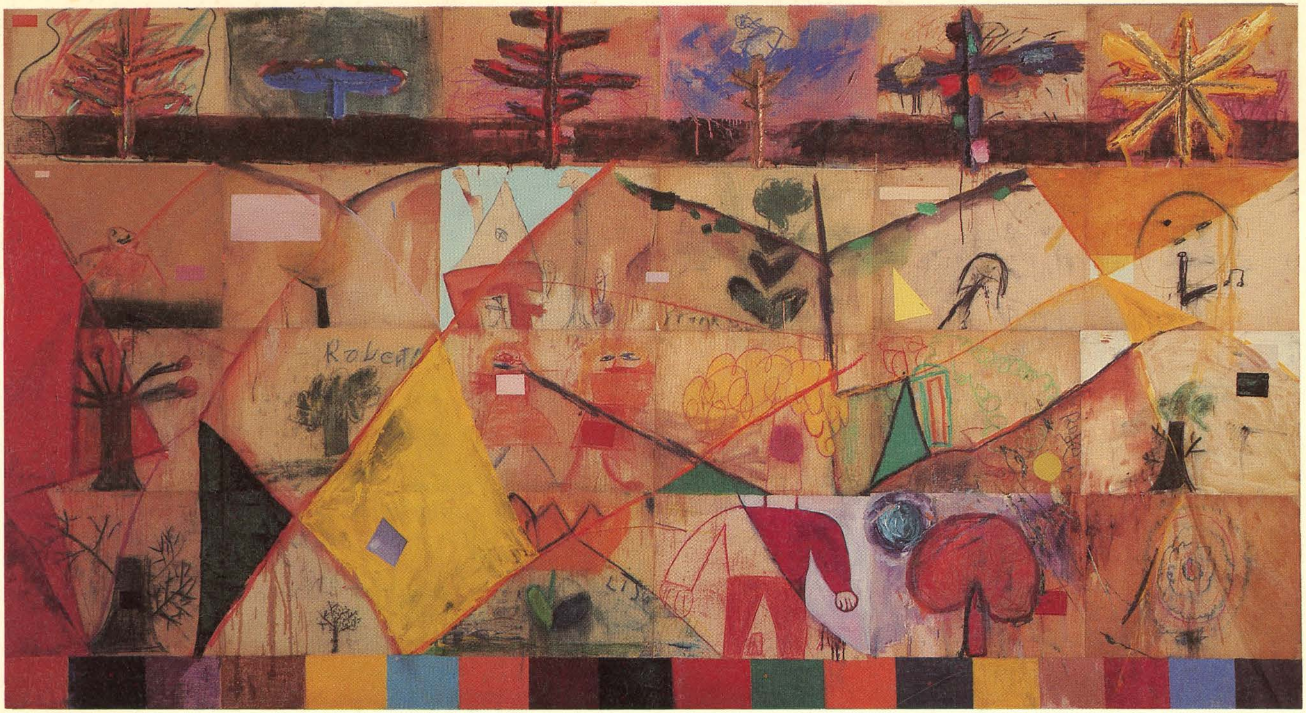

JOAN SNYDER

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As with any ambitious project there are many people who, with their energy and ideas, insure its successful completion. I wish to take this time to acknowledge those friends and colleagues who have contributed so generously to this project.

Michael Walls served as guest curator for the exhibition and provided us with an insightful essay concerning significant issues in painting and in Joan Snyder's work in particular. The exhibition and catalog essay is an example of Michael's abiding interest and deep commitment to the artist and her work. Patricia Hamilton, who is always helpful, has been most generous in her cooperation and support. I would like to thank Mary and David Robinson and Libby Turnock, our friends, for their generous assistance and hospitality.

On behalf of the President and Trustees of the San Francisco Art Institute, I wish especially to thank the lenders to this exhibition. Their interest and generosity is a tribute to the artist herself.

The Exhibitions and Publications staff deserve warmest acknowledgments. Masashi Matsumoto, Diane Gillis, Esther Kutnick, Frank Zincavage, and Carol Parloto, Mark McGowan and Linda Dackman worked with great commitment on the project. Stephen Goldstine, President of the Art Institute, has provided substantial encouragement.

As the exhibition will travel, I wish to thank Robert Murdoch, Director of the Grand Rapids Art Museum, and Suzanne Ghez, Director of the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, for their cooperation and commitment to the project.

We deeply appreciate the support of the National Endowment for the Arts, Museum Category.

All of us who have worked on this project are indebted to Joan Snyder. Her paintings and ideas have provided the foundation for our efforts, her wisdom and sense of humor have enriched our lives. It is to Joan and her family, Larry Fink and Molly Felicia that I wish to extend my special thanks.

Helene Fried
San Francisco

Cover: **Sweet Cathy's Song** (For Cathy Elzea) 1978. Children's drawings, papier maché, chalk, and oil on canvas, 78×144 inches. Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

JOAN SNYDER
Organized by the San Francisco Art Institute

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Much has been written in the past ten years concerning not only the loss of vitality in painting but also the possibly inevitable loss of its viability as an area of serious investigation within the visual arts.

Many concerned parties—both artists and laypersons—have been startled by the degree of acceptance which these sentiments have gained.

It is perhaps difficult to realize that fewer than seventy-five years have passed since the death of Paul Cézanne, the painter revered by many knowledgeable persons as the father of the modernist movement—and even fewer years since the creation of the earliest completely nonfigurative paintings. Yet throughout this short and turbulent era, a relentless stream—of works of art, some of which succeeded in their aim of being truly revolutionary; artists' statements and manifestoes, which usually challenged the status quo and which sometimes even espoused anarchy; critical writings and verbal argumentation, often both passionate and dogmatic; and landmark exhibitions, which frequently shocked and occasionally seduced a skeptical public—has carried painting to the extremities of mute objecthood.

From the very beginning of this brief history, there has been the ferment—both sociological and artistic—required to produce statements of extreme radicality within the realm of painting.

Such disparate figures as Braque and Picasso, Malevich, Pollock, Klein, Reinhardt, and Ryman have brilliantly revolutionized the accepted language of painting—even while working within the traditional confines of physical structure. Often simultaneously, such luminous sensibilities as those of Schwitters, Duchamp, Rauschenberg and Johns, Irwin, and Stella have challenged the accepted boundaries and pushed painting into entirely new regions of physicality—sometimes through the hybridization of existing disciplines and forms.

The constantly increasing emphasis, since Impressionism, on an intellectually and historically sound evolution of style—leading as it has in the most recent decades to a preponderant interest in conceptualization and formal structure—has tended to overshadow the reliance on those time-honored criteria for the evaluation of paintings as relate to such aspects of the painter's craft as drawing, composition, color, and the actual application of medium to support—as well as making it more difficult to assess characteristics such as veracity, beauty, and mystery.

