

# AGNES MARTIN

## Life & Work

By Christopher Régimbal



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# BIOGRAPHY

Agnes Martin (1912–2004) is best known as a painter of grids, where pencil lines and bands of colour fill square canvases and subtly evoke a variety of emotional states. She is a major figure in postwar American abstraction and her work is collected and exhibited by museums of modern and contemporary art the world over. Born and raised in Canada, she moved to the United States as a young woman and considered herself part of the American art movement known as Abstract Expressionism. In recent years, her long-standing reputation within the art world as a “painter’s painter” has expanded into the wider culture.

**Some aspects of Martin’s biography—her family in Canada, her sexuality, and her mental health issues—have until recently remained obscure. What is certain is that over the course of a long life that was at times wandering and punctuated by moments of poverty, Martin developed one of the most rigorous, affecting, and coherent bodies of work of the twentieth century.**

### EARLY LIFE

Agnes Bernice Martin was born in Macklin, Saskatchewan, on March 22, 1912. “My grandparents on both sides came from Scotland, and they went on to the prairie in covered wagons,” she said during an interview for the Archives of American Art in 1989. “My parents were also pioneers; they proved up a homestead in northern Saskatchewan, but my father also managed a wheat elevator and a chop mill.”<sup>1</sup> In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, rural Saskatchewan was



View of Main Street, Macklin, Saskatchewan, 1912, photographer unknown.

in the midst of a rise in European settlement. Like many settlers, Martin’s family was of Scottish Presbyterian descent. Both sides of her family immigrated to Canada around 1875, living first in Mount Forest, Ontario, before making their way to the Prairies.<sup>2</sup>

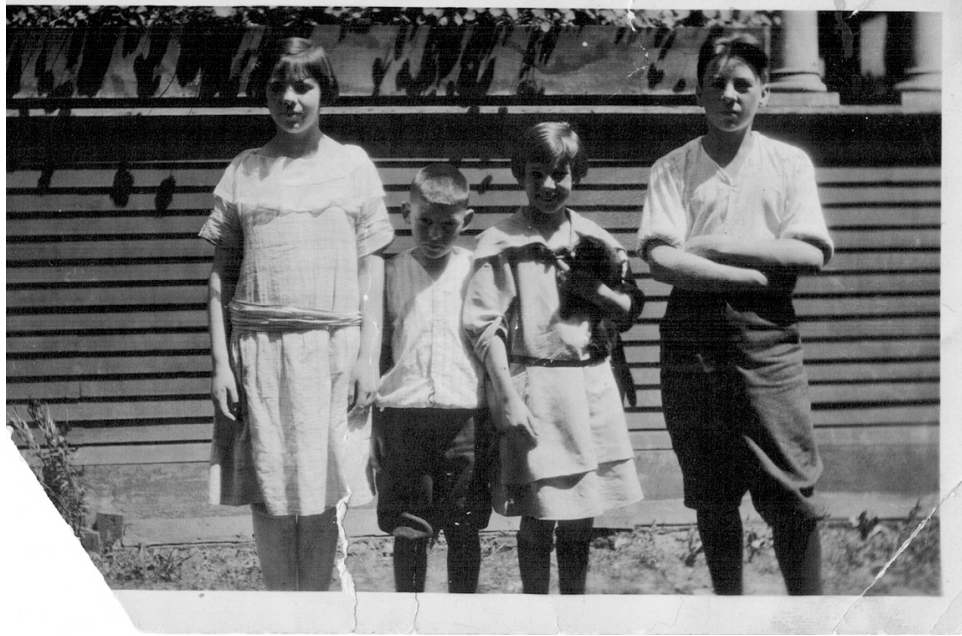
Martin’s father, Malcolm Martin, established himself in Macklin in 1908 on land obtained from the government after having fought in the Boer War in South Africa. In April 1902, at age twenty-eight, he had enlisted in the 5th Regiment of the Canadian Mounted Rifles in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba; unmarried, he cited his profession as “grain buyer.”<sup>3</sup> It is unclear how much action Malcolm saw in South Africa as hostilities ended a month after he enlisted.<sup>4</sup> He died in June 1914, when Martin was only two.<sup>5</sup> Her mother, Margaret, was the daughter of Robert Kinnon of Lumsden, Saskatchewan. Martin’s maternal grandmother died when Martin was roughly one year old, but her grandfather lived until 1936. Martin told the *New Yorker*’s Benita Eisler, “He didn’t talk to me, but somehow he influenced me tremendously.”<sup>6</sup> Later, in a 1996 interview, she elaborated: “[He] believed that God looked after children. . . and that it was none of his business. Anyway, it made for a good life, I can tell you. Freedom.”<sup>7</sup>



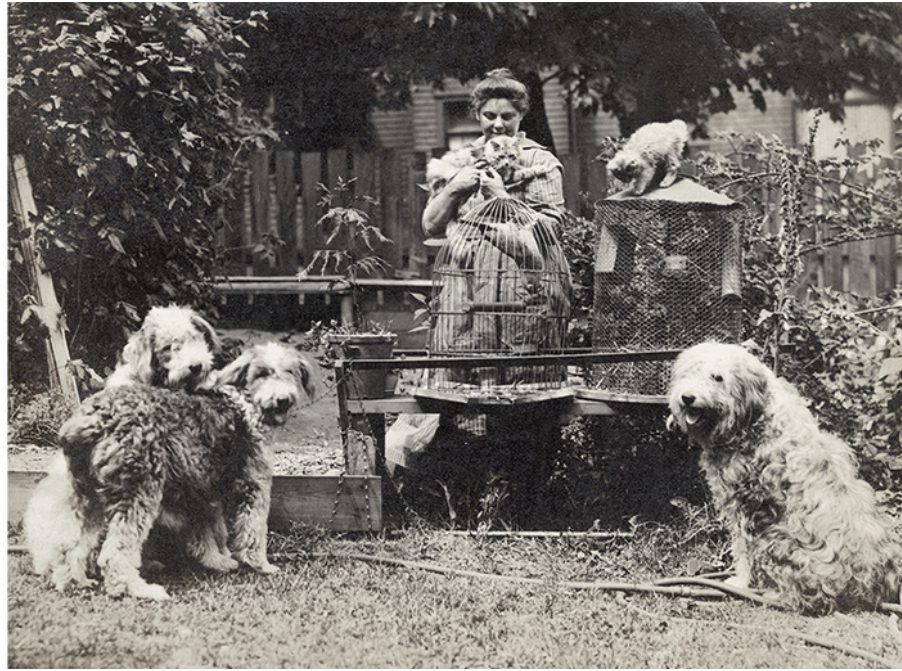
Martin was the third of four children; her siblings were Ronald, Maribel, and Malcolm Jr. The family moved several times in the years between Martin's father's death in 1914 and 1918—the years of the First World War. They left the farm in Macklin and spent time in Lumsden and Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and then Calgary, Alberta.<sup>8</sup> By the end of the war, the family had found their way to Vancouver, British Columbia, where Margaret supported them by renovating and selling houses. They lived on Nelson Street in Vancouver's West End.<sup>9</sup>

Martin felt neglected by her mother, saying, "She hated me, God how she hated me. She couldn't bear to look at me or speak to me."<sup>10</sup> Martin attended Dawson Public School and later King George Secondary School.<sup>11</sup> Her grandfather eventually moved to Victoria, just over one hundred kilometres from Vancouver across the Strait of Georgia on Vancouver Island, and she would visit him there.

Vancouver was in a period of cultural growth during Martin's teenage and young adult life. From 1921 to 1931, the British Columbia Art League operated an art gallery, which held regular exhibitions, including one by the Group of Seven in 1928. It was replaced in 1931 by the Vancouver Art Gallery. The School of Decorative and Applied Arts opened in 1925, and influential teachers Jock Macdonald (1897–1960) and F.H. Varley (1881–1969) began teaching there in 1926.<sup>12</sup> Martin's grandfather lived a short walk across Beacon Hill Park from the celebrated Canadian painter Emily Carr in Victoria.<sup>13</sup> It is unclear how much Martin was exposed to the burgeoning west coast art scene. Her only public reminiscence recalls copying postcard reproductions of famous paintings while a student.<sup>14</sup>



Agnes Martin, holding cat, with her siblings Maribel, Malcolm Jr., and Ronald, 1920s, photographer unknown, Collection of the Martin Family Archive.



LEFT: Frederick Horsman Varley, *Self-portrait*, 1919, oil on canvas, 60.5 x 51 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Emily Carr with her pets in the garden of her home at 646 Simcoe Street in Victoria, 1918, photographer unknown, Royal BC Museum and Archives, Victoria, British Columbia.

In Vancouver Martin cultivated a love of the outdoors—through hiking, camping, and, above all, swimming—that would stay with her the rest of her life. She likely began to swim while a student at King George Secondary School and trained with the renowned Canadian swimming coach Percy Norman (1904–1957).<sup>15</sup> She told Eisler that she won the Canadian Olympic tryouts in 1928 but could not afford to attend the games in Amsterdam.<sup>16</sup> She would try again in 1932; however notices from the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* from July of that year report that Martin placed fourth in the qualifiers for the women's 440-yard freestyle, falling short of qualifying for the Los Angeles Olympics.<sup>17</sup>

By the time Martin had competed in the 1932 Olympic qualifying race, she was living for part of the year in Bellingham, Washington, with her sister, Maribel. "My sister married an American and she became ill and I came down to take care of her. Then I noticed the difference in American people and the Canadian people and I decided I wanted to come to America to live, not just to go to college but actually to become an American."<sup>18</sup> Martin was attracted to the American understanding of freedom and liberty,<sup>19</sup> which she found different from her own Canadian experience of the concepts. Although she had graduated from King George Secondary School in Vancouver in 1929, she attended Whatcom High School in Bellingham in 1932 in order to matriculate to the Washington State Normal School, which she attended from 1933 to 1937. Martin's excellence in athletics shone in Bellingham. She variously played baseball, volleyball, basketball, and tennis, and organized sporting and social functions.<sup>20</sup>





LEFT: Mildred Kane and Agnes Martin playing cribbage in Kane's cottage, Elk Lake, Oregon, 1940s, photographer unknown.  
RIGHT: Agnes Martin's senior class photo on page 33 of *Klipsun*, the annual publication of the senior class of the Washington State Normal School, 1936 (detail), Special Collections, Heritage Resources, Western Libraries, Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington.

Martin obtained a student visa<sup>21</sup> and became a legal permanent resident of the United States on August 27, 1936, crossing at the Peace Arch in Surrey, British Columbia.<sup>22</sup> "I couldn't come to the United States unless I had a profession," she would later say, "and I thought the easiest profession I could acquire would be to be a teacher."<sup>23</sup> While at the Normal School, Martin met Mildred Kane, who would become one of the most influential figures in Martin's young adult life.<sup>24</sup> Martin's relationship with Mildred Kane has been described as romantic at times and platonic at others; it lasted until at least the mid-1950s. Kane was an emotional and sometimes financial support to Martin as she developed her career as an artist.<sup>25</sup> Martin graduated in June 1937 but even with a teaching certificate it was difficult to find steady work during the Depression. She taught in three different rural Washington schools over the next four years and worked for the Canadian government as a liaison to the logging industry.<sup>26</sup>

### AN ASPIRING ARTIST

Motivated by her inability to find a permanent teaching job, Martin enrolled in a one-year program at Teachers College at Columbia University in New York City in the fall of 1941 to upgrade her teaching certificate to a bachelor's degree. She moved with Kane, who began a doctorate in early childhood education.<sup>27</sup> Her time in New York coincided with the United States entering the Second World War. Martin's brother Malcolm Jr. served in the Royal

Canadian Air Force, stationed in England and later in Victoria, B.C.<sup>28</sup>

She would boast that Malcolm was "the first Canadian to enlist."<sup>29</sup>



LEFT: Arshile Gorky, *Khorkom*, c.1938, oil on canvas, 101.6 x 132.1 cm, private collection.  
RIGHT: Joan Miró, *Portrait of Mistress Mills in 1750*, 1929, oil on canvas, 116.7 x 89.6 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

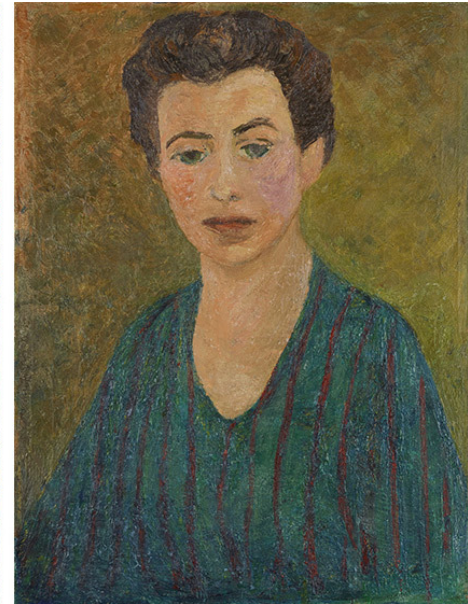
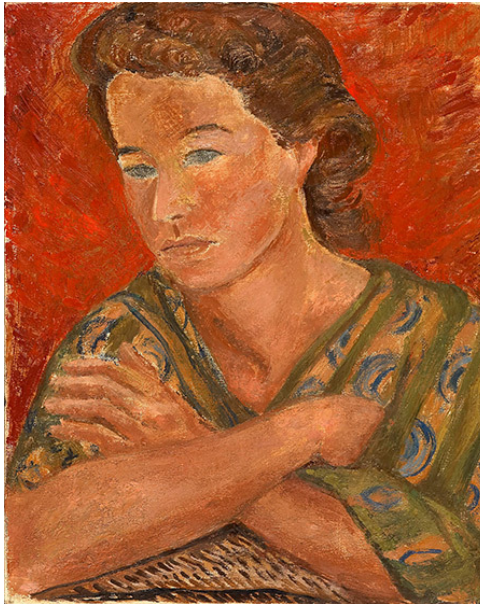


Martin not only took teaching courses but also studio classes in marionette production, letter drawing, figure drawing, and drawing and painting as part of her teaching degree.<sup>30</sup> It was in New York that Martin was first exposed to modern art and began considering a career as an artist. "I thought, if you could possibly be a painter and make a living," she later said, "then I would like to be a painter. That's when I started painting."<sup>31</sup> Art historian Christina Bryan Rosenberger suggests that Martin likely saw exhibitions by Arshile Gorky (1904–1948), Adolph Gottlieb (1903–1974), and Joan Miró (1893–1983) while a student at Teachers College.<sup>32</sup> For the remainder of the war years she continued her wandering way of life, teaching in Delmar, Delaware; Tacoma, Washington; and Bremerton, Washington. No paintings from this period survive.<sup>33</sup>

Martin's drifting eventually led her to New Mexico in 1946 when, at age thirty-four, she enrolled in a Master of Fine Arts at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.<sup>34</sup> This was Martin's first professional training toward becoming an artist. "I went to the universities because. . . there's a studio to work in and usually in the universities they let you work in the studio any time," she explained about this period. "And so, I would work at a job and save my money and go to a university when I took a year off to paint. It was the quickest way to get to be painting."<sup>35</sup>

Martin stayed in New Mexico from 1946 to 1951, and her earliest existing artworks are from these years. In 1947, she participated in the Taos Summer Field School. She exhibited two watercolours at the Harwood Foundation as part of the summer school's concluding exhibition. This was likely her first exhibition and may have included *New Mexico Mountain Landscape, Taos, 1947*.<sup>36</sup> After completing her studies, Martin was elected to the faculty of the university in 1948 and executed several encaustic canvases at this time in her role as a teacher of figurative painting.

These works include a sympathetic painting, *Portrait of Daphne Vaughn*, c.1947 of her friend Daphne Cowper, with whom she had a three-year romantic relationship,<sup>37</sup> and *Self-Portrait*, c.1947, which she gave to her mother in Vancouver.<sup>38</sup> Martin maintained ties to her family throughout her time in the Pacific Northwest and New Mexico, visiting in 1944 and again in 1951 for Malcolm's funeral.<sup>39</sup> She also spent at least one Christmas in Vancouver in the early 1950s.<sup>40</sup>



LEFT: Agnes Martin, *Portrait of Daphne Vaughn*, c.1947, encaustic on canvas, 50.8 x 40.6 cm, Peters Family Art Foundation, Santa Fe, New Mexico. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019). RIGHT: Agnes Martin, *Self-Portrait*, c.1947, encaustic on canvas, 66 x 49.5 cm, private collection. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).



Martin lasted only one year teaching at the University of New Mexico, leaving in 1948 for a better-paying job instructing delinquent boys at the John Marshall School in Albuquerque. Along with Cowper, Martin built an adobe house in Albuquerque with the help of her students—the first of several adobe houses that she built throughout her life.<sup>41</sup> She became an American citizen in 1950 and set off on a path to establish herself as an American artist.



LEFT: Agnes Martin in New Mexico, 1940s, photographer unknown. RIGHT: Agnes Martin, *Untitled (Landscape South of Santa Fe, N.M.)*, 1947, watercolour and ink on paper, 27.6 x 35.6 cm, private collection. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

## A NEW DIRECTION

In the fall of 1951, Martin embarked on her final period of formal education, enrolling at Teachers College at Columbia University in New York City for a master's degree in modern art. The ten months that Martin spent in the city had a profound effect on her development as an artist through her introduction to Abstract Expressionism and Eastern philosophy. The Abstract Expressionist art movement had completely transformed the New York art world since Martin left the city in 1943. Its impact was felt throughout the College, where Martin most likely first encountered this key influence.<sup>42</sup>

Martin had several opportunities to see the work of significant artists from the movement. Jackson Pollock (1912–1956) and Ad Reinhardt (1913–1967) both had exhibitions at the influential Betty Parsons Gallery during this period. In addition, Pollock, Mark Rothko (1903–1970) and Clyfford Still (1904–1980) were all included in an exhibition called *15 Americans at the Museum of Modern Art*, which also overlapped with Martin's stay.<sup>43</sup> It was during this time that Martin began to develop an abstract style of her own, which can be seen in a 1952 watercolour, *Untitled*, which shows an early debt to Surrealism through automatic drawing. The merging of Surrealism and Cubism is often considered the source for Abstract Expressionism in America. Art historian Ellen G. Landau argues that artists were motivated to use "personal means" such as automatism and improvisation, to "attain universal meanings" in their work.<sup>44</sup>



Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 1952, watercolour and ink on paper, 29.9 x 45.3 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

The second key influence that Martin encountered during her short time in New York was an introduction to Eastern philosophy. The lectures of D.T. Suzuki (1870–1966) at Columbia in 1952 were popular and helped introduce Zen Buddhism to American artists like John Cage (1912–1992), Philip Guston (1913–1980), and Reinhardt, among many others. It is not clear whether Martin attended these lectures, but it is possible that her interest in Zen began at this point. She read the *Tao Te Ching* and practised meditation throughout her life.<sup>45</sup> Her worldview began to be shaped by a mix of Taoism, Zen Buddhism, and Christianity. She later said, “What I’m most interested in are the ancient Chinese like Lao Tse and I quote from the Bible because it’s so poetic, though I’m not a Christian.”<sup>46</sup> Taoist ideas of egolessness and humility can be read in her work and particularly influenced her writing.<sup>47</sup> Martin left New York in 1952 with her master’s degree in hand, transformed by the experience. After a semester spent teaching in La Grande, Oregon, Martin returned to Taos in 1953. She was now painting in a much more modern style than when she had left New Mexico in 1951. *Untitled*, 1953, continues the Surrealist manner of *Untitled*, 1952, that shows the artist’s newfound sense of direction in her art.

In 1954, Martin took a short trip back to New York to attend a seminar at Teachers College. During this visit she took the first steps toward a professional career as a painter. She visited galleries and absorbed the current trends, just as she had in 1951,<sup>48</sup> and approached Betty Parsons (1900–1982), who was famous among artists for introducing the first generation of



Abstract Expressionist painters. During the late 1940s and early 1950s Parsons exhibited the work of Pollock, Rothko, Still, and Barnett Newman (1905–1970). She encouraged Martin to dedicate herself to painting full-time.

Upon returning to Taos, Martin applied to the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation for financial support. Her application cited a promised exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery, although such an exhibition would not materialize for another four years. She was awarded a monthly grant of forty dollars, which enabled her to concentrate on her painting without the need to teach.<sup>49</sup> She began to take an approach to painting that incorporated organic shapes and forms such as in *Untitled*, 1955. This work typifies what has been called her biomorphic period. However, Martin was unsatisfied with these early attempts at abstract painting, later saying,



Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 1953, oil on canvas, 85.4 x 120.7 cm, The Harwood Museum of Art, Taos, New Mexico. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

"I worked for twenty years becoming an abstract painter . . . I never wanted to show my work. I never wanted to sell it, because it was not what I wanted, and I knew that it was not what I was supposed to be doing."<sup>50</sup>



LEFT: Agnes Martin in her studio, c.1955, photograph by Mildred Tolbert, The Harwood Museum of Art, Taos, New Mexico. © Estate of Mildred Tolbert. RIGHT: *Mandelman and Ribak*, 1949, photograph by Justin Locke, Beatrice Mandelman and Louis Ribak Pictorial Collection, Center for Southwest Research and Special Collections, University of New Mexico Libraries, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

In spite of Martin's negative attitude toward this period, her biomorphic work brought her first success, which included museum exhibitions and sales. By 1955 she was included in various group exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in Albuquerque and the art gallery of the Museum of New Mexico, as well as in two local commercial galleries. That same year Martin was awarded a two-person show with Emma Lu Davis (1905–1988) at the art gallery of the Museum of New Mexico. Owing to a 1956 exhibition at the Jonson Gallery in Albuquerque, Martin became associated with the Taos Moderns group. Artists Beatrice Mandelman (1912–1998), Louis Ribak (1902–1979), Edward Corbett (1919–1971), and Clay Spohn (1898–1977) kept abreast of advances in American art through their connections in New York and San Francisco and represented the more modern painters working in New Mexico at the time. In 1956 Martin sold a painting to Parsons, and then another the following year, at which time Parsons offered Martin an exhibition at her New York gallery.<sup>51</sup>

### SUCCESS AND CHALLENGES

The decade that Martin lived in New York City between 1957 and 1967 brought her remarkable career success, but it also presented her with many personal challenges. On the one hand, she was finally able to establish herself as a professional painter, a goal since the mid-1940s, and her work flourished in the New York scene. But on the other, the wandering life that she had been living more or less since she left Vancouver showed no sign of abating and her struggles with her mental health, which were likely present for some time before moving to New York, came to the forefront.



LEFT: *Left to right*: Delphine Seyrig, Duncan Youngerman, Robert Clark, Ellsworth Kelly, Jack Youngerman, and Agnes Martin on the roof of 3-5 Coenties Slip, New York, 1958, photograph by Hans Namuth, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona. RIGHT: Agnes Martin with Ellsworth Kelly on Wall Street, 1958, photograph by Hans Namuth, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona.

Martin's New York story, with all of its complications, started with Betty Parsons. As a condition of representing her, Parsons told Martin that she had to move back to New York. "Betty bought enough paintings so that I could afford to go," Martin explained. "She wouldn't show my paintings unless I went to New York and lived."<sup>52</sup> Parsons also provided Martin with an entrance into the New York art scene. Through Ellsworth Kelly (1923–2015), another of Parsons' artists, Martin found a loft on Coenties Slip, an area of abandoned sail lofts and ship chandleries along a triangular three-block area of the East River on the southeastern edge of Manhattan. It was an artist's refuge. Aside from Kelly, other residents of Coenties Slip included Jack Youngerman (b.1926), Robert Indiana (1928–2018), Lenore Tawney (1907–2007), and James Rosenquist (1933–2017).<sup>53</sup> Jasper Johns (b.1930) and Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008) lived around the corner on Pearl Street.<sup>54</sup>



Martin first lived at 27 Coenties Slip, right on the river's edge, with an expansive view of the ships passing below, and moved two years later to 3-5 Coenties Slip.<sup>55</sup> She was so close to the harbour that she "could see the expressions on the faces of the sailors."<sup>56</sup> Martin lived on or around Coenties Slip until she left New York in 1967 and maintained close friendships with several artists who lived nearby. A 1957 photograph by Hans Namuth shows Martin at ease in Kelly's studio, and in another from 1958 she is out with Kelly and Indiana on bikes. She also made close female friendships at this time with the writer Jill Johnston (1929-2010) and artist Ann Wilson (b.1935), as well as Tawney.<sup>57</sup> Even though these relationships were very positive for Martin, she also described this as a lonely period: "We all knew enough to mind our own business—even when we stopped painting. . . so I used to go to the Brooklyn park and museum. And so did everyone else on the Slip. But we all went by ourselves."<sup>58</sup> This was the contradiction of Martin's New York period; she was thriving professionally and struggling personally all at once.



LEFT: Agnes Martin with Ellsworth Kelly in his studio at 3-5 Coenties Slip, New York, 1957, photograph by Hans Namuth, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona. RIGHT: Lenore Tawney in her Coenties Slip studio, New York, 1958, photograph by David Attie.

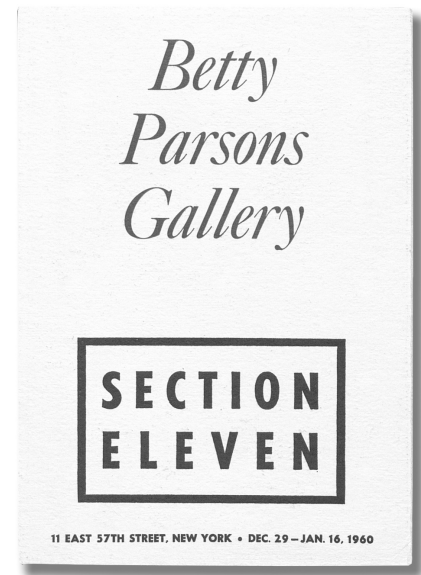
At the same time that Martin found her place as an artist on the Slip, another community was burgeoning there. Art historian Jonathan Katz referred to Coenties Slip around 1960 as "one of America's only largely queer artistic enclaves" and speculates that Martin was romantically involved with Tawney during this time.<sup>59</sup> Henry Martin, whose 2018 biography of Martin was the first to explore her relationships with women in depth, calls Katz's often-repeated claim into question, identifying Betty Parsons and an artist known as Chryssa as Martin's romantic partners in this period.<sup>60</sup> Whatever the case, Martin seems to have left the queer social world behind when she left New York in 1967.<sup>61</sup> Despite sharing several meaningful and long-term relationships in Oregon, New Mexico, and New York City, Martin never specifically acknowledged her sexuality in interviews or writings during her life. Martin kept her sexuality

hidden, often even from close acquaintances. Donald Woodman, who knew Martin in the 1970s and 1980s, for example, was not aware of whether she was a lesbian.<sup>62</sup>

Martin's first exhibition in New York was as part of Section Eleven, an extension of Betty Parsons Gallery dedicated to new talent, and ran from December 2 to 20, 1958. By the time Martin had moved back to New York in 1957, many of the most famous of the Abstract Expressionists had moved on to more commercially successful galleries, with the exception of Barnett Newman and Ad Reinhardt. Section Eleven was an effort by Parsons to rejuvenate her gallery by introducing "gifted but as yet unknown painters."<sup>63</sup>

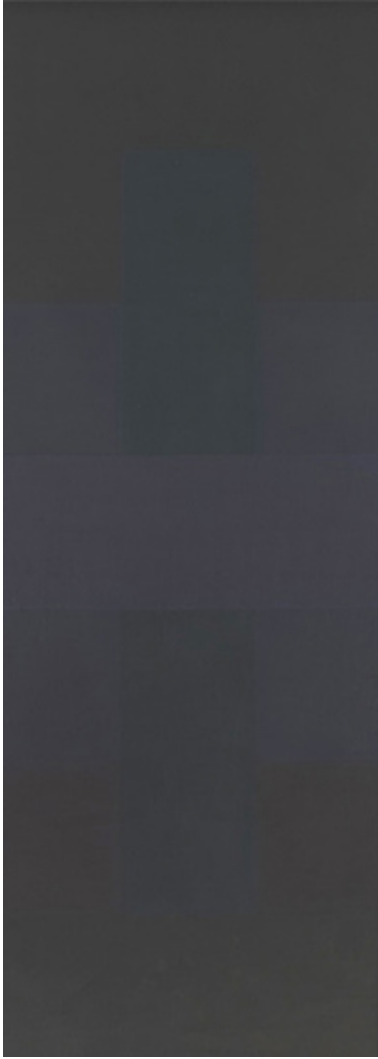
Despite Martin's success in New Mexico, Parsons promoted the artist as her discovery. A review of Martin's second exhibition at Parsons in December 1959 referred to her dismissively as a "specialist in teaching children creative activities."<sup>64</sup> New York Times critic Dore Ashton, on the other hand, noted Martin's New Mexico history in her review of the 1958 exhibition: "Agnes Martin, whose talent was seasoned on the New Mexico desert, is exhibiting her oils for the first time in New York." Setting a tone for how Martin's work would be framed for the rest of her career, Ashton closed the review by writing that the paintings "seem to be the observed and deeply felt essences of the mesa country, so long Miss Martin's home."<sup>65</sup>

In addition to her connection to Betty Parsons, Martin's association with Ad Reinhardt and Barnett Newman during this period represented perhaps her strongest connection to the generation of American Abstract Expressionists whose work had so influenced the culture at Teacher's College while she was a student there in 1951 and 1952. Reinhardt and Martin's friendship may have begun as early as 1951, when he visited Taos at the invitation of Taos Moderns, Edward Corbett and Clay Spohn, and lasted until his death in 1967.<sup>66</sup> Martin greatly admired his paintings.<sup>67</sup> Reinhardt advocated for what he called purity in abstraction, and his influence on Martin can be seen in her simplified 1957 canvases such as *Desert Rain* when compared to his own *Abstract Painting* from the same year.



Cover of exhibition publication for *Agnes Martin Section 11 Exhibition*, Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, December 29, 1959-January 16, 1960.

