HILLARY
REDER
x 1231

This is one of several large horizontal paintings that Krasner made in the 1960s, late in her career, when she would often use her whole body to apply broad, sweeping strokes of paint to the canvas. Titled after the ancient Greek goddess of the earth, *Gaea* is composed of floral colors and organic, somersaulting shapes that reflect the artist's abiding fascination with the natural world and its primeval origins. Krasner reinvented her artistic style several times over the course of her career, struggling to pursue an artistic identity separate from her role as wife (or, after 1956, widow) and relentless champion of her husband, Jackson Pollock.

A poet and longtime resident of Greenwich Village, where her neighbors included many artists and writers associated with the New York School, Ryan began painting at the age of forty-nine. Ten years later, in 1948, an exhibition of work by the German artist Kurt Schwitters inspired Ryan to adopt the medium of collage. Deeply attuned to subtleties in color, texture, and pattern, Ryan achieved rich variation in these small-scale works made from paper, cloth, and found materials such as string, foil, and sandpaper. The all-over compositions and linear movements of the woven, often frayed papers and fabrics evoke the gestural energy of Abstract Expressionism.

Valuing geometric simplicity and economy of means, Bo Bardi designed the Poltrona Bowl Chair with a steel frame and a stackable seat containing two circular cushions. The shell on the metal ring can be adjusted in all directions to suit the desired position of the sitter.
Bo Bardi, who emigrated from Italy to Brazil in 1946, played a lead role in advancing modernist architecture and design in postwar Brazil. Among the landmark buildings she designed was her São Paulo home, the Glass House (Casa de Vidro, 1951), which she furnished with Poltrona Bowl Chairs.

Made while Truitt was living in Japan, these drawings achieve a delicate balance between the tight precision of their vertical stripes and the soft texture of the Sumi ink, traditionally used in East Asian calligraphy.

In the mid-1960s, Schendel produced a series of three-dimensional works made of knotted rice paper she had intertwined by hand. She thought of them as ephemeral sculptures—not meant to last—and called them *Droguinhas* (literally "little drugs"), a Brazilian slang expression that means "nothing" or indicates something worthless. Schendel, one of the major figures of postwar Brazilian art, was also a trained philosopher and poet. She used her art to address existential questions and to subvert the traditional hierarchies between artistic mediums.

In this drawing, Chase-Riboud weaves tendrilous lines and atmospheric shading into an intricate net of lights and darks. In its reconciliation of these seemingly opposite qualities, this work echoes the dynamic materiality of her large-scale sculptures, which combine such diverse materials as silk and metal. She has also incorporated fiber elements into her sculptures, spurred on by a suggestion from Sheila Hicks, who was Chase-Riboud's classmate at Yale University, and whose work is on view nearby.

Asawa created this work by looping wire with a dowel, a process she likened to “drawing in space.” Transparent and not freestanding, Asawa’s wire constructions subvert traditional notions of sculpture to such an extent that when she first showed one in 1950, its status as sculpture was questioned. Reviewers also denigrated her work in gendered terms, calling it decorative and domestic. Such distinctions meant little to Asawa. She began her art education at an internment camp where people of Japanese descent were relocated following the attack on Pearl Harbor and later attended the experimental art school Black Mountain College, which encouraged students to mine the possibilities of their chosen material, rather than adhering to the orthodoxies of a given medium.

This is one of the first works Szapocznikow made using polyurethane, a versatile industrial material that was first produced in the 1960s. She cast a friend's belly in soft polyurethane foam, planning to create over one hundred copies to be sold as sofa cushions. Seen in isolation from the rest of the body, and multiplied five times, the form here becomes abstract, taking on an uncanny quality that belies its utilitarian purpose. For Szapocznikow, a Jewish Holocaust survivor, casting from bodies was a means to process her present circumstances and past traumas, "to preserve the fleeting moments of my life . . . its paradoxes and complete absurdity."

After studying at the Art Students League in New York and also in Paris, Bursztyn emerged as one of the pioneers of the avant-garde in Colombia in the 1960s. In 1967–68 she made her first kinetic artworks, a series of steel constructions called Hysterics (*Histéricas)* created by welding long, thin ribbons of scrap metal into erratically circular, spring-like configurations. Attached to motors, they vibrate noisily, even aggressively. Examples like the one here, with its implicit reference to human movement and feminine self-awareness, combine visceral toughness with poetic sensitivity and a sly, irreverent humor.