Writing in 1972 about the paintings of Richard Diebenkorn, the critic/curator, John Elderfield, stated: "Since stylistic innovation became an important contributing factor for achieving high quality in art, reputation has come to depend as much on advancement as on achievement itself. Reputation (which is never more than ersatz quality, for it is more properly dependent on style) favors those who possess a public image of evident extremity—a radical look."[1]

If one agrees that this dependence on stylistic innovation—this emphasis on the creation of and accompanying documentation of a "radical look" and a trademark image or style—is a true characterization of the visual arts communities of the United States and Western Europe during the past quarter century, then

Big Green 1970. Oil, acrylic and spray enamel on canvas, 6×10 feet. Collection, Mr. and Mrs. S.I. Newhouse, Jr., New York one could extend that agreement into a belief that the intrinsically inspirational and productive dialogue among artists and within their support systems in such centers as New York City, Paris, and Düsseldorf may be more than capable of leading a majority of the participants into the production of bland and depersonalized art objects—wherein the spirit and innovations of the true pioneers, whether removed by five years or five decades, have been bled to a ghost-like state through too ardent a subscription to the belief that a painter—to be eligible for "major artist" status—must establish a credibility and a legitimacy within the "mainstream" of contemporary art and at the same time must formulate a unique artistic identity. The resultant incestuousness is only heightened—in my opinion—by the insistence of certain formalist critics upon dogmatically restricting the breadth and channeling the flow of that "mainstream."

What then of painting in 1979, on the doorstep of another decade?

Despite all the prophets of doom, people go on painting. It retains the magic—the mystery—that it has exerted on practitioners and observers alike over the centuries.

What then is possible—or desirable—at the present time? What do artists themselves seek from painting as a potential lifetime's endeavor? What does the layperson hope to derive from the experiencing of a painting?

Why is designating a painting as "decorative" no longer the ultimate condemnation, as it was so widely held to be a few short years ago? ("Matisse's work is nothing if not decorative," one hears recently. Has this something to do with the fact that so many younger American painters seem to be turning to that artist for inspiration and nourishment recently—seemingly valuing his craft—his accomplishments—his attitudes—over the perhaps more dazzling succession of innovations wrought by Picasso?)

I can hear a painter/instructor at Harvard University's Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts criticizing his students' work with a growling "Looks like wallpaper!"—his most devastating appraisal, back in 1962.[2] Now, artists by the dozens are openly emulating the patternings and colorations of wallpaper in works on canvas, and if it is not wallpaper they are transcribing, it is Islamic wall tiles or 1940's dress fabrics.

. . . and why is narration no longer widely considered an unworthy undertaking for the serious artist? Artists are openly telling stories in their works in every conceivable manner—from replicating in hand-lettering every word of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* on panels of stretched canvas[3], to scribing terse and enigmatic tales of contemporary urban existence under large-scale color photographs, to embroidering complex mixed media works on paper with autobiographic notations.

Recognition has been accorded the many toilers in these particular vineyards through numerous exhibitions devoted to "pattern painting" and to "narrative art."

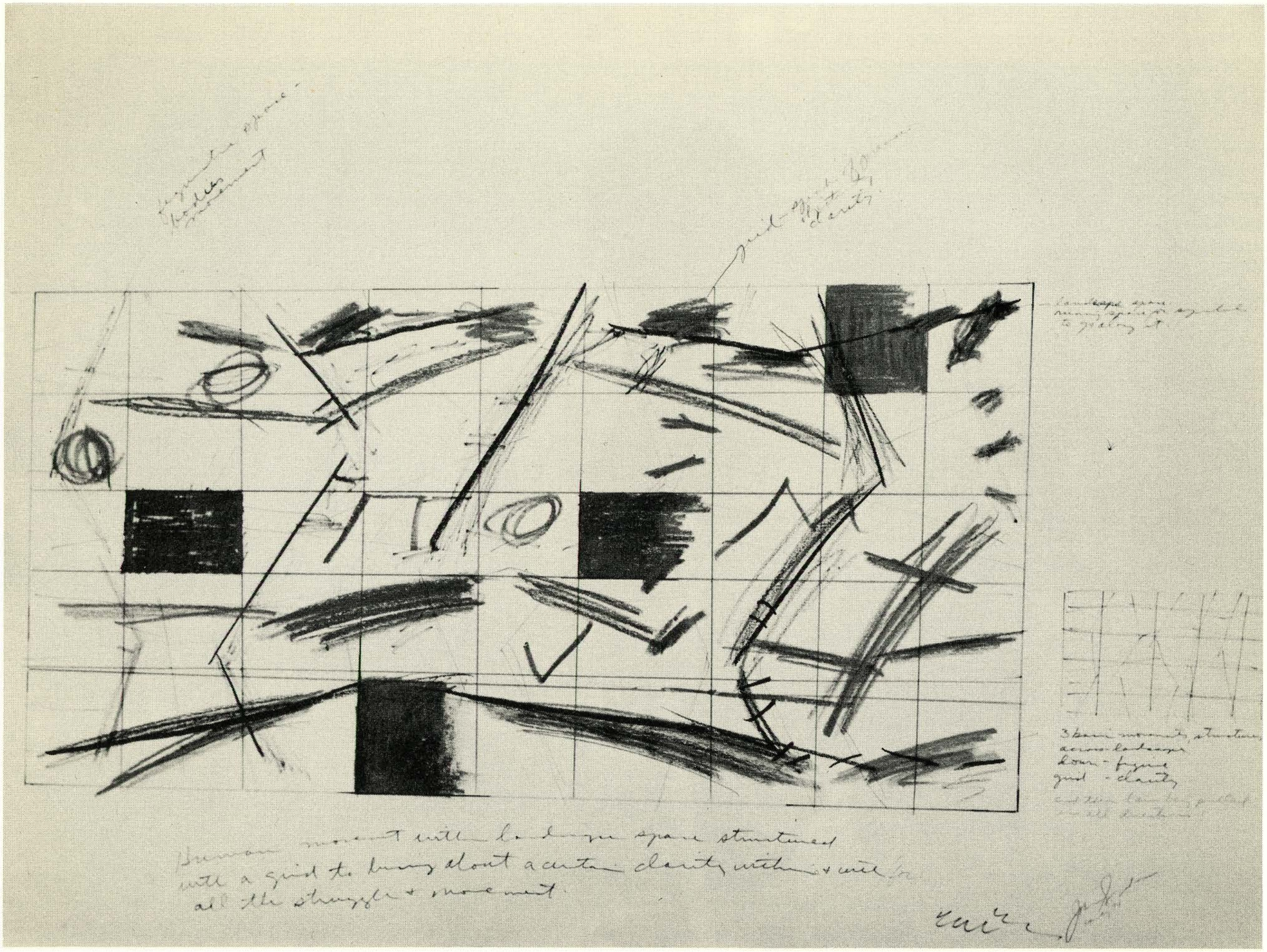
Certain areas of shared concern and investigation have begun to clearly emerge.

There was first—perhaps—a disenchantment with the grandiose, public scale of American painting. (I first began to observe reactions against this characteristic of painting around 1972.) What had been so heroic in Still, Newman, Rothko, and Pollock—so crucial to the impact of their mature work, and what had such incredible élan and brilliance in the strongest work of Louis, Noland, and Olitski, began to pall in the hands of many "lyrically" abstract painters after 1970. Scale as content became insufficient content—without the necessary skeletal structure and painterly musculature.

One of the earliest abstract artists to begin painting small-scale works which aimed for both intimacy and intensity was the New York-based painter, Jake Berthot. In the early '70's, he began paintings of a two-foot square format, without completely eschewing larger-scale works.

