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Exploring the Artists known as the Women of 9th Street Show

 IN THE NEWS  0

The 9th Street Art Exhibition, also known as the 9th Street Show, was held on May 21 to June 10, 1951. This cutting edge art ensemble was part of the post-war, avant-garde movement in NYC. These artists are often referred to as the New York School. In the years that followed, the world has celebrated the male 9th Street Show artists such as Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock and Ad Reinhardt. Unjustly, the participating female artists have been overlooked...until now.

As of late, The Women of the 9th Street Show have gained their greatly deserved recognition. The Katonah Museum of Art's exhibition, Sparking Amazons: Abstract Expressionist Women of the 9th Street Show, displays work from female artists that presented at the progressive show. This powerful exhibition runs from October 6th to January 26th. Additionally, Mary Gabriel has written Ninth Street Women which in turn has inspired Amy Sherman-Palladino and Dan Palladino to explore these female artists' lives on a television series for Amazon Prime.

The well-deserved praise these artists are receiving is particularly important to the female founded and run, Greenwich International Film Festival (GIFF). GIFF is proud to highlight the female trailblazers both past and present. They applaud the Katonah Museum of Art for spreading the names, as well as, the rich history attached to these talented artists and look forward to hearing more about them through the upcoming Amazon series.

Michael Gitlitz is the Executive Director of the Katonah Museum of Art. Michael started his career at the Hirschl & Adler Galleries. He then acted as a Director at the Marlborough Gallery in New York City. Next, Michael utilized his experience in the role of Senior Specialist and Co- Head of Post-War & Contemporary and of Modern Art at Paddle8auction house.

In this interview with GIFF, Michael shares his knowledge and insight of this historical movement, in addition to, his vision for the legacy of the Women in 9th Street Show.

What do you think defined the Women of the 9th Street Show?

The 9th Street women created a pivotal moment in art history. Importance needs to be placed on the content of the show, and their work during that period. The 9th Street Show was as influential and important as the 1913 Armory Show or the 1863 "Salon des Refusés".

How did this particular show differentiate from the others during this period?

In most cases artists were at the mercy of the galleries or art collectors to find and promote their pieces. The 9th Street Show differed because it was a collaboration of artists who gathered on their own. They didn't need recognition from an outsider to show their pieces.

While Leo Castelli is credited for hanging the pieces at the show it was Jean Steubling who found the space. The story goes, Milton Resnick spent a long night drinking with some fellow artists. The men spent the evening commiserating about being overlooked as artists. He went home and Jean Steubling, his girlfriend at the time, listened to his complaints. She decided to take the reins by approaching the building owner across the street and persuaded him to allow them to house an art show. The rest is history!

The Woman of 9th Street lived a bohemian lifestyle. Do you think this affected their art?

I think the opposite. I think it was their art, desire, obsession, drive, that forced them to live this bohemian lifestyle. It was hard enough to be an artist, but to be a female artist was even more challenging.

Grace Hartigan is an example of a female artist forgoing any notion of a traditional lifestyle. She gave up her young son to be raised by his grandparents. Additionally, she was married four times. Through it all she remained focused and committed to her art.

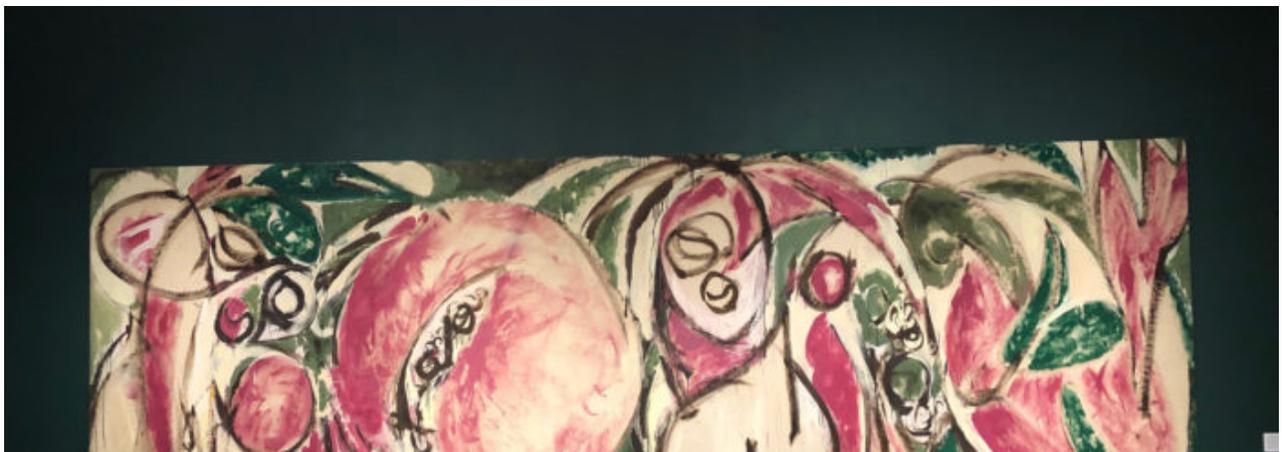
It seems the saying, “Behind every great man is a great woman”, rings true in these female artists.

