

Abstraction, Color, and Politics: 1960s and 1970s Public Tour

Title: "Making Room"

Sunday, June 9 / 2pm

Given by Grace VanderVliet

Overview

- This exhibition broadens the timeframe, story, and scale of the first version of the show (1971).
- Shows flexibility in medium and artistic choices
- Adds nuance to our institutional exploration of abstraction
- Key phrase = *making room*
- Making room for women, artists of color, new materials, small work

UMMA Exploration of Abstraction

- Version 1 = 1971
- Version 2 = 1960s and 70s
- Version 3 = Asian American (winter 2020)
- Romare Bearden traveling exhibition (October 2020)

History of 1960s-70s:

- Assassinations (MLK April 4, 1968, Kennedy 1963, Kent state)
- Civil Rights (Act 1964, 68)
- Women's rights (Roe v. Wade 1973)
- Vietnam
- Beatles broke up, Star Wars
- Political upheaval (Watergate)

Reactions:

- How do people react to turbulence, uncertainty?
- Escape (communes), directly address it, create a subculture or group
- Some artists directly addressed politics and culture, others turned to abstraction and form.
- Key question = is abstraction apolitical? Is anything free from the culture in which it was created?

Nevelson and Frankenthaler

- Making room for women
- Ninth Street Women - Mary Gabriel. Explores the Ninth Street Show (1951) and the relationships behind Abstract Expressionism in NYC
- How did they make their way in?
- Persistence, money, relationships (these are natural paths to power and the inside)
- How do they challenge the gendered history of this traditional narrative (Pollock, deKooning)? Through scale, method, medium
- Slow looking - 5 min of exploration. Color, depth, finish, organization / composition

Rockburne and Diao

- Why are these paired together?
- How does the wall color alter your response?
- Gather initial reactions
- Biographies
- Rockburne: knowing that she was interested in math and material, how does that change our perspective? Used to think, now I think routine.
- Diao: knowing that he gathered all information he could from being around Guggenheim and the movement, how does that affect our perception?

Salon-Hang Wall

- Overview = comet with AI Loving leading the way
- Continuation of Version 1 = AI Loving and Sam Gilliam
- Making Room for Miniature: John T. Scott
- Making Room for Various Methods: Beverly Pepper, Richard Hunt (show sculpture), Bigler watercolor
- Making Room for Materials: Sam Gilliam (paper), Binion (crayon)
- Making Room for Detroit: Not only NYC as central: McGee, Bigler, Covensky
- Making Room for flexibility between abstraction and figuration: Hartigan, Delaney
- Making Room for Multiple Identities: Howerdena Pindell (show both sides of work)

Conclusion

- Who are we making room for today? How is the art world shifting?