Related to this concern and constituting what I believe to be the most widespread impulse in American abstract painting in the past five years is the strong reaction against painting which is programmatic in conception, "depersonalized" in execution, or serial in its relation to the artist's production.

While the works of Agnes Martin, Robert Ryman, Robert Mangold, and Brice Marden—all of whom have entered the literature devoted to "reductive" "minimal," or "fundamental" painting—continue to be highly valued and all but universally praised by their fellow artists, there has been a noticeable turning away from a



Drawing for The Storm 1974. Pencil, crayon on paper, 22×30 inches. Collection of the artist

Womanchild 1972. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 6×9 feet. Collection, Stephen D. Paine, Boston, Massachusetts reductivist sensibility in general in recent years—and surely the paucity of invention and lack of emotional content apparent in much of the work by the progeny of Reinhardt, Judd, Morris, and the afore-mentioned painters have played a significant role in the growing disenchantment.

There has been an obvious hungering for more content in painting—a more personal statement—more emotion—a greater revealing of the artist's hand.

The response has taken many forms.

Paul Brach, the painter/teacher, has spoken of the number of younger American artists who seem to be pretending that the past seventy years had never existed, in order to go back and "re-invent" modernism.

One sees the work of other artists who are open in their admiration of—and emulation of—Matisse and specific artists within the Constructivist sensibility.

Figurative painting is enjoying an almost sudden popularity—and indeed respectability—in many quarters. A number of artists whose earlier commitment was to "pure" abstraction have admitted recognizable images to their vocabularies—and enough artists are investigating and employing a type of nonobjective construct to allow the critical evaluation of—and exhibition of works by—a group of "new" imagists.

Abstract painters today coexist in a less vociferous manner with their figurative peers and—in many cases—extend to them the recognition and respect that the first generation Abstract Expressionists—in full battle mentality—understandably gave only to Edward Hopper and few others.

This has had the happy effect of allowing the accomplishments of such different figures as Philip Pearlstein, Richard Estes, Chuck Close, Vija Celmins, and Catherine Murphy to stand on their own merits—with discussions and questionings of major and minor modes fading into the background. It may even have something to do with the belated admission of Richard Diebenkorn to the ranks of living masters of painting, whereas in the recent past not even the sheer quality of his oeuvre quite permitted his passage to those remote shores.

We are in a rather curious era. As painting has reached out to embrace an encyclopaedic range of artistic sensibilities, to share the materials and structures once germane only to sculpture or to crafts, and to establish a more extensive interrelationship with photography, so has it attempted to turn inward—in the directions taken by a host of practitioners, to become more introspective, more personal, more intimate, more egocentric, and less extroverted, less didactic, less public, and less formal.

Many view as healthy the present situation, in which there is no dominant style or predominant figure—unlike the phase of Abstract Expressionism when deKooning's work provided such a focal point. By comparison, the '70's might be thought of as a decade of diversity, although it was the divisiveness of the '60's—poitical and social, as well as artistic—which set the visual arts community on those forked paths.

Another difference between the '50's and the '70's—and one which has a crucial effect on the evolution of the visual arts—is the size of the cast of characters. In the earlier decade, there were relatively few persons involved, and this made the charting of influences, movements, countermovements, groupings, and divisions an easier task—for critics and art historians, as well as for the layperson as interested observer.

As universities and other schools across the breadth of the country release their annual crops of art students into the marketplace, however, the number of participants increases the levels of artistic production, communication, documentation, and preservation to unprecedented heights.

As always, in any area of human endeavor, there are few true pioneers and visionaries. Whether the sheer number of artists at work today makes it easier or more difficult to detect the "originals" among them is open to debate.

One is inclined to the latter view when he sees how quickly—in recent years—any measurable sharing or communality among painters with regards to imagery or technique is seized upon—not only by support institutions such as critics and museum curators, who soon have formulated movements and schools, as well as topics for articles and exhibition themes—but also by artists themselves, who can quickly effect the monotony, if not the danger, of yet another short-lived academy.

The Storm 1974. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 6×12 feet. Collection, Nicholas Wilder, Los Angeles

This tendency among artists whose need for rapid recognition and/or economic support outweighs their ability to patiently refine an individual sensibility has been responsible for a bandwagon response to the success in the marketplace of super-realism and—more recently—pattern painting. One can already see evidence that the above-mentioned "new imagery" and the densely or thickly painted picture constitute additional areas for overcolonization.

The realization that the work of certain painters (whose celebrity is an accurate reflection of the fineness and importance of their work) is especially susceptible to widespread plagiarism and imitation because of either its extreme seductiveness (deKooning and Wiley are obvious examples) or its seemingly simplistic format or physical structure (Marden and Ryman, for example) may lead one to a separate consideration of the work of those "lone wolves" whose directions—vocabularies—sensibilities are so individual—particular—eccentric that they do not encourage—or even permit—imitation. Such consideration may lead to an attempted analysis of the factors which seem to remove these artists' work from the arena of more communal investigation.

. . . and this consideration brings me to the work of the subject of this exhibition, Joan Snyder.

She is, in my opinion, one of the truly individual painters of her generation, and there are a number of important characteristics of her work which set her apart from her peers. A fuller understanding of Snyder's work may follow a brief discussion of these individuating characteristics.

I believe that two of the most vital and most important characteristics of Snyder's paintings are 1) their multifaceted nature and intentions and 2) the individuality, or separateness, of each painting in relation to other paintings which she has completed within a given period of time.

Think for a moment about the great, heroic works one associates with American art's coming of age—the "triumph of American painting," as writer Irving Sandler so succintly and compellingly termed it.[4] What comes to mind? A late Rothko? Dark, glowing, achingly beautiful color—like some great luminous night moth that comes to rest on a screen door in August. Or a classic Pollock drip painting? That great surge and sweep of frenzied energy and passion—like thunderous surf breaking on the shore. A David Smith sculpture from the "Cubi" group? Silent, massive, noble—mysterious, and yet startlingly logical. Late Reinhardt? Brooding, black, unyielding. Morris Louis "Unfurled"? Twin waterfalls of color—elegant, dazzling, optimistic.