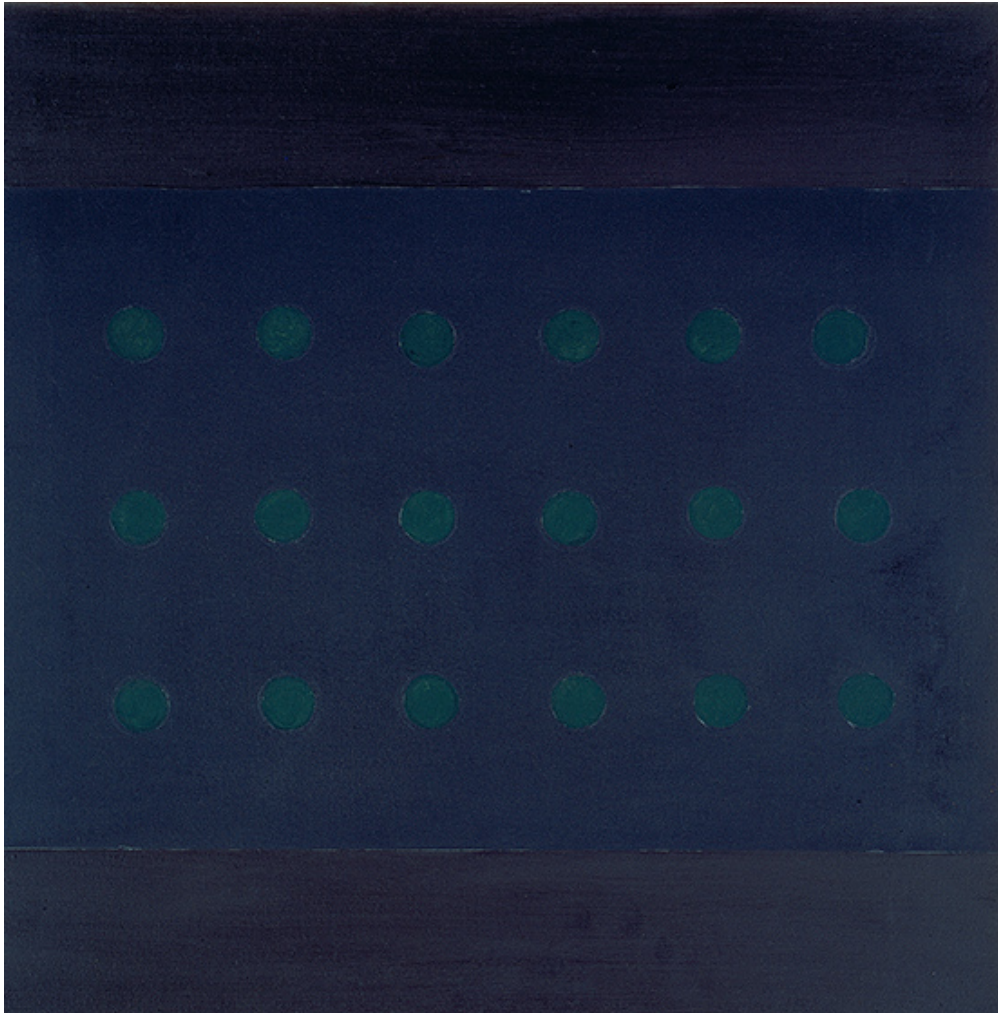




LEFT: Ad Reinhardt, *Abstract Painting*, 1957, oil on canvas, 274.3 x 101.5 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. RIGHT: Agnes Martin, *Desert Rain*, 1957, oil on canvas, 63.5 x 63.5 cm, private collection. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

Martin and Newman were introduced in 1958, and he helped Martin hang her first exhibition at Parsons. The two artists developed a close friendship.<sup>68</sup> Newman's influence can be seen in the use of hard edges in Martin's work at this time. A comparison of Martin's *Night Harbor* from 1960 with Newman's *Abraham*, painted in 1949 but included in the exhibition *The New American Painting* at the Museum of Modern Art in May 1959, shows similar colours and formats.<sup>69</sup>

Reinhardt and Newman's influence connect Martin to the legacy of Abstract Expressionism, a lineage that she asserted for the remainder of her life. "The most important cluster of painters in history was the American Abstract Expressionists," she wrote in 1983. "They gave up defined space (which resulted in enormous scale) and they gave up forms as expressive in themselves and they gave up all objectivity, making an authentic abstract art possible."<sup>70</sup> However, Martin was also part of the generation of New York artists—including Indiana, Johns, and Rauschenberg—who usurped Abstract Expressionism's dominance. This can be seen, for example, in Martin's experimentations with assemblage between 1958 and 1961, which call to mind what these three artists were doing at the same time.<sup>71</sup>

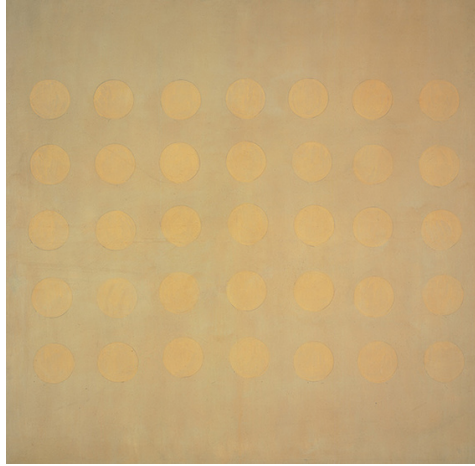


LEFT: Agnes Martin, *Night Harbor*, 1960, oil on canvas, 63.7 x 63.7 cm, private collection. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).  
RIGHT: Barnett Newman, *Abraham*, 1949, oil on canvas, 210.2 x 87.7 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

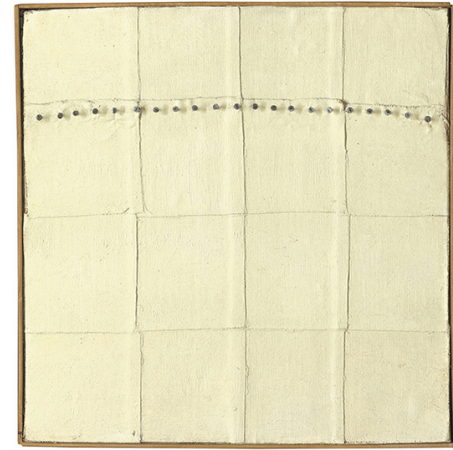
Martin premiered her first grid paintings in 1961 in her third and final exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery. The exhibition included *White Flower*, 1960, and *The Islands*, 1961, two paintings that established a formal vocabulary that Martin mined for the rest of her life: a square canvas, horizontal and vertical composition, and total non-representation. The grid was a recurring format in non-objective painting by many artists in the late 1950s and through the 1960s. The art historian Rosalind Krauss identified Jasper John's *Grey Numbers*, 1958, as an early example of the grid being employed in the New York City context.<sup>72</sup> Many of Martin's paintings from 1958 and 1959, such as *The Laws*, *Buds*, and *Homage to Greece*, include grid-like elements. Martin never acknowledged these precedents, offering instead a much more personal origin story: "I was thinking about innocence, and then I saw it in my mind—that grid," she told critic Joan Simon.<sup>73</sup>



The grid offered Martin a conduit to a completely formless way of painting. "Not abstract from nature, but really abstract. It describes the subtle emotions that are beyond words, like music, you know, represents our abstract emotions," she later explained.<sup>74</sup> Finding the grid also represented a culmination of sorts for Martin and started her on the path of repudiating much of her earlier work. "When I got the grids, and they were completely abstract, then I was satisfied," she maintained, continuing, "I consider that the beginning of my career. The ones before I don't count. I tried to destroy them all, but I couldn't get some of them."<sup>75</sup>



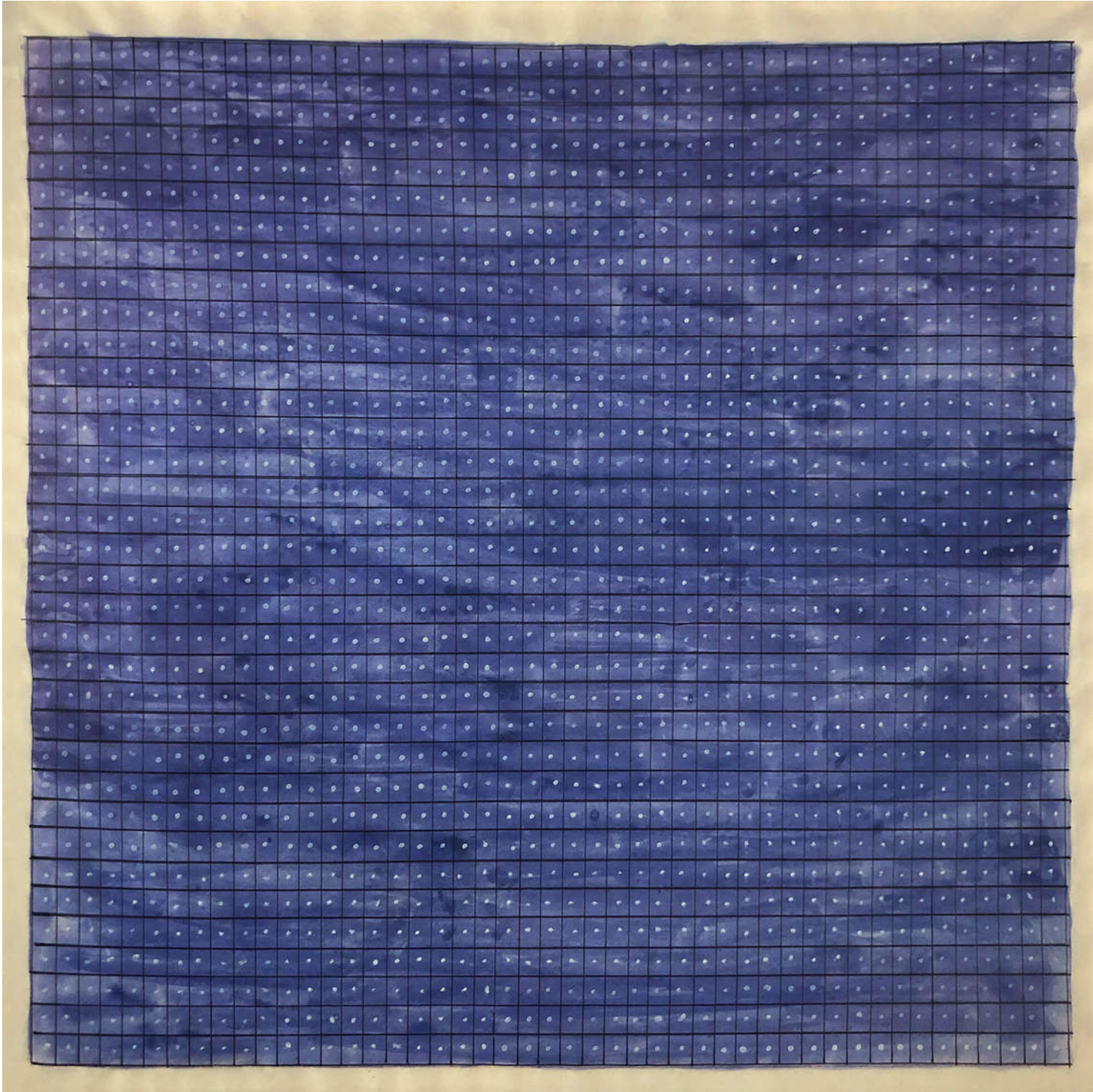
LEFT: Agnes Martin, *Buds*, c.1959, oil on canvas, 210.2 x 87.7 cm, Collection of Anne and Wolfgang Titze, Switzerland. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).



RIGHT: Agnes Martin, *Homage to Greece*, 1959, oil, nails, and canvas on canvas mounted on wood, 30.5 x 30.5 cm, private collection. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

After three solo exhibitions with Parsons Gallery, Martin switched to Robert Elkon Gallery in 1962, where she showed four times in the 1960s. Between 1962 and 1966 her work was shown in all three major New York-based modern art museums: *Geometric Abstraction in America* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1962; *The Responsive Eye* at the Museum of Modern Art in 1965, and *Systemic Painting* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 1966. Her painting *The City* (1966) was illustrated in the review of *Systemic Painting* by *Artforum* in November 1966.<sup>76</sup>

Coinciding with this period of professional success, Martin was in a difficult mental state. She suffered at least two acute episodes of schizophrenia during this time, both of which resulted in her hospitalization. She likely struggled with schizophrenia for most of her adult life, but it is undocumented before 1962. The first incident occurred when Robert Indiana found Martin wandering on South Street. She was picked up and committed to Bellevue Hospital in New York and subjected to electroshock. Her artist friends from Coenties Slip came together to help find her treatment with a respected art-collecting psychiatrist.<sup>77</sup> In 1965, Martin embarked on a solo around-the-world steamer ship holiday. In July she wrote a letter to Tawney, "I have been wishing every day that I had been writing to you but the fact is that I have been absolutely overwhelmed by this trip, especially Pakistan and India."<sup>78</sup> She was hospitalized after entering a trance in India, and Tawney travelled there to help bring her back to the United States.<sup>79</sup> There are several more debilitating schizophrenic attacks recorded after Martin left New York, but the true extent of the disease's effect on her life is not known.<sup>80</sup>



Agnes Martin, *Summer*, 1965, watercolour, ink, and gouache on paper, 22.2 x 23.5 cm, Collection of Patricia L Lewy, New York. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

In late 1967 Martin suddenly, and dramatically, left New York. By all indications she intended to leave painting behind as well: Martin burned all of the art left in her studio and gave away her art supplies.<sup>81</sup> Exactly why Martin left New York just when she had finally established the career that she had been pursuing for two decades has been the topic of much conjecture. It is often attributed to Ad Reinhardt's death or the fact that her studio was being torn down.<sup>82</sup> Martin never gave a straightforward answer to this question, offering instead equivocations such as, "I thought I would experiment in solitude, you know. Simple living." Later, she explained, "I had established my market and I felt free to leave."<sup>83</sup> In another instance, she wrote, "I left New York in 1967



because every day I suddenly felt I wanted to die and it was connected with painting. It took me several years to find out that the cause was an overdeveloped sense of responsibility."<sup>84</sup>

#### LEAVING NEW YORK

Martin used the proceeds from a \$5,000 grant from the National Council for the Arts to purchase a Dodge pickup truck and an Airstream trailer, and spent the next year and a half camping in Canada and the western United States. The exact itinerary of the trip is not known in detail. She spent time exploring nature and visiting with her family in Vancouver.<sup>85</sup> She told Suzan Campbell that she drove all over the continent: "I drove all in the West and up in Canada and couldn't make up my mind where to stop."<sup>86</sup> She spent much of the time alone, but not all of it. She was joined by Lenore Tawney for two weeks of camping in California and Arizona, before striking off alone to the Grand Canyon, and ultimately back to New Mexico. "I had a vision of an adobe brick," she said. "And I thought, that means I should go to New Mexico."<sup>87</sup>



Agnes Martin near her property in Cuba, New Mexico, 1974, photograph by Gianfranco Gorgoni.

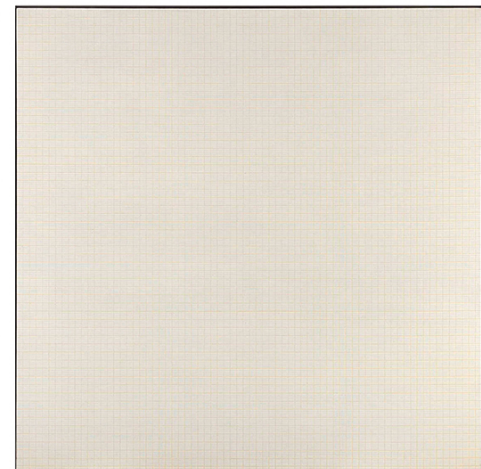
Returning to New Mexico in 1968 for the first time in more than a decade, Martin did not settle in Taos or Albuquerque where she had previously lived, but continued her pursuit of solitude. One day Martin pulled into a gas station on the Mesa Portales near Cuba, New Mexico, in an isolated northwestern part of the state separated from Santa Fe and Taos by the Jemez Mountains. "I asked the manager if there was anybody that he knew who had land outside of town with a spring. And he said, 'Yes, my wife does.' She had 50 acres on top of this mesa."<sup>88</sup>

Martin leased the fifty acres and lived there in her trailer while she started building an adobe house as she learned to do in Albuquerque in 1947. During this time she developed an ascetic lifestyle. She had no access to electricity, plumbing, or a telephone. Her bathtub was outside, and was filled by cold well water in the morning and warmed by the sun for a bath. She heated her home with and cooked on a cast iron wood stove. One winter Martin survived on walnuts, cheese, and tomatoes, while another she ate only gelatin mixed with orange juice and bananas.<sup>89</sup>

Most importantly, Martin did not paint. Around 1971 she explained this to her friend, New York art collector Sam Wagstaff (1921-1987), in a letter, writing:

"I don't understand anything about the whole business of painting and exhibiting. I enjoyed it more than I enjoyed anything else but there was also a 'trying to do the right thing'—a kind of 'duty' about it. Also a paying of the price for that 'error' that we do not know what it is. What we 'owe.' Now I do not owe anything or have to do anything. Fantastic but even more fantastic I do not think that there will be any more people in my life."<sup>90</sup>

Over the next nine years Martin built five buildings on the property. "I'm just interested in building with native materials. Adobe bricks and these logs they call vigas and I built some log houses, too."<sup>91</sup> Although she left painting behind, Martin never stopped the business of being an artist, arranging loans for exhibitions and sales through her galleries as well as collectors like Wagstaff.



LEFT: *Orange Grove* featured on the cover of *Artforum* 11, no. 8 (April 1973).  
RIGHT: Agnes Martin, *Orange Grove*, 1965, oil and graphite on canvas, 182.9 x 182.9 cm, private collection. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

Referring to her ten years in New York, Martin told her friend Jill Johnston, "I had 10 one-man shows and I was discovered in every one of them. Finally when I left town, I was discovered again—discovered to be missing."<sup>92</sup> It did not take long for Martin to be "discovered to be missing" after moving to Mesa Portales. Curator Douglas Crimp (1944-2019) visited in 1971 as part of his effort to organize Martin's first ever non-commercial solo exhibition, a modest show at the School of Visual Arts in New York in April 1971. The following year Ann Wilson, her friend from Coenties Slip, visited Portales to work with Martin on the catalogue for her first retrospective exhibition, curated by Suzanne Delehanty (b.1944) at the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania. The exhibition featured thirty-seven paintings, twenty-one drawings, and fourteen watercolours, all from between 1957 and 1967.<sup>93</sup> Although Martin was not making any new paintings at this point, she travelled to Germany in 1971 to produce a suite of thirty screen prints, titled *On a Clear Day*. She was also included in Harald Szeeman's *documenta 5* with four paintings on loan from Wagstaff.<sup>94</sup> This renewed interest in Martin's work led to two articles on the artist in the April



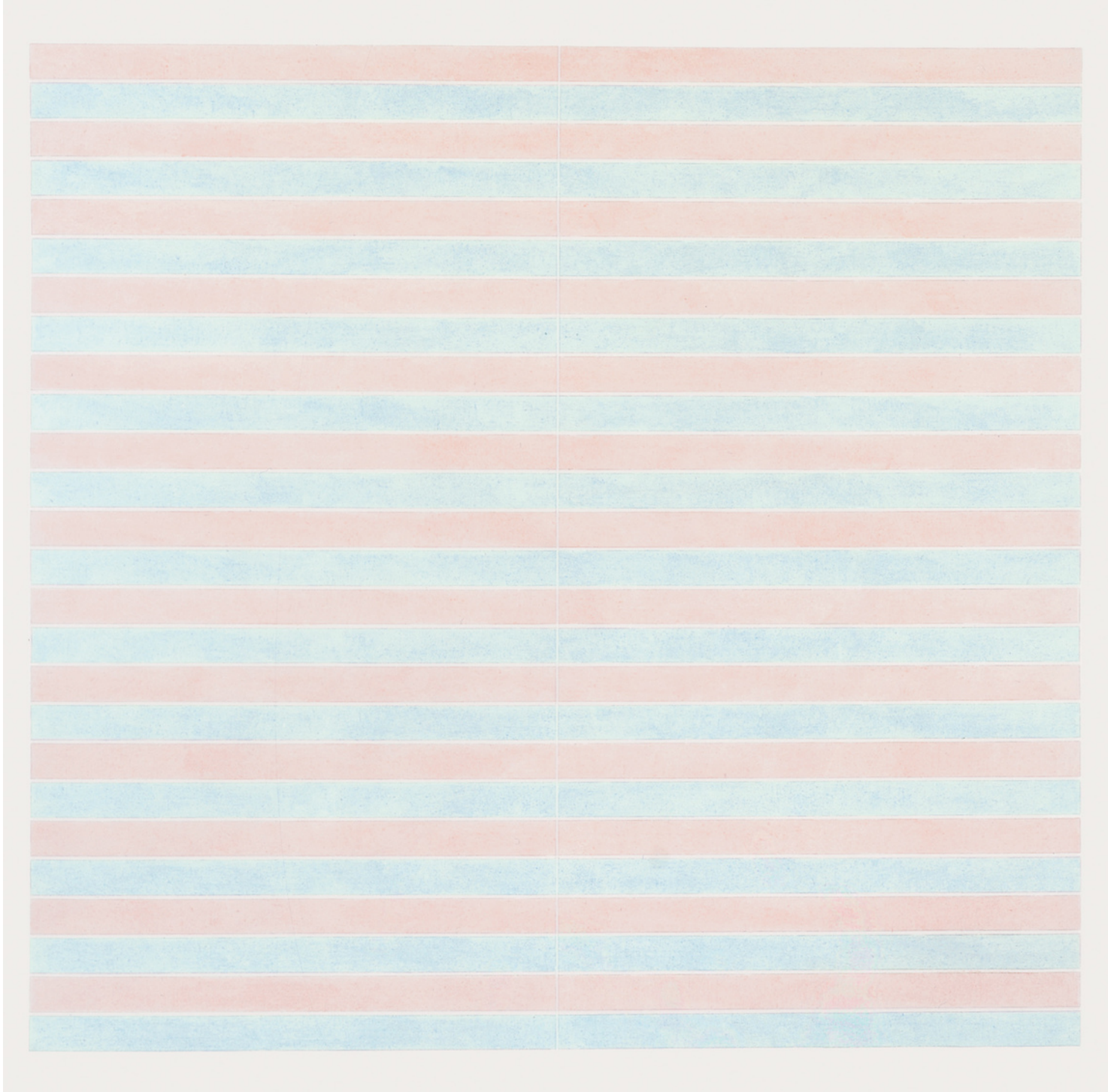
1973 issue of *Artforum*, which also featured her *Orange Grove*, 1965, on its cover.<sup>95</sup> The same issue of *Artforum* included a short piece written by Martin herself, titled "Reflections."<sup>96</sup> Around this time Martin began writing and delivering lectures about her work. She included a transcript of a lecture she delivered at Cornell University in 1972 in the catalogue for her 1973 exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art, alongside three short creative pieces that can best be described as parables.<sup>97</sup> With titles such as *The Untroubled Mind* and *The Still and Silent in Art*, these idiosyncratic texts outline a deeply personal approach to painting.



Installation view of *documenta 5*, Kassel, Germany, June 30–October 8, 1972, photographer unknown, Getty Research Institute Special Collections, Los Angeles. *In foreground: Richard Long, The Circle; Back walls from left to right: drawings by Hanne Darboven and Sol LeWitt; works by Agnes Martin and Richard Serra installed in far room.*

## RETURN TO PAINTING

In 1974 Martin discovered a new mode of expression that she would continue to communicate for thirty more years. She began by building a thirty-five-foot-square log-cabin-style studio on the Portales property and began to paint again. When she had enough canvases, she travelled to New York to seek out Arne Glimcher (b.1938) at Pace Gallery. He soon visited her in New Mexico and the canvases that Martin showed him were a departure from the New York grids. She maintained the six-foot-square scale, but the grid had been replaced with vertical and horizontal bands of ochre and blue, such as in *Untitled #3*, 1974. She soon dropped the vertical bands and focused almost exclusively on horizontal bands of alternating sizes and colours. Martin's first exhibition at Pace Gallery opened on March 1, 1975, and Glimcher represented her for the rest of her life.



Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 1974, acrylic, pencil, and Shiva gesso on canvas, 182.9 x 182.9 cm, Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

Another departure for the sixty-four-year-old artist—one that attests to her continuing curiosity—is the feature-length film *Gabriel*, 1976. Over three months in 1976, Martin filmed a local boy wandering through the landscapes of California, Colorado, and New Mexico. The film is mostly silent but intermittently scored with Bach's Goldberg Variations, a musical work made famous in 1955 by Canadian pianist Glenn Gould (1932–1982). Martin used the film to explore the themes of beauty, happiness, and innocence, which had appeared in her painting since the 1960s. "I made a movie in protest against commercial movies that are about deceit and destruction," she said in 1996. "My movie is about happiness, innocence and beauty. I just wanted to see if people would respond to positive emotions."<sup>98</sup> Martin also attempted a second film, a more complicated affair called *Captivity* that included dialogue, a script, and Kabuki actors hired from San Francisco. *Captivity* was shot in



New Mexico and the final scene was filmed in the Japanese garden at Butchart Gardens outside Victoria, British Columbia.<sup>99</sup> Unlike *Gabriel*, *Captivity* was never completed.

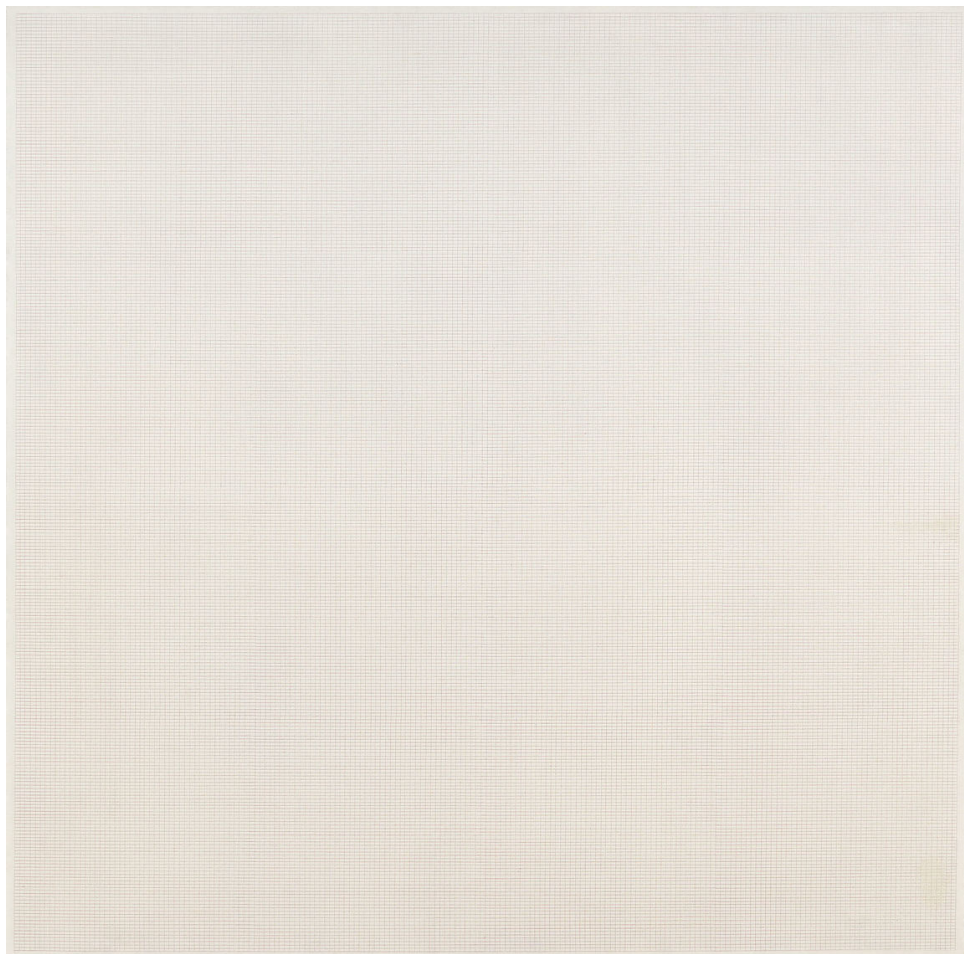


LEFT: Agnes Martin, *Gabriel*, 1976, 16mm film, colour, 78 minutes, silent with a selection of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, contemporary still photographed by Bill Jacobson from original film, Pace Gallery, New York. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019). RIGHT: Wagons built as props for Agnes Martin's second film, *Captivity*, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1977, photograph by Donald Woodman.

