

Pearl Lam Galleries

Hong Kong

HERE COMES THE SUN: A Solo Exhibition by Cynthia Polsky

Exhibition dates 20 March–20 May, 2023 Monday–Saturday, 10am–7pm

Venue Pearl Lam Galleries, 6/F, Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong

Hong Kong—Pearl Lam Galleries is pleased to present *Here Comes the Sun*, its first solo exhibition by New York-based artist Cynthia Polsky (b. 1939). On display is a selection of large-scale paintings and works on paper conceived between 1963–1974 that reflect the artist's personal interest in the spirituality, aesthetics and traditions of Asia. With the rise of the conceptual art movement during Polsky's active years as a painter, it is an interesting departure to look back at her time as a women artist who carved out her own creative direction that was outside of the dominant narratives of postwar American art of the time.

Cynthia Polsky was an active painter in the 1960s and 70s in New York, a time which is known for the prolific rise of abstract expressionism and colour field painting. Working independently from the art scene prevalent at the time, Polsky's practice instead relied on her memories and lived experiences as sources of inspiration, most prominently the artist's study of ballet and transformative travels to East and South Asia. This has resulted in a body of work that captures the nuances of an artist's subconscious and imagination. The artist stated, "I feel these paintings of mine are going home. Somehow, they belong to Asia."

The exhibition title *Here Comes the Sun* is borrowed from Polsky's large-scale painting completed in 1974. It also reflects her interest in creative freedom, which is rooted in her knowledge of Eastern traditions and their respective views on universality which she experienced while travelling to Chennai, Sri Lanka, Japan, and beyond. The artist's colour-saturated palette that invokes elusive, abstract forms is influenced by traditional Indian art, in particular 16th and 19th century Rajput and Mughal paintings, while vertically composed works like *Chromatic Cascade I, II, IV* are reminiscent of Chinese landscape ink paintings and Japanese calligraphy.

Vigorously trained in the choreographer George Balanchine's contemporary ballet technique, Polsky approached movement in the body as a form of mediation which she applied to her painting technique. Often painting while listening to classical composers, Cynthia would apply acrylic paint onto a primed and unstretched canvas laid across the floor or surface that was propped up with building blocks in different sections to create an uneven surface. Working instinctively and at a brisk pace, using tools like small sponges or Chinese ink brushes, Polsky would then hang the work to allow the paint to drip downwards. Describing her work as lyrical expressionism, movement is depicted in stasis or suspended in motion. She saw nature as a timeless subject and also explored landscapes in her paintings. Polsky also stated, "The forms one sees in nature, from the simplest to the most elaborate, were central to my imagination." As a child, she remembers travelling on a cross-country train in America, looking at the interplay between nature and light.

This exhibition is structured in a way to elucidate the relationships among three elements: the exterior (the objective), the interior (the imagined and subjective), and the scenic (the staged experience of reality), but with a focus on foregrounding the spirituality behind Polsky's oeuvre. The show presents a cinematic reading of her artworks as a series of *mise-en-scènes* with the gallery space assuming the role of the theatrical stage, which allows the compositional movement of the paintings to relate to the visitor's physical movement. Polsky's paintings not only function as residues of her physical movements, but more importantly they speak of metaphysics and how to externalise energy from the subconscious into a visual reality.

Alexandra Munroe, a pioneering authority on modern and contemporary Asian art, states, "To me, (the experience of the childhood of her children) could be the most feminist part of Polsky's practices. She is aligning her creativity with being with children and identifying as a mother, being in the space of motherhood and allowing herself to make art in another space at the same time. That doesn't define her work as women's art, but it clarifies the honesty of her being a woman and an artist of her generation in a particular New York Culture."

Gallery founder Pearl Lam states, "I met Polsky more than a decade ago. The first time I encountered her work was during a visit to her home. I was impressed and awed by the works hanging on the wall. What caught me by surprise was when I was told they were by Polsky herself. Little did I know that Cynthia Polsky painted in a past life. After this experience, I have been waiting for the right moment to share her work."

To coincide with the exhibition, a richly illustrated catalogue will be published by Pearl Lam Galleries featuring all of Cynthia Polsky's artworks within the show as well as an artist interview by Alexandra Munroe and exhibition text by New York-based independent art critic Karen Wilkin.

About Cynthia Polsky

Cynthia Polsky is a New York-based abstract expressionist artist, whose works are informed by her interest in rhythm, spirituality, and the subconscious. Active as an artist on the New York scene in the 1960s and the 1970s, Polsky's artworks also reflect the artist's personal interest in the aestheticism and techniques of East and South Asia. Polsky's work is a celebration of freedom, nature and its processes and emotional temperaments.

Polsky previously studied at School of American Ballet, and The Art Students League of New York. Her work has previously been exhibited at Benson Galleries in Bridgehampton, USA; Artisan Gallery in Houston, USA; Laguna Art Museum in Laguna Beach, USA; Comara Gallery in Los Angeles, USA; Palm Springs Desert Museum in Palm Springs, USA; Krannert Museum at the University of Illinois in Champaign, USA; and Ulrich Museum of Art in Wichita, USA. Polsky's works are also included in major public collections, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, USA; Storm King Art Center in Mountainville, USA; The Israel Museum in Jerusalem, Israel; and Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University in Cambridge, USA.





About Pearl Lam Galleries

Pearl Lam Galleries is a driving force within Asia's contemporary art scene. Founded in 2005, the gallery plays a vital role in stimulating international dialogue and cross-cultural exchange between the East and West.

Following a rigorous programme, Pearl Lam Galleries presents museum-quality exhibitions that re-evaluate and challenge perceptions of cultural practice in Asia. With a thoughtfully balanced roster of Chinese and international artists, the gallery is strategic in its curation, positioning itself as an educator.

The gallery maintains a flagship space in the historic Pedder Building in Hong Kong, whilst the Shanghai gallery is situated in the heritage architecture in the Bund district. With a team of international staff, Pearl Lam Galleries' reach is global, having presentations at major international art fairs including Art Cologne, Art Basel, Frieze Masters, and West Bund Art and Design.

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