

## ANN PURCELL (b. 1941)

A nationally recognized artist whose abstract work is represented in museums across the United States, Ann Purcell considers process to be a critical factor in her work. Employing both gestural and analytical approaches in her paintings, collages, and works on paper, she works within tensions of paradox, ambiguity, duality, and contradiction. Her method is related to dance—an important form for her beginning in her childhood—as well as to music, while she draws on her thorough grounding in European and American Expressionist traditions. Art history is also an important source for Purcell; she states that “one of the things that is so wonderful about art is that art history is an endless resource—one cannot consume it all. There are thousands of years of art to mine and find a challenging and supportive foundation for the artist.” In the catalogue for a solo exhibition of Purcell’s work at the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C. (1976), the museum’s chief curator Jane Livingston commended Purcell’s “fluidity with a vast range of idioms.” Livingston stated: “Purcell is among the most disciplined and prolific artists I have encountered: the number of fresh, sometimes startlingly brutal, sometimes exquisitely refined works she manages to create in the continually ongoing process of her production is proportionately remarkable.”<sup>1</sup>

Purcell was born in 1941 in Washington, D.C. and raised in Arlington, Virginia. She studied independently in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, and received her B.A. from the Corcoran College of Art and Design and George Washington University, Washington, D.C., in 1973. She went on to receive her M.A. in Liberal Studies from New York University in 1995. While finishing her degree at the Corcoran, Purcell took a summer course with Washington Color School painter Gene Davis, who became her mentor and lifelong friend. Through Davis, she met Jacob Kainen, who had been Graphic Arts curator at the Smithsonian. Purcell recalls often walking through museums in Washington, D.C. with Davis and Kainen, considering the historical context of works of art and critiquing them. Her development was also shaped by the artist’s colony at Provincetown, Massachusetts. She initially went to the Cape Cod artist’s colony in the summer of 1982 on the recommendation of E. A. Carmean, Jr., then chief curator of twentieth-century art at the National Gallery. In Provincetown, Carmean introduced her to Robert Motherwell, from whose work Purcell has drawn much inspiration. Other sources of influence for Purcell are the cutouts of Matisse and paintings by Helen Frankenthaler and Mark Rothko.

Purcell first exhibited her work in 1971, when she had a solo exhibition at Villa Roma Gallery in San Miguel de Allende. When she showed at the Corcoran in a six-artist show in September 1976, a critic stated: “Ann Purcell may be the one painter here to achieve a personal mood. She draws and paints like an Abstract Expressionist, spreads pigment like a color field painter, uses color like a Darby Bannard or a Richard Diebenkorn, but adds a gentleness all her own.”<sup>2</sup> In addition to her 1976 solo exhibition at the Corcoran—she has had one-artist shows throughout her career, including two at Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York (1980, 1983). She has also participated in numerous group exhibitions, including many organized by museums, including the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo and the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

Working in series, Purcell combines a wide range of sources from art history and life, uniting associations and extrapolations. Her “Caravan Series” evoke journeys, as well as “finding new things, places of influence, buying old things, ancient histories, and open discoveries.” The series was inspired by Purcell’s summers in Provincetown in the early 1980s. In the August, 1984 issue of *The Advocate*

*Summer Guide*, Purcell told Margaret Seaver that she had finally found “the mystical, paradoxical space” that she aimed to illustrate in her paintings from the landscape, culture, and light of Provincetown. “I see it in the boats on the bay. They are suspended in the endless and infinite space.”<sup>3</sup> Other works belong to the “White Space,” “Lagniappe,” “Playground,” and “Kali Poem” series. Whereas the “Lagniappe” works reference a word that entered the English language from Louisiana French, describing small gifts given by merchants to customers for good measure, the “Kali Poem” paintings, featured in this exhibition, emanated from May Sarton’s 1971 poem of invocation to the Hindu goddess.

Throughout Purcell’s career, critics have given recognition to her willingness to explore a range of artistic methods and reconcile seemingly disparate means of expression. In 1976–77, when she was included in *Five Plus One*, a group exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery, Benjamin Forgey observed in *ARTnews* that the “light-filled paintings of Ann Purcell, alone among the artists in pursuing a complex, painterly style, are a delightful, sensual explosion.”<sup>4</sup> In 1983, Dan Cameron took note of a few exhibitions of Purcell’s work in an article in *Arts* magazine. Describing Purcell as “a fervent disciple of modernism,” he remarked on the way she brought together painting and drawing in the collages in her “Playground Series” “by manipulating edge, mass, and composition in a single gesture.” Cameron went on to comment that Purcell had extended the “metaphoric velocity of her pieced paintings” into paintings themselves, in which she developed new methods of applying “thin lines, drips, oilstick calligraphy, and controlled skeins of color that act as chromatic splinters.” Observing that within a picture, these elements served to hold the frontal plane in place, Cameron stated how Purcell was able to balance “the stable pictorial structure with a new sense of disorderliness.”<sup>5</sup> When Purcell exhibited her work at Osuma gallery in 1987, a critic commented that her works were “pure abstractions—Jackson Pollock paint drips accented with the occasional rugged brushstroke of a Franz Kline.”<sup>6</sup>

