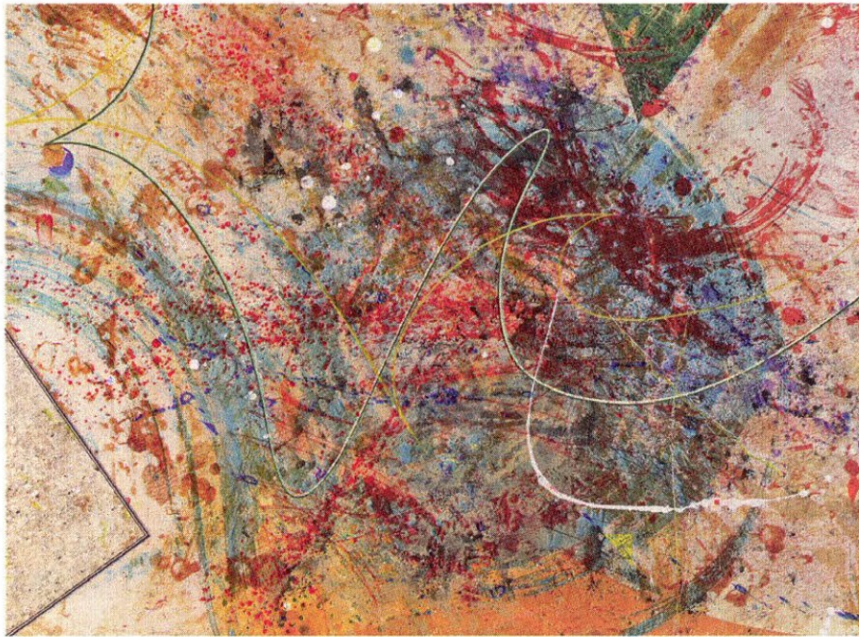


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VIA ALEXANDRE GALLERY

Pat Adams's "Our Time" (1979). A new show of her works surveys paintings from the 1970s and 1980s.

Pat Adams

Through April 16. Alexandre, 291 Grand Street, Manhattan. 212-755-2828; alexandregallery.com.

Pat Adams is something like the Jan van Eyck of postwar American abstraction. Her paintings have a fineness and excess of detail — and therefore of meticulous technique — that astound the eye. Thin precise lines of two or more colors — which imply a three-hair brush — bound, spiral or loop through fields of paint splatters and smears and geometric detritus. The resulting pictorial space is complicated and suggestive: simultaneously cartographical, microscopic and celestial. A recurring motif, as seen in "Out Come Out" (1980) or "On the Table" (1979), is a jutting plane intruding from an edge, its surface emphasized by the addition of mica, sand or broken eggshell.

The effect is jarring, at once physical and cosmic.

Born in California in 1928 and schooled in art at the University of California, Berkeley, in the 1940s, Adams came East in 1950, and exhibited until 2008 with Zabriskie Gallery in Manhattan. Her current exhibition — her first in New York since then — surveys paintings from the 1970s and '80s. It presents the visual and philosophical richness of a style long at odds with so many first principles of New York painting in decades past: flatness, simplicity and straightforward process. Those decades are now over, making it easier to see Adams's work as an inspiring depiction of diversity and unpredictability — vital to life as much as to art. Surprisingly her canvases are not yet represented in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art or the Metropolitan Museum. Just saying.

ROBERTA SMITH