After just under ten years on Mesa Portales, a dispute with the family who owned the land arose, and Martin had to leave her home and studio behind. "I had a lifetime lease from Mrs. Montoya," she told Eisler, "then her brother came and said I was on *his* land. And I was. He had a ruthless lawyer, who said he would sue me for anything I took off. I lost a couple of trucks."<sup>100</sup>

### THE FINAL YEARS

In 1977, Martin moved to a rented property in Galisteo, a small town south of Santa Fe, much closer to society than she had been in Portales.<sup>101</sup> She brought her Airstream trailer and covered it in adobe bricks. Martin set about building a house and studio and in 1984 she purchased the property. At seventy-two, she owned her own home and property for the first time. Although Martin was experiencing material success, she still maintained an austere lifestyle; one of her few public indulgences was a white Mercedes that Arne Glimcher had given to her, which she drove around New Mexico well into her nineties. "I have tons of money," she told Eisler, "anybody that shows with Arne Glimcher makes plenty of money, and I've made millions. It doesn't mean a thing to me. All I want is a good



Agnes Martin, *The Rose*, 1964, oil, graphite, and coloured pencil on canvas, 182.9 x 182.9 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.



car.”<sup>102</sup> With financial success, Martin was also able to travel extensively. Beginning in the 1970s she visited many international locations, including Panama, Germany, Iceland, Sweden, and returned several times to her native Canada. In 1975 and again in 1978, she travelled to Great Slave Lake and the Mackenzie River in the Northwest Territories.<sup>103</sup> In 1989 she took a cruise up the coast of British Columbia and Alaska. And in 1995 she took a train across the country, from Vancouver to Halifax and back to Montreal.<sup>104</sup>

Martin participated in the Venice Biennale in 1976, 1978, 1980, 1997, and 2003; was the subject of retrospective exhibitions at the Hayward Gallery in London in 1977,<sup>105</sup> the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1991,<sup>106</sup> and the Serpentine Galleries in London in 1993;<sup>107</sup> and was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime achievement in 1997. After being ignored by Canadian museums through the 1950s and 1960s, her work finally received recognition in the country of her birth. The Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto purchased *Untitled #8*, 1977, in 1977 and *The Rose*, 1964, in 1979, although she did not have her first solo Canadian exhibition until 1981. The twelve-canvas piece *The Islands I-XII*, 1979, was exhibited at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary and the Mendel Art Gallery (now the Remai Modern) in Saskatoon in 1981 and at the Saidye Bronfman Centre in Montreal in 1982.<sup>108</sup> The most significant exhibition from her late period was a retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art, curated by Barbara Haskell in 1992. Like Martin’s retrospective at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia nineteen years before, Haskell’s exhibition featured only artworks made after Martin’s move to New York in 1957, ignoring (at Martin’s request) anything made in New Mexico in the 1950s.<sup>109</sup> It was not until 2012, seven years after her death, that an exhibition and publication explored Martin’s pre-1957 work.<sup>110</sup>



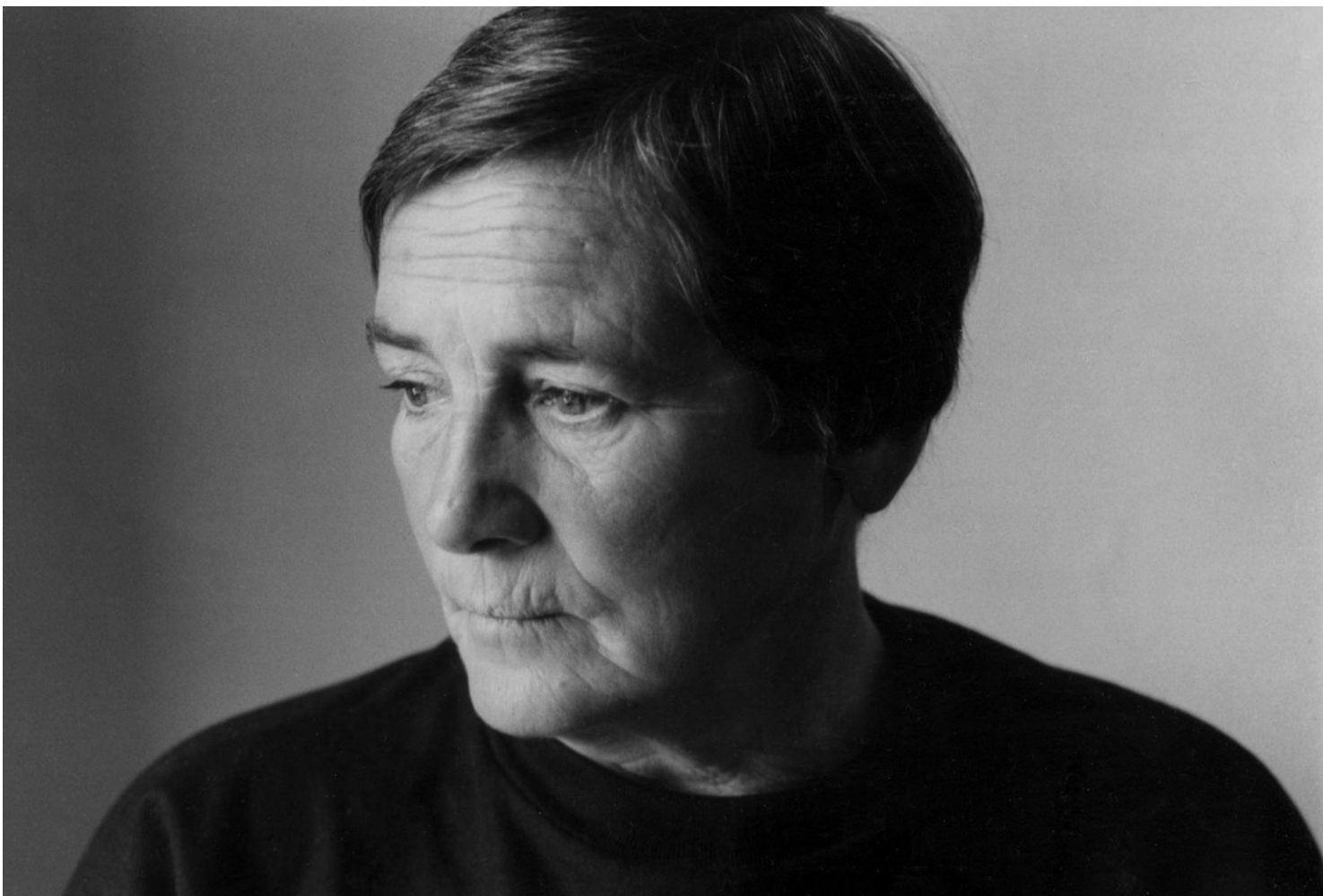
Agnes Martin, seven artworks installed with Donald Judd’s yellow benches in a purpose-built gallery designed by Martin, 1993–94, Agnes Martin Gallery, The Harwood Museum of Art, Taos, New Mexico, photograph by Tina Larkin.

While the 1980s were a critically and financially successful decade for Martin as well as one of the most stable periods of her life, she continued to cope with mental illness. She received treatment in the early 1980s at both the state mental hospital in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and at St. Vincent Hospital in Santa Fe, New Mexico.<sup>111</sup> Around the same time as her retrospective opened at the Whitney Museum, Martin moved into a retirement residence in Taos, but she did not retire from painting or exhibiting her work. She kept her home and



studio in Galisteo but also opened another studio in Taos, where she worked most days. She reduced the size of her six-foot-square paintings to five feet square, which were easier to handle. She also maintained an ambitious travel schedule and continued to drive. In 1997, Martin donated a series of seven paintings to the Harwood Museum of Art in Taos, where they are on permanent display in a custom-built, octagonal gallery.<sup>112</sup> The canvases are illuminated by natural light from a central oculus over four yellow benches designed by her friend and fellow artist Donald Judd (1928-1994). The gallery invites quiet contemplation and has been compared to the Mark Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas. Martin put some of her new wealth into philanthropy, often directed toward youth, sports, and nature conservation in and around Taos.<sup>113</sup>

Martin never stopped experimenting within the confines of her post-grid style and in 2003 produced her first non-horizontal or vertical canvases since the early 1960s, including *Homage to Life*, 2003, and *Untitled #1*, 2003. She was honoured by the United States and Canada near the end of her life; she was presented with the National Medal of Arts by Bill and Hillary Clinton in 1998 and joined the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts in 2004. That summer Martin's health began to decline, forcing her to stop painting. She died in Taos on December 16, 2004, of congestive heart failure. Her ashes were spread on the grounds of the Harwood Museum of Art in Taos.<sup>114</sup> She believed that "art is the concrete representation of our most subtle feelings."<sup>115</sup> By that measure, Agnes Martin was one of the great artists of the twentieth century.



Agnes Martin, 1978, photograph by Dorothy Alexander. © Dorothy Alexander Photographer.

# KEY WORKS

Agnes Martin started painting relatively late in life and quickly absorbed the modernist movements of New Mexico and New York City. Over a decade she developed a rich artistic vocabulary, which set her on a creative path that she followed for the rest of her life. Her paintings and drawings defy characterization. Critics saw the Saskatchewan prairies and the high deserts of New Mexico, yet she denied the connection. Using grids to convey her idea of formlessness, she considered it an emotional state. These key works chart Martin's early, figurative years, through to the development of her abstract work. They reveal a curiosity for artistic exploration, yet remarkable consistency.



## NEW MEXICO MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPE, TAOS 1947



Agnes Martin, *New Mexico Mountain Landscape, Taos, 1947*

Watercolour on paper, 27.9 x 38.7 cm

University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque, New Mexico

© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

*New Mexico Mountain Landscape, Taos, 1947* may depict Wheeler Peak in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the tallest peak in New Mexico. It was executed during the summer of 1947 and is a student work, the product of Martin's participation in the Taos Summer Field School, a course dedicated to outdoor landscape painting. With green, brown, and purple watercolour economically applied to paper, Martin captures a likeness of the mountain rising over the Taos plateau.

Martin had enrolled in a master of fine arts program at the University of New Mexico in 1946 after having previously trained as an art teacher. She spent the summers of 1947 and 1948 participating in the Taos Art School (the first summer as a student, the second as an instructor). A photograph from that year of Martin standing at an easel in the high desert, wearing an army surplus jacket and blue jeans and concentrating on the composition in front of her, shows the artist working on a similar landscape.

Although this is one of Martin's earliest existing paintings, she was likely an accomplished amateur before entering the University of New Mexico in 1946—she had been painting in some capacity since her time at Teachers College in New York in 1941. As a result, the piece shows a technical achievement beyond her status as a student.



LEFT: The Slide Trail outside Taos, New Mexico, with Taos Mountain in the distance, 2018, photograph by Cindy Brown for the *Taos News*. RIGHT: Agnes Martin in New Mexico, c.1947, photographer unknown.

The years between 1941 and 1947 could be described as itinerant for Martin, who moved several times across the United States, changing jobs regularly. It is no surprise then that few works from this period remain, especially as Martin was known later in her life to track down and purchase back her earliest work, only to destroy it. Two other watercolours remain from the Taos Art School, as well as several encaustic and oil portraits from around the same time. Martin showed two watercolours at her first museum exhibition, at the Harwood Foundation at the end of the 1947 summer school. *New Mexico Mountain Landscape, Taos* may have been one of them. Watercolour paints dry almost instantly in these arid conditions; this painting has the appearance of having been quickly composed, with rapid brush strokes representing massive geological forms and the surrounding landscape.

It was a painting much like *New Mexico Mountain Landscape, Taos* that Martin must have been thinking of when in 1973 she wrote, "I used to paint mountains here in New Mexico and I thought my mountains looked like ant hills. . . . I saw the plains driving out of New Mexico and I thought that the plain had it, just the plane. . . . Anything can be painted without representation."<sup>1</sup>

Although it would be another two years until Martin would make her first experiments with abstract art, this quote illustrates that she was feeling constrained by the need to represent objects or places in her paintings.



## UNTITLED 1955



Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 1955

Oil and metallic paint on canvas, 118.1 x 168.3 cm

Private collection, Houston

© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

*Untitled* is a key example of the biomorphic style that Martin worked in between 1954 and 1958, which was characterized by contrasting organic shapes floating over a light background. After spending two years in New York and Oregon, Martin returned to Taos in 1953, and threw herself into painting, working first in a surrealist style derived from automatism, a method of drawing without a preconceived plan. She briefly explored this approach, similar to her fellow Taos Moderns painters Beatrice Mandelman (1912-1998) and Louis Ribak (1902-1979), before settling on a biomorphic style likely influenced by paintings that she saw in New York City by Arshile Gorky (1904-1949).<sup>1</sup>

*Untitled* contains references to Martin's earlier surrealist line paintings, such as *The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden*, c.1953. The star feature on the upper right of the 1955 canvas, for example, has a similarity to the free-floating lines of the earlier painting. The paintings represent Martin's early investigations into total formlessness, something that she would later achieve in her mature grid paintings such as *The Tree*, 1964.



LEFT: Beatrice Mandelman, *Mexico*, undated c.1950s, collage and acrylic on paper, 48 x 61.5 cm, Rosenberg & Co., New York (reprinted with permission from the University of New Mexico Foundation, Albuquerque, New Mexico). RIGHT: Arshile Gorky, *Agony*, 1947, oil on canvas, 101.6 x 128.3 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Martin's surrealist and biomorphic period between 1954 and 1958 marks the first time she was able to dedicate herself to painting in a sustained way. Judging by the number of canvases in a 1953 portrait photograph of Martin by Mildred Tolbert (1919-2008), it was a productive period. One of the paintings visible in the top left corner of the photograph features a long, dark, curving tentacle, capped by a small circle, very similar to the shape in the upper left corner of *Untitled*. Since few of Martin's biomorphic paintings remain, due in part to the artist's later habit of destroying artwork that predated 1957, the photograph may be the best evidence that Martin experimented with this stylistic element heavily around 1954.

These are the paintings that gained the attention of gallery owner Betty Parsons in 1957, and ultimately that of the wider New York art world. A similar biomorphic painting from c.1956, *Dancer No. 1 (L.T.)*, was featured on the invitation for Martin's first New York exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery. However, by the end of the 1950s, Martin had abandoned the style in favour of her grid format. *Untitled* was reproduced in 1973 in Martin's first *Artforum* feature and again in 1992 in the Whitney Museum catalogue, making it one of the better-known paintings from this period in her career.



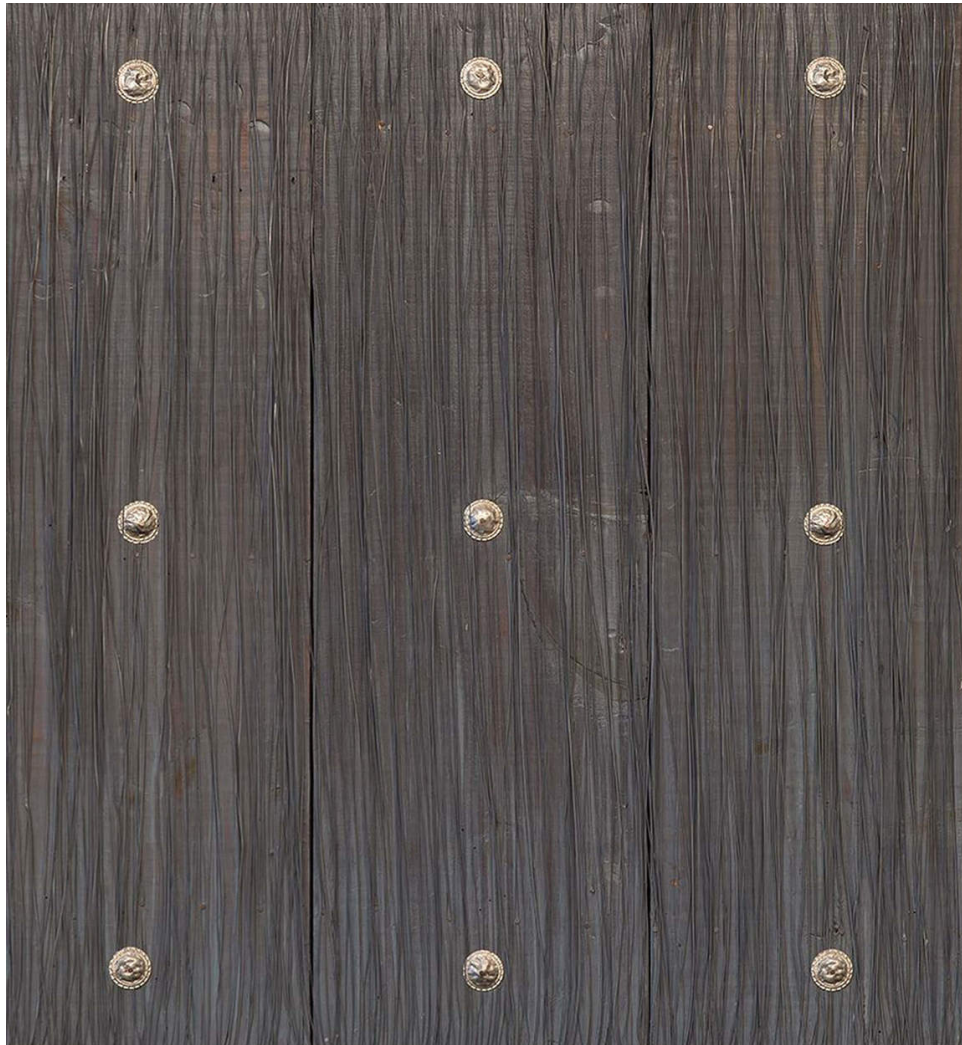
## THE LAWS 1958



Agnes Martin, *The Laws*, 1958  
Oil and boat spikes on wood, 263.9 x 45.7 x 5.1 cm  
Private collection, Switzerland  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

Agnes Martin established her career while living in New York City between 1957 and 1967, having previously lived there on two occasions as a student. During the first years of this sojourn in the city, she produced a handful of assemblages, including *The Laws*. The artwork consists of a wooden board, which is over two metres tall, painted dark blue on the top half and a lighter blue on the bottom half. A grid of fifty boat spikes is nailed into the top half of the board—one of Martin's first ever nods to the grid format. A grid of similar style appears in many compositions over the following four years, including as bottle caps in *Water*, 1958, and steel nails in *The Wall #2*, 1962.

Martin lived in several lofts on Coenties Slip, near the East River in what must have felt like a forgotten corner of Manhattan. The Slip was a disappearing part of the New York of Herman Melville, who set his 1851 novel *Moby-Dick* on the whaling ships that came and went from Manhattan's seaport.<sup>1</sup> The lofts and docks around Coenties Slip offered the artists who lived there a ready supply of detritus and abandoned objects from which they could fashion artworks. This is seen in the work of Robert Indiana (1918–2018), who, like Martin, lived on the Slip, and Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008), who had a place around the corner on Pearl Street.<sup>2</sup> Indiana and Rauschenberg were both associated with the Pop art movement and, like Martin, used found objects from the waterfront to create three-dimensional sculptures and assemblages.

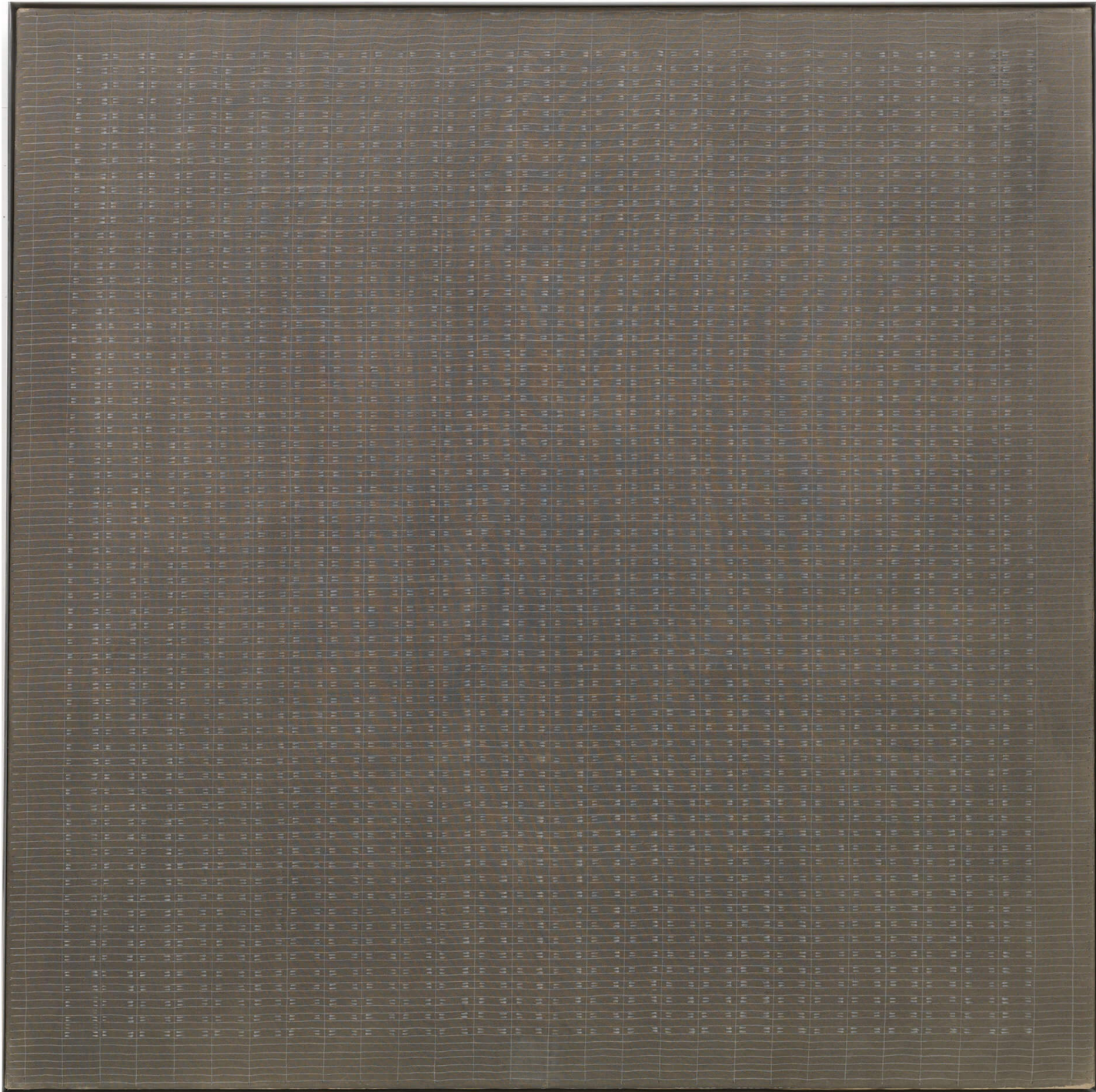


Agnes Martin, *Water*, 1958, oil, wire, and bottle caps on wood, 94 x 87.6 cm, private collection, Chicago. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

The pioneering fibre artist, Lenore Tawney (1907–2007), who also lived on Coenties Slip, acquired *The Laws*. Tawney, who would become a long-time friend of Martin, owned other three-dimensional artworks by the artist, including *Kali*, 1958, and *Homage to Greece*, 1959. Martin's assemblages are largely concentrated in private collections and rarely exhibited or reproduced, although *The Laws* may have been included in Martin's second exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery in December 1959. Martin abandoned the style by 1963, just as she was settling on the grid paintings that would make her famous. Artworks such as *The Laws* and *The Wall #2* represent not only key moments in the development of her grid but also proof of a deep engagement with the vibrant avant-garde scenes of 1960s New York.



## WHITE FLOWER 1960



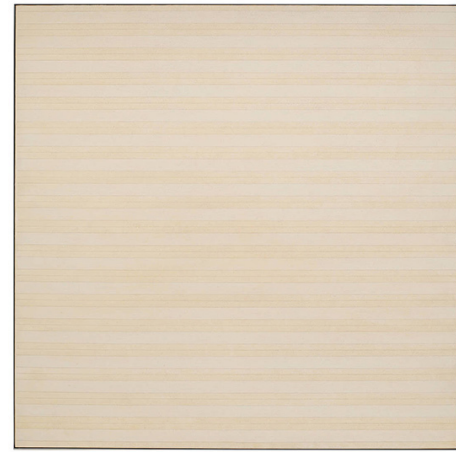
Agnes Martin, *White Flower*, 1960  
Oil on canvas, 182.9 x 182.9 cm  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

Martin premiered her earliest grid paintings at her third and final exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery in 1961, which included the painting *White Flower*. Executed on a six-foot-square canvas, which became her standard canvas size for the next thirty-two years, *White Flower* consists of a dark background with a grid of white lines that create hundreds of rectangles, wider than they are tall. Each rectangle is delineated by four dashes of white paint, one in each corner, except for a border of empty rectangles that extends several inches in from each edge.

The grid paintings of 1960 and 1961, including *White Flower*, often included non-grid elements, such as borders, dashes, dots, and broken lines. *The Islands*, 1961, for example, features a border, much larger than the one on *White Flower*, with graphite rectangles and white painted dots instead of dashes. Martin gradually left the dots, dashes, and broken lines behind, and by 1964 the borders were gone as well. The grid format offered Martin the opportunity to create completely formless

paintings. "My paintings have neither object nor space nor line nor anything—no forms," she said in 1966. "They are light, lightness, about merging, about formlessness, breaking down form."<sup>1</sup>

Martin gave at least five other paintings the title *White Flower*, or a variation of that name. Two from the early 1960s share recognizable rectangle and dot patterns of white paint, while two from 1985 feature grey horizontal lines over a white background. The 1960 canvas is the only one of the five that is not white as the flower in the title suggests. Martin explained that "other titles that I have given, *Desert Flower* and *White Flower*. . . it isn't really about a flower, it's really about a mental experience."<sup>2</sup>



LEFT: Agnes Martin, *White Flower II*, 1985, acrylic and graphite on canvas, 182.9 x 182.9 cm, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019). RIGHT: Agnes Martin, *Desert Flower*, 1985, acrylic and pencil on linen, 183.2 x 183.2 cm, Pace Gallery, New York. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).



## THE TREE 1964

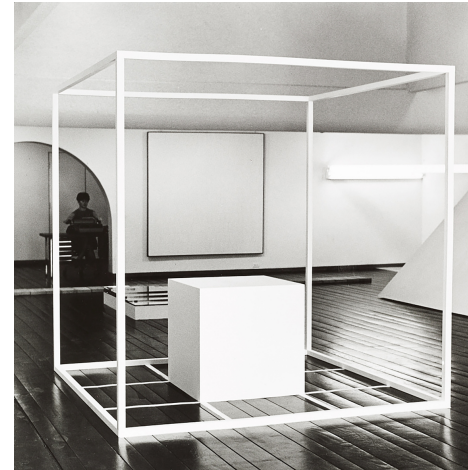


Agnes Martin, *The Tree*, 1964  
Oil and graphite on canvas, 182.9 x 182.9 cm  
Museum of Modern Art, New York  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

*The Tree* is one of the best-known examples of Martin's mature grid paintings from the mid-1960s. Although it is not her earliest grid, it is often associated with the earliest moments of her signature style owing to her proclamation, "When I first made a grid I happened to be thinking of the innocence of trees. . . and then this grid came into my mind and I thought it represented innocence, and I still do, and so I painted it and then I was satisfied."<sup>1</sup>

Hundreds of hand-drawn graphite lines cross the painted off-white canvas horizontally and vertically, creating countless small, vertical rectangles. Half of the rectangles contain four additional vertical graphite lines in long rows that extend horizontally across the canvas, creating the effect of twenty-four horizontal bands alternating off-white and grey. The title of the painting, *The Tree*, is in keeping with Martin's practice in the 1960s of naming canvases after objects. Although the title refers to a specific object, it is impossible to discern any connection to or representation of a tree in the painting. Other works from the era with similar names, such as *The Beach*, 1964, or *Orange Grove*, 1965, belie any overt connections to their titles as well. Martin was not trying to represent a tree, or a beach, or an orange grove, as physical objects or places in her paintings; rather, she aimed to capture the feeling of those objects.

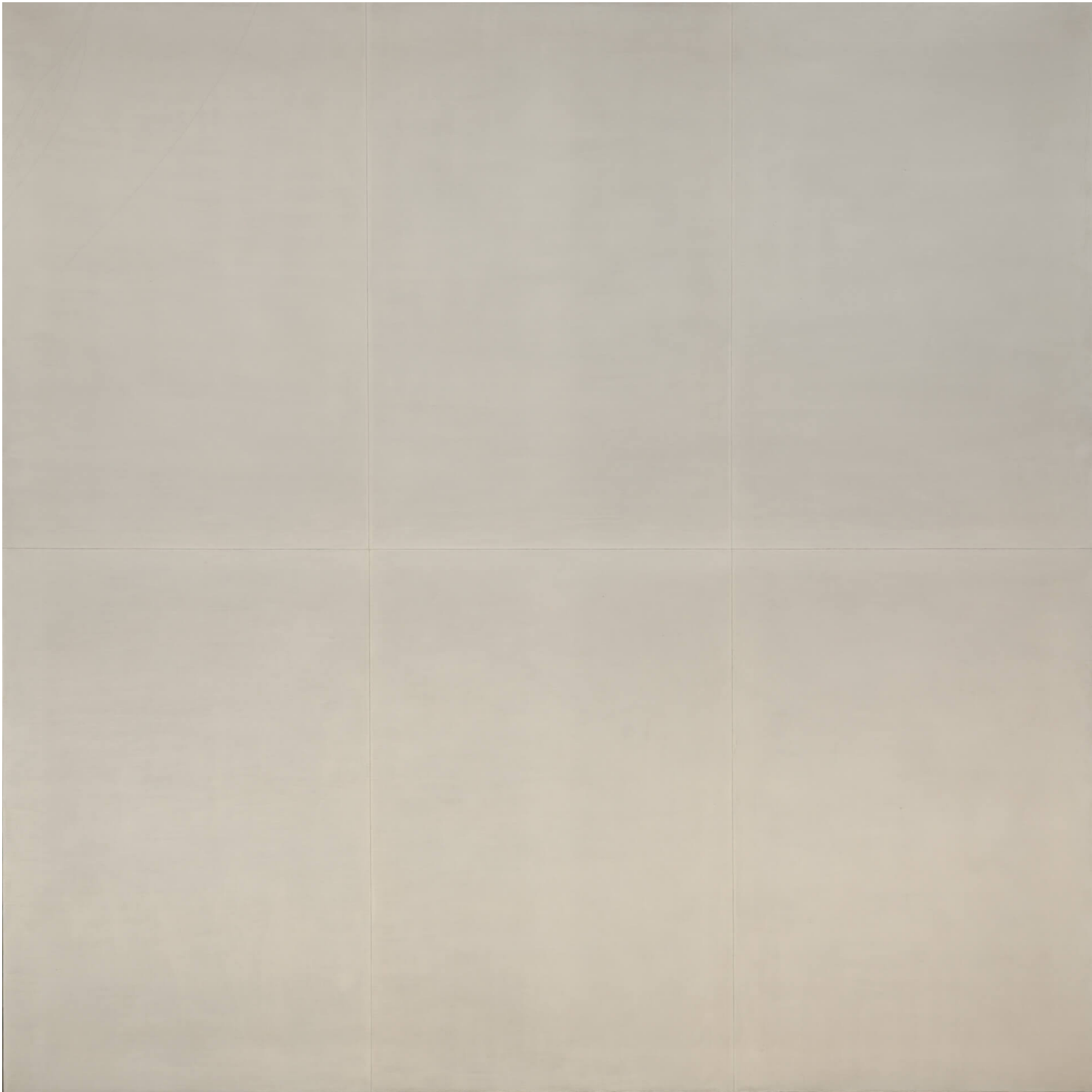
Through her participation in the 1967 exhibition *10* at Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles, Martin's grid paintings became associated with the art movement called Minimalism. Artists associated with the movement created work characterized by simple forms, the creative use of colour, and a deliberate lack of expression that emphasized the materiality of art. Although Martin's grid paintings are similar in appearance to the works of Sol LeWitt (1928–2007), there are significant differences: LeWitt created three-dimensional grids, and he and the Minimalists were interested in materialism and intellectualism; by contrast, Martin was primarily concerned with representing abstract emotions. In 1965, the Museum of Modern Art acquired *The Tree*, making it Martin's first painting to be purchased by a major New York museum.



Installation view of *10* exhibition at Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles, May 2–27, 1967. In the foreground: Sol LeWitt, *Series B #8*, 1967, baked enamel on aluminum, 522.5 x 522.5 x 522.5 cm. Hanging on back wall: Agnes Martin, *Leaf in the Wind*, 1963, acrylic and graphite on canvas, 190.5 x 190.5 x 2.2 cm, now in the collection of the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, California, and Dan Flavin, *Untitled*, 1966, neon sculpture, 22.9 x 243.8 x 177.8 cm.



## TUNDRA 1967



Agnes Martin, *Tundra*, 1967

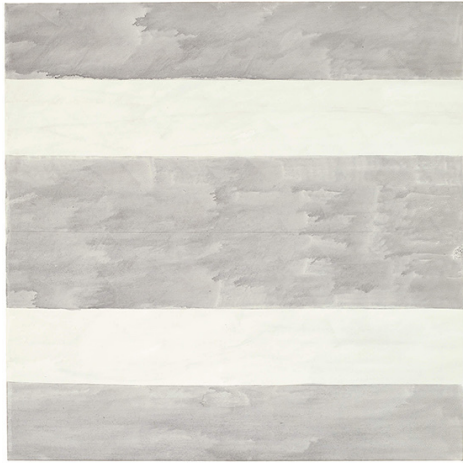
Acrylic and graphite on canvas, 182.9 x 182.9 cm

The Harwood Museum of Art, Taos, New Mexico

© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

*Tundra* is the last painting that Martin made before shocking the art world and abruptly leaving New York in 1967. It is also a beautiful and unique work from her New York period, a conclusion that brought her mature grid period to an end. Two horizontal lines and one vertical line, barely perceptible on an off-white background, create six large vertical rectangles. The painting retains the vertical and horizontal compositional elements of the mature grids, but presents the format in an entirely new way.

