

## GAZELLI ART HOUSE



© Grace Hartigan, Untitled, 1965. Courtesy ACA Galleries, New York

### 9th St. Club

Elaine de Kooning, Perle Fine, Helen Frankenthaler, Grace Hartigan, Lee Krasner, Mercedes Matter, Joan Mitchell

Private view: January 16th, 2020

Exhibition: January 17th – February 23rd, 2020

Tuesday Talk with Mary Gabriel and Rex Stevens, moderated by Will Corwin: 6-8 pm February 4th, 2020

Gazelli Art House presents '9th St Club' as part of its ongoing series of exhibitions exploring key art movements of the 20th century. The exhibition features works from Elaine de Kooning, Perle Fine, Helen Frankenthaler, Grace Hartigan, Lee Krasner, Mercedes Matter and Joan Mitchell, and is inspired in part by Mary Gabriel's acclaimed 2018 book 'Ninth Street Women'. Gazelli Art House is the first gallery to show these artists together in the UK, and the show follows the Tate Modern's opening of a new room devoted to the work of Helen Frankenthaler, and a recent Lee Krasner retrospective at the Barbican. "It is pertinent to highlight these artists and draw on the parallels and ever-changing dynamics between the US, Europe and the UK today. As ever, we look to one another for reference within our own socio-political contexts, and are culturally in dialogue via the art each scene produces," says Mila Askarova, Director of Gazelli Art House.

The artists belonged to the movement sometimes known as 'Abstract Expressionism' and were thought of as rebels and troublemakers making spirited work that inspired disobedience. Their paintings highlighted an emerging individualism, and beckoned towards an almost mythological heroic and revolutionary spirit in the new era of the self, supported by the acceptance of European abstraction in New York and notions of Freudian psychoanalysis. With their gripping energy the works carried all the rage necessary to transcend their conservative political backdrop and post-war malaise, and all the requisite hope to imagine change. The American-dream infused optimism (and hubris) is palpable in the works' commitment to a liberation of style and fervour that belonged uniquely to this specific group, place and time.

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The original 9th street exhibition was held in 1951, and was a ground-breaking display of the New York avant-garde art scene. The community of artists gave form to the struggles, tensions and release of a turbulent moment, and the reverberations in the art world are still felt today. “The Club” was an artists’ association which operated as a hearth-like nucleus for the overlapping artistic and literary communities. Ideas and practices were generated from the communal effort to respond to the Paris obsessed art-institutions of New York, and fueled a local scene bursting with pride and American idiosyncrasy. Despite the supposed dictum that “no women, communists, or homosexuals” were allowed as members it became a fertile space for progressive interactivity, which supported the connections between one another and to the world at large.

‘9th St. Club’ reinterprets the Abstract Expressionist movement, disentangling it from its mainstream interpretation as an ultra-macho group of predominantly male artists, infamous for a lifestyle of alcoholism and womanising. By focusing on the women of the movement there is an attempt to go beyond the reductive association with the art simply giving form to anger and toxic masculinity. Abstract expressionism introduced a new and unique use of paint and a spectrum of emotions previously unexpressed in painting. These women fought to exhibit and even exist among their more deified and more marketed male counterparts. Their vitality, so present in the works, is all the more profound for the daring it took to step into the ring of expressionist machismo. Each artist’s work is animated by their own persona, and it is clear that in their individual practices, art was life and life was art. The riotous and dramatic theatricality of their lives played out in colour and form on canvas, and functioned as a liberating force for cultural and ideological renewal whilst clarifying and transforming the art world. The energetic bursts of abstraction operated like fission - affecting everything around it, and defining an entire era, city, and scene, “hewing a clearing / in the crowded abyss of the West.” [1]

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1 ‘Ode to Willem De Kooning’, Frank O’Hara, 1957

## About the Gallery

Gazelli Art House is a commercial gallery with a wide range of international artists, presenting a broad and dynamic programme to a diverse audience through global public projects and exhibition spaces in London and Baku. Gazelli Art House was founded in 2003 in Baku, Azerbaijan where it held exhibitions with Azeri artists. Having hosted conceptually interlinked off-site exhibitions across London, founder and director of Gazelli Art House, Mila Askarova, opened a permanent space on Dover Street, London in March 2012. In 2017, the redesigned gallery space reopened in Baku, with an ambitious annual program showcasing both local and international artists. Representing artists like Aziz+Cucher, Derek Boshier, Stanley Casselman, Francesco Jodice, Recycle Group, Kalliopi Lemos, Niyaz Najafov and Saad Qureshi amongst others, the gallery has built a consistent and diverse program with artists working in sculpture, photography, painting, video, performance and virtual reality.

<http://www.gazelliarthouse.com>

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