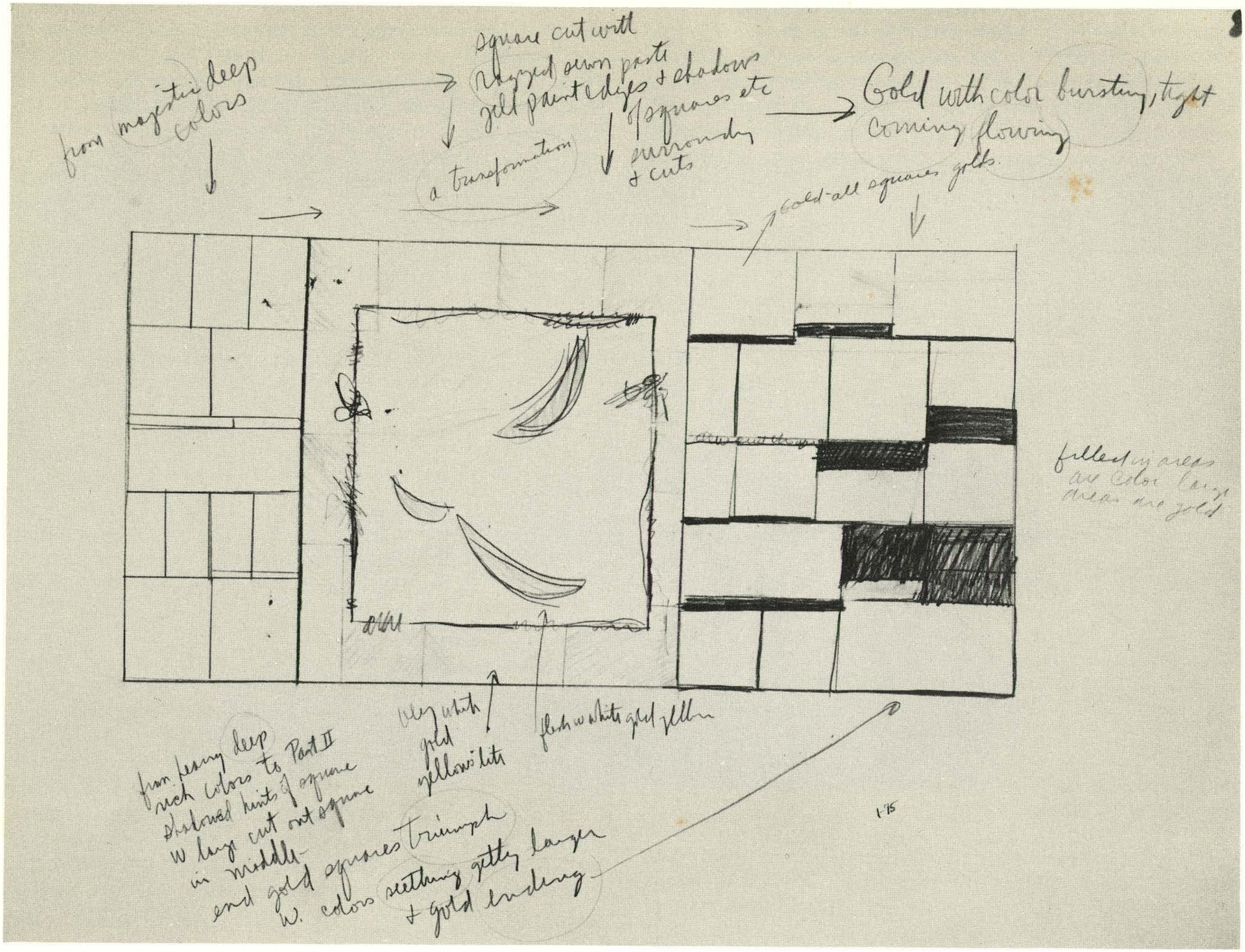
In almost every case, a sharp, clear image comes to mind. A gestalt. It's not that there is not a lifetime of subtleties to expore and ponder, but first the slap in the face of the brave and noble effort—of the vital decision—of genius? is there.

As is almost always noted by those writers who have tackled her work in print, however, this definite memory/image of a Snyder painting is of quite a different nature. Marcia Tucker has written, "Seeing Joan Snyder's paintings for the first time is like looking into a partially demolished building filled with the remants and debris of its occupants' lives; the initial experience is that of surprise, disorientation, curiosity. . . . There is almost too much to look at at once, a shocking sense of disorder in the context of what were once structured, habitable spaces."[5] And further, " . . . recalling any single painting is like trying to recall a piece of music in its entirety. At best, one remembers the melody line, recognizes in the relationship of notes a style, and perceives the piece as much by its intervals and silences as by its notes."[6]

In speaking of the dualities within her paintings, Snyder refers to her "constant avoidance of single imagery—simple and single imagery."[7] Again and again, the important role which her responses to music have played in the evolution of her painting is mentioned: "the idea that a painting can have many moods and many feelings," that "it has different parts and different sections—like a symphony does."

She never uses the term "contradictions" when discussing her work, though the critic Hayden Herrera, who knows Snyder's work perhaps as well as any person, has written of the "contradictions and disjunctions" which exist within the "visual coherence" which Snyder can achieve.[8]

Snyder is full of qualities which would strike many as contradictory: the ardent feminist, and the devoted wife of a complex and gifted artist—the ambitious painter



Drawing for Symphony III 1975. Pencil on paper, 22×30 inches. Collection, Michael Walls who is repeatedly drawn to the vitality of New York, and the very private person whose artistic and emotional wholeness demands the quietude and seclusion of her farm in Pennsylvania — the tough-talking, no nonsense painter, and the tender, sentiment-filled mother.

Because her work flows directly out of her, it contains contradictions too, and that is — in one sense — at the core of its richness and vitality.

Snyder shows me no hint of possessing the extraordinary editorial skills of an Ellsworth Kelly, that ability to put just the right amount of ingredients into a painting — the "drawn" line, the chosen colors, the "there" but suppressed surface — to create a supremely taut, elegant statement. She sometimes seems to put in everything she knows. So anxious is she to bring meaning to her painting — "a painting has got to be *about* something" — so disposed to plumb her psyche — to put beauty *and* truth on canvas — that the paintings more often than not fairly brim over with content, with painterly incident, and with emotion. (Herrera has written that when Snyder's message was too urgent to be expressed in forms, that it was spelled out in words on the painting.)[9] . . . and yet, because she is so gifted and so committed, this maker of paintings which are often clumsy and awkward, and even vulgar, can make sense and meaning — can even make magic — out of what would turn to a hopeless potpourri in other painters' hands.

She is largely self-taught as an artist; she began late (with one painting class as a senior in college); her approach and her interests are almost entirely non-art historical[10] (making her a rare bird among abstract painters of the most recent decades); she acknowledges being a "lone wolf," especially in recent years ("I have absolutely no dialogue with any painter. None." — which does not mean that she does not number many gifted artists among her friends; "I talk mostly to myself. The vocabulary that I use in talking to myself almost isn't even a vocabulary (with which) to have a dialogue with somebody.").

Snyder's work draws richness in the constant crossing over in its sources between the intuitive and the analytical — and between the emotional and the formal.

"You can't avoid the formal issues. I deal with them all the time. But that isn't what my work is about. It's always about something else.

"I think my work operates on many different levels. It is terribly emotional, but I also think it deals with as many painterly problem-solvings as (does the work of) any other painter, but that doesn't become my quest and that doesn't become the subject matter of my paintings."

In the light of these statements, it is perhaps not surprising that Snyder believes that the principal characteristic separating her work from that of other painters of her generation is its intense emotional content.

She states also the belief that most painters of her age group fall within one of two groups: those who "have a message" and those who are "formal artists." She feels that her strength as an artist lies in the fact that her work crosses between both areas constantly.

If surprised by these self-appraisals on Snyder's part, one might consider her work in relation to that of the other American abstract painters who are now, let us say, between thirty and fifty years of age and who have "survived" the very real struggle to make serious works during the past ten years: Brice Marden, Jake Berthot, Robert Mangold, Jo Baer, William Conlon — the work of each is "cooler" emotionally and more strictly formal in structural organization than is that of Snyder. Contrasted with the work of such a brilliant artist as Frank Stella (whose most recent paintings are related in their bravura and in their optically dazzling beauty to his late "Protractor" works, while being more rambunctious and eccentric), Snyder's paintings operate on quite different — and more complex — emotional levels. Even those assured painters her age dealing with recognizable imagery — Chuck Close, Sylvia Mangold, Richard Estes — are "sterner" and much less inclined to allow emotional content to interfere or compete with the concept of their work.