In her last half-dozen paintings of 1967, Martin began expanding out of the grid, a process that culminated with *Tundra*. In works such as *Hill* and *Desert*, both 1967, she abandoned the vertical lines, focusing only on the horizontal. In both paintings, a repeating pattern of two single lines and then a double line is expressed.



These types of patterned compositions would reappear in the 1970s in paintings such as *The Islands I-XII*, 1979. In *Trumpet*,

LEFT: Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 2004, acrylic and graphite on canvas, 152.4 x 152.4 cm, private collection. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019). RIGHT: Agnes Martin, *Trumpet*, 1967, acrylic and graphite on canvas. 182.9 x 182.9 cm, private collection. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

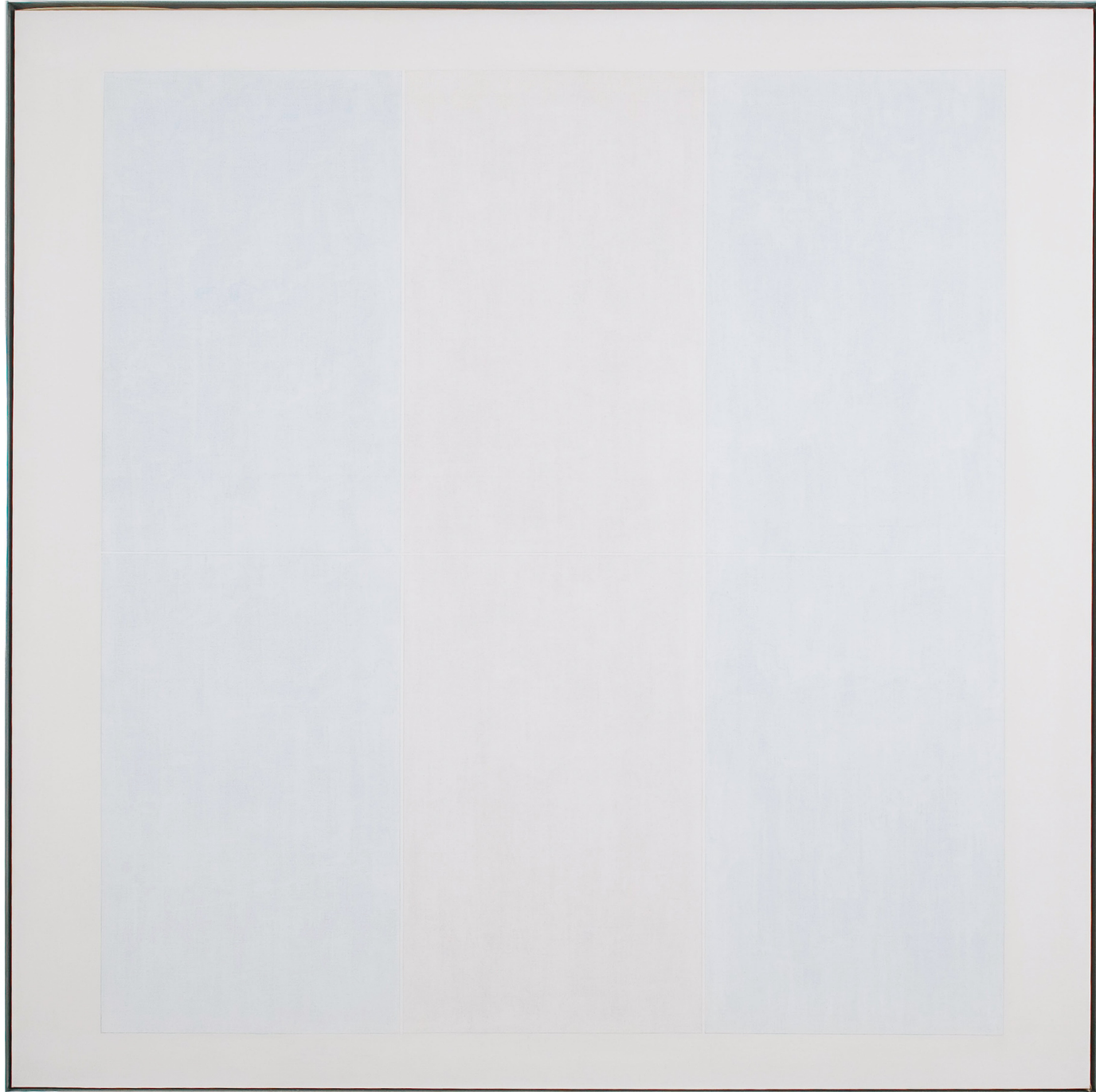
1967, painted right before *Tundra*, Martin introduces a mottled grey background, another format that does not otherwise appear in the 1960s grids but will reappear in paintings much later in her career, including *Untitled*, 2004, one of the last Martin completed before she died.

Although Martin's 1967 paintings, including *Tundra*, represent the end of her grid period, they also lay the ground for the work that she would take up in the 1970s and beyond. For example, the six white vertical rectangles created by the expanded grid in *Tundra* are very similar in format to the six red and blue vertical rectangles in *Untitled #3*, 1974.

In 1967 or 1968, collector Samuel Wagstaff (1921–1987) purchased *Tundra*.<sup>1</sup> It was included in Martin's first non-commercial art exhibition, organized by Douglas Crimp (1944–2019) at the School of Visual Arts Gallery in New York in 1971, at *documenta 5* in Kassel, Germany in 1972, and in Martin's mid-career retrospective at the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania in 1973. In 1971, the painting was featured in a tribute to Martin in *Artforum* by Kasha Linville, who called *Tundra* "a simple, almost inexplicable canvas."<sup>2</sup>



## UNTITLED #3 1974



Agnes Martin, *Untitled #3*, 1974

Acrylic and graphite on canvas, 182.9 x 182.9 cm

Des Moines Art Center, Iowa

© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

After leaving New York and the art world behind in 1967 and spending a year and a half on the road, Martin resurfaced in New Mexico in 1968. She settled on a mesa near the town of Cuba and lived in this beautiful yet challenging landscape for six years without painting. In 1974 she began painting again and by 1975 was ready to exhibit a new series of work at Pace Gallery in New York City.

One of the first canvases Martin painted after this six-year hiatus was *Untitled #3*.<sup>1</sup> The work maintains the overall structure that she developed for her grids in the 1960s, yet presents several significant new elements. The six-foot-square format remained, as did the acrylic and graphite composition. Where nearly all of the canvases from 1964 to 1967 were made up of a graphite grid overlaying a canvas painted a single colour, *Untitled #3* introduces the use of a multiple-colour base in what will eventually morph into Martin's bar format. Six tall rectangles (two red and four blue) of equal size are laid over a white background on a vertical orientation, each separated by a thin white line. Each rectangle is outlined with graphite. The red and blue rectangles are very lightly applied, giving the appearance of sun-bleaching. The vertical orientation, first seen in *Tundra*, 1967, is reintroduced, but now represents a new direction.

Martin said of this change in her art: "The paintings in my first show after I started painting again were all vertical. I don't know why, I can't explain the leap that was my inspiration. I had to do everything I'm told. So does everybody else."<sup>2</sup> Martin often talked about her inspiration, or sometimes acknowledged the voices telling her to do things in a certain way.<sup>3</sup> The insertion of vertical and later horizontal bands would come to characterize Martin's post-grid paintings for the rest of her life. *Untitled #3* was among the work included in her 1975 Pace Gallery exhibition.



Agnes Martin with Arne Glimcher in front of her studio in Cuba, New Mexico, 1974, photograph by Fred Mueller.



## GABRIEL 1976



Agnes Martin, *Gabriel*, 1976

16mm film, colour, 78 minutes,

silent with a selection of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*

Contemporary stills photographed by Bill Jacobson from original film

Pace Gallery, New York

© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

With no training or previous experience with filmmaking, in 1975 Martin purchased a camera using proceeds from her first exhibition at Pace and began working in nature.<sup>1</sup> The result is Martin's only complete film, *Gabriel*. While the title might suggest an homage to the Annunciation, the film focuses on the vast landscape that enveloped her on the isolated mesa in northeastern New Mexico, a place where she lived for nearly a decade, as well as the landscapes of California and Colorado.

*Gabriel* opens on a young boy, the titular Gabriel, facing the vastness of the Pacific Ocean as waves break on the beach. He is filmed from behind, a mop of light brown hair, a white shirt and shorts. The viewer does not see his expression.



Martin originally wanted to make the film with her niece Christa's two-year-old daughter, Erin. They flew down to New Mexico from Vancouver and spent some time in Martin's adobe studio but never found time to film.<sup>2</sup> *Gabriel* ended up being played by a local New Mexican child named Peter Mayne, who in the film walks along a river and into the mountains. A long sequence in the middle switches to sustained, close up shots of flowers, streams, and trees. It is silent except for several passages of the famous 1955 Glenn Gould recording of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.



Agnes Martin, *Gabriel*, 1976, 16mm film, colour, 78 minutes, silent with a selection of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, contemporary stills photographed by Bill Jacobson from original film, Pace Gallery, New York.

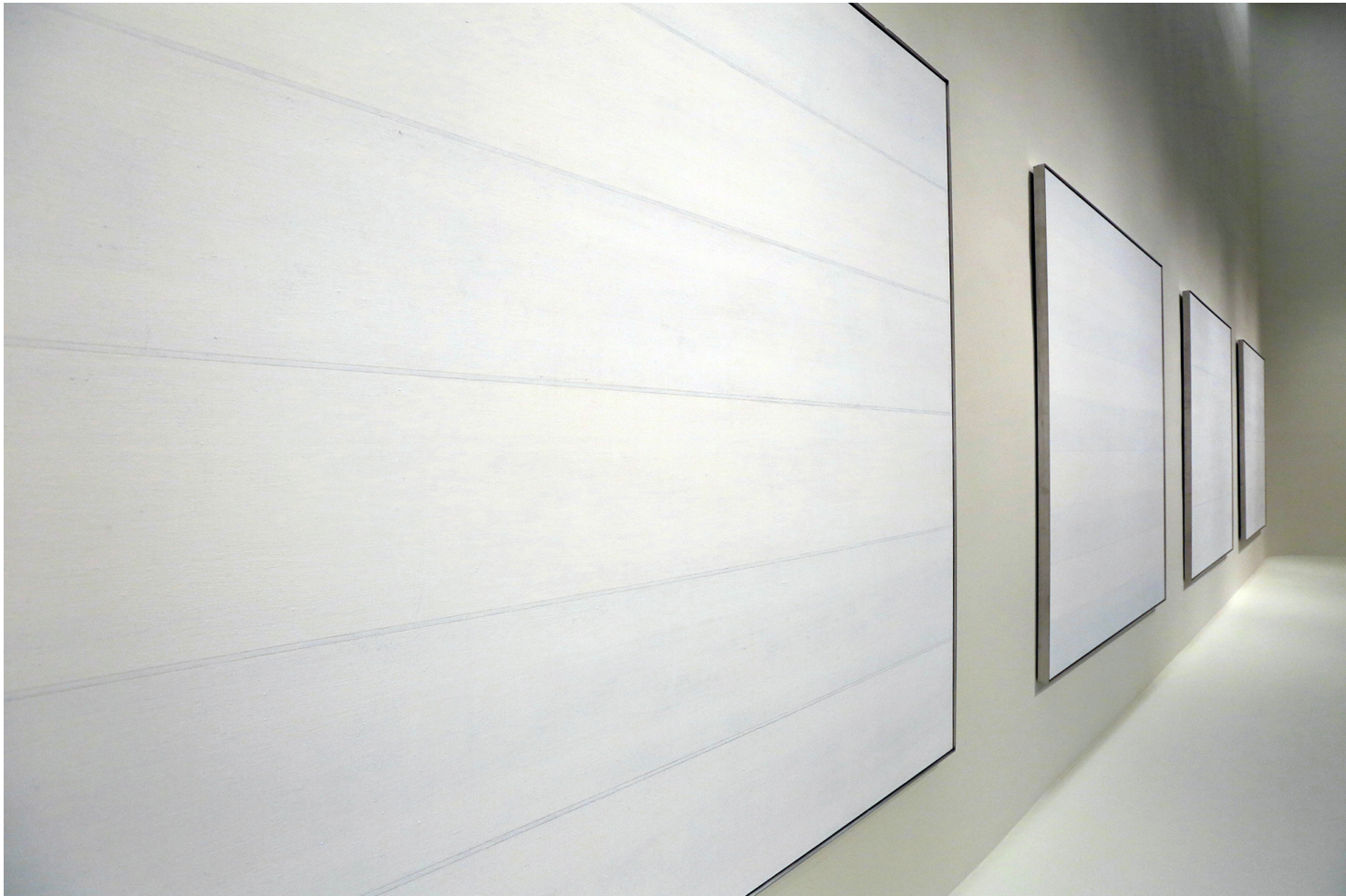
Art historian Matthew Jeffrey Abrams explores the significance of the use of the fellow Canadian's recording in Martin's film, arguing that Gould and Martin share a commitment to form, variation, and obsession in their work.<sup>3</sup> In this way, *Gabriel* can also be compared to the famous pianist's own 1967 experimentation with media, *The Idea of North*, a radio documentary that would become the first part of Gould's three-part Solitude Trilogy.<sup>4</sup> It features five interviewees whose voices are spliced, overlapped, and intertwined contrapuntally—a compositional device that Gould borrowed from Bach. Although the five interviewees are the focus of the documentary, the subject is, as Barbara Frum put it, "solitude and what it means to [Gould]."<sup>5</sup>

Martin, who at the time was seeking her own solitude on the mesas of New Mexico, similarly focused on the child Gabriel, but was really investigating happiness, innocence, and beauty—abstract emotions that she believed could be experienced when contemplating the natural world.<sup>6</sup> "My work is about emotion," Martin said in a statement that could apply as equally to *Gabriel* as to her paintings. "Not personal emotion, abstract emotion. It's about those subtle moments of happiness we all experience."<sup>7</sup> Therefore *Gabriel* must be understood within the context of Martin's abstract paintings. While the forms are entirely different, they both embody the unrepresentable emotions that Martin felt when she contemplated the natural world.

In 1977, Martin attempted a second film, *Captivity*, which included dialogue, a script, and Kabuki actors hired from San Francisco. It was shot in New Mexico and on Vancouver Island but was never completed. *Gabriel* was first screened at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania in 1977.



## THE ISLANDS I–XII 1979



Agnes Martin, *The Islands I–XII*, 1979

Acrylic and graphite pencil on linen, twelve parts, each 182.9 x 182.9 cm

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

In 1977 Martin rented a property in Galisteo, New Mexico, where she lived for some years in an Airstream trailer that she encased in adobe bricks. Before even building a house, Martin constructed a studio that was larger than the thirty-five-foot by thirty-five-foot one she had built in Portales in 1974, which she finished with the help of local tradespeople by 1979. Here Martin began to make her largest and most complex work to date, *The Islands I–XII*, a twelve-canvas composite, one of only four multi-panel pieces that she made in her lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

Although *The Islands I-XII* contains twelve canvases, it is a single artwork. It is always exhibited as one and in the same order. What appears at first as a very subtle series of paintings, when examined closely, reveals an intricate study of repeating patterns and ideas.

Each canvas has between four and twelve wide bars of white and off-white, which are bisected either by graphite lines or thin bands. The first canvas, for example, has five white bars separated by four thin off-white bands. The second canvas has three off-white and two white bars, alternating and separated by a horizontal graphite line; the off-white bars are bisected by graphite lines, while the white bars are not. The variations continue until the piece concludes.

The organization of the twelve canvases is akin to the structure of classical music, with a theme explored through variations. The end result, also like music, is more than an intellectual exercise in balance, tone, and scale, but rather a truly experiential encounter, one that takes place over time. As the viewer's gaze moves across the panels from left to right there is tension and release; ideas develop and are resolved over several canvases. Martin often compared her paintings to music, saying, "People are not aware of their abstract emotions, which are a big part of their lives, except when they listen to music or look at art."<sup>2</sup>

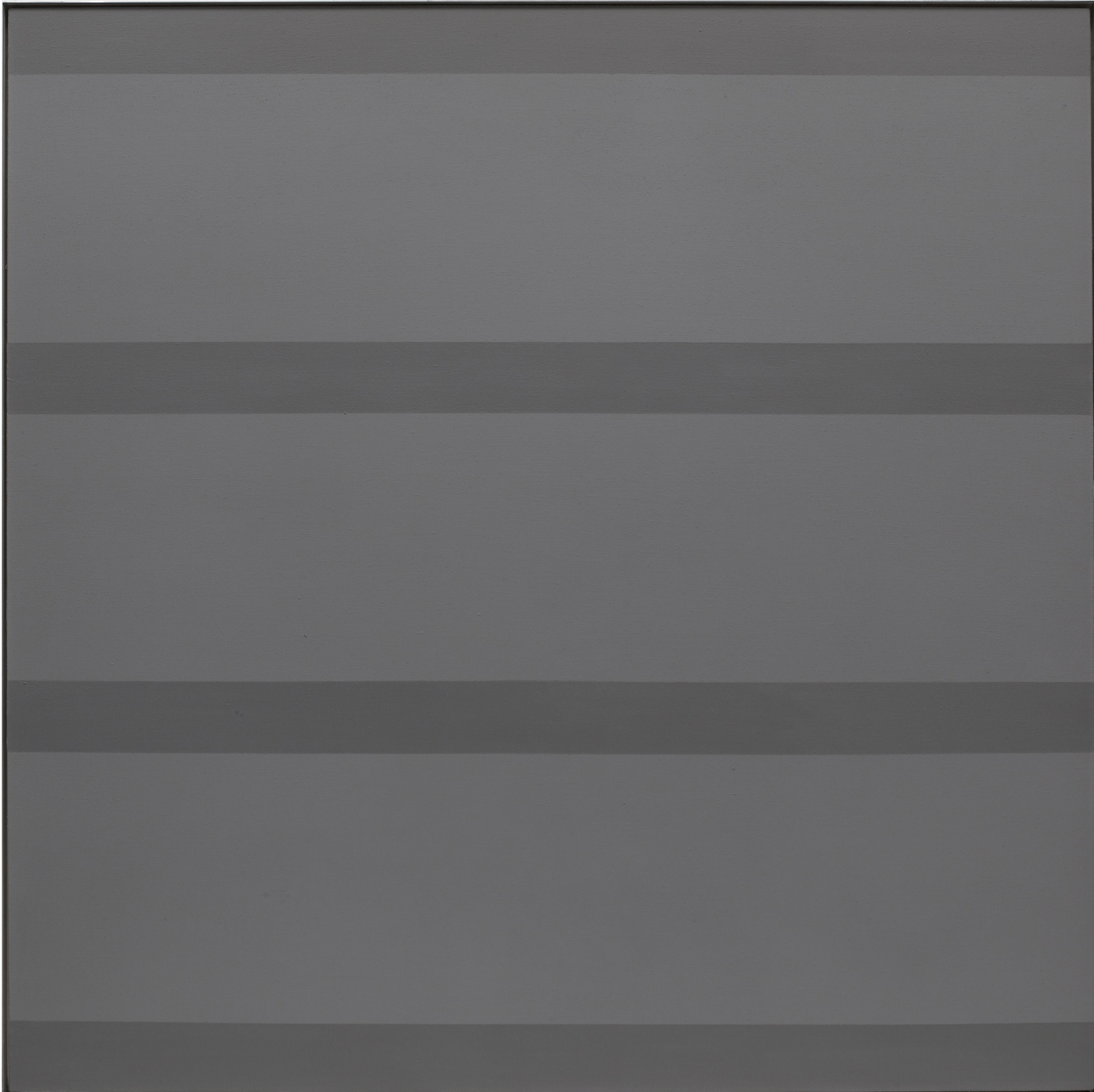
First exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe in 1979, the series travelled to seven museums throughout the United States before being exhibited at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon, and the former Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts in Montreal—Martin's first exhibitions in her native Canada. The Whitney Museum of American Art acquired *The Islands I-XII* around the time the institution held a retrospective exhibition of the artist's work in 1992.



Entrance to Agnes Martin's former studio and home in Galisteo, New Mexico, 1992, photograph by Mary Ellen Mark.



## UNTITLED #3 1989



Agnes Martin, *Untitled #3*, 1989

Acrylic and graphite on canvas, 182.9 x 182.9 cm

Private collection, New York

© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

By the late 1980s, Martin's monochromatic palette evolved to feature darker tones. *Untitled #3*, 1989, includes three thick, dark grey bars alternating with four thinner and darker bars. The acrylic is the colour of graphite, which largely hides the graphite lines that separate the thick and thin bars.

Grey paintings were not a radical departure for Martin. Her grid paintings of the 1960s often had an off-white or light grey palette. In 1974 Martin introduced muted colours as seen in *Untitled #3*, 1974, but then moved back toward a white or an off-white palette in paintings such as *The Islands I-XII*, 1979, and *White Flower I*, 1985. However, the grey paintings of the late 1980s are much darker and more sombre than anything she had painted before or after. Martin never acknowledged whether she was or was not exploring negative emotions in her painting during this period.

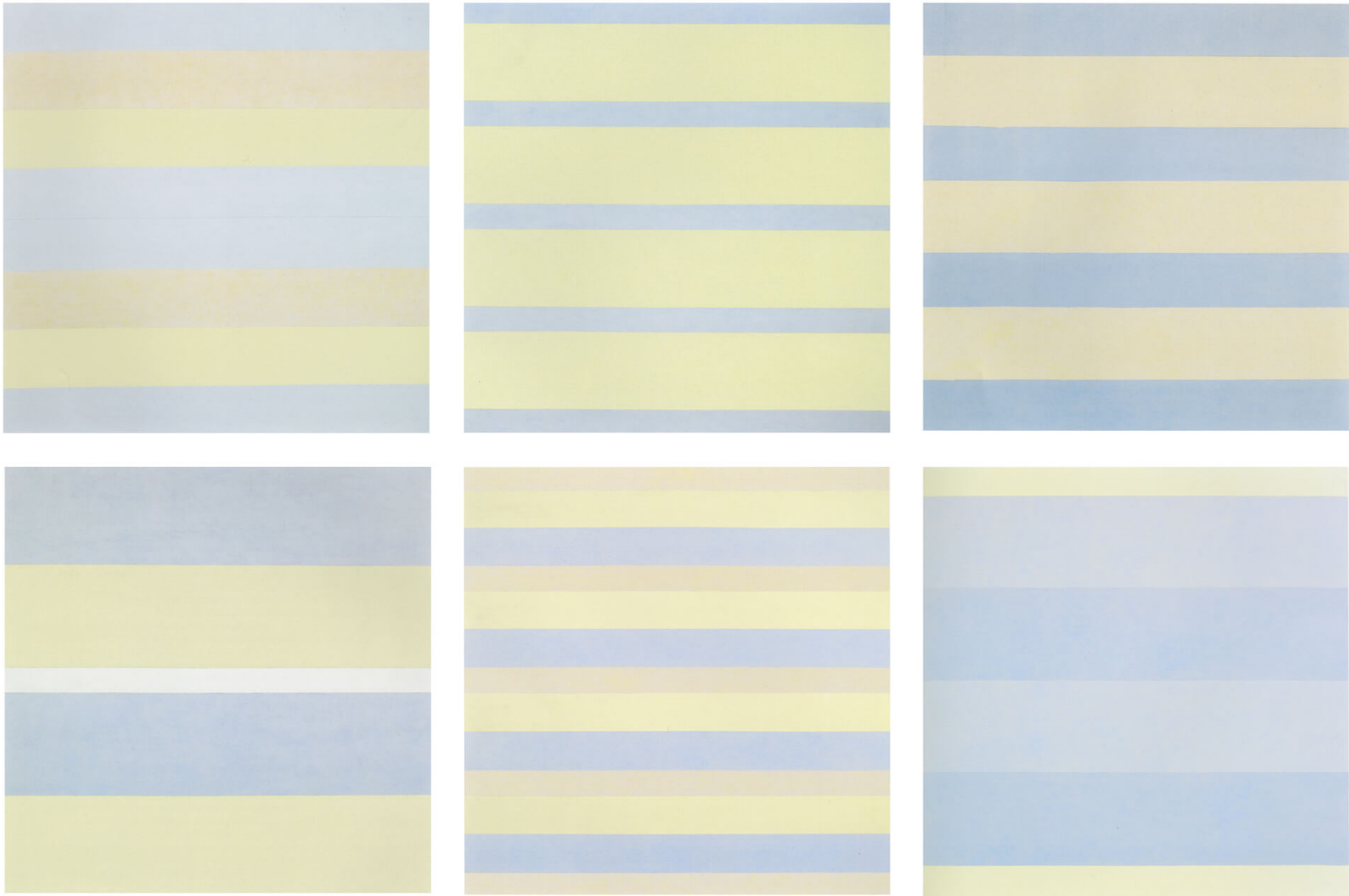


Installation view of *Agnes Martin: Recent Paintings*, The Pace Gallery, 142 Greene Street, New York, December 7, 1990-January 12, 1991.

*Untitled #3* was among ten canvases featured in the exhibition *Agnes Martin: Recent Paintings*, which opened in December 1990 at the Pace Gallery in New York. It is considered the height of Martin's grey period (approximately 1985-1992), a body of work that was celebrated in the 2011 Pace exhibition *Agnes Martin, The '80s: Grey Paintings*. *Untitled #3* was also included alongside a series of prints, *On a Clear Day*, 1973, and seven other acrylic and graphite on canvas paintings in a solo exhibition at the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina, Saskatchewan, in 1995.<sup>1</sup> By around 1992, Martin began to move away from her grey paintings by reintroducing colour into her work, which ultimately led to the most chromatic and energetic pieces of her career.



## WITH MY BACK TO THE WORLD 1997



Agnes Martin, *With My Back to the World*, 1997

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas,

six panels, each 152.4 x 152.4 cm

Ovitz Family Collection, Los Angeles;

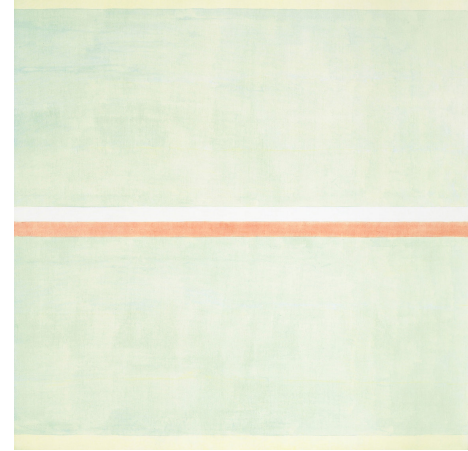
fractional and promised gift to the Museum of Modern Art, New York

© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

Martin's mindset in the last few decades of her life can be summed up by the title of a series of six paintings she made in 1997: *With My Back to the World*. Like *The Islands I-XII*, Martin's *With My Back to the World* is a multi-panel work of six related but distinct canvases that are shown together as a whole.

The first canvas of the series has eight horizontal bars in light blue, yellow, and orange in two identical schemes that are separated by a central graphite line. For the second canvas, four large light yellow bars alternate with five light blue bars. This compositional feature continues with alternating sun-bleached reds, yellows, and blues on four other canvases, with Martin varying the order, thickness, and opacity for effect. The colour palette is similar to that of the works in her 1975 Pace Gallery exhibition. They are smaller in scale than her earlier paintings; Martin reduced the size of her canvases from six feet square to five feet square after moving into the Plaza de Retiro retirement residence in Taos around age eighty. The smaller format enabled her to more easily manipulate the canvases as she lost strength with age.

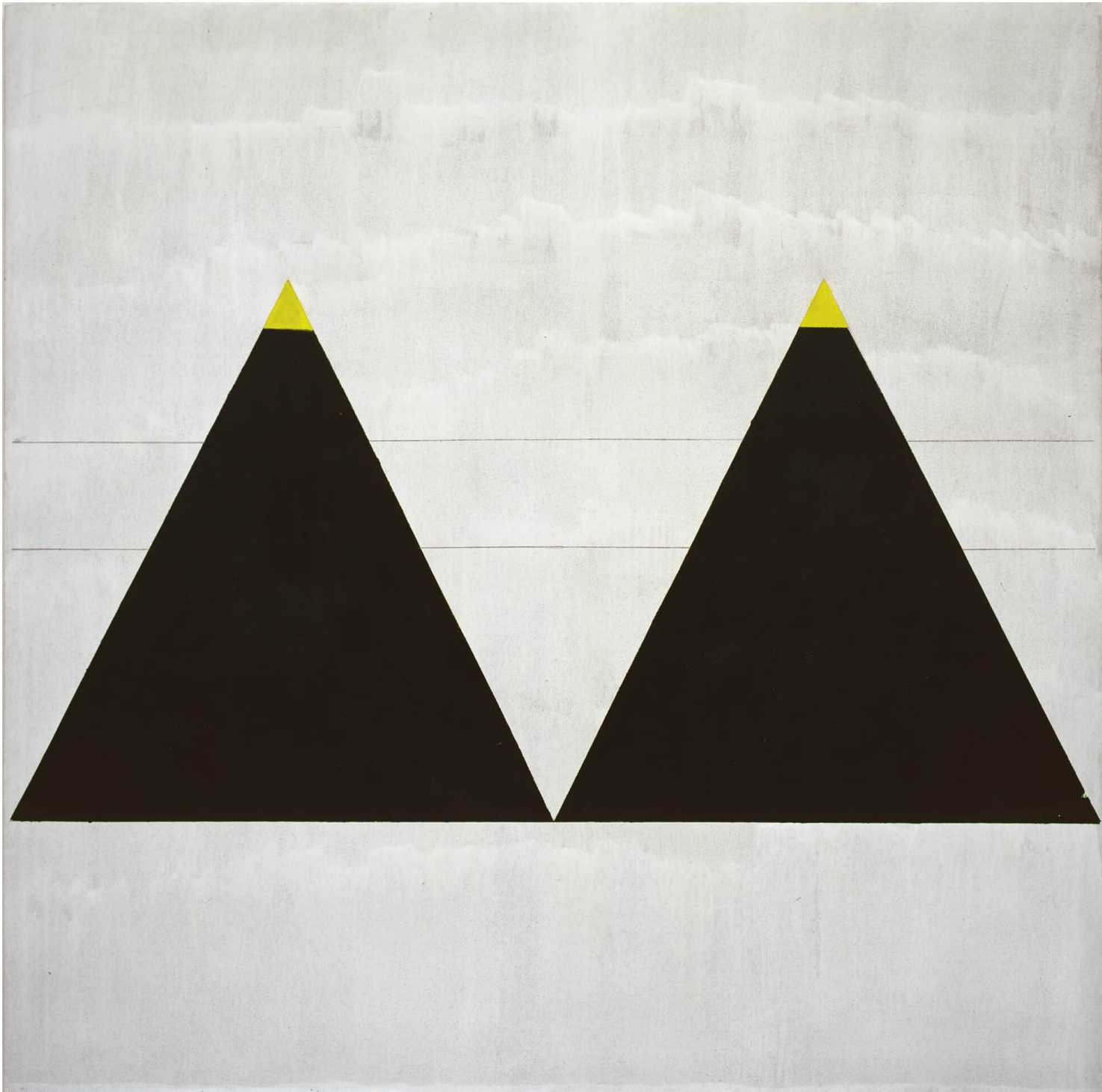
Almost all of Martin's paintings in the 1970s and 1980s were untitled; the few that she did name referenced physical objects or places in nature. In *With My Back to the World* and other canvases in the mid-1990s, Martin began to name her paintings after emotional states instead of the natural forms that elicited those emotions, laying bare her desire to make art about the intangible experiences in life. By the time Martin painted *With My Back to the World*, she was one of the most critically celebrated and commercially successful living artists. Yet if one compares photographs of Martin's living quarters at the Plaza de Retiro to those taken in the Ledoux Street studio in Taos where she had lived in the mid-1950s, when she had barely a penny to her name, one begins to understand Martin's lifelong commitment to austerity and anti-materialism, which is evoked by the title of the piece.



