

FASHION

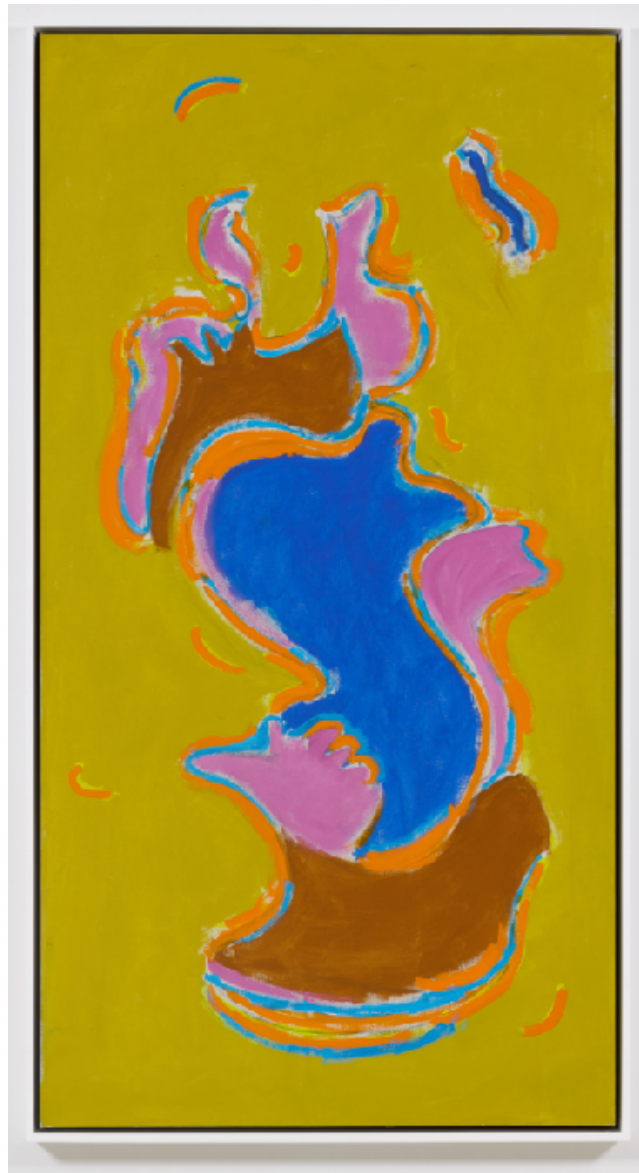
Louis Vuitton Puts a New Spotlight on Feminist Artist Betty Parsons

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The French brand adds Parsons's "African Dawn, 1972" to the collection on display in their New York flagship. Supported by Louis Vuitton.

A visit to Louis Vuitton's New York flagship involves gazing at creative director Nicolas Ghesquière's beautiful garments as well as world-class art, including a larger-than-life Jeff Koons sculpture and a Yayoi Kusama flower. Now, the flagship has added another valuable piece to its collection: a painting by the pioneering artist and gallerist Betty Parsons.

The painting, "African Dawn, 1972" comes to the store by way of starchitect and leather aficionado Peter Marino, who designed the Fifth Avenue flagship. At a panel discussion last Thursday with Alexander Gray, who represents Parsons's estate, and art journalist Lindsay Pollock, Marino reminisced that he found the "staggeringly beautiful" painting at Gray's gallery while searching for artwork for Louis Vuitton's new location on Paris's Place Vendome, but insisted the painting instead belonged at the New York location (coincidentally a stone's throw from Parsons' original gallery space at 15 East 57th street).



Betty Parsons, "African Dawn, 1972." Courtesy of Alexander Gray Associates.

Though she was an American artist, Parsons spent a considerable amount of time living in Paris, making her a perfect emblem for a transatlantic brand whose innovation is tied to its worldliness (Louis Vuitton is, after all, [a brand built on traveling trunks](#)). As Gray noted, “Her courage to tear up the script for women and apply it to canvas” helped shift the narrative for female artists as well as artists of color, whom she represented in her own gallery space. With the purchase of “African Dawn,” Louis Vuitton is shining a light on an artist whose name may not be as instantly recognizable as a Koons or Kusama, but whose work and legacy are of equal importance, particularly in understanding the history of female artists.

A teenage runaway, Parsons headed to the 1913 Armory Show, where Duchamp first exhibited his explosive “Nude Descending a Staircase,” heralding the dawn of Modernism in America. Herself an Abstract Expressionist, Parsons would go on to give Barnett Newman his first solo show at her gallery, as well as debuting works by Mark Rothko, Ellsworth Kelly, and Robert Rauschenberg.

Her abstract painting, a wash of chartreuse (not coincidentally, Marino's favorite color) has waves of blue, brown, and pink, outlined by a bright orange, complementing the interiors of the flagship location. For those who can't make it to the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris, its flagship stores-cum-gallery spaces are a subtler, more accessible way to see the brand's impressive, growing art collection. You don't always have to wait in a five-hour-long line to see a Kusama; you can walk into Louis Vuitton anytime.

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