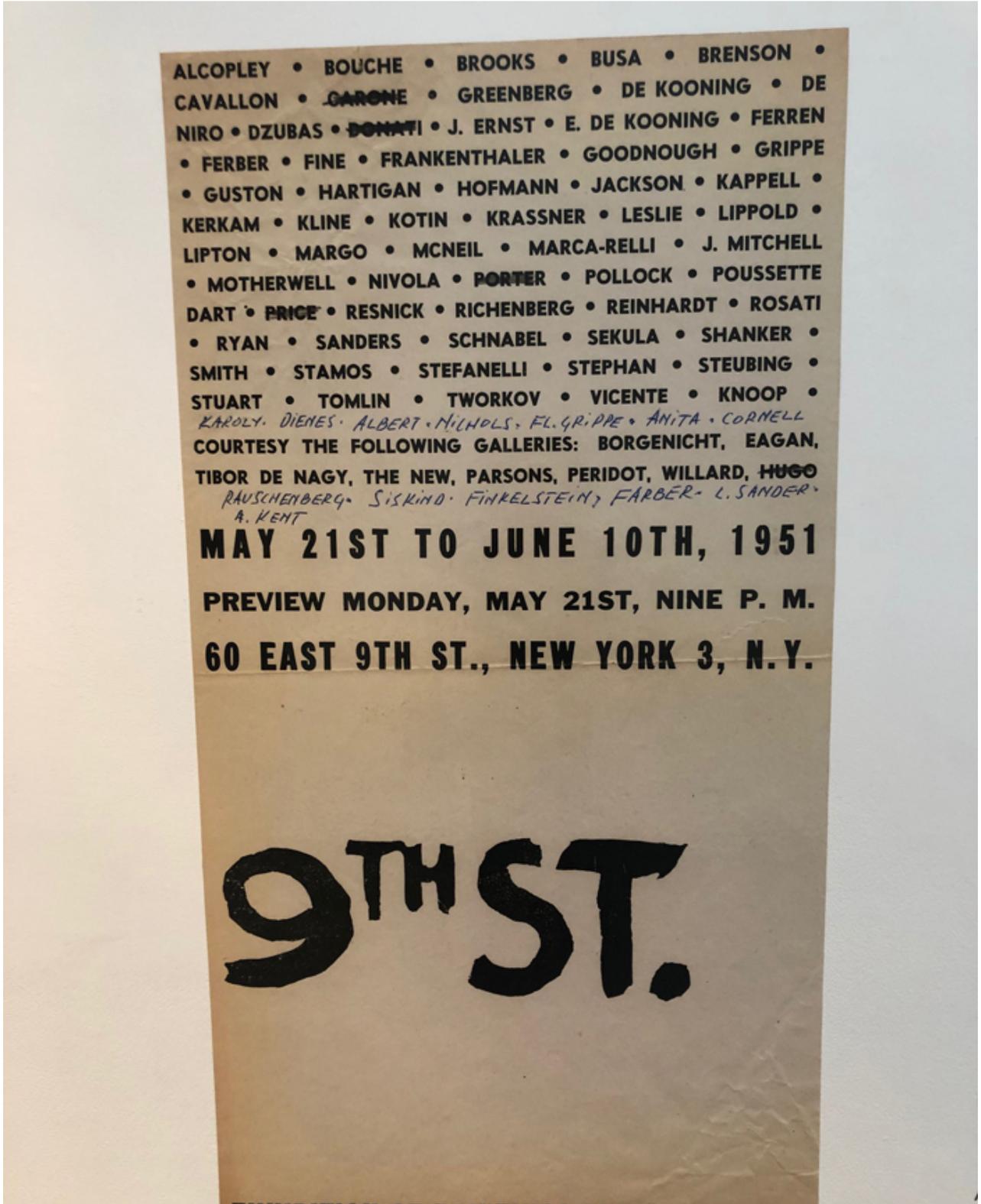
Very true. For the most part, it was the women who supported the men. There is the story of Jean Steubling finding the space for the 9th Street Show to help her then boyfriend Milton Resnick. We also know that Jackson Pollock would not have been nearly as successful and recognized if it wasn't for Lee Krasner. Lee Krasner, herself a gifted artist, focused most of her attention on supporting Pollock and his work. Thus boosting him to becoming one of the most successful artists to date.

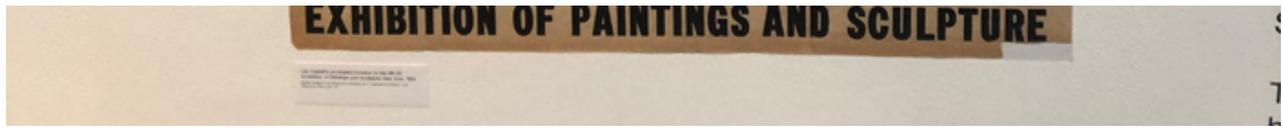
Do you think that in 50 years we will still be talking about the Women of 9th Street?

I do. The art world is cyclical but I do believe the women of 9th Street have secured their place. I also hope to see other artists, such as LGBT artists, being celebrated in the future.

The Katonah Museum of Art will follow this current exhibit to explore the world of another strong, female artist, Bisa Butler. Butler broaches the dividing line between creating with paints on canvas and creating with fiber by fashioning magnificent quilts. This exhibition will run from March 15th to June 14th.









Lee Krasner in front of her painting *The Seasons*, 1957
Photograph: Hans Namuth
© 1991 Hans Namuth Estate, Artwork © 2019 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, NY

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About the author

Lauren Stannard

Lauren, when not chasing after her three sons, writes. Her experience includes work in marketing and education, as well as, screenplay writing. When possible she ditches the carpools and escapes to the nearest mall, concert or comedy show

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