I have stated the importance, in my opinion, of the separateness of each of Snyder's paintings within the flow of her work. Because she has developed an intensely personal vocabulary of images, structures, rhythms, gestures, markings, and color relationships, a Snyder painting is as markedly individual and as uniquely her own territory as are the works of such disparate painters as Al Held, Robert Mangold, and Robert Ryman. Yet, unlike those figures and indeed most of her well-established contemporaries, Snyder does not work in the manner of "close variations on a theme."

The ramifications of this—both intrinsic (related to her growth as an artist) and extrinsic (related to the public's recognition of her work)—are many.

I believe that most persons within the visual arts community would agree that it is absolutely necessary for an artist to produce a certain number of works within a particular mode which are more or less immediately recognizable as the work of that specific person, in order to separate himself or herself from the enormous number of artists working and showing publicly today—in short, to achieve visibility, recognition, and—ultimately—a reputation.

Happily, for most artists, the natural course of painting seriously—of the intense investigation of one's chosen or discovered visual language over a period of weeks, months, and years—does result in the existence of a number of works whose kinship can be comprehended by the interested observer.

It goes without saying that many estimable artists deliberately paint a group, sequence, or series of felicitously interrelated works for the specific purpose of producing the components of one or more cohesive exhibitions. They may do this "coldbloodedly"—for career and/or economic reasons—even though they are anxious to move on to new ideas and projects, and though they are perfectly aware that the most they may gain from the process is an added level of patience, discipline, or craft.

For Snyder, however, this course is totally foreign to her nature. It has been oft-remarked that she could have easily advanced both her visibility and her purse by lingering at some length on the "stroke" paintings (the artist's generic name for those works accomplished between 1969 and 1974 which first brought her acclaim). It is interesting that more than one critic lamented in print her turning away from these paintings whose indisputable originality and intoxicating vitality and spontaneity seemed to promise as much for abstract painting as they did for the artist herself.

She states that "Painting is so important to me that I could never paint for an audience." Each time she begins a painting, it is a whole new adventure. This adventure and the process by which she works involve the sorting out and the editing of the many "painting ideas" that flood her consciousness on an everyday basis. "I live my life . . . and the ideas that keep coming back to me are the ones I know are important, and then I begin to edit them and out of maybe twenty different painting ideas I choose one and do that painting."

She refers also, however, to the role of her subconscious in the evolution of the work. "I almost don't have control over it (the course the paintings take and the images that appear). I mean I do, and then I don't."

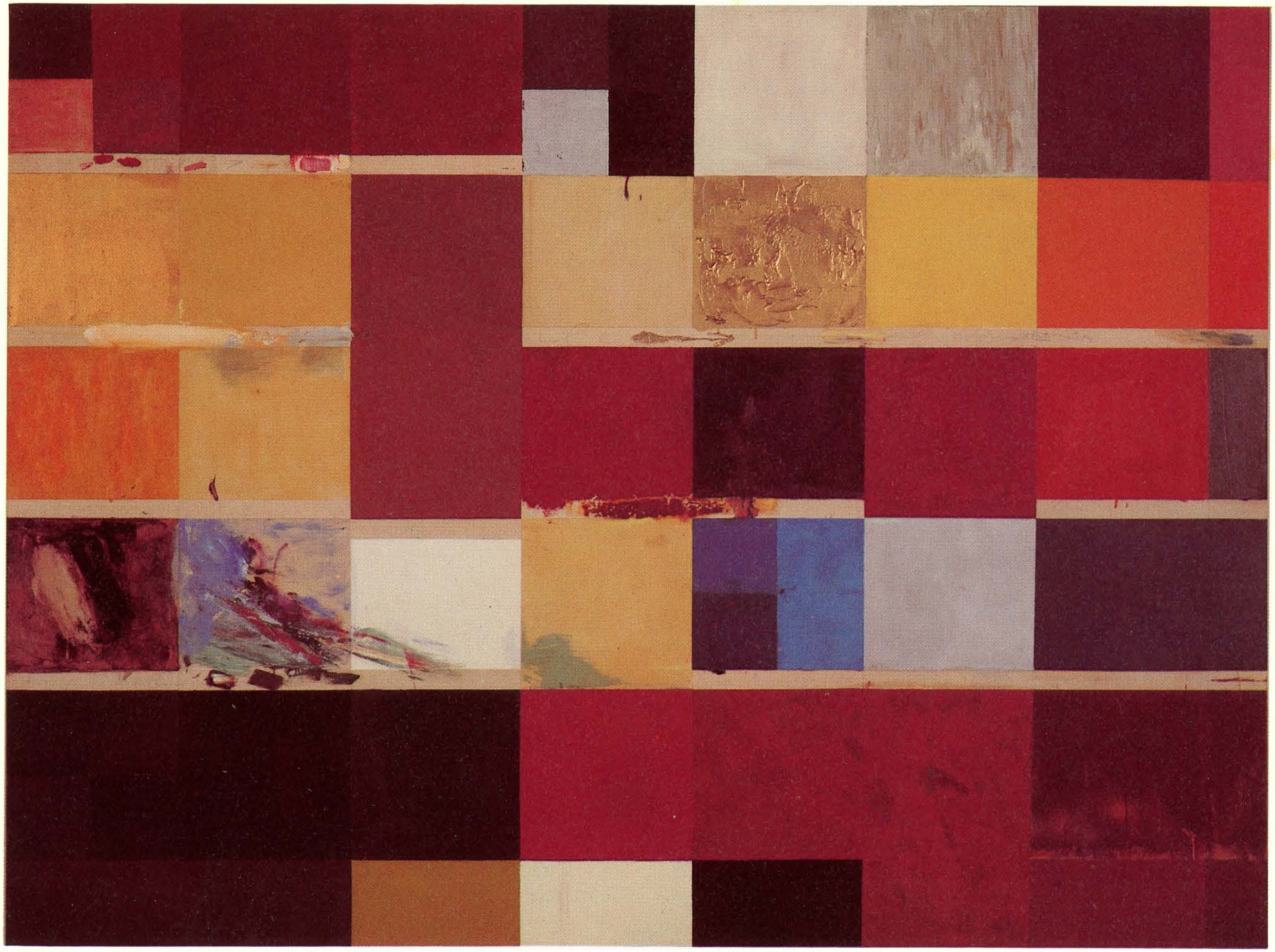
It is important to distinguish between that which she terms a "painting idea" (the broad concept of the work; that which she is saying in the painting) and the "painterly problem-solvings" referred to earlier (the formal issues, pictorial solutions, structural devices, and "discoveries"—a term Snyder uses frequently in discussing the growth of her work). She says that to understand the evolution of her work, one has to consider each painting separately, as there were always two or three problems she was tackling or discoveries she was making in each painting.[11] One or more of these concerns would then be carried over to, and reinvestigated in, the following painting, though they might not occur in the same combination in a work for some time—and by then new discoveries would have been made, and additional investigations and solutions would have complicated and enriched the painting.