For this presentation, the artwork's motor is controlled by a timer that turns on for one minute every ten minutes.

Frankenthaler described this painting as part of a series "involved in inner amorphous worlds or depths exploding on the surface and in perspective, and held at points by local blocks of paint." To create this illusion of depth, Frankenthaler thinned her pigments with turpentine so that they would soak directly into the canvas and stain it. She rarely used the color black, but here her technique of stain-painting enables it, in the artist's words, to "act as a color shape, not as black line or 'stable binder.'"

Although it shares a name with the biblical tale of Jacob's dreamed ascent toward heaven, this work, Frankenthaler insisted, had no illustrational intention: "The picture developed (bit by bit while I was working on it) into shapes symbolic of an exuberant figure and ladder, therefore *Jacob's Ladder*." Inspired by Jackson Pollock in her "experiments with line not as line but as shape," Frankenthaler took his iconic drip technique a step further, thinning her pigments so that they would soak into the unprimed canvas she had laid on the floor. Her technique was instrumental to the development of 1960s Color Field painting.

In *Ladybug*, Mitchell abuts pure colors with colors that mix on the canvas, dense paint with liquid drips, flatness with relief. White patches of pigment aerate the energized fields of color. Although Mitchell was considered one of the principal figures of the second generation of Abstract Expressionists that emerged in the mid-1950s, she also challenged the conventional wisdom of the New York School. While her paintings are abstract, their starting point was nature, which she set out not to describe but "to paint what it leaves me with."

To create this sculpture, Nevelson stacked boxes against a wall and filled each compartment with found wooden scraps including moldings, dowels, spindles, and furniture parts. She then covered the entire assemblage with black paint, both unifying the composition and obscuring the individual objects. She once explained her fascination with the color black: “It wasn’t a negation of color. It was an acceptance. Because black encompasses all colors.” The towering geometric construction plays with flatness and recession, straight lines and curves, overlaps and vacancies.

Abakanowicz's massive fiber works fuse weaving with sculpture and installation. While the abstract form of *Yellow Abakan* is determined by the drape of the coarsely woven sisal, an industrial plant fiber used to make rope, the scarred seams and anatomical appendages lend the work a disquieting figural presence. Abakanowicz and many artists of the Eastern Bloc were drawn to craft and textile traditions because they were expressive mediums less regulated by Soviet censorship.

Of the genesis of her sculptural textiles, Hicks said, “I became absorbed into the story of what is a tapestry, what is not a tapestry, what is the new tapestry, what is a tapestry that leaves the wall and jumps into space.” The vertical display of *Prayer Rug* upends the notion of the rug as a textile trodden underfoot, and the dangling, voluminous tassels highlight the tactile quality of the wool fibers. Hicks—who studied with Josef and Anni Albers at Yale, and later drew inspiration from fiber-working techniques she encountered during her travels throughout Latin America, North Africa, and India—makes work that bridges art, architecture, design, and craft. Her architectural sensibility extends to the many large-scale soft fiber pieces she developed for modernist corporate office buildings and public spaces, which provide a foil to the severity of these environments.

The free-hanging display of *Little River* emphasizes its dimensionality and highlights the contrast between solid and void in its construction. Tawney achieved this effect through her use of the open-warp technique, influenced in part by her study of complex pre-Columbian Peruvian textiles. *Little River* was included in *Wall Hangings*, a 1969 MoMA exhibition showcasing the work of preeminent contemporary fiber artists, among them Magdalena Abakanowicz, Anni Albers, and Sheila Hicks, whose works are also on view in this gallery.

A self-taught artist, Sobel invented her own painting process. According to her son, “she would prepare a ground, which would invariably suggest or trigger some ‘idea’ for her, whose sudden conception was matched by an equally rapid execution. In her efforts to pin down her conception she would pour the paint, tip the canvas, and blow the wet lacquer.” In this painting she achieved a jewel-like, marbled surface by using fast-drying enamel paint. Her automatic technique has been likened to that of the Surrealists. She responded, “I only paint what I feel.”

