

BARRON'S

Women Artists Will Star at Independent 20th Century's New York Fair

By **Abby Schultz** | Sept. 3, 2024



Lenore Tawney, *Union of Water and Fire* 1974, linen. Tawney was a member of a community of artists practicing in the 1950s and '60s at Coenties Slip in Manhattan. Photography by Michael Brzezinski © Lenore G. Tawney Foundation. Courtesy the Lenore G. Tawney Foundation, New York, and Alis on Jacques, London.

Nearly half of the works to be exhibited at Independent 20th Century this week in New York are by women artists, many of whom were celebrated in their day but who may not be as well known to contemporary collectors.

Boosting the representation of 20th-century women artists has been a deliberate effort for Independent, which unlike most art fairs is an invitation-only, curated event.

"It's harder in the pre-feminist period to find the material, or to find the material that hasn't been exposed, but we are finding it, and we're really excited to focus on it more fully," says Elizabeth Dee, founder and CEO of Independent.

One reason the fair can now represent more of this work is that galleries are seeking it out, Dee says.



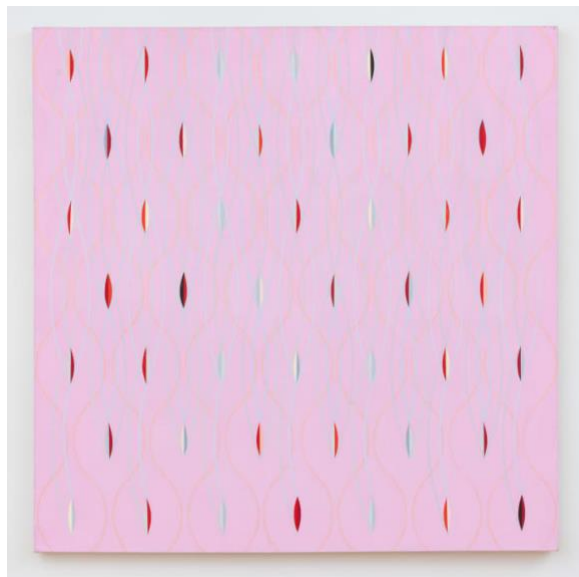
Emila Medkova, *Puppet Theater*, 1978, a gelatin silver print on glossy paper, vintage, will be in Richard Saltoun Gallery's "Butterfly Time – 12 Women In Surrealism," at Independent 20th Century.

© Emila Medkova and the estate of the artist. Courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery, London and Rome

To highlight art history is reason enough for some dealers to feature women artists whose contributions have been forgotten, but there are also practical reasons.

"This is an area that has the most energy in the market at the moment too," Dee says. "The pricing is very, very reasonable for what the historic value and importance of these artists is and will continue to be, with representation [increasing] at institutions and galleries across the world."

Richard Saltoun Gallery, which has locations in London and Rome, for instance, is showing a group of 12 women in surrealism at Independent in an exhibition titled "Butterfly Time." On display will be paintings, works on paper, and photography, many created by lesser-known artists such as Canadian surrealist Mimi Benoit Parent or Czech photographer Emila Medkova. But he's also including *Souvenir du "Déjeuner en fourrure"* (*Souvenir of Breakfast in Fur*), a work conceived in 1936 and executed in 1972, on fabric, paper, artificial fur, and artificial flowers encased under plastic by the more well-known surrealist Meret Oppenheim.



Audra Skuodas, *Womb Wound Series* 1999, acrylic on canvas.

Courtesy the artist's estate, Cristin Tierney Gallery, New York, N.Y., and Abattoir Gallery, Cleveland.

London gallery Alison Jacques will feature Lenore Tawney, who was among a community of artists who took up residence in Coenties Slip at the southeastern edge of Manhattan in the 1950s and '60s. Members included several artists who would become well known, including Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Indiana, and Agnes Martin.

As a textile artist, however, Tawney was “overlooked within the movement for so many decades,” Dee says. “The medium was just not taken as seriously. Now, that’s all being rectified.”

From this past October through March, the Crystal Bridges Museum of Art in Bentonville, Ark., featured Tawney in a dual-artist show titled “Takaezu & Tawney: An Artist is a Poet.” The museum had recently acquired works by ceramist Toshiko Takaezu and Tawney, who shared a strong friendship for decades. In October, the Museum of Modern Art in New York will be rehanging works in the museum’s collection from the Coenties Slip artists, including Tawney.

She was “a true New York figure,” Dee says.



Van Doren Waxter in New York is featuring three women artists at its Independent 20th Century booth. Pictured is Zoe Longfield’s *Untitled*, a gouache on paper. Works by Vivian Springford and Rosemarie Beck will also be shown. Zoe Longfield estate and Van Doren Waxter, New York.

Cristin Tierney Gallery in New York and Abattoir Gallery in Cleveland are showing large-scale paintings and drawings made of thread by Audra Skuodas, an Lithuanian-born artist. Skuodas’ works, mixing figuration and abstraction, have received more attention since she died in 2019, being acquired and exhibited in museums in Ohio, including the Cleveland Museum of Art, according to the galleries.

The gallerists said their aim in presenting Skuodas “is to open her work up to an international audience and to demonstrate that alternative narratives are not only plausible but an essential part of a non-canonical approach to the study, appreciation, and historicizing of the arts.”

Three American women artists who were primarily landscape painters will be exhibited at New York gallery Van Doren Waxter’s booth. Among them is Zoe Longfield, whose works were briefly represented by the American abstract expressionist Clyfford Still, who had a gallery when he was teaching at an art school in California. Although Longfield was among the early abstract expressionist painters in the U.S., her works are less widely known.

Van Doren Waxter, which focuses on post-war and contemporary art including American abstraction, has done a good job of balancing the canon by representing more women artists, Dee says.

“It’s amazing, these artists were recognized by their male peers at the time, and then we just lost track of these estates,” she says. “Now, this generation of galleries are embracing them and bringing them forward. There’s so much catch up to be done.”

Independent opens at Casa Cipriani in the Battery Maritime Building in Lower Manhattan on Thursday and to the public Friday through Sunday.