Agnes Martin, *Gratitude*, 2001, acrylic and graphite on canvas, 152.4 cm x 152.4 cm, Glimcher Family Collection, New York. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).



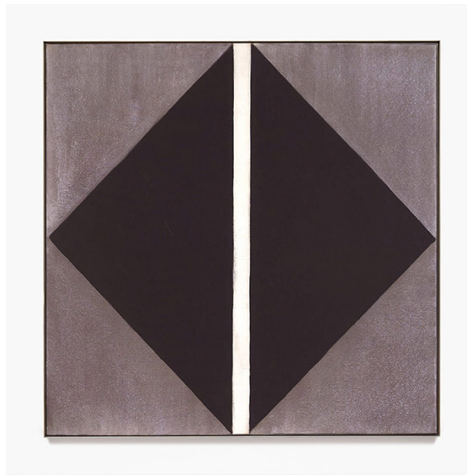
## UNTITLED #1 2003



Agnes Martin, *Untitled #1*, 2003  
Acrylic and graphite on canvas, 152.4 x 152.4 cm  
Private collection  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

During the last few years of her life, Martin's work took a dramatic shift as she began to move away from the horizontal format that had characterized her painting since the 1970s. In 2001, canvases with vertical stripes, such as *Little Children Playing with Love*, returned. Yet *Untitled #1* from 2003 broke through both the vertical and horizontal grids that had defined the artist's practice since 1960, establishing a final trajectory that was as surprising as it was logical.

This striking painting features an uneven acrylic background and brush strokes are visible across the whole picture plane. At the centre of the composition are two black triangles, peaked in yellow. Two graphite lines cross behind the triangles horizontally. In the career of any other artist, these subtle changes would hardly seem monumental. However, for Martin, who had steadfastly committed to her format of horizontal lines on square canvases for more than twenty years, these changes signalled a new chapter at the end of her life.



LEFT: Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, c.1957, oil on canvas, 86.4 x 86.4 cm, Dia Art Foundation, New York. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019). RIGHT: Agnes Martin, *Homage to Life*, 2003, acrylic and graphite on canvas, 152.4 x 152.4 cm, Collection of Leonard and Louise Riggio, New York. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

The painting was included in Martin's last exhibition at the former PaceWildenstein Gallery in 2004, where it hung alongside the canvas *Homage to Life*, 2003. *Untitled #1* and *Homage to Life* harken back to the formal experiments of the late 1950s and early 1960s that prefigured Martin's grids, such as *Untitled*, c.1957, and *Words*, 1960, two works that also include the triangle motif. They are late-career masterpieces that show that the artist never stopped experimenting within the parameters that she had set for herself. They were included in the 2005 Venice Biennale, six months after Martin's death.





# SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

Over a long life and career, Agnes Martin intersected with and influenced many of the important art movements of the mid-twentieth century, and she is recognized as one of the most internationally significant painters of the postwar generation. Since the late 1950s, Martin has been the subject of more than one hundred solo exhibitions, as well as numerous articles and books, which offer a wide range of scholarly views on her life and art. Nevertheless, many debates surrounding the nature of her enigmatic abstract canvases, her idiosyncratic lifestyle, and her position in the history of modern art arose during her lifetime, and these continue to shape the scholarship around both Martin and her work.



### UNDERSTANDING AGNES MARTIN

For nearly forty years, Agnes Martin was singularly dedicated to a very rigid format of painting: a square canvas or paper of consistent size and material, divided horizontally or vertically, or both, by a grid-like structure. This type of consistency is almost unparalleled in the annals of modern art. Because of this very inflexible format, it is sometimes difficult to understand what makes Martin's paintings different from one another or to pinpoint the subtleties of how her art evolved over her lifetime using writing alone. This is one of the struggles in translating her art; it exceeds the written word.

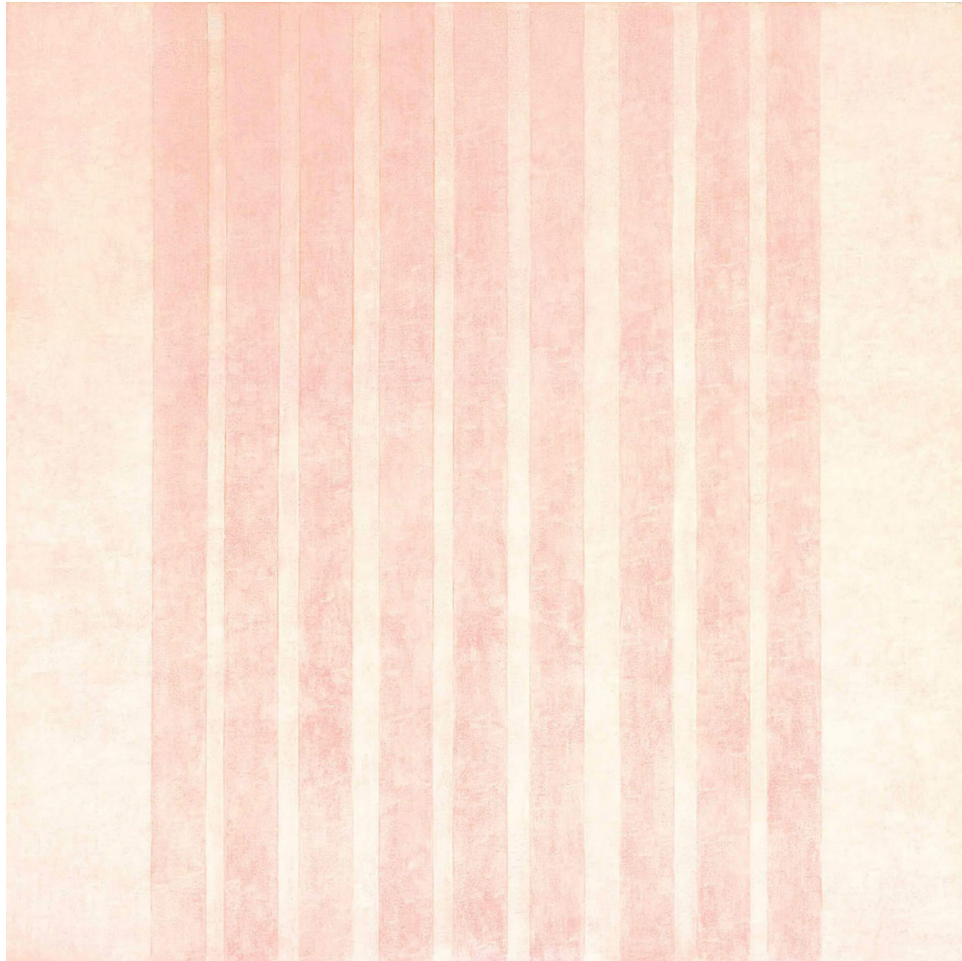
Martin did not intend for her work to be about the formal qualities of the grid; rather, the grid was a vehicle for her to make paintings that were completely without form.

She wrote, "My paintings have neither object nor space nor line nor anything - no forms. They are light, lightness, about merging, about formlessness."<sup>1</sup>

Martin wished to create an abstract emotional experience; one that she likened at times to listening to music or being in the natural world. As Martin explained: "There's nobody living who couldn't stand all afternoon in front of a waterfall. It's a simple experience, you become lighter and lighter in weight, you wouldn't want anything else."<sup>2</sup>

While Martin's paintings appear to be subtle variations on a single theme, they are intended to convey a wide spectrum of human experience and emotion. According to art critic Rhea Anastas, Martin understood that her work expressed an "innate psychic realm as opposed to a formalist, rationalist sphere."<sup>3</sup> This can be seen in the description of *Play*, 1966, by the art critic, and Martin's friend, Ann Wilson (b.1935). The painting is a grid of single horizontal and double vertical lines on a white background. Wilson writes that *Play* is "a painting about love," arguing that "the spatial rhythm of the suggestion of infinity makes possible a state of self-loss in contemplation."<sup>4</sup>

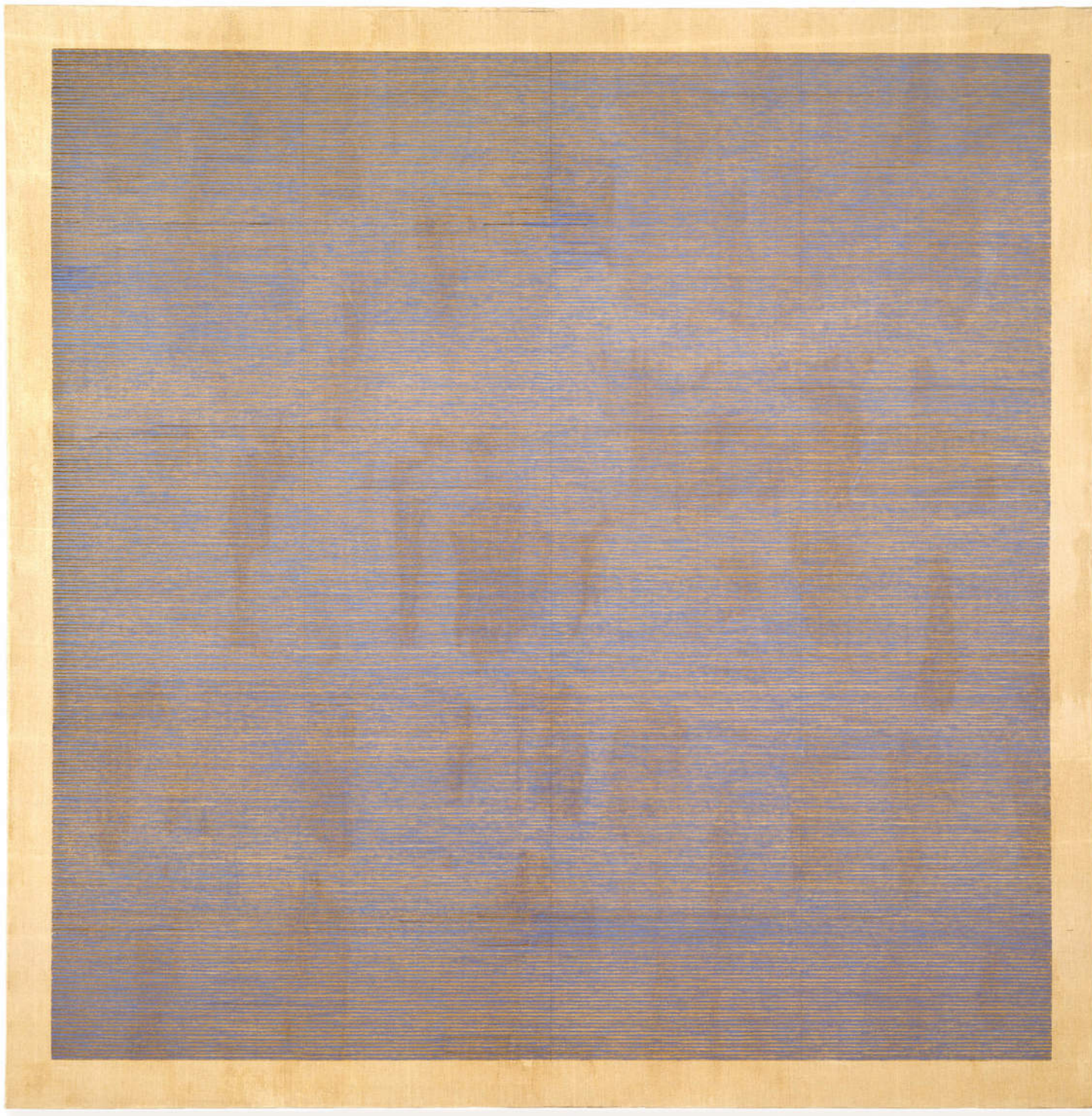
Throughout her career Martin alternated between periods when she titled her paintings and times when all of her paintings were untitled. In the 1960s, she tended to title her works after natural objects or phenomena—for example, *White Flower*, 1960, *The Tree*, 1964, or *Tundra*, 1967—although they were sometimes named after actions, such as *Play*. These titles anchor the



Agnes Martin, *Untitled #13*, 1975, acrylic and graphite on canvas, 182.9 x 182.9 cm, private collection. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).



viewer's experience when confronted by the painting. One can imagine standing in front of *Falling Blue*, 1963, and having the experience of standing in front of a waterfall as Martin described.<sup>5</sup> However, she realized the limitation that the titles of her work placed on the viewer. While discussing her painting *Milk River*, 1963, Martin wrote: "Cows don't give milk if they don't have grass and water. Tremendous meaning of that is that painters can't give anything to the observer. . . . When you have inspiration and represent inspiration, the observer makes the painting."<sup>6</sup> So it is not surprising that beginning in the early 1970s, when this statement was written, through to the end of the 1990s, Martin largely stopped giving her paintings titles. She represented her inspiration and left it to the observer to make meaning.



Agnes Martin, *Falling Blue*, 1963, oil and graphite on canvas, 182.9 x 182.9 cm, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

Martin provided guidelines on how she wanted her work to be understood in her writing and public talks. "My interest is in experience that is wordless and



silent," she wrote in 1974. "And in the fact that this experience can be expressed for me in artwork, which is also wordless and silent."<sup>7</sup> Although she wrote extensively about her own work, Martin was at times reluctant to subject her art to the critical interpretation of others. In 1980 she was offered an exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, which she accepted with the caveat that there would be no exhibition catalogue. This was an impossible demand to the Whitney, and her exhibition did not proceed.<sup>8</sup> Titles and critical interpretation of her work were antithetical to Martin's vision of a still and silent art. Yet in the late 1990s and into the 2000s, Martin began giving her work titles again, eschewing the natural allusions of the 1960s for very specific, emotional states such as *A Little Girl's Response to Love*, 2000, and *Homage to Life*, 2003. These late works direct the viewer's response more than any previous works; rather than the almost indescribable feeling of the innocence of trees, for example, Martin takes us by the hand and leads us to an outburst of love in the last years of her life.

#### AN ELUSIVE MODERN ART

Precisely how Martin fitted into American abstraction was the subject of considerable debate during her lifetime. Martin was associated with two distinct artist scenes—first the Taos Moderns, and later the artists of New York City. The former was a group of self-described modern painters, which included Louis Ribak (1902–1979), Beatrice Mandelman (1912–1998), Clay Spohn (1898–1977), and Edward Corbett (1919–1971), who came to the remote New Mexico town from New York City and California in the 1950s. Taos had been a destination for artists since the 1890s and was well-known through the paintings of

Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986) and the photographs of Ansel Adams (1902–1984). Taos Moderns was not an official group, but its members were inspired by Abstract Expressionism and were connected to the larger movement of postwar American abstraction: California painter Richard Diebenkorn (1922–1993) showed several times in Taos, and Mark Rothko (1903–1970), Ad Reinhardt (1913–1967), and Clyfford Still (1904–1980) all visited from New York.<sup>9</sup> Reinhardt is the common figure between Martin's world in Taos in the 1950s and her life in New York in the 1960s. The two met in Taos in 1951, and they later shared a gallerist in Betty Parsons (1900–1982).<sup>10</sup> During this period, Martin painted in an abstract, biomorphic style, as can be seen in the 1954 painting *The Bluebird*.

In 1957, Martin moved to New York and specifically to Coenties Slip, where a small enclave of artists had taken up residence in abandoned ship lofts on the

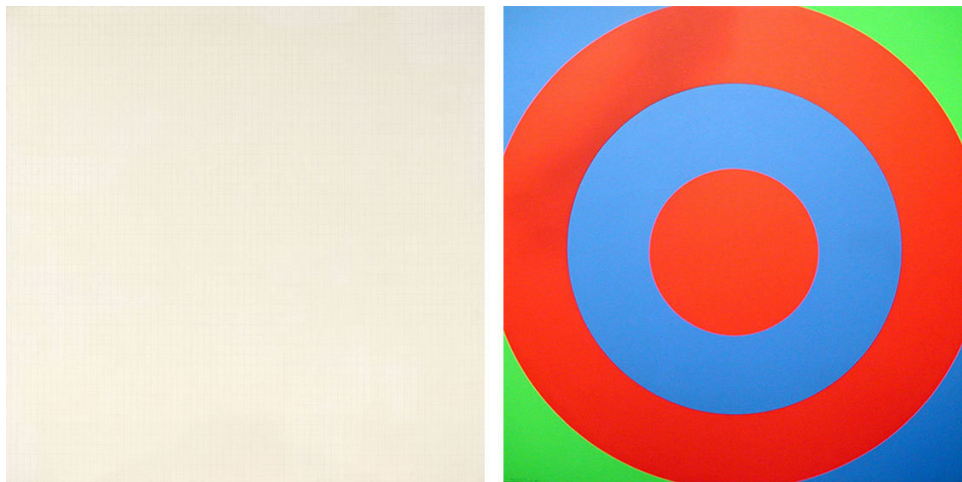


Agnes Martin, *The Bluebird*, 1954, oil on canvas, 71.4 x 101.6 cm, Roswell Museum and Art Center, New Mexico. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).



eastern shore of Lower Manhattan in the 1950s. Like the Taos Moderns, the artists of the Slip, including Robert Indiana (1928–2018), Lenore Tawney (1907–2007), Ellsworth Kelly (1923–2015), James Rosenquist (1933–2017), and Jack Youngerman (b.1926), were not unified by a single style but by a shared sensibility and geographic proximity. During this period, Martin developed her signature grid style, which can be seen in *Tundra*, 1967, the last painting she made before she left New York. Collectively, the artist scene represented a response to Abstract Expressionism; Martin can be understood as a transitional figure between the generation of Jackson Pollock (1912–1956) and Willem de Kooning (1904–1997) and the formalists–Minimalists, practitioners of Optical art (popularly known as Op art) and of Hard Edge—who followed.<sup>11</sup>

Martin was included in group exhibitions in the 1960s that placed her in the various painting camps. In 1965, the Museum of Modern Art categorized her with Op art, which was a movement of artists who explored ideas of perception through abstraction and included Bridget Riley (b.1931) and Canada's Claude Tousignant (b.1932).<sup>12</sup> While



LEFT: Agnes Martin, *The City*, 1966, acrylic and graphite on canvas, 182.9 x 182.9 cm, Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019). RIGHT: Claude Tousignant, *L'empêcheur de Tourner en Rond*, 1964, acrylic latex on canvas, 177.8 x 177.8 cm, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut.

While both included in the exhibition and share similar large-scale formats and make use of geometric shapes, his canvas creates a distinct sensation of movement that is not present in Martin's canvas.

In contrast, a 1966 exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum characterized Martin's *The City*, 1966, along with Ellsworth Kelly's *Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange, Red*, 1966, as examples of Hard Edge painting.<sup>13</sup> Curator Lawrence Alloway argued the term opposed the geometric abstraction of Op art and was "a way of stressing the wholistic [*sic*] properties of both the big asymmetrical shapes" of Kelly and the "symmetrical layouts" of Martin.<sup>14</sup>



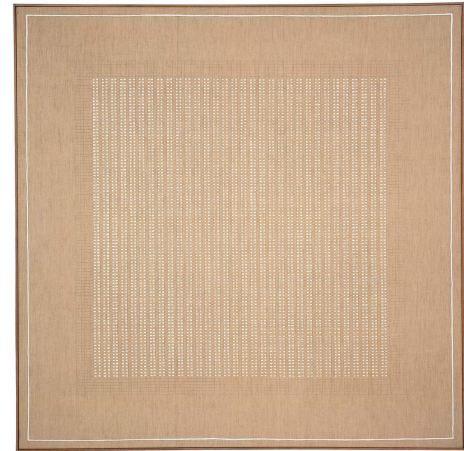
Ellsworth Kelly, *Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange, Red*, 1966, oil on canvas, five panels, 152.4 x 609.6 cm overall, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

That same year, Martin's *Leaves*, 1966, was exhibited alongside Minimalist works by Robert Morris (b.1931), Carl Andre (b.1935), and Sol LeWitt (1928–2007) at the Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles.<sup>15</sup> The exhibition included monotone and grid-based paintings and sculptures that were stylistically similar to Martin's work. Although this was a visually coherent exhibition, the artists could not agree on a statement or even a title that encapsulated their movement.<sup>16</sup> Martin later stated, "They were all minimalists, and they asked me to show with them. But that was before the word was invented. . . and then when they started calling them minimalists they called me a minimalist, too."<sup>17</sup> The art critic Lucy Lippard noted that Martin's paintings had an emotional complexity that set them apart from the minimalists, calling them "unique in their poetic approach to a strictly ordered and controlled execution."<sup>18</sup>

Martin rejected all of these associations, insisting that they ignored the underlying emotion of her grid paintings. She considered herself to be a member of the Abstract Expressionist movement, which included many immigrants to the United States, such as Willem de Kooning, Hans Hofmann, and Mark Rothko. However, Martin's formative years in New York occurred after the supremacy of the movement had waned, and her self-identification with it was based on philosophical considerations more than any formal connections.<sup>19</sup> Her paintings lacked the expressive gestures and drips of Pollock's monumental canvases, for example, or the vivid merger of abstraction and representation of de Kooning's *Woman* series. Yet Martin saw her paintings as part of the same emotional trajectory: she told the *New Yorker* that the Abstract Expressionists "dealt directly with those subtle emotions of happiness that I'm talking about."<sup>20</sup>

### NATIONAL IDENTITY

Like many aspects of Agnes Martin's life, the issue of her nationality was complex. Martin was born in Macklin, Saskatchewan, in 1912, lived briefly in Calgary, Alberta, and moved with her family to Vancouver when she was around seven years old, remaining there until she completed high school. Martin first moved to the United States in 1932, at age twenty, to help care for her sister who was ill, and she stayed because of the educational opportunities.<sup>21</sup>



Agnes Martin, *The Islands*, 1961, oil and graphite on canvas, 183.9 x 183.9 cm, private collection, New York. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).



Martin identified as an American artist from at least the 1940s, and she became an American citizen in 1950. In a 1954 grant application to the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation, Martin writes of her interest in “assisting the establishment of American Art, distinct and authentic. . . an acceptable representation of the expression of the American people.”<sup>22</sup> In a letter to a friend around the same time, she writes glowingly that “almost everyone in America is creative about what he does in his way of living and this is a wonderful thing because it has always been the tendency in this culture.”<sup>23</sup>



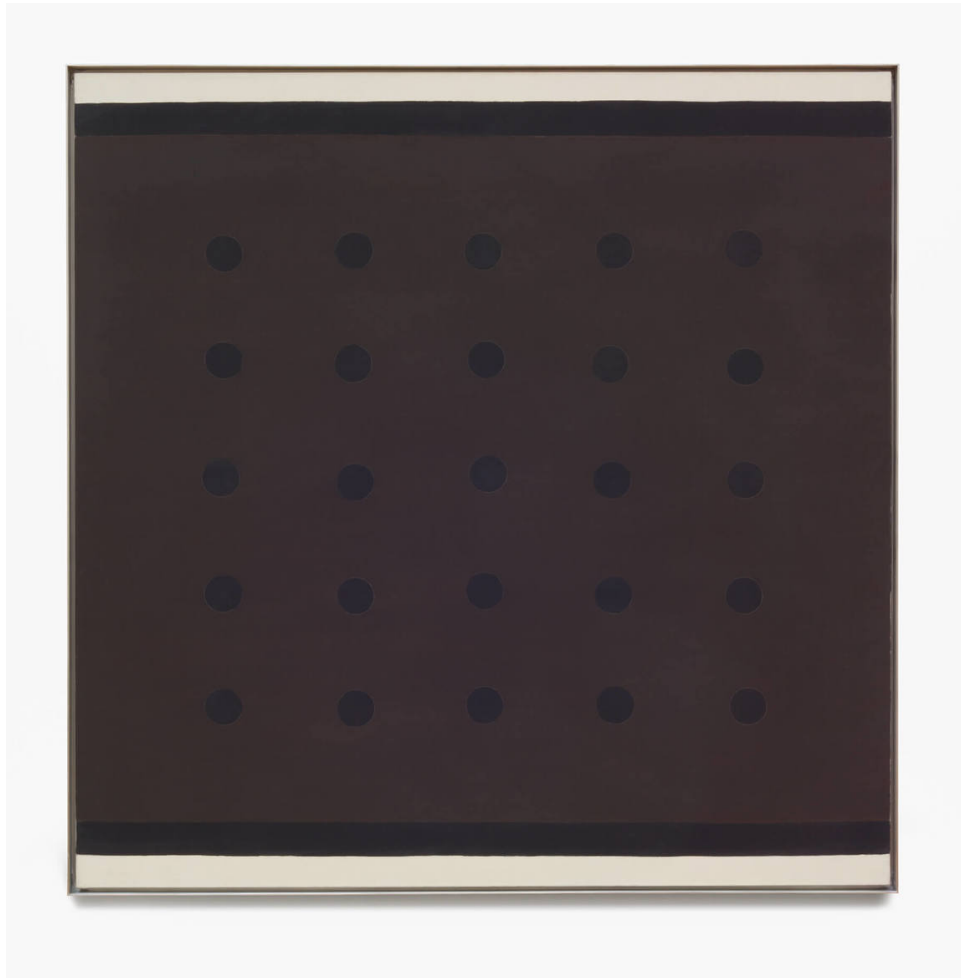
LEFT: Residents of Coenties Slip, New York, 1958, photograph by Jack Youngerman. *Left to right:* Delphine Seyrig, Duncan Youngerman, Lenore Tawney, Jerry Matthews, Ellsworth Kelly (*foreground*), Robert Indiana (*background*), Dolores Matthews, and Agnes Martin. RIGHT: A photograph of fifteen of the so-called Irascibles, November 24, 1950, published in *Life* magazine January 15, 1951, photograph by Nina Leen. *Left to right, front row:* Theodoros Stamos, Jimmy Ernst, Barnett Newman, James Brooks, and Mark Rothko; *middle row:* Richard Pousette-Dart, William Baziotis, Jackson Pollock, Clyfford Still, Robert Motherwell, and Bradley Walker Tomlin; *back row:* Willem de Kooning, Adolph Gottlieb, Ad Reinhardt, and Hedda Sterne.



Martin’s position can be contrasted with that of other Canadian expatriate artists in the 1950s, such as Fernand Leduc (1916–2014), Jean Paul Riopelle (1923–2002), and Paul-Émile Borduas (1905–1960), who had established their markets in Canada before leaving and who benefited from the support of the Canadian art establishment while abroad. Martin was never associated with any Canadian art movement; as a result, she was virtually ignored by collectors and galleries in Canada until late in her career. To this day, she is considered an American artist, even in Canada. Her painting, *White Flower I*, 1985, for example, hangs in the postwar American art galleries at the National Gallery of Canada, alongside works by Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, Clyfford Still, and Mark Rothko, and not in the Canadian and Indigenous art galleries. *The Rose*, 1964, similarly hangs in a gallery dedicated to American art at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

In America, ironically enough, Martin was often associated with Canada. The critic Dore Ashton made a connection between Martin's paintings and the vastness of the Saskatchewan prairie in a review of her second exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery in 1959:

"Agnes Martin was born in Saskatchewan and brought up in Vancouver and the great prairies have lodged in her imagination ever since."<sup>24</sup> Perhaps Ashton was thinking of the painting *Earth*, 1959, a canvas of just over four by four feet that was included in that exhibition. The picture shows a grid of twenty-five dark brown circles on a lighter brown background, with horizon-type lines at the top and bottom, giving the impression of a very simplified farmer's field. Critics also associated Martin with the Indigenous cultures of Canada, presumably Cree in Saskatchewan and the Nations of the Pacific Northwest in British Columbia. Ashton later recalled that when she met Martin in the late 1950s, the artist "spoke of her youth in Canada, of her exploration of the Indian [sic] culture there, and—proudly—of her work with mining and logging companies."<sup>25</sup>



Agnes Martin, *Earth*, 1959, oil on canvas, 126.4 x 126.4 cm, Dia Art Foundation, New York. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

The source of her unembellished canvases and austere lifestyle have similarly been attributed to her childhood in Canada. Art critic Holland Cotter singled out Martin's Presbyterian grandfather and his perceived Calvinism as an influence: "It is surely to this childhood one must look first in considering Martin's paintings and writings."<sup>26</sup> Although Martin told Ashton, "I guess I am really an American painter" in 1959, similar tropes drawn from her Canadian heritage to those outlined above persisted in American writing on her work throughout her career.<sup>27</sup> Martin herself may have encouraged these comparisons to the Saskatchewan prairies, at least passively. "My work is non-objective," she maintained, before adding, "but I want people, when they look at my paintings, to have the same feelings they experience when they look at landscape so I never protest when they say my work is like landscape."<sup>28</sup> Take, for example, *Grey Geese Descending*, 1985. The title evokes a flock of geese touching down, perhaps on a snow-covered farmer's field, as suggested by the grey-white canvas and horizontal lines. Yet for Martin this is an attempt to represent the feeling of the grey geese descending and not a physical component of the scene based on observation.





