

HOLLIS TAGGART

Hollis Taggart to Open Show of Audrey Flack's Early Abstract Expressionist Works, Including Never Before Seen Works on Paper

On View May 26 – June 24, 2022

New York—May 17, 2022—From May 26 to June 24, Hollis Taggart will present *Audrey Flack: Force of Nature*, a selection of Abstract Expressionist works, including early never-before-seen works on paper, by the renowned artist. Opening just three days before Flack's 91st birthday, the exhibition is her first Abstract Expressionist show at Hollis Taggart since the 2015 *Audrey Flack: The Abstract Expressionist Years*, which provided an expansive overview of her paintings from the 1950s and 1960s. The forthcoming exhibition provides further insight into the development of her early practice, freshly revealing works from the late 1940s and into the early 1950s. The gallery has long championed Flack's work, bringing critical attention to the depth and range of her artistic practice and her significant contributions to both the Abstract Expressionist and Photorealism movements.

On May 26, from 5 to 8 pm, the press and public are invited to celebrate Flack's 91st birthday and the opening of the exhibition. This will be a unique opportunity to connect with the artist, an Abstract Expressionist luminary, and experience these early works with her. The 1940s works were pivotal to setting Flack on an artistic trajectory that led to success within the Abstract Expressionist movement, a movement in which she was one of the numerous women who have still not garnered the depth of critical attention they deserve.

The never-before-seen trove of works on paper in *Audrey Flack: Force of Nature*, named for the abstract forest series and landscape themes featured in the exhibition, dates from 1948 to 1954 were recently rediscovered in her studio as part of an archival and cataloging process. The works span the time immediately after her graduation from the High School of Music and Arts in Harlem into her tenure at New York City's Cooper Union and later to her studies under Josef Albers at Yale, a transitional period where she developed her artistic voice and became fully immersed in the Abstract Expressionist movement.

Some of the earliest works featured are three paintings dated to the late 1940s. Even as she was painting nature, she took inspiration from the urban landscape of her native New York City and rendered the scene in bright oranges, blues, and greens. After, during her time at Cooper Union, she was influenced by German Expressionist Ludwig Kirchner, Fauve Henri Matisse, nineteenth-century German Romantic landscapist Caspar David Friedrich, and Piet Mondrian's landscapes, as well as her friendships with Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning. After being recruited to Yale in 1950 under Josef Albers when he left Black Mountain College, her work moved away from the noticeably natural into more purely abstract and geometric forms. By 1954 she began experimenting with the bright, rich colors that would pave the way to her Photorealist work for which she is critically acclaimed, showing her skill at layering the quick-drying vibrant colors.

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Flack never saw her watercolors as a study or preparation for oil paintings but a finished work all their own, according to author and historian Samantha Baskind, whose essay anchors the accompanying exhibition catalogue. The watercolors show her intuitive engagement with abstraction, essential to understanding the full trajectory of her career into Photorealism, figurative sculpture, and Post Pop Baroque. Flack's work can be found in the collections of museums like the Museum of Modern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, and the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Her work is shown in current exhibitions including *Carlo Crivelli: Shadows on the Sky* at Ikon Gallery in Birmingham, England, and *Fruit Soup: Contemporary Vanitas by Audrey Flack and Gracelee Lawrence* at the University of Albany Museum of Art and was included in the 2021 exhibition *On the Basis of Art: 150 Years of Women at Yale*. Flack is working on a memoir, titled *With Darkness come Stars*, due out in 2023 from Pennsylvania State University Press.

“That we get to celebrate the opening just three days before Audrey’s 91st birthday is a special treat. This is an incredible opportunity to connect with these early Abstract Expressionist works, some that have never been seen before, and reexamine this interesting moment in Audrey’s incredible, multifaceted career. During our more than 40-year history as a gallery, we have championed women artists and we continue to be inspired and excited by Audrey’s incredible work, past and present. We are delighted to share this show and continue to bring attention to her practice,” said Hollis Taggart.

About Hollis Taggart

Founded in 1979, Hollis Taggart presents significant works of American art, showcasing the trajectory of American art movements from the Hudson River School to American Modernism and the Post-War and Contemporary eras. Its program is characterized by a deep commitment to scholarship and bringing to the fore the work of under-recognized artists. The gallery has sponsored several catalogue raisonné projects, most recently for the American Surrealist artist Kay Sage, and has been instrumental in advancing knowledge of such artists as Alfred Maurer, Arthur B. Carles, and more recently, Theodoros Stamos, Marjorie Strider, and Michael (Corinne) West. In the summer of 2019, the gallery announced the formal expansion of its primary market business and focus on the presentation of contemporary work. It continues to expand its roster of contemporary artists, focusing on emerging and mid-career talents. With more than 40 years of experience, Hollis Taggart is widely recognized by collectors and curators for its leadership, expertise, and openness, on matters of art history, and market trends and opportunities. The gallery’s flagship location is in Chelsea, and it also operates a space in Southport, Connecticut.

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