

PRESS RELEASE**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****PERLE FINE: THE ACCORDMENT SERIES (1969-1978) OPENS AT BERRY CAMPBELL**

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, January 25, 2020— Berry Campbell is pleased to announce an exhibition of paintings by the renowned Abstract Expressionist painter, Perle Fine (1905-1988) newly acclaimed for her inclusion in the *9th Street Show* (1951). Recently, Richard Prince chose *Movement Left and Right* (1947) from the vaults of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum for his curated section of the exhibition, *Artistic License: Six Takes on the Guggenheim Collection*. This exhibition at Berry Campbell focuses on Perle Fine's *Accordment Series* (1969-1978) and includes several prominent examples that have not been exhibited since the artist's 1978 exhibition at Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton. Inspired by the artist's time on the Eastern End of Long Island during winter, Fine described her *Accordment* grid paintings as "in tune with nature and the universe," and through them she expressed the underlying structure and order that superficial depiction often disguises.^[1] *Perle Fine: The Accordment Series (1969-1978)* will open with a reception on Thursday, February 13, 2020 from 6 to 8 pm and will continue through March 14, 2020.

Committed to abstraction throughout a career that lasted fifty years, Perle Fine maintained high ideals, never adopting a method to follow a trend or compromising when her work was outside the mainstream.^[2] Although she experienced the barriers that limited the opportunities for women artists in the era—especially those who entered into the macho milieu of Abstract Expressionism—she held to her belief that it was painting itself that mattered, not who had created it. However, Fine's achievement and that of other women of her time are now being given serious attention, such as in the 2016 exhibition, *Women of Abstract Expressionism*, held at the Denver Art Museum. The show, including Fine's work along with that of Mary Abbott, Jay DeFeo, Judith Godwin, Helen Frankenthaler, Sonia Gechtoff, Grace Hartigan, Elaine de Kooning, Lee Krasner, Joan Mitchell, Deborah Remington, and Ethel Schwabacher, was curated by University of Denver professor Gwen F. Chanzit, who wrote the accompanying catalogue.

One of six children, Fine was born in Boston in 1905 to parents who had recently emigrated from Russia. She began studying art while growing up in nearby Malden, Massachusetts. Before finishing high school, she took classes in illustration and graphic design at the School of Practical Art, Boston (she paid her tuition by working in the bursar's office). In 1927 or 1928, she moved to New York City, continuing her training under Pruett Carter at the Grand Central School of Art. In 1930, she transferred to the Art Students League and studied there with Kimon Nicolaidis, absorbing his method of combining spontaneity with an academic approach to figural modeling. The work of Paul Cézanne, however, was her greatest source of inspiration at the time. In the same year, she married Maurice Berezov, a fellow artist with whom she had become acquainted at Grand Central.

When Hans Hofmann moved his popular Munich art school to New York in 1933, Fine took the opportunity to enroll. Her classmates included avant-garde artists Larry Rivers, Robert De Niro, and Lee Krasner, who became her lifelong friends. Fine also attended Hofmann's summer school in Provincetown. She did not exhibit her work actively during the 1930s, when Regionalism and Social Realism prevailed. By 1943, however, she had begun to gain recognition. That year she was awarded a grant from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation; she would receive additional grants from the foundation in the years ahead. She also began exhibiting at Peggy Guggenheim's Art of this Century Gallery and at the Museum of Nonobjective Painting (now, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York), then under the directorship of Hilla Rebay.

In 1945, Fine joined American Abstract Artists, a group founded in 1936 to give abstract art a voice in the United States by exhibitions, publications, and discussions. Through the organization, with which she exhibited through the 1970s, she became acquainted with many leading abstract artists, including Josef Albers, Fannie Hillsmith, Ibram Lassaw, Irene Rice Pereira, and Ad Reinhardt. She especially admired Reinhardt, finding his bravery inspiring. Her first solo exhibition was held in February and March of 1945 at the Willard Gallery on East 57th Street. By the end of the year, she was represented by Karl Nierendorf, who specialized in the German Blaue Reiter group. Nierendorf gave Fine a stipend and held shows of her art at his gallery in 1946 and 1947.

In 1947, Fine was asked by the collector Emily Hall Tremain to make an exact copy of Piet Mondrian's diamond-shaped *Victory Boogie-Woogie*, then in Tremain's collection (now in the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague) as well as to prepare a complete analysis of the painting, on which the artist had been working when he died three years earlier. Fine, who had come to know Mondrian after he emigrated to America in 1940, felt a deep reverence for his achievement. She executed her copy under the same conditions in which he had worked, including a pristine white-walled studio and with the same materials he had employed. In 1944, she had begun to create etchings, working with Stanley William Hayter. Her work in this medium was first shown in a group exhibition held that year at Wittenborn & Co., New York.