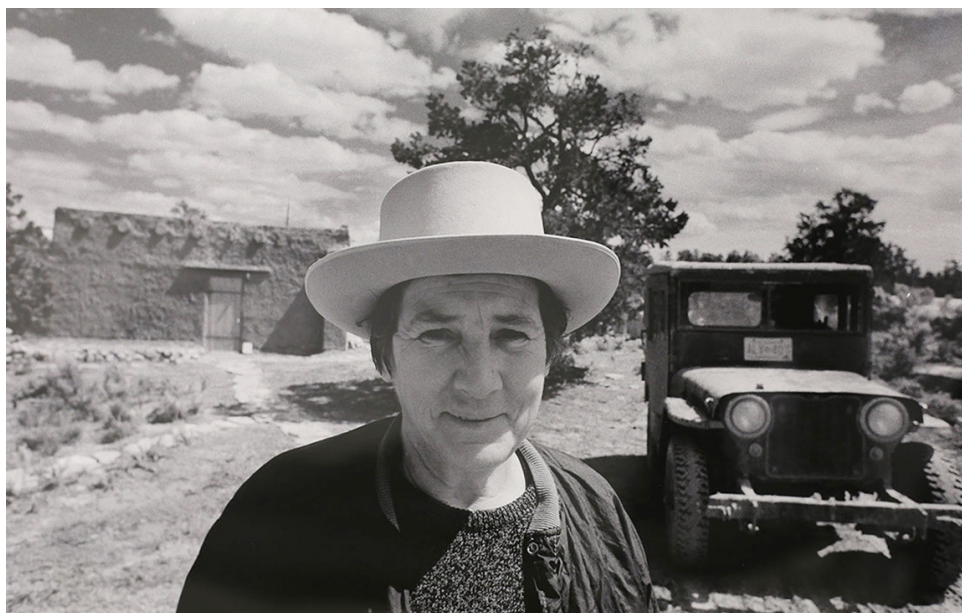
LEFT: Tammi Campbell, *Dear Agnes*, October 1–December 31, 2017, 85 letters, graphite on Japanese paper, 27.9 x 21.6 cm with letterfold. RIGHT: Installation view of Tammi Campbell, *Dear Agnes*, October 1–December 31, 2017 in the exhibition *Dear Agnes: Tammi Campbell, Agnes Martin, and Sarah Stevenson* at the Esker Foundation, Calgary, September 22–December 21, 2018, photograph by John Dean.

Despite living in the United States for over seventy years, Martin did maintain a lifelong connection to Canada. She spent time with her family in British Columbia intermittently during the decades after she left, and also made more wide-ranging visits, including in Canada's centennial year of 1967, and again in 1977 to work on a film in Victoria, British Columbia.<sup>29</sup> Canadian museums and galleries started recognizing her work in the 1970s, first with purchases of *Untitled #8*, 1977, and *The Rose*, 1964, by the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1977 and 1979 respectively. In 1985, the National Gallery of Canada purchased *White Flower #1*, 1985. Since that time the prices for her canvases have steadily risen, and no other Canadian museum owns a painting by Agnes Martin. Despite this, Martin's influence on contemporary Canadian art can be seen today, particularly in the work of Saskatoon-based artist Tammi Campbell (b.1974). Her ongoing piece *Dear Agnes*, begun in 2010, consists of a grid drawing she composes each day based on Martin's *On a Clear Day*, 1973. Campbell has completed over one thousand of these drawings to date.<sup>30</sup>

#### WITH HER BACK TO THE WORLD

Following Martin's dramatic departure from New York in 1967, she spent a year and a half travelling North America. She found her way to Mesa Portales near Cuba, New Mexico, in late 1968; the six years that followed were ones of self-imposed solitude, during which Martin did not paint. She would return to it in 1974.

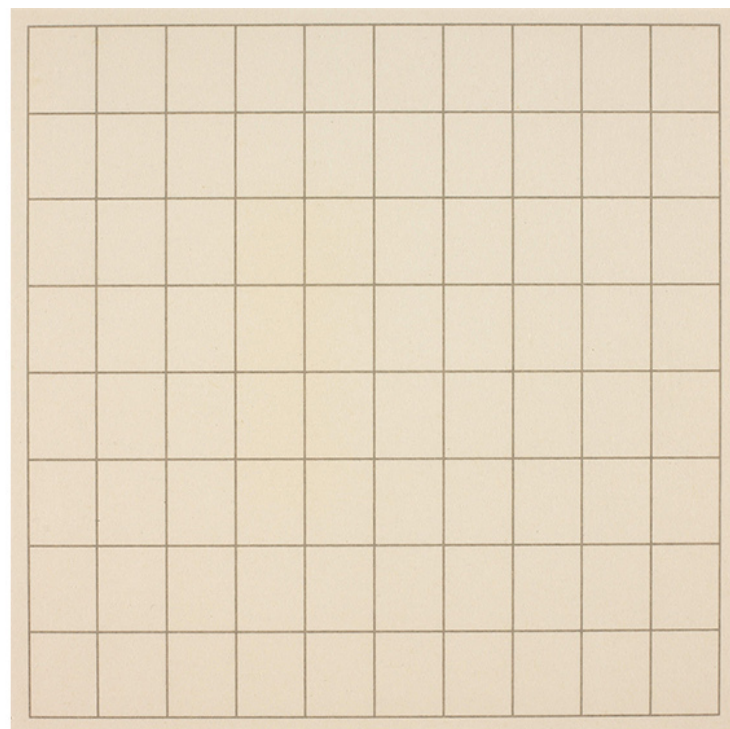
Although Martin had lived most of her adult life in precarious and nomadic circumstances, press accounts began to focus on this dimension of her life more after her move to Mesa Portales. At the same time as she was introducing new colours and redefining her grid style in



Agnes Martin, Cuba, New Mexico, 1974, photograph by Gianfranco Gorgoni.

paintings such as *Untitled #3*, 1974, a new conversation began developing around Martin as a person in the early 1970s. An ascetic public persona began to emerge, with Martin herself helping to construct the image through interviews in the popular and art press, as well as her own extensive writing.<sup>31</sup>

Martin's new self-positioning can be traced to two texts that appeared in 1973, around the same time as her first retrospective exhibition held at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia. The first, "The Untroubled Mind," appeared in the catalogue for that exhibition. The text consists of quotes by Martin, transcribed by Ann Wilson, in which the artist argues for the importance of innocence and beauty in art. To Martin, the untroubled mind is found in early childhood and is a moment when "inspiration is most possible."<sup>32</sup> Undoubtedly inspired by her attraction to Eastern philosophy, Martin notes that the artist must proceed without ego. "It would be an endless battle if it were all up to ego," she wrote. "Because [the untroubled mind] does not destroy and is not destroyed by itself."<sup>33</sup> Martin's own Tao-inspired writings have inspired Taoist interpretations of her paintings, such as by the art critic Thomas McEvilley, who likens her grid paintings to the "uncarved block" or a state of potential being. "Activated and tingling, the grid is the place of infinite creativity," he writes, concluding with Martin's own words: "the ground to which we must return for 'the renewal of memories of moments of perfection.'"<sup>34</sup>



LEFT: Agnes Martin, "Reflections," transcribed by Lizzie Borden, *Artforum* 11, no. 8 (April 1973), page 38. RIGHT: Agnes Martin, *On a Clear Day*, 1973, portfolio of 30 serigraphs in grey on cream laid Japan paper, mounted in window mats of white Schoeller Parole paper, with introduction sheet, in black leather-faced cardboard box, each 38 x 38 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

The second text, "Reflections," was transcribed by Lizzie Borden for *Artforum* from an interview with Martin and explores what she calls "the perfection underlying life."<sup>35</sup> Martin observes that a work of art is "successful when there is a hint of perfection present" and calls the act of seeking perfection "living the inner life."<sup>36</sup> Not all artists live the inner life, Martin concludes, but "others," presumably referring to herself, "live the inner experiences of the



mind, a solitary way of living."<sup>37</sup> She makes very explicit connections between solitude and even privation and perfection in art: "In these moments. . . we wonder why we ever thought life was difficult."<sup>38</sup>

Beyond seeing herself as an Abstract Expressionist, Martin recognized her art as part of a "classic tradition" that included Coptic, Egyptian, Greek, and Chinese art.<sup>39</sup> She connected these traditions of art-making with her own paintings and considered the art object to be a representation of ideals held within the mind. It is within this context of classicism that Martin's grid paintings must be understood: "I was thinking about innocence, and then I saw it in my mind—that grid. And so I thought, well, I'm supposed to paint what I see in my mind. So I painted it, and sure enough, it was innocent."<sup>40</sup> When she painted what she saw in her mind, this connected her to the traditions of the past. "Classicists," she wrote, "are people that look out with their back to the world."<sup>41</sup> This notion inspired Martin for most of her adult life. Although she first wrote the statement in 1973, Martin revived the sentiment in a six-panel painting from 1997, *With My Back to the World*. In this series of blue, yellow, and orange striped paintings, one can understand the connection that Martin believed existed between abstraction and emotion. "Not personal emotion," she would say, but "abstract emotion. It's about those subtle moments of happiness we all experience."<sup>42</sup> Martin believed that the object of painting was to "represent concretely our most subtle emotions."<sup>43</sup>

### CRITICAL AND COMMERCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

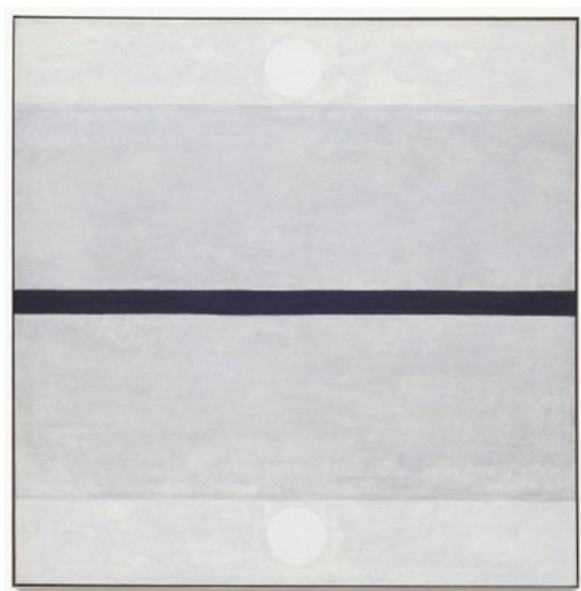
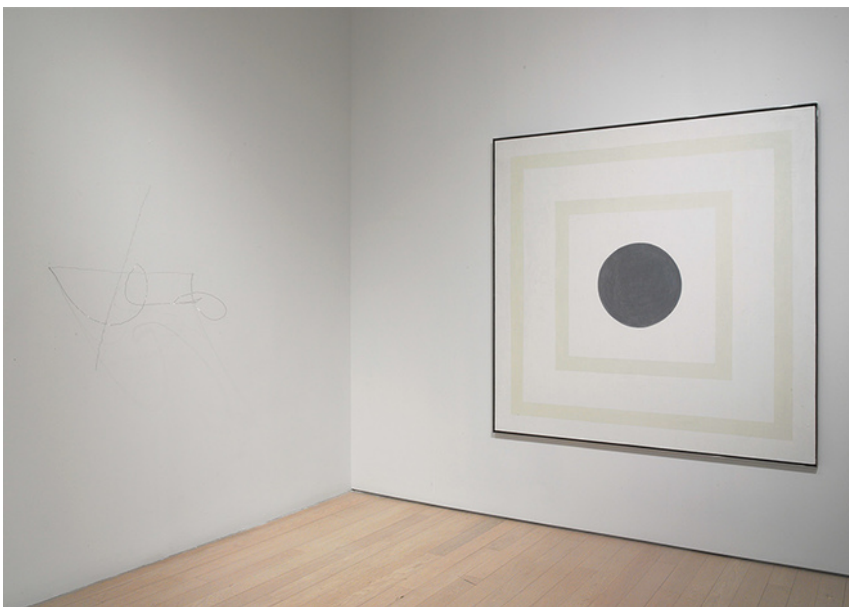
Agnes Martin is one of the most critically and commercially successful abstract painters of the second half of the twentieth century, achieving a high level of sustained, global recognition since the 1970s. She has been the subject of several major touring retrospectives over the last forty-five years, the first organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania in 1973 and another soon after in 1977, organized by the Arts

Council of Great Britain.<sup>44</sup> The 1990s saw back-to-back retrospectives for Martin, first at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1991, and then in 1992 at the Whitney Museum of American Art.<sup>45</sup> Most recently, the Tate Modern in London organized a posthumous retrospective that travelled to the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York between 2015 and 2017.<sup>46</sup>



Installation view of *Agnes Martin*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, November 6, 1992-January 31, 1993, photograph by Geoffrey Clements.

Martin's work commands high prices—*Orange Grove*, 1965, set a record in 2016 with a sale price of US\$10.7 million, making it one of the most expensive paintings by a Canadian-born artist ever sold at auction<sup>47</sup>—and it has been widely collected both privately and by institutions around the world: in New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Guggenheim all have extensive collections of Martin's work, as do the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa and the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto. The Dia:Beacon in New York, the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, and the Harwood Museum in Santa Fe all have permanent and multi-artwork displays of Martin's paintings. The Harwood Museum's Agnes Martin Gallery attracts visitors from all over the world.



LEFT: Installation view of *Agnes Martin, Richard Tuttle: Crossing Lines*, Pace Gallery, New York, November 2, 2017–January 27, 2018. Left to right: Richard Tuttle, *29th Wire Piece*, 1972/2017, and Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 1958, photograph by Kerry Ryan McFate. RIGHT: Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 1960, oil on canvas, 177.8 x 177.8 cm, Dia Art Foundation, New York. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

Martin has had an influence on subsequent generations of artists, including Richard Tuttle (b.1941). Tuttle, who also lives in New Mexico, has been described as a Post-Minimalist. The two artists exhibited together, including at SITE Santa Fe in 1998.<sup>48</sup> Martin also had a tremendous influence on younger female artists such as Eva Hesse (1936–1970), whose too-short career in New York almost matched Martin's own time in the city, and Ellen Gallagher (b.1965).<sup>49</sup> Thanks in part to the influence of her work on subsequent generations of female artists, Martin has gained a reputation as a feminist icon.<sup>50</sup> Her friendship with feminist writer Jill Johnson, her success as a female artist in a male-dominated era, her sexuality, and her ambiguity around gender all feed into this narrative. Martin herself refused this label, telling the *New Yorker* bluntly: "The women's movement failed."<sup>51</sup> She did not identify as a feminist and would deride those who would describe her as such.

In 1997, Martin was awarded the Golden Lion for lifetime achievement at the Venice Biennale. This event set off a series of awards and accolades that included both the United States' National Medal of Arts in 1998 and Canada's Royal Academy of the Arts Award in 2004. During the last years of her life, Martin was the subject of a documentary, *With My Back To The World*, which offers an intimate portrait of the artist at a time when she was arguably at her most philosophical. "If you wake up in the morning and you feel very happy



about nothing, no cause, that's what I paint about—the subtle emotions that we feel without cause in this world," Martin says of her works. "And I'm hoping that people, when they respond to them, will realize that. . . their lives are broader than they think."<sup>52</sup>



Agnes Martin in the Agnes Martin Gallery of The Harwood Museum of Art, Taos, New Mexico, 2002, photograph by Patricia Garcia-Gomez.



# STYLE & TECHNIQUE

Agnes Martin's approach to painting can be separated into two long periods divided by a seven-year hiatus between 1967 and 1974. The first, from 1946 to 1967, is characterized by explorations into different approaches to abstraction. The decades between 1974 and her death in 2004 represent an investigation into the creative potential of a single format—square canvases of consistent size with either horizontal or vertical lines or bars. Within these major phases, her work can be categorized into briefer periods, one as short as four years, through which we can chart Martin's evolving style and the technique behind her canvases.



**EARLY WORKS: 1947–1957**

Although Agnes Martin started painting while studying at Teachers College at Columbia University in New York in 1941 and 1942, no artworks remain from this period, nor from the four subsequent years that she spent as an itinerant teacher throughout the American West.<sup>1</sup> Martin meticulously and methodically found and destroyed her early paintings, making an assessment of the beginning of her career difficult. The earliest extant works by Martin date from the two years that she spent at the University of New Mexico between 1946 and 1948, first as a student and then as a teacher. They were produced in the context of the classes that she was taking or teaching and do not point to a consistent style. An encaustic still life of a vase of flowers on a bench may have been completed as a component of her entrance exam in 1946; three watercolour landscapes of the Taos valley were realized during the 1947 Taos Summer Field School session; and four portraits, one of herself and three of friends and acquaintances in Albuquerque, may date to a class in portrait painting Martin taught in the fall of 1948.

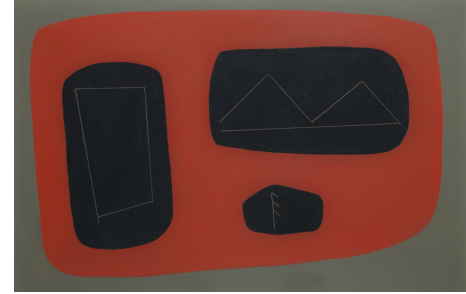


Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, c.1946, watercolour on paper, 37.5 x 52.4 cm, private collection, California. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

There are several works on paper that date to her time pursuing a master's degree at Teachers College at Columbia in 1951 and 1952, including *Untitled* from 1952. These works show a strong influence of automatism, a technique developed by the Surrealists and utilized by the Abstract Expressionists to draw or paint while suppressing conscious control in an effort to allow the subconscious to take over. Two early abstract paintings have been dated c.1949, which means that Martin may have begun painting in a non-objective style while teaching in New Mexico public schools before moving back to New York in 1951.<sup>2</sup> One, *Untitled*, c.1949, shows a deconstructed landscape with simplified symbols for a tree, two mountains, and a lake traced in black shapes that float on an orange and green background.

But it was not until 1953, when Martin was back in Taos, that we can say she started developing an abstract style of her own within a group that became known as the Taos Moderns. The period, generally termed her biomorphic period because it featured floating curvilinear and organic-like forms, continued until 1957, when she moved back to New York. Biomorphism is a variety of abstraction where forms are derived from organic shapes, as opposed to the ridged shapes found in geometric abstraction. It was prevalent amongst the Abstract Expressionists in New York in the 1940s, as seen in the work of Jackson Pollock (1912–1956), Arshile Gorky (1904–1948), and Mark Rothko (1903–1970), all admired by Martin at this time. Critic Lawrence Alloway described biomorphism as the “invention of analogies of human forms in nature and other organisms,” and it was introduced to New York through European Surrealists such as Jean Arp (1886–1966) and Joan Miró (1893–1983), among other sources such as Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), more than a decade before Martin picked it up.<sup>3</sup>

Only fifteen oil paintings on canvas and some works on paper can be dated to this period. The canvases are all rectangular, almost all of them in landscape orientation (wider than they are high), and they are of varying sizes. They often feature Surrealist-like black lines, possibly the result of automatic drawing, and biomorphic forms floating over a light background. Comparing Martin’s *The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden*, c.1953, to *Charred Beloved II*, 1946, by Arshile Gorky reveals a similar melding of abstract brush strokes and a wandering line.<sup>4</sup> Martin’s painting *The Bluebird*, 1954, features the eponymous animal in the lower right corner. It is the last referential form that Martin painted.



Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, c.1949, oil on Masonite, 35.6 x 53.3 cm, private collection. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).



LEFT: Agnes Martin, *The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden*, c.1953, oil on board, 121.3 x 182.9 cm, private collection, Denver, Colorado. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019). RIGHT: Arshile Gorky, *Charred Beloved II*, 1946, oil on canvas, 136 x 101.6 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



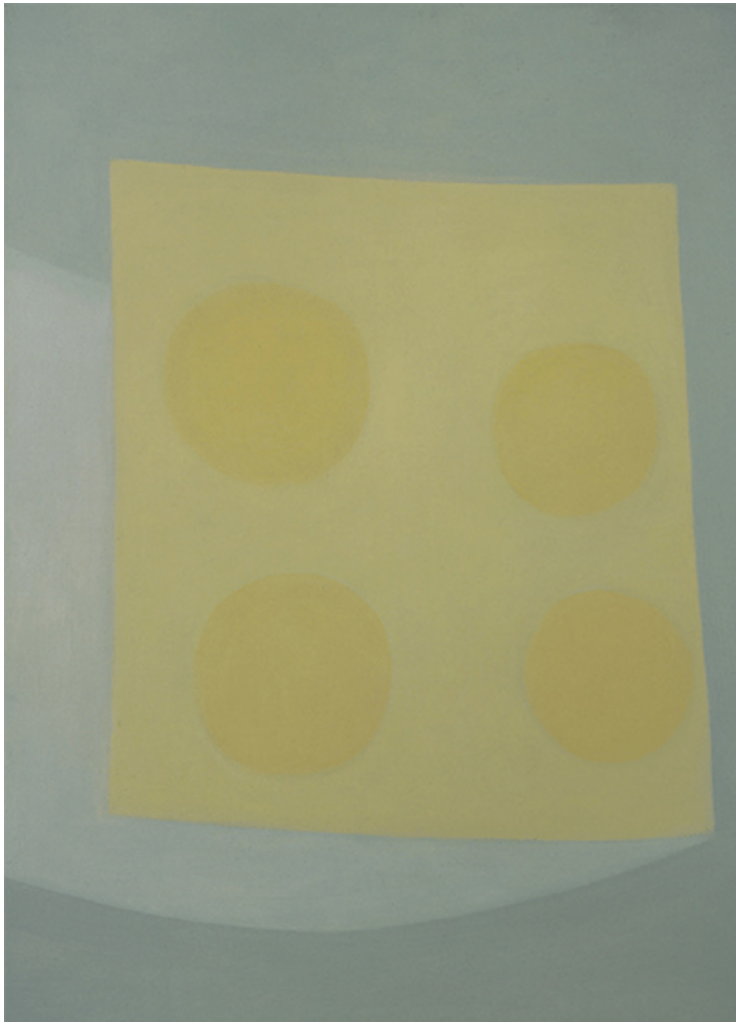
**BEFORE THE GRID: 1957–1961**

Martin's approach to abstraction changed quite quickly after she returned to New York in 1957, this time not as a student but as an artist. *Dancer No. I (L.T.)*, painted in Taos around 1956 and likely finished in New York in 1957 or 1958, can be seen as a transitional painting between her Taos and early New York styles. The biomorphic shapes of the Taos period can be seen throughout the canvas. A yellow square with four roughly symmetrical circles in the top right quadrant of the painting, on the other hand, indicates the more geometric style that Martin was fostering during her first year in the city. In *Drift of Summer*, 1957, she zooms in on the yellow square from *Dancer No. I (L.T.)*, making it the focus of the painting. Over the course of two paintings, she abandoned biomorphic form and replaced it with a simple geometric shape.



Agnes Martin, *Dancer No. I (L.T.)*, c.1956, oil on board, 121.9 x 182.9 cm, Collection of Stanley D. Heckman, New York. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

The yellow square led to a series of similarly shaped canvases, introducing a format to her practice that included *The Spring*, 1958, which was exhibited alongside *Dancer No. I (L.T.)* and *Drift of Summer* in her first solo exhibition at the Betty Parsons Gallery in 1958. For her second exhibition with Parsons, Martin further developed her analysis of the rectangle and the circle, expanding the simple grid of four circles to a larger grid of twenty-five circles, with five rows of five, in the painting *Earth*, 1959. *Reflection*, 1959, from the same exhibition, featured five rows of three white circles over a dark background.

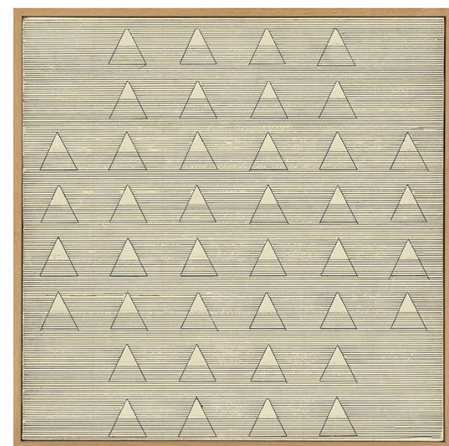
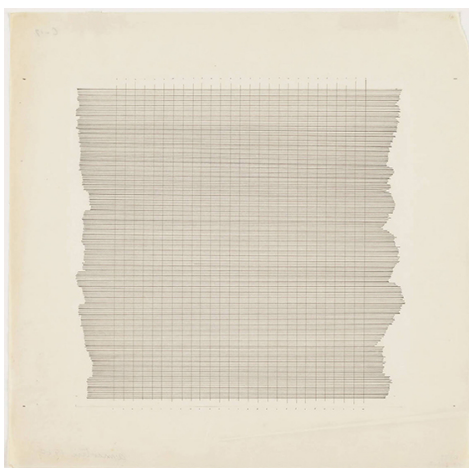


LEFT: Agnes Martin, *Drift of Summer*, 1957, oil on canvas, 127 x 91.4 cm, private collection, United Kingdom. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019). RIGHT: Agnes Martin, *Reflection*, 1959, oil on canvas, 182.9 x 121.9 cm, private collection. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

Martin experimented extensively with canvas size, material, and technique between 1958 and 1961. Most of the works from these years are oil on canvas, although she did work in assemblage and ink on paper. Many of the canvases from these exhibitions had natural palettes of brown, yellow, and grey, and had titles such as *Desert Rain*, 1957, and *Water*, 1958. At her final exhibition at the Betty Parsons Gallery in 1961, Martin exhibited her first true grid paintings, replacing circles with lines of oil or graphite on canvas.

#### THE NEW YORK CITY GRID: 1961–1967

For the first three years of the 1960s Martin continued to explore different media to probe the creative potential of the grid format. The grid was an organizing structure for Martin, within which she could experiment with colour, form, and shape. *White Flower*, 1960, is an oil painting with a rectangle and dash pattern on a six-foot-square canvas, one of the first paintings of that size. *Untitled*, 1960, from the same year, has a similar rectangle and dash pattern but is made up of graphite, oil, and ink on a one-foot-square raw canvas. *Words*, 1961, on the other hand, has a

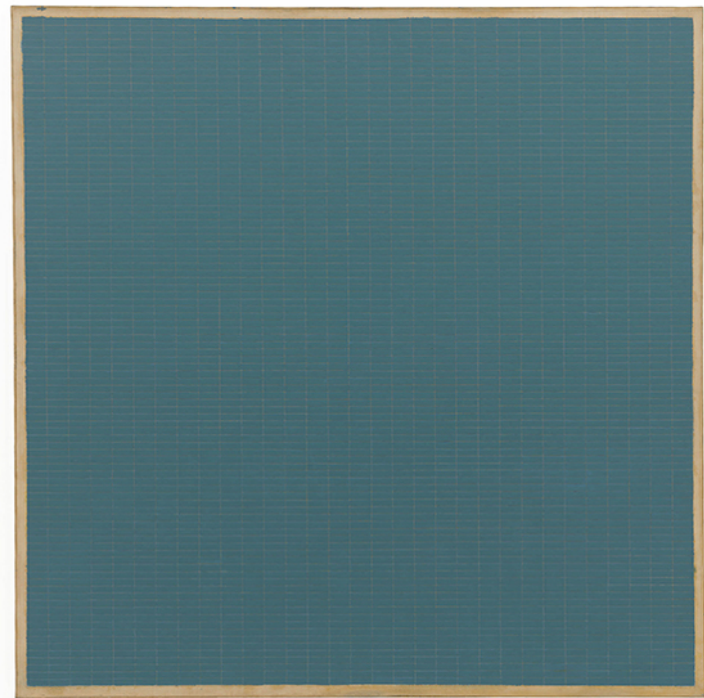
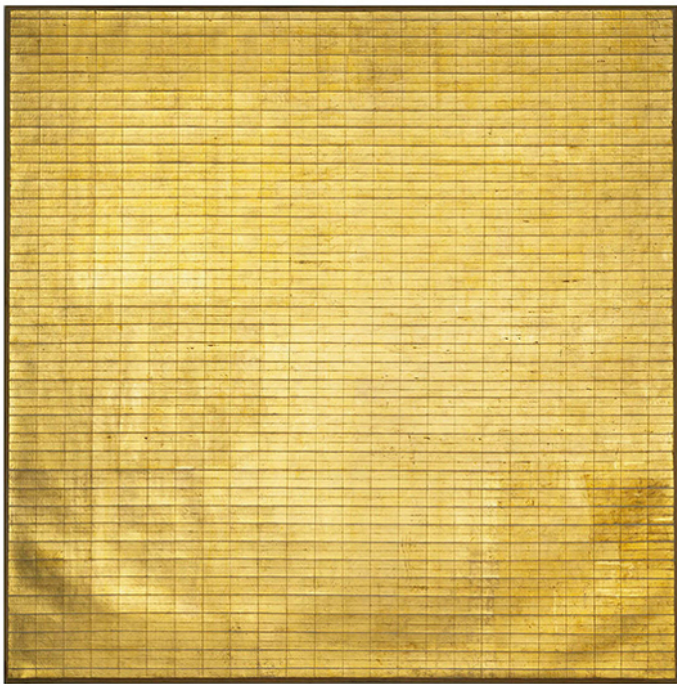


LEFT: Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 1960, ink on paper, 30.2 x 30.6 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019). RIGHT: Agnes Martin, *Words*, 1961, ink on paper mounted on canvas, 61 x 61 cm, private collection. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).



grid of pyramids and horizontal lines on a two-foot-square paper mounted on canvas. Martin also used some unconventional painting materials during this time. *The Wall #2*, 1962, has a dot and rectangle pattern of oil and ink on canvas mounted on wood, but the dots are nails tacked onto the wood through the canvas. Two paintings from 1963, *Friendship* and *Night Sea*, are covered in gold leaf. Perhaps the most unorthodox work from this period is *The Wave*, 1963, an edition of five wood and coloured Plexiglas boxes with grids scored into their bottoms. Each box contains over a dozen small beads that roll and settle along these lines like a children's toy.

In 1964 the grid paintings became much more consistent in size, material, and technique. All of the canvases dated to that year were six feet square, either oil or acrylic with graphite or coloured pencil. Martin also worked in smaller-scale drawings, some as small as eight inches square as, for example, in *Untitled*, 1963. Art historian Briony Fer argues that although the scale of her paintings and drawings differed, Martin did not distinguish between the two, using the same techniques, materials, and forms in both formats.<sup>5</sup> In a review of Martin's exhibition at Robert Elkon Gallery in 1965, Jill Johnston described the grid as "absurdly simple," with the "the quiet intensity of a perfectly contained image that moves in and around itself without moving at all."<sup>6</sup>



LEFT: Agnes Martin, *Friendship*, 1963, incised gold leaf and gesso on canvas, 190.5 x 190.5 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019). RIGHT: Agnes Martin, *Night Sea*, 1963, oil, crayon, and gold leaf on canvas, 182.9 x 182.9 cm, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

Martin often started her painting process by sitting in her chair with a clear mind, waiting for inspiration. Each band, bar, or line was carefully planned out in advance using intricate mathematical equations on sheets of paper in her studio. Only after she had worked out the composition would she attempt it in a larger format, first by covering the canvas in oil or acrylic paint with a brush, then by drawing graphite lines using a short T-square and a string to guide her hand. The result, which can be seen in *The Rose*, 1964, for example, is often minuscule imperfections in each line where she lifted the pencil to move the T-square. After 1966 Martin predominantly used acrylic paint.<sup>7</sup>

**HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL BANDS: 1974–2004**

The twenty years before Agnes Martin's sudden departure from New York in 1967 were full of stylistic and technical experimentation. The thirty years that followed her return to painting in New Mexico in 1974 after a hiatus of seven years, on the other hand, can be described as a meticulous exploration of the creative potential of a single style. Between 1974 and 1993 Martin painted almost all of her paintings on six-foot-square canvases using acrylic. She produced the occasional small canvas, generally one foot square, and also worked in watercolour on paper, usually at a size of nine inches square.



