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For Immediate Release:

Women Across America: 1945–1979

Mary Abbott • Elise Asher • Janice Biala • Elaine de Kooning • Sari Dienes • Martha Edelheit
Perle Fine • Helen Frankenthaler • Jane Freilicher • Shirley Gorelick • Grace Hartigan
Adaline Kent • Ellen Key-Oberg • Ida Kohlmeyer • Lee Krasner • Zoe Longfield
Beatrice Mandelman • Jeanne Miles • Betty Parsons • Pat Passlof • Jeanne Reynal
Miriam Schapiro • Edith Schloss • Hedda Sterne • Alma Thomas • Nina Yankowitz

Eric Firestone Gallery
40 Great Jones Street | New York, NY 10012
May 12 – July 11, 2026
Opening Reception: Tuesday, May 12, 6:00–8:00PM

Eric Firestone Gallery is pleased to present *Women Across America: 1945–1979*, an exhibition that showcases connections between women across the country in the post-World War II period. This exhibition highlights the rich tradition of abstraction within the period across various mediums. Taking inspiration from William Gerdts's sprawling *Art Across America: Two Centuries of Regional Painting 1710–1920*, the three-volume encyclopedia of art in the United States, this exhibition reimagines what an Americanist Art History of the postwar period might look like if told through women's art. The show traces a transitional time for women within the art world, with figures such as Adaline Kent and Jeanne Reynal who forged their own paths in order to work as artists, painters like Pat Passlof and Helen Frankenthaler who fought for a place within the New York School, and artists who became outspoken in their feminism during the women's movement like Miriam Schapiro and Nina Yankowitz. This exhibition furthers the gallery's commitment to reexamining modern and contemporary art histories of the United States, especially championing underrecognized artists.



Grace Hartigan | *Donna* | 1951
oil on board
18 1/2 x 22 3/4 in.

Over the last decade, women artists have increasingly achieved recognition for their role in post-war abstraction. This exhibition will present an expansive view of this art world: connecting now well-established names alongside reintroductions. The curation will create conversations between artists involved with Surrealism,

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Adaline Kent | *Luna* | 1952
cement with pebbles and shell inclusions
9 1/2 x 12 1/2 x 5 1/2 in.
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the Studio Craft Movement, Abstract Expressionism, the Washington Color School, and Women's Art Movement. The exhibition draws together work from artists' estates, key paintings coming out of private collections for the first time in decades, and distinguished loans.

Taking place over the United States's semiquincentennial, this exhibition tells various kinds of American stories: regional stories, immigrant stories, and exile stories. In the years leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War, many fled Europe for the United States. Among them were numerous artists, including **Sari Dienes** (1898–1992) and **Hedda Sterne** (1910–2011), both of whom trained at European academies, lived and became part of avant-garde circles prior to settling in New York. These artists, though fiercely independent in their respective studio practices, generated connections among artists.

Leaving behind much of what they knew, they created channels for social interaction and artistic exchange in their new country. In New York, Dienes established the Ear Inn as an artists' bar, which hosted performances and happenings.

Several of the artists in the exhibition are associated with Abstract Expressionism and the New York School. While the scene was dominated by men, women were an integral part of intellectual debates and the social scene that defined the movement. **Mary Abbott** (1921–2019), **Elaine de Kooning** (1918–1989), and **Perle Fine** (1905–1988) were some of the few women who became part of "The Club," the legendary group of artists who would gather to discuss art and philosophy. Sterne, for her part, became known for being the only woman in the iconic *Inascibles* photograph, published in Time Magazine in 1951, introducing a new group of New York artists to a national audience and challenging the primacy of their European counterparts. **Helen Frankenthaler** (1928–2011), **Grace Hartigan** (1922–2008), **Pat Passlof** (1928–2011), and **Miriam Schapiro** (1923–2015) all became fixtures of the downtown scene, frequently attending events at The Club and socializing at the Cedar Tavern. By the 1950s, Passlof began organizing the "Wednesday Night Club," an alternative to the male-dominated Club, which was more open to younger artists and women.