After Nierendorf's sudden death due to a heart attack in 1947, Fine was represented by Betty Parsons, whose gallery (opened in September of the year) had become the leading showplace for cutting-edge art in New York. Among the artists whose work she represented were Adolph Gottlieb, Hofmann, Ellsworth Kelly, Agnes Martin, Barnett Newman, Pollock, Reinhardt, Rothko, and Clyfford Still. In 1949, Fine was invited by de Kooning to join The Club, a group including Kline, Reinhardt, Philip Guston, and Elaine de Kooning. The artists gathered in an East Village loft for discussions and presentations by leading New York philosophers, art critics, and poets. Fine and Elaine de Kooning were two of the three female members in the group.

In the late 1940s, Fine drew extensively from Cubist fragmentation as well as from the ideas of Hans Hofmann on the harmonics and formal tensions of color and shape. In the early 1950s, she moved in a new direction emphasizing color as an expressive means of its own. Rendered with staining

and varying degrees of translucency, the serene, reductive compositions that resulted are suggestive of the works of Mark Rothko, with whom she was close at the time. However, she felt there was an essential difference between her art and Rothko's. While acknowledging that both were creating "quiet complexes of color," she felt she did not seek Rothko's sublime transcendence. Instead she stated that she kept her focus on "the thing itself."^[1] Among the works from this time is a series she called *Prescience*, in which she filled large canvases with layered color, some seemingly below the surface and pushing forward, that has the ghostly quality of pentimenti. Her method still evoked the push-pull of Hofmann, but instead of gesture and color, it consisted of etherealized foreground and background shapes. She also brought a new sense of playfulness in biomorphic and organic forms that evoke the wit of Paul Klee and Joan Miró. Nonetheless, she stopped short of anything definitively referential so that the impact of her work elicits a meditative rather than an analytical response in the viewer. When one of her works was included in a group show at Betty Parsons in March 1952, *The New York Times* critic Howard Devree compared it with Nell Blaine's "intricate upbuilding" in a scene suggestive of mountains, stating: "Perle Fine's canvas has reached the utmost in economy in two areas of bluish-green bordering a sweep of white as if the shadow of a cloud had all but obscured a landscape."^[2] When Fine had a solo show at Betty Parsons in December of 1952, Lawrence Campbell called the works on view, "marks on the walls made by the smoke from a candle."^[3] Another reviewer mentioned that the "the weight of time taken plus their worked out simplicity" made these paintings "very quiet."^[4] While distinguishing her art from the mythmaking of Rothko, Fine realized that some of her more successful paintings had a "kind of myth in them." For her, this quality was not "simply a matter of design." She stated: "Sometimes just the way the paint was handled would give you a . . . sense of mystery in what appears to be a perfectly flat design, and another wouldn't do at all. It's very strange that it worked that way . . . It has to do with everything that's there—and what isn't there as well."^[5]

In 1954, Fine and Berezov built a one-room studio house in the woods in Springs, East Hampton, an area where they had often visited Krasner and Pollock. After the construction was complete, Fine decided to remain in Springs throughout the year, although she occasionally traveled into the city to see art and to install her work in exhibitions. In 1955, she became affiliated with Tanager Gallery, where she had solo shows through 1960.

In the late 1950s, Fine made intricate use of collage in her paintings, interweaving jagged scraps of paper, newspaper cutouts and aluminum and gold foil across white fields. In about 1961, she destroyed a show's worth of her art and created a new group of works that she called the *Cool Series*. In accord with the Color Field movement, these reductive, vibrant, geometric images were praised when they were shown at Graham Gallery in 1963 and 1964.^[6] In the mid-1960s, Fine created a series of painted wood reliefs in which the parts were fragmented yet formed a cohesive totality.

From 1962 until 1973, Fine served as an Associate Professor of Art at Hofstra University, Hempstead, Long Island, where a ten-year retrospective of her work was held in 1974 following her retirement from teaching. Begun about 1970, Fine's *Accordment* series included drawings, gouaches, and oils, in which she utilized Mondrian's grid construction as a framework for overall shimmering surface effects.

Fine exhibited her work extensively in solo and group shows. Following her death from pneumonia in 1988, she was featured in solo exhibitions at the Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, East Hampton, New York (2005) and again at Hofstra in 2009.

