

VAN DOREN WAXTER

Zoe Longfield

A World of One's Own

September 17 – November 14, 2026



Zoe Longfield, *Untitled*, c. 1948, Oil on canvas, 34 x 26 in (86.4 x 66 cm)

Van Doren Waxter is delighted to announce *Zoe Longfield: A World of One's Own*, an exhibition of rarely shown paintings and works on paper from 1948 to 1950. This is the gallery's second solo exhibition of the artist since announcing exclusive representation of the Zoe Longfield Estate.

Following a prestigious and comprehensive education in painting, studying under Richard Diebenkorn, David Park, and Clyfford Still at the California School of Fine Arts, Zoe Longfield in the late 1940s to the early 50s produced esoteric and remarkably original paintings, which in her own words sought to “solve those problems peculiar to painting.” Frequently comprising muted colors, Longfield's paintings are mysteriously light and fluid. The canvas is not so much immured by paint but rather set free, transforming into something beyond the object. The atmosphere of the pictures is more aligned with that of Surrealist painters than that of her teachers such as Diebenkorn and Park, whose sense of color and light emanates from the landscapes of the Bay Area. The utterly abstract shapes, intertwined with eerie grays and mellifluous pinks and purples, are liberated from any association with familiar forms, reflecting her internal world rather than an external one.

The reality in which Longfield lived, as Virginia Woolf writes on existing in a man's world, was “erratic and undependable,” ripe with discrimination and doubt. As one of the first-generation Bay Area Abstract Expressionists, Longfield was constrained to only a handful of commercial galleries to work with and overlooked as an artist while the art world favored her male peers. Without the illusion of praise or validation, Longfield did perhaps the most valuable thing an artist could do— paint because it mattered to her. Longfield's canvases, discovered in her home where she lived until her death in 2013, are charged with that instinct of an introspective artist and her undeniably unique voice.

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About the Artist

Zoe Longfield (1924–2013) was an American abstract expressionist painter in the San Francisco Bay Area. She was a participant in the first generation of Bay Area Abstract Expressionism, which occurred in San Francisco in the last half of the 1940s. Zoe Longfield was also one of the earliest women artists working in this movement and is featured, along with her fellow students, in a now well-published photo from the California School of Fine Arts (CSFA) in 1948. During her brief active years, Longfield produced a significant body of paintings, prints, and drawings that showcase both a deft handling of media and a unique visual vocabulary that she employed. Like many women artists of her time, she gave up her own creative ambitions when she married in order to support her husband's career. She never returned to painting after 1951.

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