

MNUCHIN GALLERY

The New York Times

Art We Saw This Fall

From our critics, reviews of closed gallery shows around New York City.



Lynne Drexler, "Untitled," (1960) in the exhibition "The First Decade," at Mnuchin Gallery. via The Estate of Lynne Drexler

Lynne Drexler

Runs through Dec. 17. Mnuchin Gallery, 45 East 78th Street, Manhattan; 212-861-0020, mnuchingallery.com; and Berry Campbell, 524 West 26th Street, Manhattan; 212-924-2178 berrycampbell.com

By Roberta Smith

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The painter Lynne Drexler (1928-1999) came to New York in 1955 and had her first gallery solo here in 1961. Those dates make it a bit late to call the artist either Abstract Expressionist or second-generation Abstract Expressionist, as do the news releases for her first solo exhibition in 38 years, "The First Decade," running concurrently in two galleries. These terms have been widely used lately; perhaps they signal

historical and market value. Drexler's paintings are pretty and angst-free; they feature amorphous clouds of small dots, dashes and squares of ringing color on raw or stained canvases. They evoke mosaics, textiles and sundry post-Impressionist painters and seem most credible aligned with Color Field painting.

The "first decade" covered here is 1959-1969, a fertile period for new art in New York when younger painters confronted Pollock's all-over drip paintings — among them Yayoi Kusama, Frank Stella and Brice Marden. Drexler did too but in a more conventional, people-pleasing direction.

At Mnuchin, the paintings and works on paper date from 1959 to 1964. The best works tend toward lighter, even pastel colors scattered over raw canvas, or toward deep nocturnal tones. The colors grow stronger; larger squares and circles enter the pictures, as do long slender rectangles.

At Berry Campbell, where works from 1965 to 1969 are on view, Drexler's style starts to harden. The colors become repetitive and the clouds of little shapes become dense, crowding the surface. The bunched rectangles morph into bulging, striated shapes suggesting floods, billowing smoke, wasps' nests or great churning waves.

The beguiling airiness of the earlier paintings is gone, which is not a good sign.



Lynne Drexler's "Burst Blue" (1969) at Berry Campbell. Estate of Lynne Drexler; via Berry Campbell, New York