Purcell was an prominent teacher of painting, drawing, and art history at the Corcoran College of Art and Design; the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; and Parsons School of Art and Design in New York. She has been a guest lecturer and artist-in-residence at several universities. Her awards include grants from the Hereward Lester Cooke Foundation, National Gallery of Art (1988, for mid-career achievement), the Pollock-Krasner Foundation (1989, 2018), the New York Foundation for the Arts (2013), the Joan Mitchell Foundation (2014), and the Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation (2014). Purcell’s work is represented in the collections of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; the Baltimore Museum of Art; the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.; the Santa Barbara Museum; the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond; and the Luther W. Brady Art Gallery, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

Lisa N. Peters, Ph.D.

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CV

1971, Independent Study, San Miguel de Allende, Mexico

1973, BA, Corcoran School of Art and George Washington University, Washington, DC

1995, MA in Liberal Studies, New York University

**AWARDS**

1988, Hereward Lester Cooke Foundation Grant, National Gallery of Art  
1989, Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant  
2013, New York Foundation for the Arts Grant  
2014, Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant  
2014, Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation Grant  
2018, Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant

**SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

Villa Roma Gallery, San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, 1971.  
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC, 1976.  
Pyramid Galleries, Washington, DC, 1978.  
Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York, 1978.  
Dart Gallery, Chicago, 1979.  
Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York, 1980.  
Osuna Gallery, Washington, DC, 1981.  
Hokin Gallery, Chicago, 1982.  
Group Gallery, Provincetown, Massachusetts, 1983.  
Osuna Gallery, Washington, DC, 1983.  
Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York, 1983.  
Massimo Gallery, Provincetown, Massachusetts, 1984.  
Osuna Gallery, Washington, DC, 1985.  
Jack Shainman Gallery, Provincetown, Massachusetts, 1985.  
Reynold C. Kerr Gallery, New York, 1985.  
Jack Shainman Gallery, Provincetown, Massachusetts, 1986.  
Philip Dash Gallery, New York, 1986.  
Osuna Gallery, Washington, DC, 1987.  
Philip Dash Gallery, New York, 1989.  
Philip Dash Gallery, New York, 1993.  
Philip Dash Gallery, New York, 1997.  
Philip Dash Gallery, New York, 1998.  
Philip Dash Gallery, New York, 1999.  
Hokin Gallery, Palm Beach, Florida, 2001.  
Hokin Gallery Bay Harbor Island, Miami, 2002.  
Middendorf & Co. Gallery, London, 2002.  
Tilghman Gallery, Boca Raton, Florida, 2002.  
Rotunda Gallery, Brooklyn, New York, 2007.  
Osuna Art, Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Maryland, 2008.  
Miwa Gallery, New York, 2008 – 09.  
Berry Campbell, New York, *Paintings from the 1970s*, 2015.  
Berry Campbell, New York, *Caravan Series*, 2018.  
Berry Campbell, New York, *Kali Poem Series*, 2020.  
Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Massachusetts, 2024.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

