

# Art & ANTIQUES

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CUBISM | NORA STURGES | FLEMISH MASTERWORKS | MATTHEW WONG

ALEX KATZ

# Devoted Friends

ON OCTOBER 13, Hollis Taggart in New York City opened the exhibition “Kinship: Dusti Bongé and Betty Parsons” that is the first to chronicle the friendship and careers of artist Dusti Bongé and artist and gallerist Betty Parsons. It also marked the opening of the expansion to the gallery’s flagship Chelsea location, with this show occupying both floors.

Bongé’s 35 works on view will cover the full arc of her artistic journey including modernism, surrealism and abstract expressionism periods and works on paper. Parsons is represented by 15 works that were mostly gifts to Bongé and have never been seen before. As the gallery shares, “The exhibition captures the significance of network and relationship building among women within the art ecosystem at midcentury, with Parsons leveraging her own success as a gallerist to

bring forward Bongé’s innovative vision and work.”

In the late 1930s, Bongé experimented with cubism and that transitioned into her decadelong fascination with surrealism that was “influenced by the absurdity of the circus.” This is directly referenced in



the 1945 work *Circus Series* that features black-and-white and red-and-white stripes swirling and moving together in different shapes. Other works from that period, like the 1944 *Sunflowers*, have more realistic



elements with a mountain range in the background and the sunflowers bending toward the light.

Bongé transitioned to more abstract works over time and was fully absorbed in abstract expressionism by 1955 with colors inspired by her home in the Gulf Coast. These works were the core of presentations at Parsons’ gallery. They have the same spirit and energy as the surrealistic works, as seen in *Magic Promised (No. 9-12)*, from 1955, which has swirls of color surrounding a dark central more linear shape.

Parsons was a leader of surrealism and abstract expressionism at her gallery by championing many women artists of the time as well as showing the

works of luminaries including Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, Agnes Martin and Robert Rauschenberg. Often overshadowed by her role as a gallerist, Parsons was an artist who closed the gallery in summers to focus on painting and sculpting. Her pieces, like the painted wood sculpture *Look Up* (1980) and the *Untitled* circa 1960 painting with a primarily orange-hued background, show she was an astute colorist with an effortless style.

Along with artwork, the show will include archival material, such as vacation photographs of the pair, and there will be a catalogue with an essay by curator Gwen Chanzit.



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