Fine's work is represented in many important private and public collections, including Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts; Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock; Ball State Museum of Art, Muncie, Indiana; Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts; the Brooklyn Museum, New York; Cheekwood Botanical Garden and Museum of Art, Nashville, Tennessee; Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.; Guild Hall, East Hampton, New York; Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York; Hofstra University, Long Island, New York; Indianapolis Museum of Art; Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, Utica, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; New York University Art Collection; Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, New York; Principia College, Saint Louis, Missouri; Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Massachusetts; Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey; Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; University of California Art Museum, Berkeley; University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Greensboro; and Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts.

-Lisa N. Peters, Ph.D.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Christine Berry and Martha Campbell have many parallels in their backgrounds and interests. Both studied art history in college, began their careers in the museum world, and later worked together at Spanierman Gallery in midtown Manhattan. Most importantly, however, Berry and Campbell share a curatorial vision.

Both art dealers developed a strong emphasis on research and networking with artists and scholars during their art world years. They decided to work together, opening Berry Campbell Gallery in 2013 in the heart of New York's Chelsea art district, at 530 West 24th Street on the ground floor. In 2015, the gallery expanded, doubling its size with an additional 2,000 square feet of exhibition space.

Highlighting a selection of postwar and contemporary artists, the gallery fulfills an important gap in the art world, revealing a depth within American modernism that is just beginning to be understood, encompassing the many artists who were left behind due to race, gender, or geography-beyond such legendary figures as Pollock and de Kooning. Since its inception, the gallery has been especially instrumental in giving women artists long overdue consideration, an effort that museums have only just begun to take up, such as in the 2016 traveling exhibition, *Women of Abstract Expressionism*, curated by University of Denver professor Gwen F. Chanzit. This show featured work by Perle Fine and Judith Godwin, both represented by Berry Campbell, along with that of Helen Frankenthaler, Lee Krasner, and Joan Mitchell. In 2019, Berry Campbell's exhibition, *Yvonne Thomas: Windows and Variations (Paintings 1963 - 1965)* was reviewed by Roberta Smith for *The New York Times*, in which Smith wrote that Thomas, "... kept her hand in, adding a fresh directness of touch, and the results give her a place in the still-emerging saga of postwar American abstraction."

In addition to Perle Fine and Judith Godwin, artists whose work is represented by the gallery include Edward Avedisian, Walter Darby Bannard, Stanley Boxer, Dan Christensen, Eric Dever, John Goodyear, Balcomb Greene, Gertrude Greene, Ken Greenleaf, Raymond Hender, Jill Nathanson, John Oppen, Stephen Pace, Charlotte Park, William Pehudoff, Ann Purcell, Mike Solomon, Syd Solomon, Albert Stadler, Yvonne Thomas, Susan Vecsey, James Walsh, Joyce Weinstein, Frank Wimberley, Larry Zox and Edward Zutrau. The gallery has helped promote many of these artists' careers in museum shows including that of Bannard at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami (2018-19); Syd Solomon, in a traveling museum show which culminates at the John and Mable Ringling Museum in Sarasota in 2020; Stephen Pace at The McCutchan Art Center/Pace Galleries at the University of Southern Indiana (2018) and at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum (2019); and Vecsey and Mike Solomon at the Greenville County Museum of Art, South Carolina (2017 and 2019, respectively).

Collaboration has been an important aspect of the gallery. With the widened inquiries and understandings that have resulted from their ongoing discussions about the art world canon, the dealers feel a continual sense of excitement in the discoveries of artists and research still to be made.

Berry Campbell is located in the heart of the Chelsea Arts District at 530 West 24th Street, Ground Floor, New York, NY 10011. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm.

For information, please contact Christine Berry or Martha Campbell at 212.924.2178, www.berrycampbell.com, or info@berrycampbell.com.

[1] Harrison, Helen A. "49 ARTISTS CAPTURE THE ILLUSIONS AND REALITIES OF WINTER." *The New York Times*, January 3, 1982, sec. Art. <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/01/03/nyregion/art.html?searchResultPosition=8>.

[2] The main source on Fine is Kathleen L. Housley, *Tranquil Power: The Art and Life of Perle Fine* (New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 2005).

[3] Discussed in Housley, p. 157.

[4] Howard Devree, "Two Group Annuals: Abstract Round-Up," *New York Times*, March 2, 1952, p. X13.

[5] Lawrence Campbell, "Reviews and Previews," *Artnews* (December 1952), p. 43.

[6] Quoted in Housley, p. 174.

[7] Perle Fine interview conducted by Dorothy Seckler in 1968 for the Oral History Program, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

[8] A 2011 exhibition featured this series (Curated by Christine Berry), which was accompanied by a catalogue: Lisa N. Peters, *Perle Fine: The Cool Series, 1961-1963* (New York: Spanierman Modern, 2011).