Like many artists in this exhibition, Rama gained acclaim only late in her career. A self-taught artist, today she is celebrated for her biographically inflected work, which mines themes of poverty, trauma, and female sexuality. This work is part of a series known as Bricolages, in which she covered abstract, stain-like grounds with found and often fetishistic objects, including eyelashes, teeth, syringes, or, in this case, plastic doll eyes. In earlier years, Rama focused on erotic representations of women, but after she was censored for obscenity in fascist Italy in 1945, she moved away from figuration and entered what she called the "abstract war."

Current's hand-painted lines appear to vibrate and give the illusion of three-dimensional depth. Relying on her own observations of how perception can arouse certain physiological sensations, Riley sought to create a "disturbance" in her early paintings—which, like this one, were primarily black and white—in order to activate "the space between the picture plane and the spectator." *Current* was included in *The Responsive Eye*, the 1965 MoMA exhibition that helped to define a new style known as Op art, which exploited the optical effects of patterned abstractions and contrasting colors.

Encounter's totem-like forms exemplify the push and pull between abstraction and evocations of nature, memory, or myth in Dehner's work. The interplay of positive and negative space reflects her emphasis on sculptural contours rather than mass. Before the 1950s, Dehner's art took a back seat to that of her husband, the sculptor David Smith. She did not make three-dimensional works until 1952, two years after they divorced. Of her early sculptures, including *Encounter*—which she made by pouring molten bronze into wax molds, an ancient technique known as the lost-wax process—Dehner explained, "I was never taught sculpture at all. . . . I didn't need it. The minute I had [the wax] in my hands, I knew what to do."

Wrapping and coiling became signature techniques for Hesse after she worked for a year in an abandoned German textile factory, surrounded by discarded materials such as cord and electrical tubing. Hung from the wall by a drooping elastic cord, the oblong sausage-like shape was made with papier-mâché, painted, and wrapped with string. In contrast to the Minimalist artists who were her friends and peers, Hesse sought to cultivate organic qualities, a tactile sensibility, and bodily associations in her sculpture.

Orange comprises nine identical geometric modules configured to show various possibilities of their rotation. In its use of repetitive, activated geometry, *Orange* exemplifies the Concrete art created by the Rio de Janeiro–based avant-garde group known as Grupo Frente, which also included artists Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica.

To make this work, Herrera painted vertical bands of black and white at varying lengths and with diagonal breaks that create a two-tone zigzag pattern. She extended her pattern to the face and sides of the frame, giving the object a sense of dynamic totality. “I began a lifelong process of purification, a process of taking away what isn’t essential,” she explained. Although active in Paris and New York from the late 1940s on, she did not sell a painting until 2004, at the age of eighty-nine. She has recalled that one dealer bluntly told her, “You can paint circles around the male artists that I have, but I’m not going to give you a show because you’re a woman.”

Of the genesis of her paintings, Martin said, "When I first made a grid I happened to be thinking of the innocence of trees and then this grid came into my mind and I thought it represented innocence, and I still do, and so I painted it and then I was satisfied. I thought, this is my vision." Martin rendered fine vertical lines and lightly shaded horizontal bands in oil and pencil, softening the geometric grid, which in this case seems to expand beyond the confines of the canvas. For Martin the grid evoked not a human measure but an ethereal one—the boundless order or transcendent reality associated with Eastern philosophies.

In this work, glowing orbs filled with frenzied strokes of color are connected by an imperfect grid of sinuous lines. These elements are reminiscent of the two hundred blinking light bulbs and tubes covered with colorful paint connected by a trail of wires that the artist used in her performance *Electric Dress*, also produced in 1956. Tanaka was a member of Gutai, a group of Japanese artists active between 1954 and 1972 who aimed to bring materials together with the human spirit in their performative works.

Dissolving planes into lines and treating lines as shapes in space, this sculpture explores, in the artist's words, "the transparency of volume." The sculpture depends on the viewer moving around it to generate the visual effect of vibration where the lines intersect. Having fled Germany at the beginning of World War II for Venezuela, Gego became a leading proponent of geometric abstraction in her adopted country, where she worked across painting, printmaking, and drawing, in addition to sculpture, to explore line on its own terms.

Inspired by the principles of function and utility advocated at the Bauhaus, where she had served as acting director of the weaving workshop until 1933, when the Nazis closed the school, Albers created textiles that could organize architectural space and connect users with their environments. After immigrating to the United States, Albers and her husband, Josef Albers, taught at Black Mountain College, where they both exerted a profound influence on a new generation of young artists. To make her room dividers, she used unconventional materials, such as cellophane and horsehair,in a dynamic combination of soft and coarse elementsthat allow light and air to move through them.

