from the KMA grounds, to paint monumental rolls of unstretched canvas that are suspended from the walls. The marks and vibrant palette which saturate the entire surface reference the natural world, and the gesture of pouring paint reveals her unconventional artistic process that filters and redefines abstraction and expression.

Courtesy of Rotem Reshef Studio, New York.

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### ABOUT THE KATONAH MUSEUM OF ART:

The Katonah Museum of Art promotes the understanding and enjoyment of the visual arts for diverse audiences. The Museum presents exhibitions that explore ideas about art, culture, and society – past and present – through innovative exhibition and education programs.

Museum hours: Tuesday—Saturday, 10:00 AM—5:00 PM, Sunday 12:00—5:00 PM, closed Monday. General admission: \$10 adults, \$5 seniors & students. Members & children under the age of 12 always enter free.

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Katonah Museum of Art

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