LEFT: Agnes Martin, *Untitled #12*, 1975, acrylic, graphite, and gesso on canvas, 182.9 x 182.9 cm, Dia Art Foundation, New York. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019). RIGHT: Agnes Martin in her studio, Taos, New Mexico, 2004, photograph by Lark Smotherman.

Martin sustained the general format of the grid, but in place of the horizontal and vertical pencil lines from the 1960s, she started painting wider bands of colour, usually horizontal, but occasionally vertical in orientation. In effect, Martin had moved beyond the grid while maintaining some of the grid's formal characteristics. By the time she completed the twelve-part *The Islands I–XII* in 1979, Martin had ceased to paint vertical canvases. She concentrated exclusively on horizontal compositions until the 2000s.



Before 1967, Martin had worked in a variety of media and investigated different materials in her painting including oil, acrylic, wood, and gold leaf. After 1974, Martin settled on acrylic gesso with graphite pencil lines for her canvas paintings. The horizontal works of the 1980s and after generally took the form of alternating bands of colour, such as *Untitled #12*, 1981, or a white canvas with graphite lines, such as *White Flower I*, 1985. Martin devised individual and complex repeating patterns for each painting to divide the canvases into distinct units. The colours in the 1970s and early 1980s were often red, blue, or orange, and thinned to evoke the sun-bleached hues of New Mexico. She used light pastel washes and embraced a wider palette than she had in New York.<sup>8</sup>



Agnes Martin, *Little Children Playing with Love*, 2001, acrylic and graphite on paper, 152.4 x 152.4 cm, private collection. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).

At the end of the 1980s Martin began using darker colours and made several grey paintings such as *Untitled #3*, 1989. After moving into a retirement home in 1992, and opening a second studio in Taos, Martin reduced the size of her canvases to five feet square and increased the frequency of her one-foot-square paintings. She found them easier to handle. Her paintings also became much brighter after her grey period, with more and more colour at the end of her life, such as in *Little Child Responding to Love*, 2001.

Although Martin's painting seems to follow a gradual development from her grids in 1961 until her death in 2004, there is one conspicuous example of a major work that does not fit this structure of Martin's artistic development: the film *Gabriel*, 1976. Shot on 16mm colour film using an Aeroflex camera, *Gabriel* is one of two films that Martin attempted, and the only one that she ever released. Although it is radically different in form from any of her paintings, its themes of happiness, innocence, and beauty are ones that Martin explored over her whole career. In this sense, *Gabriel* can help us develop a deeper understanding of Martin's paintings as contemplative, requiring time and reflection, and hinting at a deep well of underlying emotion.



Agnes Martin, *Gabriel*, 1976, 16mm film, colour, 78 minutes, silent with a selection of Bach's Goldberg Variations, contemporary still photographed by Bill Jacobson from original film, Pace Gallery, New York. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019).





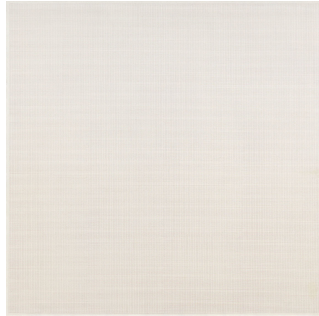
# WHERE TO SEE

The works of Agnes Martin are held in public and private collections internationally. Although the following institutions hold the works listed below, they may not always be on view. This list contains only the works held in public collections discussed and illustrated in this book; many other works by Martin may be found in public collections across the United States.

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## ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO

317 Dundas Street West  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
1-877-225-4246 or 416-979-6648  
[ago.ca](http://ago.ca)

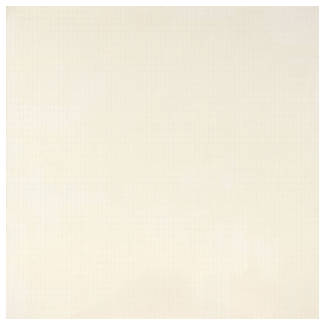


**Agnes Martin, *The Rose*, 1964**  
Oil, graphite, and coloured pencil  
on canvas  
182.9 x 182.9 cm

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## CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

11150 East Boulevard  
Cleveland, Ohio, USA  
1-877-262-4748 or 216-421-7350  
[clevelandart.org](http://clevelandart.org)



**Agnes Martin, *The City*, 1966**  
Acrylic and graphite on canvas  
182.9 x 182.9 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

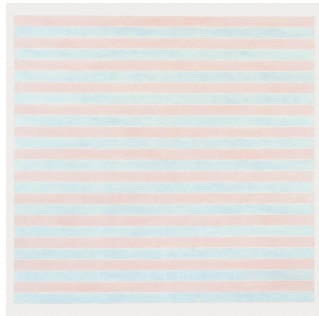
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## CRANBROOK ART MUSEUM

39221 Woodward Avenue  
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, USA  
248-645-3323  
cranbrookartmuseum.org

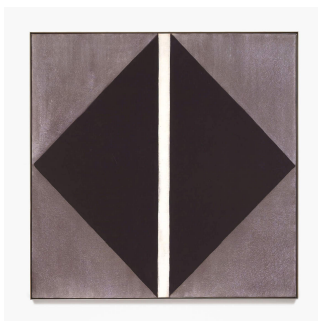


**Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 1974**  
Acrylic, pencil, and Shiva gesso  
on canvas  
182.9 x 182.9 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

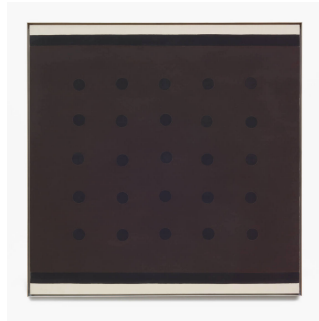
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## DIA ART FOUNDATION

535 West 22nd Street  
New York, New York, USA  
212-989-5566  
diaart.org



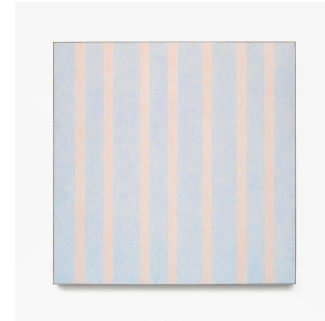
**Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, c.1957**  
Oil on canvas  
86.4 x 86.4 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)



**Agnes Martin, *Earth*, 1959**  
Oil on canvas  
126.4 x 126.4 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)



**Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 1960**  
Oil on canvas  
177.8 x 177.8 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)



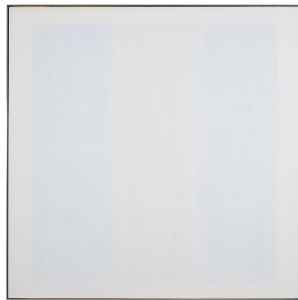
**Agnes Martin, *Untitled #12*, 1975**  
Acrylic, graphite, and gesso on canvas  
182.9 x 182.9 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

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## DES MOINES ART CENTER

4700 Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, IA, United States  
515-277-4405  
[desmoinesartcenter.org](http://desmoinesartcenter.org)

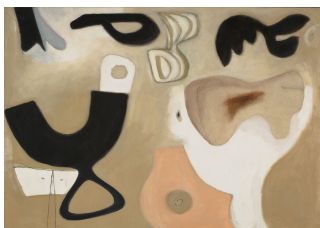


**Agnes Martin, *Untitled #3*, 1974**  
Acrylic and graphite on canvas  
182.9 x 182.9 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

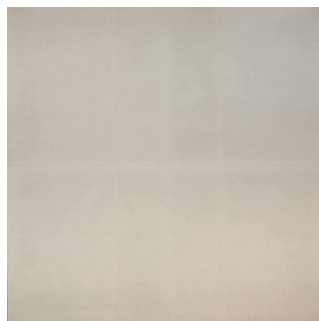
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## HARWOOD MUSEUM OF ART

University of New Mexico  
238 Ledoux Street  
Taos, New Mexico, USA  
575-758-9826  
[harwoodmuseum.org](http://harwoodmuseum.org)



**Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 1953**  
Oil on canvas  
85.4 x 120.7 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)



**Agnes Martin, *Tundra*, 1967**  
Acrylic and graphite on canvas  
182.9 x 182.9 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)



**Seven artworks installed with Donald Judd's yellow benches (© 2019 Judd Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOCAN) in a purpose-built gallery designed by Martin, 1993-94, © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)**

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**MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**

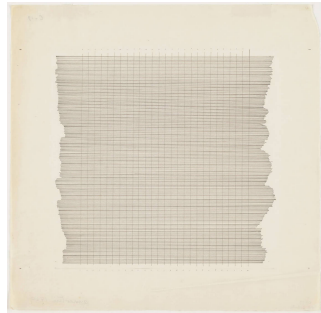
11 West 53rd Street  
New York, New York, USA  
212-708-9400  
moma.org



**Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 1952**

Watercolour and ink on paper  
29.9 x 45.3 cm  
© Agnes Martin /  
SOCAN (2019)

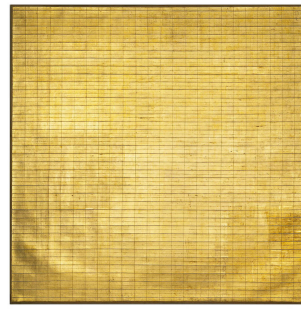
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**Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 1960**

Ink on paper  
30.2 x 30.6 cm  
© Agnes Martin /  
SOCAN (2019)

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**Agnes Martin, *Friendship*, 1963**

Incised gold leaf and gesso on canvas  
190.5 x 190.5 cm  
© Agnes Martin /  
SOCAN (2019)

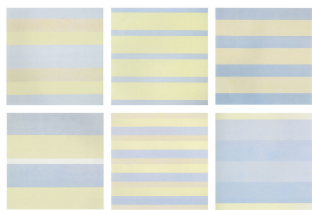
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**Agnes Martin, *The Tree*, 1964**

Oil and graphite on canvas  
182.9 x 182.9 cm  
© Agnes Martin /  
SOCAN (2019)

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**Agnes Martin, *With My Back to the World*, 1997**

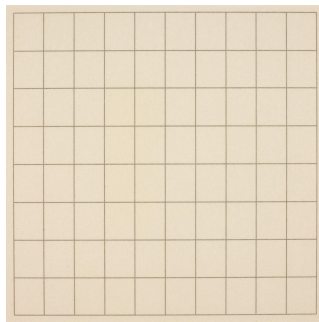
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, six panels  
Each 152.4 x 152.4 cm  
© Agnes Martin /  
SOCAN (2019)

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## NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

National Gallery of Canada  
380 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
613-990-1985  
gallery.ca



**Agnes Martin, *On a Clear Day*,  
1973**

Portfolio of 30 serigraphs in grey  
on cream laid Japan paper,  
mounted in window mats of  
white Schoeller Parole paper,  
with introduction sheet, in black  
leather-faced cardboard box  
Each 38 x 38 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

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## NELSON-ATKINS MUSEUM OF ART

4525 Oak Street  
Kansas City, Missouri, USA  
816-751-1278  
nelson-atkins.com



**Agnes Martin, *White Flower II*,  
1985**

Acrylic and graphite on canvas  
182.9 x 182.9 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

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## ROSWELL MUSEUM AND ART CENTER

1011 North Richardson Avenue  
Roswell, New Mexico, USA  
575-624-6744  
roswell-nm.gov



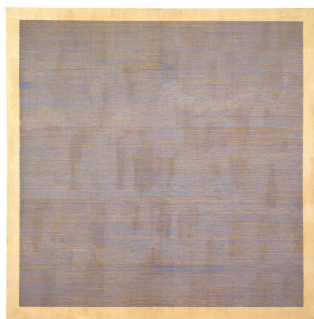
**Agnes Martin, *The Bluebird*, 1954**

Oil on canvas  
71.4 x 101.6 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

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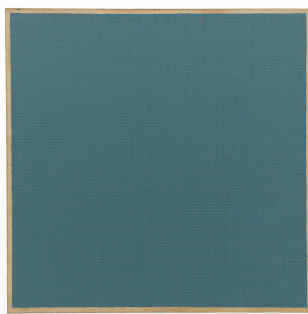
## SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

151 3rd Street  
San Francisco, California, USA  
415-357-4000  
sfmoma.org



**Agnes Martin, *Falling Blue*, 1963**

Oil and graphite on canvas  
182.9 x 182.9 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)



**Agnes Martin, *Night Sea*, 1963**

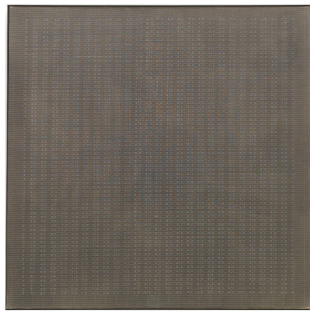
Oil, crayon, and gold leaf on canvas  
182.9 x 182.9 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

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## SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

1071 5th Avenue  
New York, New York, USA  
212-423-3500  
guggenheim.org



**Agnes Martin, *White Flower*, 1960**

Oil on canvas  
182.9 x 182.9 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

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## UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO ART MUSEUM

203 Cornell Drive  
Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA  
505-277-4001  
artmuseum.unm.edu



**Agnes Martin, *New Mexico Mountain Landscape, Taos*, 1947**

Watercolour on paper  
28 x 38.8 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

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## WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

99 Gansevoort Street  
New York, New York, USA  
212-570-3600  
[whitney.org](http://whitney.org)



**Agnes Martin, *The Islands I-XII*,  
1979**

Acrylic and graphite pencil on  
linen, twelve parts  
Each 182.9 x 182.9 cm  
© Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019)

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## NOTES

## BIOGRAPHY

1. Suzan Campbell, "Agnes Martin," in *Oral History and Art: Painting: Interviews with Edward Hopper, Brice Marden, Agnes Martin, Robert Rauschenberg, Larry Rivers and Frank Stella* (Washington and Edinburgh: Smithsonian American Art Archives and Museums, 2015), 93.
2. Henry Martin, *Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon* (Tucson: Schaffner Press, 2018), 32.
3. Library and Archives Canada, "South African War, 1899-1902 - Service Files, Medals and Land Applications - Malcolm Martin," <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/south-african-war-1899-1902/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=10623&>
4. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/south-african-war/>
5. Martin told some people that her father died from injuries sustained in South Africa (Benita Eisler, "Profile: Life Line," *New Yorker*, January 25, 1993, 72), although this account has been called into question (Nancy Princenthal, *Agnes Martin: Her Life and Art* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2015), 22-23). Martin told her friend Donald Woodman that her father had contracted syphilis while overseas, which may have contributed to his early death (Donald Woodman, *Agnes Martin and Me* (New York: Lyon Artbooks, 2016), 60).
6. Benita Eisler, "Profile: Life Line," *New Yorker*, January 25, 1993, 72.
7. Joan Simon, "Perfection Is in the Mind: An Interview with Agnes Martin," *Art in America*, May 1996, 87.
8. Nancy Princenthal, *Agnes Martin: Her Life and Art* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2015), 22-23. The 1916 census places the family at 206 Kelly Street in Lumsden. Martin, her mother and siblings are listed as household members, along with a Margaret Dunn, age 19. Ancestry.com *1916 Canada Census of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta* [database online]. Thank you to Philip Dombowsky.
9. Christa Martin, telephone interview with Christopher Régimbal, Vancouver, July 11, 2019.
10. Jenny Attiyeh, "Agnes Martin: An Artist On Her Own," interview with Agnes Martin, self-published, 2001, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/221427944/Interview-with-Taos-artist-Agnes-Mart>.
11. Tiffany Bell, "Chronology," *Agnes Martin: Paintings* (New York: Artifex Press, 2017). <https://artifexpress.com/pages/agnes-martin>
12. William Wylie Thom, "Fine Arts in Vancouver, 1886-1930: An Historical Survey," (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1969), 81-100.



13. Princenthal, *Agnes Martin*, 32.

14. Eisler, "Profile: Life Line," 72.

15. Bell, "Chronology." Percy Norman was the head coach of the Vancouver Amateur Swim Club from 1931 to 1955. He coached a 1932 team that did not qualify for the Olympics (which presumably included Martin). He was a swim coach for Canada's team at the 1936 Olympics. His legacy lives on today through the Percy Norman Swim Club, founded in 1970s.

<https://www.pnsc.ca/history.html>

16. Eisler, "Profile: Life Line," 73.

17. Princenthal, *Agnes Martin*, 26.

18. Suzan Campbell, "Agnes Martin," 95.

19. In 1980, Martin wrote about her experience as an American immigrant: "Can't you see the freedom in America? That it's not just political? Can't you see American liberty? Can't you see self-reliance and self-expression? That is the American atmosphere." Agnes Martin, "Agnes Martin: From Canada," in *Mosaic: Immigrant Experience in the Words of Those Who Lived It*, ed. Joan Morrison and Charlotte Fox Zabusky (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1980), 120.

20. Martin's name appears often in the pages of the *Northwest Viking* newspaper, mostly for her involvement in sports. *Northwest Viking*, vol. 34, no. 12, December 21, 1934, for example, indicates that Martin was named all-star on the volleyball team. Western Washington University Digital Collections. <http://content.wvu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/wfront/id/2392/rec/1> Thank you to Stephanie Burdzy.

21. Agnes Martin, "Agnes Martin: From Canada," 119.

22. Martin listed her address as 5011 7th Avenue North East in Seattle Washington and her occupation as Teacher on her Resident Alien's Border Crossing Card. Ancestry.com *U.S. Border Crossings from Canada to U.S., 1895-1960* [database online]

23. Joan Simon, "Perfection Is in the Mind," 87.

24. Henry Martin, *Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon*, 40.

25. Henry Martin, *Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon*, 71.

26. Suzan Campbell, "Agnes Martin," 103.

27. Henry Martin, *Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon*, 46.

28. Christa Martin, telephone interview with Christopher Régimbal, Vancouver, July 11, 2019.

29. Princenthal, *Agnes Martin*, 45.
30. Princenthal, *Agnes Martin*, 39.
31. Eisler, "Profile: Life Line," 73.
32. Christina Bryan Rosenberger, *Drawing the Line: The Early Work of Agnes Martin* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 18.
33. Henry Martin has identified two early paintings from this period: *Cherry Blossom Orchard* and *View from the Porch*. Neither of these paintings are reproduced in publications or exhibition catalogues. Henry Martin, *Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon*, 48.
34. Bell, "Chronology."
35. Suzan Campbell, "Agnes Martin," 102.
36. The Taos Summer Field School was run through the University of New Mexico and offered students instruction in open air landscape painting around Taos. Martin paid her tuition by working as a dormitory proctor in 1947 and was an instructor in 1948. Rosenberger, *Drawing the Line*, 23.
37. Henry Martin, *Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon*, 60.
38. The painting languished in Martin's mother's attic until her sister-in-law Mary Pearl rescued it, hanging the work with pride of place in her home for many decades. Christa Martin, telephone interview with Christopher Régimbal, Vancouver, July 11, 2019.
39. Malcolm Jr. died in 1951 of kidney failure. Christa Martin, telephone interview with Christopher Régimbal, Vancouver, July 11, 2019.
40. In a letter to Geraldine Hammond in the early 1950s, Martin gives a forwarding address of 2716 Collingwood Street in Vancouver. See Agnes Martin catalogue raisonné for reference: <https://artifexpress.com/catalogues/agnes-martin/artist/info-pages/58864073a622561d1ef99918>
41. Henry Martin, *Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon*, 59-60.
42. Rosenberger, *Drawing the Line*, 33.
43. Dorothy C. Miller, *15 Americans* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1952).
44. Ellen G. Landau, "Abstract Expressionism: Changing Methodologies for Interpreting Meaning," *Reading Abstract Expressionism: Context and Critique* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 5-6.
45. Rosenberger, *Drawing the Line*, 44; Princenthal, *Agnes Martin*, 56.
46. Irving Sandler, "Agnes Martin, Interviewed by Irving Sandler," *Art Monthly*,



September 1993, 5.

47. Agnes Martin, "The Untroubled Mind," in *Writings/Schriften*, ed. Dieter Schwarz (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz-Verlag, 1991), 35–44.

48. Richard Tobin, "Agnes Martin: Before the Grid," in *Agnes Martin: Before the Grid*, ed. Tiffany Bell and Jina Brenneman (Taos: The Harwood Museum of Art, 2012), 23.

49. Rosenberger, *Drawing the Line*, 78–79.

50. Eisler, "Profile: Life Line," 74.

51. Bell, "Timeline."

52. Suzan Campbell, "Agnes Martin," 106–107.

53. Mildred Glimcher, *Indiana, Kelly, Martin, Rosenquist, Youngerman* (New York: The Pace Gallery, 1993), 7.

54. Joan Simon, "Perfection Is in the Mind," 124.

55. Mildred Glimcher, *Indiana, Kelly, Martin, Rosenquist, Youngerman*, 8.

56. Joan Simon, "Perfection Is in the Mind," 89.

57. Henry Martin, *Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon*, 122–123.

58. Joan Simon, "Perfection Is in the Mind," 88.

59. Jonathan D. Katz, "Agnes Martin and the Sexuality of Abstraction," in *Agnes Martin* (New York: Dia Art Foundation; New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2011), 176.

60. Henry Martin, *Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon*, 143, 148.

61. Katz, "Agnes Martin and the Sexuality of Abstraction," 176.

62. Donald Woodman, *Agnes Martin and Me* (New York: Lyon Artbooks, 2016), 41.

63. Betty Parsons, "Section Eleven to Open," Section Eleven Exhibitions, 1958–1961: Various Exhibitions, 1958–1961, Box 19, Folder 47, Betty Parsons Gallery Records and Personal Papers, c.1920–1991, bulk 1946–1983, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Quoted in Rosenberger, *Drawing the Line*, 94.

64. Lawrence Campbell, "Reviews and Previews: Agnes Martin," *Art News*, January 1960, 16.

65. Dore Ashton, "Premier Exhibition for Agnes Martin," *New York Times*,

December 6, 1958.

66. Rosenberger, *Drawing the Line*, 100. In 1993, Martin told Irving Sandler, "I was a good friend of Ad's. At least, I hope I was. He was a very generous man, very intelligent." Sandler, "Agnes Martin, Interviewed by Irving Sandler," 11.

67. Henry Martin, *Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon*, 175.

68. Martin also told Sandler, "I considered that I was very good friends with Barnett Newman, or he was a very good friend to me I should say," Sandler, *Agnes Martin, Interviewed by Irving Sandler*, 9.

69. In his statement for the exhibition, Newman wrote in terms that are very similar to Martin's later statements on her own work: "Painting, like passion, is a living voice, which, when I hear it, I must let speak, unfettered." *The New American Painting: As Shown in Eight European Countries, 1958-1959* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1959), 60.

70. Agnes Martin, "Agnes Martin" as part of Maurice Poirier and Jane Necol, "The '60s in Abstract: 13 Statements and an Essay," *Art in America*, October 1983, 132.

71. For example, see Douglas Dreishpoon, Joe Lin-Hill, and Robert Hobbs, eds., *Robert Indiana: A Sculpture Retrospective* (Buffalo, NY: Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 2018).

72. Rosalind Krauss, "Grids," *October*, Summer 1979, 51.

73. Joan Simon, "Perfection Is in the Mind," 124.

74. Suzan Campbell, "Agnes Martin," 108.

75. Joan Simon, "Perfection Is in the Mind," 86.

76. Robert Pincus-Witten, "'Systemic' Painting: A Well-Chosen View Is Presented by Lawrence Alloway," *Artforum* 5, no. 3 (November 1966): 42.

77. Princenthal, *Agnes Martin*, 152-153.

78. Letter from Agnes Martin to Lenore Tawney, postmarked July 7, 1965. Reproduced in Mona Schieren, *Transkulturelle Übersetzung : zur Konstruktion asianistischer Ästhetiken in der Amerikanischen Kunst Nach 1945* (Munich: Verlag Silke Schreiber, 2016), 153.

79. Princenthal, *Agnes Martin*, 151-152

80. There have been several different timelines suggested for these episodes. I have chosen to follow the one outlined in Bell, "Chronology."

81. Martin burned or otherwise destroyed her canvases often throughout her life. It is unclear when this began.



82. Suzan Campbell, "Agnes Martin," 120.
83. Eisler, "Profile: Life Line," 70.
84. Agnes Martin, "Agnes Martin," in "The '60s in Abstract," 132.
85. Malcolm Martin Jr. died as a result of kidney failure in 1951. Martin visited with his widow, Mary Pearl. Christa Martin, telephone interview with Christopher Régimbal, Vancouver, July 11, 2019.
86. Suzan Campbell, "Agnes Martin," 121.
87. Joan Simon, "Perfection Is in the Mind," 89.
88. Joan Simon, "Perfection Is in the Mind," 89.
89. Arne Glimcher, *Agnes Martin: Paintings, Writings, Remembrances* (London: Phaidon Press, 2012), 64.
90. Archives of American Art, Samuel Wagstaff Papers, box 2, folder 11 "Martin, Agnes 1968-1973." <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/samuel-wagstaff-papers-6939/subseries-1-1/box-2-folder-11>
91. Suzan Campbell, "Agnes Martin," 121.
92. Jill Johnston, "Agnes Martin: 1912-2004," *Art in America*, March 2005, 41.
93. Suzanne Delehanty, *Agnes Martin* (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1973).
94. Harald Szeeman, *documenta 5* (Kassels: The Fridericianum, 1972), 43.
95. Lawrence Alloway, "Agnes Martin," *Artforum*, April 1973, 32-37.  
Lizzie Borden, "Early Works," *Artforum*, April 1973, 39-44.
96. Agnes Martin, "Reflections," *Artforum*, April 1973, 38.
97. Delehanty, *Agnes Martin*, 17-31.
98. Joan Simon, "Perfection Is in the Mind," 89-124.
99. Woodman, *Agnes Martin and Me*, 29-30.
100. Eisler, "Profile: Life Line," 81.
101. Woodman, *Agnes Martin and Me*, 35.
102. Eisler, "Profile: Life Line," 82-83.
103. In 1975 Martin travelled to the Mackenzie River with curator and museum

director Sam Green. This trip was cut short due to Green's health. See Bell, "Chronology." Martin returned to the Northwest Territories in 1978 with her landlord and sometime assistant Donald Woodman. See Woodman, *Agnes Martin and Me*, 55-90.

104. Bell, "Chronology."

105. Arts Council of Great Britain, *Agnes Martin, Paintings and Drawings, 1957-1975* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1977).

106. *Agnes Martin: Paintings and Drawings: 1974-1990* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1991).

107. Emma Anderson, ed., *Agnes Martin: Paintings and Drawings 1977-1991* (London: Serpentine Gallery, 1993).

108. Tiffany Bell, "The Islands I-XII, 1979," *Agnes Martin: Paintings* (New York: Artifex Press, 2017), <https://artifexpress.com/pages/agnes-martin>.

109. Barbara Haskell, *Agnes Martin* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1992).

110. Tobin, "Agnes Martin: Before the Grid."

111. Woodman, *Agnes Martin and Me*, 127-137.

112. <http://harwoodmuseum.org/exhibitions/view/59>

113. Henry Martin, *Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon*, 284.

114. Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find a Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database online].

115. Joan Simon, "Perfection Is in the Mind," 124.

#### KEY WORKS: NEW MEXICO MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPE, TAOS

1. Agnes Martin, "The Untroubled Mind," in *Agnes Martin*, ed. Suzanne Delehanty (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1973), 17-18.

#### KEY WORKS: UNTITLED

1. Richard Tobin, "Agnes Martin: Before the Grid," in *Agnes Martin: Before the Grid*, ed. Tiffany Bell and Jina Brenneman (Taos: The Harwood Museum of Art, 2012), 23.

#### KEY WORKS: THE LAWS

1. In the opening chapter Melville describes the life of the whalers in New York in the mid-nineteenth century, focusing on Coenties Slip: "Circumambulate the city of a dreamy Sabbath afternoon. Go from Corlears Hook to Coenties Slip, and from thence, by Whitehall, northward. What do you see?—Posted like silent sentinels all around the town, stand thousands upon thousands of mortal men fixed in ocean reveries." Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick or The Whale* (London: Vintage Books, 2007) 1-2.



2. Joan Simon, "Perfection Is in the Mind: An Interview with Agnes Martin," *Art in America*, May 1996, 124.

#### KEY WORKS: WHITE FLOWER

1. Agnes Martin, quoted in Ann Wilson, "Linear Webs," *Art and Artists*, October 1966, 49.

2. Quoted in Lynne Cooke, ". . . in the classic tradition . . .," in *Agnes Martin*, ed. Lynne Cooke, Karen Kelly, and Barbara Schröder (New York: Dia Art Foundation, 2011), 16.

#### KEY WORKS: THE TREE

1. Suzan Campbell, "Agnes Martin," in *Oral History and Art: Painting: Interviews with Edward Hopper, Brice Marden, Agnes Martin, Robert Rauschenberg, Larry Rivers and Frank Stella* (Washington and Edinburgh: Smithsonian American Art Archives and Museums, 2015), 108.

#### KEY WORKS: TUNDRA

1. Archives of American Art, Samuel Wagstaff Papers, box 2, folder 11 "Martin, Agnes 1968-1973." <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/samuel-wagstaff-papers-6939/subseries-1-1/box-2-folder-11>

2. Kasha Linville, "Agnes Martin: An Appreciation," *Artforum*, June 1971, 73. This issue of *Artforum* had fellow-Canadian Michael Snow's *Wavelength* on the cover.

#### KEY WORKS: UNTITLED #3, 1974

1. This piece is presumably the third work that Martin painted in 1974, as it is marked "1974 #3" on the verso in the artist's hand. Numbers 1 and 2 are not listed on the catalogue raisonné and may have fallen victim to the artist's notoriously rigorous editing. See Tiffany Bell, *Agnes Martin: Paintings* (New York: Artifex Press, 2017).

2. Irving Sandler, "Agnes Martin, Interviewed by Irving Sandler," *Art Monthly*, September 1993, 7.

3. Martin's schizophrenia at times manifested in aural hallucinations. She generally distinguished between her inner inspiration and her "voices" as a source for her work, but those distinctions were sometimes obscured. See Nancy Princenthal, *Agnes Martin: Her Life and Art* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2015), 156-157.

#### KEY WORKS: GABRIEL

1. Suzan Campbell, "Agnes Martin," in *Oral History and Art: Painting: Interviews with Edward Hopper, Brice Marden, Agnes Martin, Robert Rauschenberg, Larry Rivers and Frank Stella* (Washington and Edinburgh: Smithsonian American Art Archives and Museums, 2015), 137.

2. Christa Martin, telephone interview with Christopher Régimbal, Vancouver,

July 11, 2019.