This is a hallmark of Snyder's painting. This constant backward and forward movement within her own work—self-nourishing; re-examining the successes and disappointments of earlier works; the striving to "pull together" everything which she feels has been vital and true in the earlier work into the new.

When discussing the evolution of her paintings, I asked the artist which work she considers her first fully realized painting. Although she spoke later of paintings which "in looking back, . . . don't lose for me," her immediate response was "I feel that I haven't gotten to that one yet, and that's what keeps me going."

. . . and so it is—and why it is—that the paintings are so commanding—so worth one's close attention—so full of struggle and intense caring and risk-taking. That is why there are the clumsy, dumb paintings occasionally—and the occasional ones that are sublimely beautiful.

The fact that each is a wholehearted undertaking by an artist who is always searching and who is never self-satisfied helps to explain the occurrence of a painting such as "Symphony III," which has all the tranquility,



Symphony II 1974. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 6×9 feet. Collection, Nicholas Wilder, Los Angeles the embroidered elegance, and the classicism of a masterpiece by Harunobu, directly after the completion of the violent, torment-filled painting, "Vanishing Theatre."

"I don't know what it is (about) my contemporaries. I think that they think about painting very differently than I do. I don't know why. I don't know what it is."

"For me, when I started to paint, it was like speaking for the first time. I mean, I felt like my whole life, I had never spoken. I had never been heard. I had never said anything that had any meaning. When I started painting, it was like I was speaking for the first time. And that's how important painting is to me."

Amen.

Michael Walls
Richmond, Virginia
November 1979

Footnotes

1. Elderfield, John. "Diebenkorn At Ocean Park," *Art International*, Lugano, Switzerland; Volume XVI/2, 20 February 1972; page 20.
2. Boston area painter, Albert Alcalay
3. A project by West Coast artist, Allen Ruppersberg, completed in 1973–74
4. Sandler, Irving. *The Triumph Of American Painting: A History Of Abstract Expressionism*, Harper & Row, New York City; 1970.
5. Tucker, Marcia. "The Anatomy of a Stroke: Recent Paintings by Joan Snyder," *Artforum*, New York City; May 1971; page 42.
6. Ibid., page 45.
7. All quotations from Joan Snyder are drawn from a tape-recorded discussion between Michael Walls and Joan on 12 August 1979 at her farm, Martin's Creek, Pennsylvania.
8. Herrera, Hayden. Untitled essay, "Joan Snyder: Seven Years of Work," Neuberger Museum, State University of New York, Purchase; 1978; page 2.
9. For a sensitively stated, negative response to this aspect of Snyder's work, see; Rubinfien, Leo. "Reviews: New York," "Joan Snyder, Hamilton Gallery," *Artforum*, New York City; Summer 1978; pages 74 and 75.
10. When asked to discuss artists whose work has been an influence on her work or in some way important to her, Snyder cites as very strong inspirations: the German Expressionists, the Fauves, Hans Hofmann ("Hofmann was a great inspiration to me. There's no question about that."), Cézanne, and primitive art and children's art (in both, it is the directness and the strong sense of the narrative that appeal to her). Also important to her, although in a less direct way, have been: Jackson Pollock ("the freedom of Pollock"), Mark Rothko ("important in certain strange, quiet ways"), some of Georgia O'Keeffe's work, Picasso ("so intelligent and so spontaneous;" "and not being afraid to do things"; his works are "outrageous, and always very beautiful"), and Matisse ("eloquent"). At one time, she was very moved by the (early) works of Marisol (the primitive aspects and the clarity and simplicity of organization). Recently, she has greatly admired the work of Antoni Tàpies ("so strong formally, but always has an emotional punch to it—and reason") and that of Mary Frank.
11. An example of one of these "discoveries" is given in the artist's words, as she relates the making of a painting, "Love Your Bones" (1970–71), and her use of the grid in that specific work: "That painting had strokes going down (referring to the vertical stacking of the "strokes") and had a zigzag line going across, and as I hit the zigzag line—which was a zigzag grid going across, I imagined to myself that I could see the inside of each stroke as it went through those zigzag boxes. I could see the top. I could see the bottom. It was like me discovering Cubism—in a certain way. What I was beginning to do was wanting to turn the strokes around—wanting to see the back of them—the side of them—wanting to see what they looked like, instead of just flat . . . . Somehow, I wanted to twist them around, and in the process, I was twisting the grid—which is what the zigzag lines were coming from."

Vanishing Theatre 1974. Oil, acrylic, chicken wire, papier maché, fabric and thread on canvas, 5×10 feet. Collection, Sidney Singer, Jr., New York

INVENTORY LIST

SQUARES, 1972, oil and acrylic on canvas, 48″×48″, Collection of the Artist
SUMMER PAINTING, 1971, oil and acrylic on canvas, 60″×60″, Courtesy of Patricia Hamilton Gallery, New York, New York
BIG GREEN, 1971, oil and acrylic on canvas, 72″×120″, Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Samuel I. Newhouse, Jr., New York, New York
SUMMER ORANGE, 1970, oil and acrylic on canvas, 42″×96″, Collection of Mr. Michael Walls, Richmond, Virginia
WOMANCHILD, 1972 – 73, oil and acrylic on canvas, 72″×108″, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Stephen D. Paine, Boston, Massachusetts
RESOLVE IN 4×8, 1972, oil and acrylic on canvas, 48″×96″, Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Stranahan, Perrysburg, Ohio
RED SQUARES, 1973, oil and acrylic on canvas, 36″×36″, Collection of the Artist
UNTITLED, 1970, oil and acrylic on canvas, 12″×12″, Collection of Dr. & Mrs. Dalmau, Glenn Gardner, New Jersey
LINES AND STROKES, 1969, oil and acrylic on canvas, 68″×125″, Collection of the Artist
POEM, 1970 – 71, oil and acrylic on canvas, 36″×48″, Collection of Dr. & Mrs. Dalmau, Glenn Gardner, New Jersey
UNTITLED, 1970, oil and acrylic on canvas, 22″×36″, Collection of the Artist
SQUARES, 1972, oil and acrylic on canvas, 48″×48″, Collection of the Artist
MAIDEN VOYAGE, 1977, oil and acrylic on canvas, 48″×96″, Courtesy of Patricia Hamilton Gallery, New York, New York
THE STORM, 1974, oil and acrylic on canvas, 72″×144″, Collection of Mr. Nicholas Wilder, Los Angeles, California
VANISHING THEATRE, 1974 – 75, oil, acrylic, chicken wire, papier maché, fabric, 60″×144″, Collection of Mr. Sidney Singer, Jr., New York, NY
SYMPHONY III, 1974 – 75, oil, acrylic, papier maché and thread on canvas, 60″×120″, Collection of Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Purchased through a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and an anonymous donor
SYMPHONY II, 1974, oil and acrylic on canvas, 72″×96″, Collection of Mr. Nicholas Wilder, Los Angeles, California
CREEK SQUARE, 1974, oil and acrylic on canvas, 60″×60″, Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Marvin Gerstin, Bethesda, Maryland
AND OUR SOULS, 1976, oil and acrylic on paper, 36″×60″, Collection of American Can Company, Greenwich, Connecticut
DOUBLE SYMPHONY DRAWING, 18¼″×34¼″, acrylic on paper, Collection of the Artist
UNTITLED DRAWING, 24″×32″, pencil and acrylic on paper, Collection of the Artist
UNTITLED DRAWING, 24″×32″, pencil and acrylic on paper, Collection of the Artist