Benglis used pigmented beeswax to make *Embryo II*, one of a series of lozenge-shaped works from the mid-1960s that she scaled to the length of her arm. She brushed hot beeswax in upward strokes on the object's top half, and in downward strokes on the bottom. As it cooled, the wax formed a craggy topography, which Benglis amplified with a blowtorch. Reacting against what she viewed as the austerity of Minimalism, she embraced unusual materials, gaudy color, and bodily references. She also breathed new life into the dripping and pouring that had been associated with Abstract Expressionism, which in Benglis's hands became witty and subversive rather than emotionally cathartic.

This painting consists of a trio of geometric shapes in primary colors dancing around a kinked, spiraling black line—an animated constellation that seems to move forward and backward through the picture plane. One of the leading abstractionists in Montevideo, Freire created paintings with flat, slick surfaces at a time when a more expressionistic, figurative style held sway there. She made *Untitled* the year after she participated in the second Bienal de São Paulo, where she encountered Brazilian geometric abstraction as well as European paintings by artists such as Piet Mondrian, both of which were generative in her pursuit of an abstract vocabulary.

Taking canvas from conveyor belts discarded by a laundry below her East Village apartment, Bontecou stretched pieces of the fabric across a steel armature and fastened them to the metal with wire. Expanding out from the wall in an unusual construction that contains a prominent void at the center, *Untitled* straddles the boundaries between painting and sculpture, mechanical and organic, inviting and threatening. Bontecou created this sculpture in a year marked by intense anxiety: the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba failed, the United States committed its first troops to Vietnam, and the construction of the Berlin Wall began. In a rare statement, she wrote, “My concern is to build things that express our relation to this country—to other countries—to this world—to other worlds to glimpse some of the fear, hope, ugliness, beauty and mystery that exists in us all and which hangs over all the young people today.”

Kolářová began experimenting with cameraless photography in 1961, creating “artificial negatives” by pressing small domestic and natural objects into sheets of soft wax and then exposing the impressions to photographic paper under shifting light. Captivated by the ability of light to record the materiality of these objects, Kolářová made increasingly abstract work, which culminated in these concentric light images.
In the mid-1960s, Kolářová moved away from photography to make assemblages such as *Five by Four*, at right, in which she similarly used modern utilitarian objects.

Flickering with the glint of metal paper fasteners against a sapphire ground, *Five by Four* is one of several meditative grid assemblages Kolářová made in the mid-1960s. Through her use of ordinary domestic materials, she inserted a feminine vocabulary into the nascent conceptual art scene in Prague, where the home she shared with her partner, the artist and poet Jiří Kolář, became the center of a progressive artistic and intellectual community. The couple was affiliated with the *Křižovatka* (Crossroads) art movement in Prague, which, in opposition to Soviet-sanctioned Socialist Realism, oriented itself toward the international avant-garde and its strategies of abstraction.

This painting is from a series titled Roads, in which Sterne used spray acrylic to suggest the motion and speed of the New York highways that captivated her throughout the 1950s. Sterne had immigrated to New York in 1941, fleeing Nazi roundups in her native Bucharest. Nine years later, she was named one of America's best artists under thirty-six in *Life* magazine, a rare accolade for a woman at the time.

Like almost every member of São Paulo's famed Foto Cine Clube Bandeirante (FCCB), Altschul was an amateur, meaning she pursued photographic activity without any professional affiliation or ambition. She began attending workshops with the FCCB in the late 1940s and became a member in 1952. There are no written records of her creative intent, leaving only the visual evidence of her achievement: experimentations with process and form, and inventive compositions discovered within everyday life. These large-scale prints were made for the active circuit of contemporary salons and exhibitions that traveled throughout Brazil and internationally in this period.

In 1951, in a letter to Edward Steichen, then director of the Department of Photography at MoMA, the photographer Carlotta Corpron wrote, “I arrived at pure abstraction in photography through taking hundreds of photographs, realistic and experimental.” Corpron was one of twelve women featured in the MoMA exhibition *Abstraction in Photography* in 1951, along with Lotte Jacobi and Barbara Morgan. Jacobi and Naomi Savage were also included in MoMA’s 1960 show *The Sense of Abstraction*. Following World War II, it was a matter of ongoing debate whether photography’s capacity for representation carried with it a responsibility for humanist engagement, and whether abstraction should remain in the realm of painting. These exhibitions challenged such notions, suggesting a vital relationship between abstraction in painting and photography.