Misrachi Gallery, Mexico City, 1971.  
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, *Nineteenth Area Exhibition*, 1974.  
State Department, US Information Agency, Washington, DC, *American Embassies in the Middle East*, 1974 – 76.  
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, *Corcoran Faculty*, 1976.  
Gallery #641, Washington, DC, *New York/Washington*, 1976.  
Inland-Foundry Exhibition, Washington, DC, 1976.  
Pyramid Galleries, Washington, DC, *Two-Person Drawing Exhibit*, 1976.  
Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, *Washington Painters*, 1976.  
Washington Project for the Arts, Washington, DC, *Drawings from the Studios of Washington Artists*, 1976.  
Miami Dade Community College, Miami, 1978.  
Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina, *Selected Works from Tibor de Nagy Gallery*, 1978.  
Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida, 1978.  
Pyramid Galleries, Washington, DC, *Summer at Pyramid*, 1978.  
Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, Loretto, Pennsylvania, 1978.  
Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, *New York Collection*, 1978 – 79.  
Dart Gallery, Chicago, 1979.  
Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC, *Washington Artists at H.E.W.*, 1979.  
Osuna Gallery, Washington, DC, *15 Artists*, 1979.  
Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York, *Shape and Field*, 1979.  
Weatherspoon Art Gallery, Greensboro, North Carolina, *Works on Paper*, 1980.  
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, *Acquisitions, 1975 to Present*, 1982.  
Provincetown Group Gallery, Massachusetts, 1982.  
Hokin Gallery, Chicago, 1982.  
Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Massachusetts, 1982.  
Virginia Technical University, Blacksburg, Virginia (traveled to James Madison University, Virginia), 1982.  
Provincetown Group Gallery, Massachusetts, 1983.  
Hokin Gallery, Palm Beach, Florida, 1983.  
Hokin/Kaufman Gallery, Chicago, 1983.  
Osuna Gallery, Washington, DC, 1983.  
Whitewind Gallery, Mendham, New Jersey, 1983.  
Hokin Gallery, Bay Harbor Islands, Florida, 1984.  
Hokin Gallery, Palm Beach, Florida, 1984.  
Hokin/Kaufman Gallery, Chicago, 1984.  
Osuna Gallery, Washington, DC, 1984.  
Osuna Gallery, Washington, DC, 1985.  
Philip Dash Gallery, New York, 1986.  
American Embassy in Havana, *Art in the Embassies*, 1988.  
Bernard Jacobson Gallery, New York, 1988.  
Cooper Union School of Art, New York, *Center for Book Arts Exhibit*, 1989.  
Tilghman Gallery, Boca Raton, Florida, 1989.  
Zack/Shuster Gallery, Boca Raton, Florida, 1989.  
Osuna Gallery, Washington, DC, *Collage*, 1990.  
The National Museum of Women in the Arts-in-Embassies Program, Washington, DC (traveled to

Katmandu, Nepal), 1992.

The National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC, *Book Exhibition*, 1993 – 94.

US Department of State, Art-in-Embassies Program, Stockholm, Sweden, *American Painters*, 1994 – 95.

The Rotunda Gallery, *Reading Between the Lines*, Brooklyn, 1998.

Osuna Art, Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Maryland, *Art from Past to the Present, A Selection*, 2004.

Center for Book Arts, New York, 2007.

Osuna Art, Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Maryland, *Recent Acquisitions*, 2007.

Osuna Art, Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Maryland, *Works on Paper*, 2008.

Osuna Art, Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Maryland, *Artists' Works Group Show*, 2009.

Katzen Art Center, American University, Washington, D.C., *Washington Art Matters II: 1940s-1980s*, 2015.

Berry Campbell, New York, *Summer Selections*, 2015.

Berry Campbell, New York, *Summer Selections*, 2016.

Berry Campbell, New York, *Summer Selections*, 2017.

Cavalier Galleries, New York, *57<sup>th</sup> Street: America's Artistic Legacy, Part I*, 2018.

Berry Campbell, New York, *Summer Selections*, 2018.

Corcoran Gallery of Art, Luther W. Brady Art Gallery, Washington DC, *Full Circle: Hue and Saturation in the Washington Color School*, 2018.

George Washington University Museum, Luther W. Brady Art Gallery, Washington DC, *A Time for Action: Washington Artists circa 1989*, 2019.

Berry Campbell, New York, *Summer Selections*, 2019.

Berry Campbell, New York, *Artist Insights/ Contemporary Highlights*, 2020.

Berry Campbell, New York, *Perseverance*, 2024.

#### SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York

Alusuisse Corporation, Richmond, Virginia

American Telephone and Telegraph, New York

American University Museum, Katzen Arts Center, Washington, D.C.

Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Maryland

Capitol Holding Corporation, Louisville, Kentucky

Continental Bank of Chicago

Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C.

Embassy of Italy, Washington, D.C.

Femmes Artistes Musée Mougins, France

Luther W. Brady Art Gallery, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

Italian-American Foundation, Washington, D.C.

Jack Shainman / The School, Kinderhook, New York

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.

New Orleans Museum of Art, Louisiana

PepsiCo Collection, New York

Philadelphia Life Insurance, Pennsylvania

The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City, Utah

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, California  
Sydney Lewis Foundation, Richmond, Virginia  
Vesti Industries, Cambridge, Massachusetts  
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Livingston, *Five Washington Artists*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1976).

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Gold, "Five Plus One at Corcoran," *The Sun* (Baltimore), September 26, 1976, p. D8.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Seaver, "Ann Purcell, A Self-Assured Artist," *The Summer Advocate* (Provincetown, Massachusetts), August 16, 1984.

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Forgey, "Washington, D.C.: Catching Up with Morris Louis," *Art News* (November 1976), p. 104.

<sup>5</sup> Dan Cameron, "Ann Purcell," *Arts* (November 1983).

<sup>6</sup> Pamela Kessler, "Four Artists in Search of No Subject," *Washington Post*, September 25, 1987, p. WK47.