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Pat Adams: Works from the 1970s and 80s
March 14 through April 25, 2020



Pat Adams, *Out Come Out*, 1980, oil, isobutyl methacrylate, pastel, mica, eggshell and sand on linen, 80 x 80 inches.

The gallery is pleased to present its first exhibition of Pat Adams's paintings and drawings, *Works from the 1970s and 80s*. This show includes sixteen works on paper, six major paintings and marks the first major New York presentation of Adams's work since 2008 and the close of her longtime former dealer's gallery, Zabriskie. In 2017 Adams's work was the subject of a career retrospective at the Bennington Museum in Vermont.

Over decades Pat Adams (American, b. 1928) has developed a complex abstract visual vocabulary to explore metaphysical ideas in both her large-scale paintings and intimate works on paper. Adams's worldview, combined with an intense focus on visuality and an awareness of the psychology of perception—how we see, feel, and comprehend the world—has its origins during her childhood in California and was solidified in her years of study at the University of California, Berkeley. In addition to art, Adams studied anthropology, paleontology, psychology, and physics, which impressed her both on the complexity of the phenomenal world, and the significance of primary, intrinsic constructs in how we perceive and comprehend that world. After graduating Berkley in 1949, Adams moved to New York, where she began to study the painting of Kandinsky and Mondrian at the Guggenheim and the works of Jackson Pollock at the Museum of Modern Art. She attended classes at the Brooklyn Museum Art School where she studied with Max Beckmann, John Ferren and Reuben Tam.

Since the mid-fifties, Adams has explored a core vocabulary of abstract geometric forms that have been embedded in undefined fields of glistening colors. Her imagery often includes circles, curves, lines, arabesques, squares, and variations of spherical shapes. She often enhances the material quality of her paintings by mixing sand, mica, eggshells and other natural materials into her pigments, creating both deep and shallow spaces; mysterious transparency and physicality. Adams has developed her own

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language and system of poetics that has been revealed in her titles and writings to describe qualities in her work: “quiddity or whatness, riches, the once again begin again, towardness, involuntary affect, slowing, apperency, delayed closure, autogenous bursts, and the ‘not-as-yet.’”

This system of poetics has been described by artist and critic Mario Naves as “verbs.” He writes:

The metaphysical underpinnings of these dense and delicate pictures divulge themselves gradually. Adams illuminates what are often abstruse avenues of philosophical thought, yet doesn't put a fine point on them. Her pictures are particular as they are elusive, and she thrives on paradox.

While Adam's paintings often have an immediate, even visceral impact on the viewer, their great strength may rest in their ability to draw viewers in and keep them visually, mentally, and emotionally engaged over long periods of looking, thinking and feeling. Her work has a unique core that confront the viewer, asking to give their exclusive attention to what is before their eyes, so that they focus more on the painting and not on the search for outside references. Her works ask the viewer to observe what happens when a wire-thin line journeys into an undefined field, or when jolts of color move in a parabolic trajectory across the canvas.

The critic Lance Esplund has said of Adams's work:

One of the most startling things about Ms. Adams's works is that their flat surfaces, as active, various and sometimes seemingly chaotic as they are, still maintain clockwork precision and clarity. It's as if we were seeing the stages of growth or the steps of transformation, each accompanied by its gaseous residue or shed skin.

On the works featured in our current show, John Yau writes:

The overlapping transparent and semi-transparent layers, the multitude of abstract vocabularies engaging with each other in various ways, become an invitation to immerse oneself in the many different pleasures and possibilities that her paintings bring together. On every scale, Adams's work invites a slow contemplative engagement, which runs counter to the quick visual consumption of a signature image or motif, which has become a commonplace experience in today's art world.

Adams's drawings and paintings have been the subject of more than thirty one-person shows in New York since the mid-1950s. Since the early 1960s Adams has lived in Vermont, where she enjoyed a long teaching career at Bennington College. She lives in an historic Victorian home with lush gardens, a pond, surrounded by the Green Mountains. The environment is graceful and includes a rich blend of colors, textures and shapes – as those integrated in her work. However, Adams has said that her long-time surroundings are only but one aspect of her work. While a place enhances, it does not ultimately inform the subject of her painting. It provides the solitude required to reflect on herself, disengage from the mainstream and view from a distance the issues that occupy the world.

For further information please contact the gallery at 212-755-2828 or at inquiries@alexandregallery.com