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

BIRTH:
16 April 1940; Highland Park, New Jersey

EDUCATION:
Douglass College, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1958–1962; B.A. in Sociology, 1962

Rutgers, The State University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, M.F.A. in Painting, 1966

TEACHING:
Joan Snyder has taught on a contractual basis, as an artist-in-residence, and as a visiting artist at the following institutions:

Rutgers, The State University (Upward Bound project)
Ferkauf Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Yeshiva University; New York City
State University of New York, Stonybrook
University of Colorado; Boulder
Yale University Summer School of Music and Art; Norfolk, Connecticut
Yale University; New Haven, Connecticut
Princeton University; New Jersey
University of California, Irvine
San Diego State University; California
Atlanta College of Art; Georgia
San Francisco Art Institute; California
Wake Forest University; Winston-Salem, North Carolina

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Anderson, Laurie. "Reviews & Previews", "Joan Snyder's recent paintings . . ."; *Art News*, May 1973; page 91.

Baker, Kenneth. an untitled essay; *The Christian Science Monitor*, 20 April 1972; page 8.

Baker. *"Joan Snyder"*; exhibition catalog for "Joan Snyder & Pat Steir"; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Massachusetts; 1974.

Bell, Jane. "Arts Reviews", "Ten Painters in New York Michael Walls"; *Arts Magazine*, October 1974; page 62.

Bell. "Drawing, Now, Then, And Again"; *New York Arts Journal*, November-December 1977; pages 13 and 14.

Bell. "Joan Snyder"; *Contemporary Artists*, edited by Colin Naylor and Genesis P-Orridge; St. James Press, London and St. Martin's Press, New York City; 1977.

Bell. "New York Reviews", "Generation (Susan Caldwell)"; *Art News*, April 1979; pages 154 and 156.

Borden, Lizzie. "New York", "Joan Snyder, Paley and Lowe Gallery"; *Artforum*, January 1972; pages 88 and 89.

Davis, Douglas. "Portrait of Young Artists"; *Newsweek*, 7 February 1972; page 79.

Davis. "A Spring Sampler of Shows"; *Newsweek*, 30 April 1973; pages 88 and 89.

Davis. "Art Without Limits"; *Newsweek*, 24 December 1973; pages 68-74.

Elderfield, John. "Grids"; *Artforum*, May 1972; pages 52–59.

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Frankenstein, Alfred. "Powerful, Roughhewn Paintings"; *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 August 1971; page 36.

Herrera, Hayden. "Review of Exhibitions", "New York", "Joan Snyder at Carl Solway"; *Art in America*, May–June 1976; pages 103 and 104.

Herrera. an untitled essay (in the form of the reprinting of the above review from *Art in America*); exhibition catalog for "Joan Snyder", Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, Century City, California; 1976.

Herrera. an untitled essay; exhibition catalog for *Joan Snyder: Seven Years of Work*, Neuberger Museum, State University of New York, Purchase; 1978.

Hickey, Dave. "New York: Reviews and Previews", "Frankenthaler at Emmerich, Joan Snyder at Paley & Lowe"; *Art in America*, January–February 1972; pages 33 and 35.

Hughes, Robert. "Myths of 'Sensibility"; *Time*, 20 March 1972; pages 72–77.

Kramer, Hilton. "Other exhibitions this week . . ."; *The New York Times*, 3 March 1978; page C 18.

Linville, Kasha. "New York", "Group Show, Paley and Lowe Gallery"; *Artforum*, January 1971; page 81.

Lippard, Lucy R. "Introduction"; anthology catalog titled "*Women Artists Series, Year Five*", Mabel Smith Douglass Library, Douglass College, New Brunswick, New Jersey; 1976.

Lippard. "Exchanges of What? Esthetic Energy? Style? Prestige? Power? Best Wishes?"; exhibition catalog for "*Exchanges I*", Louis Abrons Arts for Living Center, Henry Street Settlement, New York City; 1979.

Perreault, John. "A lollapalooza of a mishmash" (a review of "1972 Annual Exhibition: Contemporary American Painting", Whitney Museum of American Art); *The Village Voice*, 10 February 1972.

Ratcliff, Carter. "New York Letter"; *Art International (incorporating The Lugano Review)*, 20 January 1972; page 68.

Rickey, Carrie. "Joan Snyder"; *Village Voice*, 3 December 1979; page 95.

Robbin, Tony. "A Protean Sensibility"; *Arts Magazine*, May 1971; pages 28, 29, and 30.

Rubinfien, Leo. "Reviews: New York", "Joan Snyder, Hamilton Gallery"; *Artforum*, Summer 1978; pages 74 and 75.

Russell, John. "Generation: An Invitational Exhibition (Susan Caldwell Gallery . . .)"; *The New York Times*, 9 February 1979; page C 24.

Schjeldahl, Peter. "Joan Snyder—The Energy And Surprise Have Gone"; *The New York Times*, 13 May 1973; page D 23.

Snyder, Joan. an untitled statement; *Studio International Journal of Modern Art*, July-August 1974.

Snyder. "Painters Reply . . ."; *Artforum*, September 1975; pages 26–36.

Stiles, Knute. "San Francisco", "Joan Snyder, Michael Walls Gallery"; *Artforum*, November 1971; pages 87 and 88.

Tucker, Marcia. "The Anatomy of a Stroke: Recent Paintings by Joan Snyder"; *Artforum*, May 1971; pages 42–45.

Welish, Marjorie. "Review of Exhibitions", "Joan Snyder at Hamilton"; *Art in America*, July–August 1978; page 114.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1970	Dayton's Gallery 12; Minneapolis, Minnesota*
1970	A Clean Well Lighted Place; Austin, Texas*
1970	*Small Works*, The New Gallery; Cleveland, Ohio, 4 December—unannounced closing.
1971	Bykert Gallery; New York City. (February)*
1971	Paley & Lowe Inc.; New York City. (March)*
1971	*Into the 70's*, Mansfield Fine Arts Museum; Mansfield, Ohio*
1971	Glauber-Poons Gallery; Amsterdam, The Netherlands*
1972	*1972 Annual Exhibition: Contemporary American Painting*, Whitney Museum of American Art; New York City, 25 January–19 March. Catalog.
1972	*Grids*, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania; Philadelphia, 27 January–1 March. Catalog.
1972	*Three Artists: Mary Heilmann, Joan Snyder, Pat Steir*, Main Gallery, Department of Art, University of Rhode Island; Kingston. (February) *
1972	*Gedok American Woman Artist Show*, Kunsthaus; Hamburg, German Federal Republic, 14 April–14 May. Catalog.
1972	*8 New York Painters*, University Art Museum, University of California; Berkeley, 10 May–25 June.
1972	*Paintings On Paper*, The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art; Ridgefield, Connecticut, 17 September–17 December.

1972 *12 Statements: Beyond The 60's*, The Detroit Institute of Arts; Michigan, 27 September– 5 November. Catalog.