Artist-run galleries played an important role in this new order with their democratic and grassroots spirit. **Elise Asher** (1912–2004) was a founding member of Tanager Gallery, an artist cooperative that positioned itself as a downtown alternative to the gallery scene. Uptown, **Betty Parsons** (1900–1982) established her gallery in 1946. As an artist herself, she had an eye for spotting talent regardless of gender and showed Dienes, Fine, **Adaline Kent** (1900–1957), **Lee Krasner** (1908–1984), **Jeanne Miles** (1908–1999), **Jeanne Reynal** (1903–1983), and Sterne.

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Helen Frankenthaler | *Highland Road* | 1969

acrylic on canvas

40 1/2 x 93 1/4 in.

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In the San Francisco Bay Area, artists developed their own styles of modernism. **Zoe Longfield** (1924–2013) was one of the earliest women associated with Bay Area Abstract Expressionism. She showed at Metart Gallery, a short-lived cooperative that launched the careers of other first generation Bay Area Abstract Expressionists. Jeanne Reynal brought intuition and spontaneity to the medium of mosaic, guided by her involvement with Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism. Adaline Kent, an essential member of the Bay Area's community of modernist artists, experimented throughout her career to create abstractions informed by nature. Kent and Reynal developed a close friendship at this time and both showed frequently at the San Francisco Museum of Art (now SFMOMA). Reynal would leave an enduring impact on the institution by advising the museum's first director to make several key purchases of contemporary American art.

Throughout the United States, modernism emerged wherever artists practiced. In Washington, DC, **Alma Thomas** (1891–1978) created work that defined the Washington Color School, with richly saturated colors and tessellated pictorial planes. **Beatrice Mandelman** (1912–1998) left New York for the Taos Art Colony where she was one of a few women painting. She melded the abstraction of her earlier career as a New York School artist with the influence of the desert and Native American cultures to create her Taos Modern work. **Ida Kohlmeyer** (1912–1997) lived and worked in New Orleans throughout her life, and only began her career as an artist in her thirties, reflecting the freedom and creativity of her city. Provincetown, MA was a hub for many practicing artists who found community, exchange, and discourse. **Shirley Gorelick** (1924–2000) developed her bold, dynamic, and richly saturated paintings within this enclave of abstract expressionism, which included Asher and Frankenthaler.

Still, some women did not find their place within the various art worlds in the United States and traveled or lived abroad. **Edith Schloss** (1919–2011), leaving a difficult marriage, fled to Italy in 1962 to find her personal freedom. **Janice Biala** (1903–2000), a Polish-born immigrant, returned to Europe shortly after the Second World War, and would split her time between New York and Paris for the rest of her life. For artists like Schloss and Biala, Europe allowed for greater freedom during the immediate postwar period.

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The exhibition showcases artists who broke with dominant trends of modernism. **Martha Edelheit's** (b. 1931) extension paintings of 1959–60, which incorporate found materials, energetically push the picture plane beyond the rectangle of the canvas. **Nina Yankowitz** (b. 1946) draped and folded her canvases on the walls. Guided always by her belief in community and multi-sensory experience, Yankowitz's works are site-specific and partially determined by the person installing and interpreting the work.



Martha Edelheit | *Caged Language* | 1959
wood, chicken wire, metal, canvas and oil paint
46 x 72 in.

This multigenerational, multipolar exhibition traces connections between women artists and their practices. It visually shows complex networks and aesthetic relationships over time, with artists who found connections across music, poetry, performance, science, and the feminist movement. In an art world that prized the idea of the individual as paramount, these stories are an important counter, showing a rich variety of experience, and highlighting the persistence of artists who refused to be excluded.

This exhibition is organized by Maddy Henkin, Associate Director and Alabel Chapin, Research Assistant. The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalogue.

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For further information, contact: press@ericfirestonegallery.com