In this painting inspired by the Shinnecock Canal, which runs through the South Fork of Long Island, Hartigan transforms landscape into a dynamic interplay of colliding colors and forceful gestures. “I want an art that is not ‘abstract’ and not ‘realistic,’” she said. Hartigan was the only woman included in *New American Painting*, an exhibition organized by MoMA that traveled throughout Europe from 1956 to 1958 and helped to establish Abstract Expressionism as a dominant international style. In an attempt to circumvent the prejudice against women artists in the 1950s, she exhibited briefly under the name George Hartigan.

The Quartered One is from a series of sculptures that Bourgeois characterized as "lairs." The lair had contradictory implications for the artist, who said, "[It] is for seclusion and rest. But the security of the lair can also be a trap." Hanging like a pendulum, with hollowed-out appendages that can be peered into and a spine-like track on its back, the sculpture suggests both a large nest and some kind of animal or carcass. By the time she made this sculpture, Bourgeois had been working for two decades, but her art had received scant critical attention. Beginning in the mid-1960s, however, a younger generation of artists and critics embraced her work for the way it mined psychological and subjective states.

With its overlapping loops and circles, *Desert Flower* suggests a bird's eye view of one of the transparent wire sculptures that Asawa had begun making in the 1950s, such as the example on view in this gallery. It is one of fifty-four lithographs that Asawa made at Tamarind Lithography Workshop in 1964–65. Tamarind, founded in Los Angeles in 1960 by the artist June Wayne, was instrumental in bringing about a renaissance of printmaking in the United States. Among the many artists Wayne invited to make prints at Tamarind in the 1960s were an unusually high number of women, including Asawa, as well as Anni Albers, Gego, Eleanore Mikus, Louise Nevelson, and Hedda Sterne, whose works are also on view in this exhibiton.

Throughout the 1960s, Baer made dramatically spare paintings, based on permutations of the same formal elements that characterize *Primary Light Group: Red, Green, Blue*. Trained in physiological psychology and interested in optical phenomena, Baer has described the perceptual dynamics at play in these compositions: "I paint a black band which does not recede, a color band which does not obtrude, a white square or rectangles which does not move back or forth. . . . There is also a painted white exterior frame band. There is no hierarchy. There is no ambiguity. There is no illusion."

Natzler and Rie were pioneering potters who began their careers in Vienna before World War II; both emigrated in the late 1930s because of their Jewish descent—Natzler to Los Angeles and Rie to London. Natzler, who worked with her husband, Otto, threw the pots while he glazed them, a reversal of the traditional division of labor in which women oversaw surface decoration. His experimental glazes complemented her sensitively proportioned forms. Rie's delicate vessels are remarkable for their angular bodies and textured surfaces animated by fine scratches. In keeping wtith modernist principles of design, both artists privileged function and form over ornament.

Attracted to the social freedom and teeming postwar art scene in the United States, Kusama left Japan and moved to New York City in 1958. Soon thereafter, she began producing her Infinity Nets series of paintings, including *No. F.*, in which she played with the notion of infinite repetition and infinite space. While the expansive white of her canvas presaged the monochromes of the Minimalists, her use of thick, intricately webbed impasto hints at something more personal and obsessive. In fact, her nets can be seen as a material form of the patterns that Kusama experiences in hallucinations, a condition that has afflicted her since childhood.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, more women began to have access to professional training in the fine arts. They were often steered toward craft disciplines such as textile design, weaving, and pottery, historically considered feminine pursuits. This primed them for careers in textile manufacturing at a time when most sectors of industrial design remained closed to women. After World War II—when there was a boom in printed textile design, spurred on by the end of restrictions on dyes, advances in industrial-scale printing techniques, and the introduction of synthetic materials such as rayon—women designers took a lead role in this field. Among them were Lucienne Day and Vera, whose designs are on view here. Characterized by bright colors, bold patterns, and innovative textures, textiles such as these played a key role in integrating abstraction and modernist design into daily life.