

HEATHER JAMES FINE ART

For Immediate Release

DE KOONING X DE KOONING
HEATHER JAMES FINE ART, NEW YORK
November 8, 2018 – February 28, 2019
Opening reception: Thursday, November 8, 6 - 8 p.m.



NEW YORK - An exhibition of paintings and works on paper by Elaine and Willem de Kooning will be on view at Heather James Fine Art, New York, from November 8, 2018 - February 28, 2019. *De Kooning X De Kooning* also features a selection of photographs of the artists by their close friend Rudy Burckhardt. The accompanying exhibition catalogue will include an interview with artist Yvonne Jacquette, Burckhardt's widow, by art critic Amei Wallach, each sharing their personal insights about the de Koonings' tumultuous life together and apart. An opening reception will be held on November 8, 6 - 8 p.m.

Highlights include Willem de Kooning's *Woman II*, c. 1961, part of a critical body of work that became known as his "Women" series. This signature painting will be joined by earlier gouaches from 1937-42 -- initiated right before meeting Elaine -- and a pair of his small-scaled abstract paintings completed in 1958 -- soon after the couple separated. Elaine de Kooning's skill at integrating abstraction into realistic portraiture is reflected in a grouping of her large-scale oil paintings and sketches of subjects including writers and friends.

During the height of Abstract Expressionism in New York City, and largely overshadowed by her husband's growing fame, Elaine persevered to create a rich and diverse body of work. At a time when it was thought that a women's place was in the home, she challenged the status quo throughout her career as a ground-breaking artist, teacher, and writer. Among the group of Burckhardt's photographs of the de Koonings is one of Willem at work on *Woman I*, 1950. Now considered to be among his most famous paintings, *Woman I*, 1950-52, and *Woman II*, 1952, are part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art, NY.

According to Montana Beutler, partner at Heather James Fine Art, New York, "Elaine and Willem de Kooning were pioneers of Abstract Expressionism and figurative abstraction. We want to provide a fresh perspective on their vital contributions to the history of post-modern art in America."

Image captions:

Elaine de Kooning, *Portrait of Ethel Epstein*, 1964, oil on canvas, 56 1/2 x 40 1/2 in.

Rudy Burckhardt, *Elaine de Kooning, New York-VI.16.9*, c. 1960/1963, 7 x 9 3/4 in.

©Estate of Rudy Burckhardt, courtesy Tibor de Nagy, New York.

Willem de Kooning, *Woman II*, c. 1961, oil on paper mounted on canvas, 29 x 22 1/2 in.

Rudy Burckhardt, *de Kooning Drawing Woman I*, 1950, gelatin silver print, 9 x 8 in.

©Estate of Rudy Burckhardt, courtesy Tibor de Nagy, New York.

ABOUT ELAINE DE KOONING

Elaine de Kooning (1918 - 1989) grew up in Brooklyn, NY, in the late 1930s, and attended art classes at the Leonardo da Vinci School, and later at the American Artists' School. She met Willem de Kooning in 1938, and shortly thereafter became his student. In 1943, the couple married and, from then on, Elaine dedicated herself to promoting her husband's career. She also championed the work of other Abstract Expressionists as a regular contributor to *Artnews*. In 1949, paintings by the de Koonings were featured in *Artists: Man and Wife* at the Sidney Janis Gallery, NY. That same year, the couple helped establish the famed Artists' Club (Eighth Street Club). In 1954, Stable Gallery, NY, presented her first solo exhibition.

In 1957, the de Koonings separated, and Elaine began teaching at art schools including the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, the Pratt Institute, the Rhode Island School of Design, and the New York Studio School in Paris. She later taught at Yale University and at Parsons New School for Design, and served as the first Lamar Dodd Visiting Professor of Art at the University of Georgia. In 1988, she was elected into the National Academy of Design, NY. In 2015, a major retrospective, *Elaine de Kooning: Portraits*, was held at the National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC. Her paintings are included in the collections of the Guggenheim Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; and the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC, among others.

