

FRIEZE WEEK LOWDOWN: LONDON SHOWS TO SEE IN 2019

Tessa Moldan, *Ocula*, 20 September 2019



Betty Parsons, *No Squares* (1970). Oil on canvas. 91.4 x 127 cm. © The Betty Parsons Foundation.

Once known as the ‘den of Abstract Expressionism’, mid-century dealer Betty Parsons gained notoriety supporting the ‘four horsemen of the apocalypse’—as she referred to Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Clyfford Still—when their work was considered an affront to the traditions of painting. Born into a well-to-do New York family in 1900, Parsons was inspired at age 13 by the works of Picasso, Matisse, and Duchamp, on a visit to the New York Armory Show in 1913, triggering a lifelong passion for art. After stints in California and Paris, where she enrolled in sculpture classes at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, Parsons returned to New York, opening her gallery in 1946. Here, she championed underrepresented artists, showing works by Agnes Martin, Louise Nevelson, Thomas Sills, Jose Bernal, Roberto Matta, Kenzo Okada, and many others.

Parsons’ practice as an artist predated her career as one of New York’s most influential dealers, with potent abstraction and intimate sculptures made of jetsam and flotsam from the beach by her Long Island studio defining her output of over six decades. This exhibition at Alison Jacques Gallery is Betty Parsons’ first in London in nearly 40 years, and follows the gallery’s announcement of its representation of the Estate of Betty Parsons in 2018. The exhibition will capture her output of the 1960s and 70s, including three important wood constructions.