

Deborah Hanson-Murphy  
15.09 - 08.10.2023

Balice Hertling is pleased to present an exhibition by Deborah Hanson-Murphy.

Alfred Barr had just acquired Grace Hartigan's Persian Jacket, the first second generation Abstract Expressionist canvas to enter MoMA's collection, when a young Deborah Hanson-Murphy boarded an ocean liner to France. She'd grown up in Northern California, and though she'd ultimately spend more than half her life abroad, the immensity of the American West sweeps through the artist's work. In Paris, she enrolled in Jacques Ernotte's Etude du dessin, briefly continuing drawing studies at Art Students League, New York (with Bernard Klonis and Will Barnett), before expatriating for good with her husband, a writer and music critic.

Achieving fluency in French and painting, at which she was self-taught, Hanson-Murphy pored over works by Montaigne and Proust, and studied Watteau and Chardin at the Louvre. But it is perhaps the musical variations of Hanson-Murphy's preferred composer, Franz Schubert, that most closely inform *Variations*, the series in oil on canvas she began in 1974. Starting with the "concrete" and "what's at hand," Hanson-Murphy wrote a few years later, these works rise from her attention to objects (seashells, a marble artifact from Delos, and a dried carruba, for example) as "an aspect of interior."

Though hardly ever shown, Hanson-Murphy committed herself to *Variations* for decades, numbering her paintings chronologically and logging each seance on the back of the canvas. As the series develops, her objects, grouped as families, escape their identity, and give way to each painting's increasingly vibrant ground. Ultimately, quiet color resonates; she is painting space itself.

Deborah Hanson-Murphy (b. Stockton, USA, 1931; d. Paris, France, 2018) was largely overlooked as a painter during her lifetime. She graduated in 1953 from Stanford University and was a student at the Art Students League from 1956 to 1958. She worked mostly in Paris, her adopted city, where she lived from 1968 until her death. This solo exhibition at Balice Hertling is the artist's first in over a decade.

Lillian Davies