ABOUT WILLEM DE KOONING

Dutch-born Willem de Kooning (1916 - 1997) was a leading figure of Abstract Expressionism. While working as an apprentice at a commercial art and decorating firm in Rotterdam, de Kooning attended night classes at the Rotterdam Academy of Fine Arts and Techniques. In 1926, he stowed away on a ship to the United States, and settled in New York City the following year. After briefly working as a house painter, he established himself as a commercial artist and became a fixture within the New York art world, and became friends with fellow artists Stuart Davis and Arshile Gorky.

While working in the mural division of the Works Project Administration in 1936, de Kooning decided to commit himself fully to painting. Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, he produced work in both figurative and abstract styles. By the late 1940s and 1950s, he and his contemporaries including Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, Adolph Gottlieb, Ad Reinhardt, Barnett Newman, and Mark Rothko became collectively known as “Action Painters,” “Abstract Expressionists,” and members of the “New York School.”

After holding his first solo exhibition at the Charles Egan Gallery, NY, in 1948, and having gained the support of influential art critics Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg, de Kooning’s career was on the rise. In 1953, his striking series of figural works, known as the “Women” paintings, stunned members the art world. While many viewed his return to figuration as a betrayal of Abstract Expressionism’s basic tenets, the Museum of Modern Art embraced his new style by acquiring *Woman I* in 1953.

During the late fifties, de Kooning shifted back to “pure” abstraction with works respectively referred to as “Urban,” “Parkway” and “Pastoral” landscapes. After moving to East Hampton in 1963, he drew inspiration largely from the surrounding Long Island landscape. The late 1970s marked another prolific period in which he produced thickly-painted, sensuous abstract work. Throughout the 1980s, de Kooning explored new forms of pictorial space introducing vividly-colored, linear elements contrasted against muted white areas. In 1997, he passed away in East Hampton, Long Island, at the age of 92.

De Kooning’s work has been the subject of countless exhibitions and is part of museum permanent collections including: the Museum of Modern Art; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden, DC; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and the Tate Modern, London, among many others.

ABOUT RUDY BURCKHARDT

Swiss-born filmmaker and photographer Rudy Burckhardt (1914 - 1999) immigrated to New York City in 1935. His close friends included Willem de Kooning, Alex Katz, Jane Freilicher, Red Grooms, and Jackson Pollock. He collaborated with many artists including Grooms, Freilicher, Mimi Gross, Larry Rivers, Yvonne Jacquette, and John Ashbery on his various films. Primarily known for his distinctive cityscapes, during the 1950s and 1960s, he also frequently photographed artists such as de Kooning, Pollock, Joan Mitchel, and Mark Rothko for *Artnews*.

Burckhardt’s work has been exhibited in museums including: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, NY; the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA, Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria; Fotostiftung Schweiz, Winterthur, and the Kunstmuseum, Basel, Switzerland, among others.

ABOUT HEATHER JAMES FINE ART

Heather James Fine Art presents a rare look into art history’s past and present, offering important works from a cross-section of periods, movements, and genres — including Impressionist, Modern, Post-War, Contemporary, Latin American, Old Masters, and antiquities.

In 22 years, Heather James Fine Art has expanded into a global network with galleries located in Palm Desert, California; San Francisco, California; Montecito, California (opening fall 2018); Jackson Hole, Wyoming; and New York, New York, and consultancies in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Austin.

Each year, its galleries present an array of museum quality exhibitions exploring historical and contemporary themes, or examining the work of individual influential artists.

Heather James Fine Art is dedicated to bringing exceptional art to private clients and museums globally, and to providing the utmost personalized logistical, curatorial, and financial services.

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Heather James Fine Art galleries:

New York

Herb Alpert: A Visual Melody, Oct. 11 – Nov. 1, 2018
42 East 75 Street, New York

California

45188 Portola Avenue, Palm Desert

49 Geary Street, Suite 511, San Francisco

1298 Coast Village Road, Montecito – opening fall 2018

Wyoming

172 Center Street, Suite 101, Jackson Hole

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