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Art and Architecture presents new exhibit focusing on female abstract artists

Bailey Fritz, Staff Writer Nov 15, 2018 Updated Nov 18, 2018

The Ewing Gallery is celebrating female abstract artists in its new exhibition *Blurring Boundaries: The Women of AAA from 1936 – Present and Mutual Muses*.

The primary exhibition, *Blurring Boundaries*, curated by alumni Rebecca DiGiovanna, displays 54 works from female artists who are members of the American Abstract Artists (AAA). The AAA was founded in 1936 in New York and remains one of the longest lasting artist organizations in the world.

Included in the exhibition are works by historic members Perle Fine, Esphyr Slobodkina, Charmion von Wiegand, Irene Rice Pereira, Alice Trumbull Mason and Gertrude Greene, as well as works by current members such as Ce Roser, Irene Rousseau, Judith Murray, Alice Adams, Merrill Wagner and Katinka Mann. It explores the stylistic variations to principles of abstraction: color, space, light, material and process.

Mutual Muses is a two-person group show, with husband and wife James C. Wright and Mimi Gerard from Mississippi. They are both also members of AAA; Gerard is a choreographer and dancer, while Wright produces electronic sculptures. Gerard's choreographs for video dances can be observed in the Ewing Gallery. She also produces the costumes, produces music, edits, and does collaborative works with her husband.

The gallery contains a variety of art, ranging from painting, video, collage, drawing, and more.

“This organization started back in a time when abstract art wasn’t really in favor, it was more abstract figurative work, so these people had to fight to get representation so they banded together. It was also one of the first groups to recognize female artists, looking back in a time where unfortunately women weren’t really respected in the arts,” Eric Cagley, exhibition coordinator at Ewing Gallery, said.

“It’s abstract art, but if you start looking at work through the show, you’ll see common themes like line, color, even just paint applications.”

Although AAA contains both male and female members, the exhibition focuses specifically on the works of female artists.

“It is art; there is nothing inherently feminine about the work, you can’t tell, which I think is important to note,” Sarah McFalls, Ewing Gallery staff member, said. “I think this show is nice to display the history of involvement in the show, like a number of other members like Jackson Pollock’s wife, Lee Krasner, who is a member of AAA. We are showing women’s works from 1947 and on.”

Vera Vasek, an abstract artist from the Florida keys, has a piece that is currently on display at *Blurring Boundaries*.

“I don’t think anyone who makes art knows exactly what they are going to end up with when they make art, it is sort of a blind faith that you have where you have to begin somewhere,” Vasek said. “Just let it go where it goes. I use chance as my guiding force for my art as well, and it always helps me to learn more about myself. In any type of art, you have to go with your gut instincts.”

Ewing Gallery in the Art and Architecture building on campus shows new exhibitions every month; this one will be replaced on December 13th. All shows are free to the public, there is a different show every time, and it is not always exclusively student art; a large amount of the art comes from places all over the world, like Holland, New York, and many others. There are three locations: downtown Knoxville, Gallery 1010, and Ewing Gallery.

“This is a really big show with a little bit of everything,” Cagley said. “I think anyone could come in and find something that they would enjoy.”

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