1972-73 *Ten Artists* (*Who Also Happen To Be Women)*, The Kenan Center; Lockport, New York, 17 November (72)– 14 January (73). The exhibition was also installed at Michael C. Rockefeller Arts Center Gallery; Fredonia, New York, 19 January– 18 February (73). Catalog.

1973 *1973 Biennial Exhibition: Contemporary American Art*, Whitney Museum of American Art; New York City, 10 January– 18 March. Catalog.

1973 *Women Choose Women*, The New York Cultural Center; New York City, 12 January– 18 February. Catalog.

1973 *American Drawings 1963–1973*, Whitney Museum of American Art; New York City, 25 May– 22 July. Catalog.

1973 *Image of Movement*, Stamford Museum; Connecticut, 22 June– 22 July. Catalog.

1973 *Norfolk 73: An exhibition of paintings, prints, photographs and drawings by the resident faculty of the Art Division of the Yale University Summer School of Music and Art*, The Art Gallery; Norfolk, Connecticut, 24 June– 15 July. Catalog.

1973 *Options 73/30: Recent Works of Art*, Contemporary Arts Center; Cincinnati, Ohio, 25 September– 11 November. Catalog.

1973-74 *28 Painters of the New York Avant-Garde/28 Peintres de l'avant-garde New-Yorkaise*, The Saidye Bronfman Centre; Montreal, Canada, 27 November (73)– 3 January (74). Catalog.

1974 *Recent Abstract Painting*, Pratt Institute Gallery, Pratt Institute; Brooklyn, New York, 21 February– 15 March. Catalog.

1974 *The Levi Strauss Collection*, San Francisco Museum of Art; California, 15 March– 14 April. Catalog.

1974 *Woman's Work: American Art 1974*, Museum of the Philadelphia Civic Center; Pennsylvania, 27 April– 26 May.

1974 *Ten Painters in New York*, Michael Walls Gallery; New York City, 15 June– 6 July.

1975 *34th Biennial of Contemporary American Painting*, The Corcoran Gallery of Art; Washington, D.C., 22 February– 6 April. Catalog.

1975 *Fourteen Abstract Painters*, Frederick S. Wight Art Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles, 25 March– 25 May.

1975 *Thirty Artists in America, Part I*, Michael Walls Gallery; New York City, 7 June– 3 July.

1976 *Recent Abstract Painting*, Fine Arts Gallery, State University of New York, College at Brockport, 8 February– 5 March. Catalog.

1976 *American Artists '76: A Celebration*, Marion Koogler McNay Art Institute; San Antonio, Texas, 23 May– 31 July. Catalog.

1977 Carl Solway Gallery; New York City. An exhibition of drawings. (May)*

1977 *Contemporary Women: Consciousness and Content*, The Brooklyn Museum Art School; New York, 1 October– 27 October.

1977 *Drawing On A Grid: Eva Hesse, Agnes Martin, Katherine Porter, Joan Snyder*, Works On Paper Program, Susan Caldwell Inc., New York City, 5 October– 29 October.

1977 *Twelve From Rutgers*, Rutgers University Art Gallery; New Brunswick, New Jersey (November–December).*

1978 *Perspective '78: Works by Women*, Freedman Gallery, Albright College; Reading, Pennsylvania, 8 October– 15 November. Catalog.

1978 *A Benefit Exhibition for the Yale School of Art: Works by Members of the Yale Faculty 1950–1978*, Harold Reed Gallery; New York City, 19 October– 19 November. Catalog.

1979 *Generation: Twenty Abstract Painters Born In The United States Between 1929 and 1946*, Susan Caldwell Inc.; New York City, 2 February– 3 March.

1979 *The Implicit Image: Abstract Painting In The '70's*, Nielsen Gallery; Boston, Massachusetts, 29 April– 1 June.

1979 *Color And Structure*, Hamilton Gallery; New York City, 5 May– 2 June.

1979 *Exchanges I*, Louis Abrons Arts For Living Center, Henry Street Settlement; New York City, 11 May– 8 June. Catalog.

1979 *The 1970's: New American Painting*, organized under the auspices of The New Museum, New York City, for the International Communication

Agency (of the U.S. Government); it will tour Europe between June 1979 and late 1980. Catalog.

TWO-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

1966 *Joan Snyder, Paintings Sculpture, Lida Hilton, Graphics, Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibitions*, Art Gallery, Douglass College, Rutgers, The State University; New Brunswick, New Jersey, 13 April–25 April.

1971 *Joan Snyder, Paintings; Laurence Fink, Photographs*, Paley & Lowe Inc.; New York City, 6 November–27 November.

1974 *Joan Snyder & Pat Steir*, Institute of Contemporary Art; Boston, Massachusetts, 1 October–12 November. Catalog.

1976 *Joan Snyder—Laurence Fink*, The Broxton Gallery; Westwood (Los Angeles), California, 1 June–26 June.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1967 Little Gallery; New Brunswick, New Jersey*

1970 *Three Paintings*, Paley & Lowe Inc.; New York City, (December).*

1971 *Joan Snyder/Paintings*, Michael Walls Gallery; San Francisco, California, 11 August–4 September.

1972 Douglass College; New Brunswick, New Jersey, (April).*

1972 *Joan Snyder*, Parker Street 470 Gallery; Boston, Massachusetts, (14 April)–6 May.*

1973 Paley & Lowe Inc.; New York City, 21 April–16 May.*

1976 *Joan Snyder, New Work 1974–75*, Carl Solway Gallery; New York City, 6 February–13 March.

1976 *Joan Snyder, Works On Paper 1973–76*, Faculty Office Building Gallery, Reed College; Portland, Oregon, 27 March–25 April.

1976 *Joan Snyder*, Mabel Smith Douglass Library, Douglass College, Rutgers, The State University; New Brunswick, New Jersey, 19 April–14 May. Catalog.

1976 *Joan Snyder Recent Paintings*, Portland Center for the Visual Arts; Oregon, 6 May–13 June.

1976 *Joan Snyder*, Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art; Century City (Los Angeles), California, 10 August–10 September. Catalog.

1977 *Joan Snyder*, Fine Arts Building, Wake Forest University; Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 18 April–13 May.

1978 *Joan Snyder: Seven Years of Work*, Neuberger Museum, State University of New York, College at Purchase, 17 January–4 March. Catalog.

1978 *Joan Snyder: New Work*, Hamilton Gallery of Contemporary Art; New York City, 18 February–25 March.

1979 *Joan Snyder at W A R M, A Women's Collective Art Space*, Women's Art Registry of Minnesota; Minneapolis, 7 May–17 June.

1979 *Joan Snyder, New Paintings*, Patricia Hamilton Gallery; New York, New York, 16 November–15 December.

*Complete data on these exhibitions was not obtained.

COLLECTIONS

Museum collections in which Snyder's work is represented include:

Allen Memorial Art Museum; Oberlin, Ohio
Dallas Museum of Fine Arts; Texas
High Museum of Art; Atlanta, Georgia
The Museum of Modern Art; New York City
Neuberger Museum; Purchase, New York
J. B. Speed Art Museum; Louisville, Kentucky
Whitney Museum of American Art; New York City

The biographic and bibliographic data were compiled by Michael Walls, Director, Anderson Gallery, Virginia Commonwealth University. September–October 1979. An unedited version is available from the San Francisco Art Institute.

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