

ALEXANDRE

Pat Adams



Pat Adams: Works from the 1950s and '60s
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Alexandre
25 East 73rd Street, New York 10021

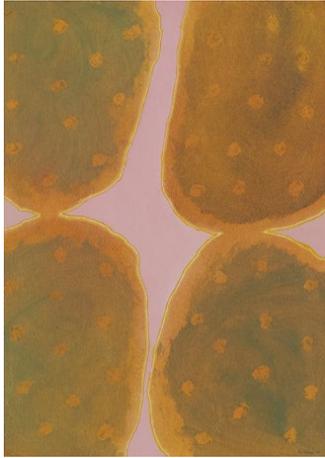
New York . . . Alexandre Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of works by Pat Adams executed in the 1950s and '60s—Adams's third exhibition with the gallery. A pivotal period in Adams's career, these two decades are marked by the birth of the artist's distinct visual language of "ur forms"—squares, circles, triangles, and S curves—which are essential to Adams's ongoing quest to seek out the "beginnings of things," an idea that continues to capture her fascination to this day.

In the vibrant landscape of 1950s and '60s New York, Adams—a California transplant to the city—charted her own course amidst the dominance of Abstract Expressionism, which oversaturated the New York art scene at the time. While there are "inescapable affinities with Abstract Expressionism in her paintings of the 1950s, perceivable in the looseness of touch, the shifting and overlapping of color areas, and the concept of the painting surface as a field of action," shared Martica Sawin in *Arts Magazine*, 1976, there are also "crystallizations of shape, bubbly concentric circles...and an imagery more visibly rooted in natural sources, suggestive of pebbles seen under water or cross-sections of geodes. These forms begin to cluster and drift, to differentiate themselves from the surrounding terrain."

It was also during this time that Adams took a profoundly impactful journey through Italy, France, England, and Spain in 1951–52, where she first encountered Hieronymous Bosch's *Earthly Delights*, paintings by J.M.W. Turner, Cosmati mosaic pavements, and the illuminated manuscripts of the *Book of Kells* and the *Lindisfarne Gospels*. Set down a path exploring formal emphasis and spiritual charge, Adams created paintings that were small in scale, yet intricately detailed and rendered with an evocative approach to mark making over the next two decades.

Le Midi (1956), *Paradigm* (1957), and *Norfolk - August 9* (1957) reflect Adams's exposure at the time to illuminated manuscripts, with their meticulous attention to detail in the interlacing multitude of circles within circles. *Gyres II* (1957) serves as an anthology of sorts of Adams's visual language, with soft, undulating fields of color, shapes, and brushstrokes giving way to precise stippling and carefully-drawn lines and edges. Her later works *Green Run Around Red* and *Morning Entrance*, both from 1969, are exemplary of her work of the second half of the 1960s, when she worked on a larger scale, placing lines and hard-edged forms in unexpected juxtapositions amid large fields of color.

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Since the mid-1950s, Pat Adams has delved into a fundamental lexicon of abstract geometric shapes, seamlessly woven into undefined expanses of luminous hues, creating works with an intriguing play of contrasts between deep and shallow space, transparency and materiality. With a focus on how we observe, experience, and understand the “multi-sidedness” of the world around us, Adams continues to study the physiological aspects of aesthetics. “Quiet but intense, the gouache paintings by Pat Adams restore to painting a certain delicate, poetic touch that seems to have fallen into desuetude since the late nineteenth century,” wrote Dore Ashton in 1956. At once precise and exploratory, Pat Adams’s oeuvre serves as a manifestation of her unwavering dedication to the realm of visuality and the intricacies of human perception.

Pat Adams (American, b. 1928) was raised in Stockton, California, and began painting at the age of ten. She studied painting at the School of Letters and Sciences at UC Berkeley from 1945–49, where she first encountered the ideas of Hans Hofmann as she studied under his former students - Worth Ryder and Margaret Peterson O’Hagan, and others who had arranged for Hofmann’s migration to the States in 1932, among them. During summers she pursued painting classes at the California College of Arts and Crafts (1945), the College of the Pacific (1946), and the Art Institute of Chicago (1948). In 1950, following her 1949 graduation Phi Beta Kappa from Berkeley, she attended the Brooklyn Museum Art School to study with Max Beckmann, Reuben Tam, and John Ferren. Her first solo exhibition was in 1954 at the Korman Gallery (later to be renamed the Zabriskie Gallery) which would continue to represent her for a period of 56 years through 2010. In 1951 she accompanied her husband, painter and printmaker Vincent Longo on his Fulbright scholarship in Italy, and in 1956, they travelled to France on her Fulbright scholarship.

Images: Pat Adams, *Norfolk - August 9, 1957*, gouache on paper, 12 1/16 x 9 3/8 inches. © Pat Adams, courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York

Pat Adams, *Tetrad*, 1965, gouache on paper, 15 15/16 x 11 1/2 inches. © Pat Adams, courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York

General inquiries: inquiries@alexandregallery.com

Press inquiries: team@danamannix.com