3. Abrams is the first art historian to track down and interview Peter Mayne.

Matthew Jeffrey Abrams, "Meeting Gabriel," *Affidavit*, April 9, 2018,

<https://www.affidavit.art/articles/meeting-gabriel>.

4. Gould's *The Idea of North* was released in December 1967 as part of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's long-running program *Ideas*. The other two parts of the trilogy are *The Latecomers*, about Newfoundland outport communities, and *The Quiet in the Land*, perhaps closest to Martin's own biography, focusing on Mennonite communities in Manitoba. A documentary film version of *The Idea of North* was released in 1970.

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1784396815>

5. Barbara Frum, "Gould Documentary the Best of Ideas," *Toronto Daily Star*, December 30, 1967, 26.

6. Lynne Cooke, ". . . in the classic tradition . . .," in *Agnes Martin*, ed. Lynne Cooke, Karen Kelly, and Barbara Schröder (New York: Dia Art Foundation; New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2011), 11.

7. Benita Eisler, "Profile: Life Lines," *New Yorker*, January 25, 1993, 70.

#### KEY WORKS: THE ISLANDS I-XII

1. The other series works include *With My Back to the World*, 1997, at the Agnes Martin Gallery at the Harwood Museum of Art, and in a series of works found at the Dia:Beacon.

2. Sandler, "Agnes Martin, Interviewed by Irving Sandler," 3. Quoted in *Agnes Martin*, eds. Cooke, Kelly, Schröder, 11.

#### KEY WORKS: UNTITLED #3, 1989

1. Cindy Richmond and Lawrence Rinder, *Agnes Martin* (Regina: The MacKenzie Art Gallery; Berkeley: Pacific Film Archive, 1995).

#### SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

1. Ann Wilson, "Linear Webs: Agnes Martin," *Art and Artists*, October 1966, 49.

2. Wilson, "Linear Webs: Agnes Martin," 48.

3. Rhea Anastas, "Individual and Unreal: Agnes Martin's Writings in 1973," *Agnes Martin* (New York: Dia Art Foundation, 2011), 135.

4. Wilson, "Linear Webs: Agnes Martin," 48.

5. On the verso of *Falling Blue*, 1963, Martin initially titled the work "White River" and crossed it out, hinting that the falling blue is a waterfall. Tiffany Bell, "Falling Water" in *Agnes Martin: Paintings* (New York: Artifex Press, 2017).

6. Agnes Martin, "The Untroubled Mind," in *Agnes Martin*, ed. Suzanne Delehanty (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1973), 17.



7. Agnes Martin, "The Still and Silent in Art," reprinted in Agnes Martin, *Writings/Schriften*, ed. Dieter Schwarz (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz-Verlag, 1991), 89.
8. Martin later had a solo exhibition in 1992. She acquiesced and allowed a catalogue to be produced. Henry Martin, *Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon* (Tucson: Schaffner Press, 2018), 239.
9. <http://www.harwoodmuseum.org/collections/taos-moderns>
10. Christina Bryan Rosenberger, *Drawing the Line: The Early Work of Agnes Martin* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 100.
11. Tiffany Bell, "Happiness is the Goal," in *Agnes Martin*, ed. Frances Morris and Tiffany Bell (New York: D.A.P. / Distributed Art Publishers, 2015), 20.
12. William C. Seitz, *The Responsive Eye* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1965), 5.
13. Lawrence Alloway, *Systemic Painting* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1966), 13.
14. Alloway, *Systemic Painting*, 14.
15. James Meyer, *Los Angeles to New York: Dwan Gallery, 1959-1971* (Washington: The National Gallery of Art, 2017), 70.
16. In a letter to the *New York Times*, Victoria Dwan wrote "we were not able to get the ten artists in our current exhibition, "10," to arrive at any sort of manifesto..." Dwan Gallery (Los Angeles, California and New York, New York) records, 1959-circa 1982, bulk 1959-1971; Series 2: New York Exhibition Files, 1965-1971, after 1982; Box 2, Folder 38: 10, 1966 October 4.
17. Suzan Campbell, "Agnes Martin," in *Oral History and Art: Painting: Interviews with Edward Hopper, Brice Marden, Agnes Martin, Robert Rauschenberg, Larry Rivers and Frank Stella* (Washington and Edinburgh: Smithsonian American Art Archives and Museums, 2015), 117.
18. Lucy R. Lippard, "The Silent Art," *Art in America*, January/February 1967, 58-63.
19. Martin was the same age as Jackson Pollock and was represented for a time by Betty Parsons, who had championed Abstract Expressionists in the early 1950s, thus giving her a generational connection to the group. She also had a connection through her association with Ad Reinhardt and Barnett Newman.
20. Benita Eisler, "Profile: Life Lines," *New Yorker*, January 25, 1993, 77.
21. "I liked the kind of higher education that we have here in the United States, rather than the scholarly type of education that they have in the Canadian

British schools." Suzan Campbell, "Agnes Martin," in *Oral History and Art: Painting: Interviews with Edward Hopper, Brice Marden, Agnes Martin, Robert Rauschenberg, Larry Rivers and Frank Stella* (Washington: Smithsonian American Art Archives; Edinburgh: MuseumsEtc., 2015), 95

22. Bell, "Happiness is the Goal," 24.

23. Letter to Geraldine Hammond, early 1950s. See Agnes Martin catalogue raisonné for reference.

24. Dore Ashton, "Art: Drawn from Nature," *New York Times*, December 29, 1959.

25. Dore Ashton, *Agnes Martin: Paintings and Drawings, 1957-1975* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1977), 7.

26. Holland Cotter, "Agnes Martin: All the Way to Heaven," *Art in America*, April 1993, 91.

27. Ashton, "Art: Drawn from Nature." For more examples see Lynne Cooke, Karen Kelly, and Barbara Schröder, eds., *Agnes Martin* (New York: Dia Art Foundation; New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2011), 11-24.

28. This statement was given after the interviewer specifically asked Martin how her memories of the great plains in Canada factor into "the openness and expansiveness in your work." Irving Sandler, "Agnes Martin, Interviewed by Irving Sandler," *Art Monthly*, September 1993, 5.

29. Martin was also very proud of her travels around the United States. For a 1980 book on the American immigrant experience, she wrote, "I lived in almost half the states, and I travelled in all the states. And I have worked almost every occupation that I can think of." Agnes Martin, "On Coming to America," *American Mosaic: The Immigrant Experience in the Words of Those Who Lived It*, ed. Joan Morrison and Charlotte Fox Zabusky (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1980), 119.

30. <http://www.campbelltammi.com/portfolio/dear-agnes/>

31. Martin's reputation as a recluse has been somewhat overemphasized. She had a rich social life and many long-term friendships over her life. Henry Martin, *Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon* (Tucson: Schaffner Press, 2018), 19.

32. Agnes Martin, "The Untroubled Mind," 35.

33. Agnes Martin, "The Untroubled Mind," 41.

34. Thomas McEvilley, "Grey Geese Descending: The Art of Agnes Martin," *Artforum*, Summer 1987, 94-99.

35. Agnes Martin, "Reflections," *Artforum*, April 1973, 38. Reprinted in *Agnes Martin: Writings/Schriften*, ed. Dieter Schwarz (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz-Verlag,



1991), 31.

36. Agnes Martin, "Reflections," 31-32.

37. Agnes Martin, "Reflections," 32.

38. Agnes Martin, "Reflections," 31.

39. Martin wrote: "I would like my work to be recognized as being in the classic tradition (Coptic, Egyptian, Greek, Chinese), as representing the Ideal in the mind. Classical art cannot possibly be eclectic. One must see the Ideal in one's own mind. It is like a memory of perfection." Agnes Martin, "Notes" in *Writings*, 19.

40. Joan Simon, "Perfection Is in the Mind: An Interview with Agnes Martin," *Art in America*, May 1996, 124.

41. Agnes Martin, "The Untroubled Mind," 37.

42. Eisler, "Profile: Life Lines," 70.

43. Suzan Campbell, "Agnes Martin," 119-120.

44. The Philadelphia exhibition travelled to the Pasadena Art Museum and the London exhibition was presented at the Hayward Gallery and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. Agnes Martin, in *Agnes Martin*, ed. Suzanne Delehanty; and Ashton, *Agnes Martin, Paintings and Drawings, 1957-1975*.

45. The Stedelijk Museum exhibition travelled to the Museum Wiesbaden, the Westfälisches Landesmuseum in Münster, and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. The Whitney Museum exhibition travelled to the Milwaukee Art Museum, the Center for the Fine Arts in Miami, the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe. See *Agnes Martin: Paintings and Drawings 1974-1990* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1991) and Barbara Haskell, *Agnes Martin* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1992).

46. Frances Morris and Tiffany Bell, eds., *Agnes Martin* (New York: D.A.P. / Distributed Art Publishers, 2015).

47. <https://news.artnet.com/market/artists-who-set-auction-records-spring-2016-495011>

48. Michael Auping, *Agnes Martin / Richard Tuttle* (Fort Worth: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 1998).

49. Holland Cotter, "Agnes Martin, Abstract Painter, Dies at 92," *New York Times*, December 17, 2004.

50. University of British Columbia art historian Jaleh Mansoor writes "Although she eschewed any identification of her art with feminism. . . her work clearly

operates as an ethical feminist practice. Martin was too engaged in a feminist relation to practice, perhaps, to objectify and label it as such." Jaleh Mansoor, "Self-Effacement, Self-Inscription," in *Agnes Martin*, eds. Lynne Cooke, Karen Kelly, and Barbara Schröder (New York: Dia Art Foundation; New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2011), 166.

51. Eisler, "Profile: Life Lines," 82.

52. *Agnes Martin: With My Back to the World*, dir. Mary Lance (USA: New Deal Films, Inc., 2002), video, 57 min.

## STYLE & TECHNIQUE

1. Henry Martin has identified two early paintings from this period: *Cherry Blossom Orchard* and *View from the Porch*. Neither of these paintings are reproduced in publications or exhibition catalogues. Henry Martin, *Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon* (Tucson: Schaffner Press, 2018), 48.

2. Rosenberger argues for a date of 1952 for these paintings, when Martin was living in La Grande, Oregon. Christina Bryan Rosenberger, *Drawing the Line* (Oakland: University of California, 2016), 32.

3. Lawrence Alloway, "The Biomorphic '40s," in *Reading Abstract Expressionism: Context and Critique*, ed. Ellen G. Landau (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 251. Originally published in *Artforum*, September 1965, 18-22.

4. Gorky is a transitional figure between Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism and a documented influence on Martin's early style.

5. Briony Fer, "Drawing Drawing: Agnes Martin's Infinity," in *Women Artists at the Millennium*, ed. Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2006), 176-177.

6. Jill Johnston, "Agnes Martin [Elkon; April 10-30]," *Art News*, April 1965, 10.

7. Martin, *Agnes Martin: Pioneer, Painter, Icon*, 162.

8. Leatrice Eiseman, "My Thoughts on Agnes Martin," August 31, 2015, <http://leatriceeiseman.com/my-thoughts-on-agnes-martin/>.

## SOURCES & RESOURCES

1. Tiffany Bell, *Agnes Martin: Paintings* (New York: Artifex Press, 2017).



## GLOSSARY

### **abstract art**

Visual art that uses form, colour, line, and gestural marks in compositions that do not attempt to represent images of real things. Abstract art may interpret reality in an altered form, or depart from it entirely. Also called nonfigurative or nonrepresentational art.

### **Abstract Expressionism**

A style that flourished in New York in the 1940s and 1950s, defined by its combination of formal abstraction and self-conscious expression. The term describes a wide variety of work; among the most famous Abstract Expressionists are Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Willem de Kooning.

### **Adams, Ansel (American, 1902–1984)**

Ansel Adams became the defining photographer of the American landscape in the twentieth century. His way of seeing the world was formed during a period spent living in California's Yosemite National Park in his twenties. A conservationist and Sierra Club president, Adams produced high-contrast, sharply focused images that sought to capture a mystical experience of untouched wilderness. He published books on both conservation and photography, and promoted photography as a fine art, helping to found a curatorial department for photography at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

### **Andre, Carl (American, b.1935)**

Carl Andre is a minimalist sculptor and poet who lives and works in New York City. His work, which has been influenced by artists Constantin Brâncuși and Frank Stella, consists of repetitive, grid patterns of blocks, bricks, and metal plates arranged on the floor or ground. Each piece is concerned with the physical realities of the space that surrounds it, and with how the viewer perceives it rather than with questions of symbolic or metaphorical meaning. Andre retreated from the public art world after he was tried and acquitted of second-degree murder in the death of his wife, the artist Ana Mendieta, in 1985.

### **Arp, Jean (German/French, 1886–1966)**

Born Hans Arp, Jean Arp was a Surrealist artist and original member of the Dada group. His work includes textile, wood relief, sculpture, and collage. Arp also wrote essays and poetry, contributing to publications including *De Stijl* and *La Révolution surréaliste*. In the 1930s, following his association with the Paris group Abstraction-Création, Arp's work began to incorporate aspects of Constructivism, which translated into harder edges in his forms. His wife was the Surrealist artist Sophie Taeuber.

**assemblage**

An assemblage, collage, or bricolage is a three-dimensional artwork created from found objects. The term “assemblage” was first used in the 1950s by the French artist Jean Dubuffet to describe his butterfly-wing collages; it was popularized in the United States in reference to the work of the American artists Robert Rauschenberg and Jim Dine.

**automatism**

A physiological term first applied to art by the Surrealists to refer to processes such as free association and spontaneous, intuitive writing, drawing, and painting that allow access to the subconscious without the interference of planning or controlled thought.

**Betty Parsons Gallery**

A gallery founded by art dealer, collector, and painter Betty Parsons in 1946 in Manhattan. Betty Parsons Gallery was an early supporter of many American Abstract Expressionist artists. The gallery closed in the 1980s.

**Biomorphic Abstraction**

A form of abstraction that draws on rounded, natural forms, “biomorphic” appears as a descriptive term for abstract art around the 1930s, though it is not limited to this time period. It can be seen in the design elements of Art Nouveau and in the surrealist paintings and sculptures of Jean Arp and Joan Miró, as well as in the work of Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, and in American design from the 1940s through the 1960s.

**Cage, John (American, 1912–1992)**

An avant-garde composer, John Cage worked from principles of randomness and indeterminacy, his influence extending beyond minimalist and electronic music to conceptual and performance art. Perhaps his best-known piece is *4'33"*, in which a performer remains silent on stage, often seated at a piano, for an unspecified amount of time. Other works relied on the *I Ching* to generate structure, or were composed for a prepared piano—prepared in that Cage inserted objects into the strings to add a percussive element to the instrument. He had a long romantic partnership and artistic collaboration with modern dance pioneer Merce Cunningham.

**Campbell, Tammi (Canadian, b.1974)**

Tammi Campbell is a contemporary artist whose work references Minimalist painters including Frank Stella and Agnes Martin. Her tromp l’oeil two- and three-dimensional works use acrylic paint to represent paper, masking tape, and other materials, references to the processes involved in art production. Since 2010 she has produced a series of drawings, entitled *Dear Agnes*, as a daily studio exercise riffing on Agnes Martin’s gridded paintings.

**Corbett, Edward (American, 1919–1971)**

An abstract painter, Edward Corbett created landscape-like compositions in shades of pale blue, bluish pink, and black. While painting, showing, and teaching in San Francisco in the 1940s and 1950s, he spent summers in the artists’ communities of Provincetown, Massachusetts, and Taos, New Mexico. In



1952, Corbett was included in the exhibition *15 Americans* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

### **Cubism**

A radical style of painting developed by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in Paris between 1907 and 1914, defined by the representation of numerous perspectives at once. Cubism is considered crucial to the history of modern art for its enormous international impact; famous practitioners also include Juan Gris and Francis Picabia.

### **Davis, Emma Lu (American, 1905–1988)**

Originally a commercial artist, Emma Lu Davis began to create sculptures influenced by global folk art traditions in the 1930s. She traveled to China and the Soviet Union, and was artist-in-residence at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, from 1938 to 1941. Davis was included in Dorothy Miller's exhibition *Americans 1942* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. In 1965 she completed a doctorate in archeology at the University of California, Los Angeles, becoming a pioneering researcher of the early histories of Indigenous cultures in the Californian desert.

### **de Kooning, Willem (Dutch/American, 1904–1997)**

Although a prominent Abstract Expressionist, de Kooning was not concerned with strict abstraction—figures appear in the dense and riotous brushwork that characterizes much of his work. Among his most famous works are those of the *Women* series, first exhibited in 1953 to much critical scorn.

### **Delehanty, Suzanne (American, b.1944)**

Beginning with her tenure at the Institute for Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from 1971 to 1978, Suzanne Delehanty has been an influential museum director and curator, with positions across the United States. Her work focuses on American contemporary art, with major exhibitions and publications on artists including Agnes Martin, Cy Twombly, and Paul Thek.

### **Diebenkorn, Richard (American, 1922–1993)**

Born in Portland, Oregon, Richard Diebenkorn was a California-based artist. Early in his career, he produced abstract work influenced by Henri Matisse, experimenting with a sense of aerial perspective on the landscape developed while he was completing a master's in fine art at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Diebenkorn established his reputation with the series of figurative works he produced from 1956 to 1966, before returning to abstraction. In all of Diebenkorn's work the process of painting remains visible in the final canvas.

### **documenta**

One of the world's longest-running international art events and most important recurrent exhibitions of modern and contemporary art. It launched in 1955 in Kassel, Germany, with the primary intention of reintegrating Germany into the international art scene after the Second World War. It takes place in Kassel every five years.

**Encaustic**

A form of painting using hot beeswax mixed with pigment, encaustic painting first emerged in Ancient Greece, with the earliest surviving examples being the Fayum mummy portraits produced in Egypt between the first and third centuries CE. The medium experienced a resurgence in the twentieth century, with artists including Jasper Johns and Tony Sherman producing work in encaustic.

**figurative**

A descriptive term for an artwork that depicts or references recognizable objects or beings, including humans. Figurative art is often representational and takes source material from the real world, although its subjects may be overlaid with metaphors and allegory. The term arose in popular usage around the 1950s to describe artwork in contrast with the Abstract Expressionist movement as well as nonfigurative and non-objective art.

**formalism**

The study of art by analyzing a work's form and style to determine its meaning and quality. It emphasizes colour, texture, composition, and line over narrative, concept, or social and political context. In the 1960s the American critic Clement Greenberg strongly championed formalism. By the end of the 1960s postmodernism and conceptual art began to challenge formalism as a system of critique.

**Glimcher, Arne (American, b.1938)**

The founder of Pace Gallery, Arne Glimcher is an art dealer and film director. He started his first gallery in Boston in 1960, moving operations to New York City in 1963. As of 2019, Pace Gallery has outposts in Beijing; Hong Kong; London; and Menlo Park, California, as well as New York. Glimcher is known for his long personal and professional relationships with the artists he represents, including Robert Irwin, Chuck Close, Louise Nevelson, and Agnes Martin, the subject of his book *Agnes Martin: Paintings, Writings, Remembrances*.

**Gorky, Arshile (Armenian/American, 1904–1948)**

Gorky immigrated to the United States after his mother died in his arms during the Armenian genocide. Among the most eminent painters of the postwar New York School, he had a seminal influence on Abstract Expressionism, and he was a mentor to other artists, including Willem de Kooning.

**Gottlieb, Adolph (American, 1903–1974)**

Gottlieb's early representational work evolved toward the surreal and Abstract Expressionism, by which he sought to remove from cultural associations from his work in order to convey a universal language of expression. He was the first American to win the Grand Prize at the Bienal de São Paulo (1963).



**Group of Seven**

A progressive and nationalistic school of landscape painting in Canada, active between 1920 (the year of the group's first exhibition, at the Art Gallery of Toronto, now the Art Gallery of Ontario) and 1933. Founding members were the artists Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, and Frederick Varley.

**Guston, Philip (American, 1913–1980)**

A significant figure in postwar American art. Guston's paintings and drawings range from the intensely personal and abstract to the expressly political, as with his murals of the 1930s and 1940s for the WPA Depression-era Federal Art Project. After nearly two decades of success as part of New York's Abstract Expressionist movement, Guston triggered the anger and scorn of the art world with his return to figurative and symbolic imagery.

**Hard Edge**

Combining geometric abstraction and intense colour, hard-edge abstraction was first used to describe the work of some Californian artists in the 1960s, although the style can be seen in the earlier work of Piet Mondrian and Joseph Albers. The term was coined by the art critic Jules Langster in 1959. Noted hard-edge painters include Frank Stella and Ellsworth Kelly.

**Hofmann, Hans (German/American, 1880–1966)**

A major figure in Abstract Expressionism and a renowned teacher. Hofmann's career began in Paris, where he moved to study in 1904. In 1915 he founded an art school in Munich that eventually drew international students, including the American Louise Nevelson, and taught there until the early 1930s, when he immigrated to the United States. Little of his early work survives.

**Indiana, Robert (American, b.1928)**

Principally known as a Pop artist (and for his famous LOVE design, featuring the word in uppercase with a slanted letter "O"), Indiana was equally important to the development of hard-edge painting and assemblage art. He has often made text a central part of his paintings, screen prints, and sculptures.

**Johns, Jasper (American, b.1930)**

One of the most significant figures in twentieth-century American art, Johns—a painter, printmaker, and sculptor—is credited, with Robert Rauschenberg, with renewing interest in figurative painting following Abstract Expressionism's dominance of the New York scene. Among his best-known works are those incorporating the motif of the American flag.

**Johnston, Jill (American, 1929–2010)**

The author of *Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution* (1973) and *Jasper Johns: Privileged Information* (1996), among others, Jill Johnston was a feminist writer and cultural critic. Known for the free associative style of her prose, Johnston was a vocal proponent of lesbian feminism and an advocate for the rejection of female heterosexuality as the only way of fully overturning patriarchal oppression.

**Judd, Donald (American, 1928–1994)**

Sculptor, critic, and a leading Minimalist artist, though he renounced the term, Judd is known for creating “specific objects,” on which he wrote a manifesto in 1964, and rejection of what he saw as the illusionism of two-dimensional media. Judd’s objects, many of them taking the box form, embody rigorously repetitive structures enforced by industrial materials and processes. In them, the artist’s emotion is completely removed to consider the object’s influence on its environment.

**Kandinsky, Wassily (Russian, 1866–1944)**

An artist, teacher, and philosopher who settled in Germany and later in France, Kandinsky was central to the development of abstract art. Much of his work conveys his interest in the relationships between colour, sound, and emotion. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911), his famous treatise on abstraction, draws on mysticism and theories of divinity.

**Kelly, Ellsworth (American, 1923–2015)**

An abstract artist from New York who matured in Paris, where he studied from 1948 to 1954, enabled by the G.I. Bill. Back in the United States he practised hard-edge colour-field painting, but, even as his rigorous style often approached Minimalism, his visual wit drew from his observations of natural forms.

**Leduc, Fernand (Canadian, 1916–2014)**

A painter and member of the Montreal-based Automatistes. Leduc’s earlier paintings evince his interest in Surrealism and automatism; later he began to work in a more formalist mode and then in a hard-edge style, which linked him to the *Plasticien* movement.

**LeWitt, Sol (American, 1928–2007)**

A leading conceptual and Minimalist painter who believed that an idea itself could be the artwork and rejected personal expression and inherent narrative. LeWitt’s works, including a series of wall drawings begun in 1968, emphasize geometric forms, clear lines, simplicity, systemization, and repetition. In 1976 LeWitt co-founded Printed Matter, a non-profit organization that publishes and promotes artists’ books.

**Mandelman, Beatrice (American, 1912–1998)**

Beatrice Mandelman was a leading figure among the group of American painters known as the Taos Moderns. Originally a social realist, Mandelman shifted towards abstraction and the influence of European modernists like Fernand Léger after moving to Taos, New Mexico, with her husband, fellow artist Louis Ribak, in 1944. A substantial body of her work is held as part of the Mandelman Ribak Collection of the University of New Mexico.

**Minimalism**

A branch of abstract art characterized by extreme restraint in form, most popular among American artists from the 1950s to 1970s. Although Minimalism can be expressed in any medium, it is most commonly associated



with sculpture; principal Minimalists include Carl Andre, Donald Judd, and Tony Smith. Among the Minimalist painters were Agnes Martin, Barnett Newman, Kenneth Noland, and Frank Stella.

**Miró, Joan (Spanish, 1893–1983)**

A prolific artist and important figure in the history of abstract art in the twentieth century. Miró engaged with painting, sculpting, printmaking, and decorative arts, and throughout his long career sustained thematic interest in the influence of his native landscape on his artistic creation. French Surrealism influenced his work, though he is recognized to have developed his own deeply personal style.

**Newman, Barnett (American, 1905–1970)**

A key proponent of Abstract Expressionism, known primarily for his colour-field paintings. Newman's writings of the 1940s argue for a break from European artistic traditions and the adoption of techniques and subject matter more suited to the troubled contemporary moment, and for the expression of truth as he saw it.

**Op art**

A style of abstract art that was developed in the 1950s and 1960s, primarily by Victor Vasarely and the British artist Bridget Riley. It aimed to produce an intense visual experience through the use of severe colour contrasts and hard-edge forms.

**O'Keeffe, Georgia (American, 1887–1986)**

A critical figure in American modernism, O'Keeffe was encouraged as a young artist by the photographer Alfred Stieglitz, whom she married in 1924. Her expressive and often nearly abstract paintings were inspired by natural forms such as landscapes, flowers, and bones. After Stieglitz's death she settled permanently in northern New Mexico.

**Pollock, Jackson (American, 1912–1956)**

Leader of the Abstract Expressionist movement, best known for his drip paintings of the 1940s and 1950s. Pollock is also closely associated with action painting, in which the act of painting is gestural and the artist approaches the canvas with little notion of what he or she will create.

**Rauschenberg, Robert (American, 1925–2008)**

A significant figure in twentieth-century American art whose paintings, sculptures, prints, photographs, collages, and installations span styles and movements from Abstract Expressionism to Pop art. Together with Jasper Johns he led a revival of interest in Dada. Among Rauschenberg's best-known works is *Bed*, 1955, one of his first "combines," or paintings that incorporate found objects.

**Reinhardt, Adolph "Ad" (American, 1913–1967)**

A painter associated with geometric and pure abstraction. Although Reinhardt was a contemporary of Abstract Expressionists, he believed that painting should be concerned with art alone. He rejected all outside symbols and references and was therefore embraced by the later Minimalists.

**representational**

A term used to describe art that is derived from references to real objects and images that are recognizable as depictions of what exists in the real world. A representational work may not be entirely realistic.

**Ribak, Louis (Lithuanian/American, 1902–1979)**

Originally a social realist painter, Louis Ribak gradually moved towards abstraction following his move to Taos, New Mexico, in 1944. His greatest early influence was his teacher John Sloan, under whom he studied at the Art Students League in New York City in the 1920s. In New Mexico he founded the Taos Valley Art School and was an influential figure in Taos's modernist art community. Ribak was married to fellow artist Beatrice Mandelman. A substantial body of his work is held as part of the Mandelman Ribak Collection of the University of New Mexico.

**Riley, Bridget (British, b.1931)**

Born in London, England, Bridget Riley became known for her Op Art paintings in the 1960s. Using optical illusions and compositions based on squares, ovals, and curves, Riley created work that seemed to shimmer in the eye of the viewer. From 1960 to 1967 she worked in black and white before gradually incorporating colour into her work and beginning to experiment with hue as a component of her visual effects.

**Riopelle, Jean Paul (Canadian, 1923–2002)**

A towering figure in Québécois modern art who, like the other members of the Automatistes, was interested in Surrealism and abstract art. Riopelle moved to Paris in 1947, where he participated in the last major exhibition of the Parisian Surrealists, organized by Marcel Duchamp and André Breton.

**Rosenquist, James (American, 1933–2017)**

A major figure in New York City's Pop art movement, James Rosenquist was a painter known for large, often room-sized, collage paintings. Influenced by consumer culture, he transferred the techniques he learned as a billboard painter to his own work, playing with the resolution of the image, and often integrated elements of social commentary into his compositions.

**Rothko, Mark (American, 1903–1970)**

A leading figure of Abstract Expressionism, Rothko began his career as an illustrator and watercolourist. In the late 1940s he developed the style that would come to define his career, creating intense colour-field oil paintings that express the same anxiety and mystery that informed his earlier figurative work.

**Spohn, Clay (American, 1898–1977)**

Born in San Francisco, Clay Spohn studied in California, New York, and Paris before becoming part of the Bay Area art scene in the late 1920s. A painter, illustrator, lithographer, and muralist, he completed public commissions in Montebello and Los Gatos, California. Spohn moved to Taos, New Mexico, in 1952, living there until 1958, when he left for New York City. His modernist, figurative work incorporated aspects of Surrealism. He was close friends with the abstract sculptor Alexander Calder.

**Still, Clyfford (American, 1904–1980)**

A painter associated with Abstract Expressionism. Still spent part of his childhood on an Alberta farm, and prairie landscapes figure prominently in his early work. The natural environment continued to be a marked influence until the mid-1940s, when he moved to New York and his paintings became increasingly abstract.

**Surrealism**

An early twentieth-century literary and artistic movement that began in Paris. Surrealism aimed to express the workings of the unconscious, free of convention and reason, and was characterized by fantastic images and incongruous juxtapositions. The movement spread globally, influencing film, theatre, and music.

**Suzuki, D.T. (Japanese, 1870–1966)**

A Buddhist scholar, Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki brought Zen Buddhist teachings to the West, travelling, lecturing, and writing throughout his career, which spanned seven decades. He believed in *satori*, an instantaneous experience of enlightenment that bypasses the rational mind, and promoted a philosophy of nonduality. In recent years, Suzuki's ideas and his position in both Japan and the West have been examined for their relationships to modernity, Western philosophy, and Japanese imperialism.

**Taoism**

Attributed to Lao Tzu, Taoism is an ancient Chinese philosophy that became the official religion of China during the Tang Dynasty of the seventh to tenth centuries. Based on the relationships between opposite forces (male and female, action and inaction, etc.), it emphasizes complementarity and unity, and describes a universe in which all things are connected. Taoism is essentially the following of the Tao, often translated as "the Way," and involves the worship of various deities and adherence to the philosophical principals described in the Tao Te Ching sacred text.

**Taos Moderns**

In the 1940s, a collection of mostly abstract expressionist painters from New York City and San Francisco moved to Taos, New Mexico, and became known as the "Taos Moderns." Influenced by the local light and landscape, they created primarily non-figurative work and transformed the town into an alternative to the art worlds and art markets from which they had come. Artists considered to be part of the group include Agnes Martin, Clay Spohn, Louis Ribak, and Beatrice Mandelman.

**Tao Te Ching**

Credited to Lao Tzu, the Tao Te Ching is the foundational sacred text of Taoism. It is a book of poetry describing how followers of the Tao should live, though it is not prescriptive. The Tao Te Ching has influenced later Chinese religion and philosophy, from Confucianism to Buddhism.

**Tawney, Lenore (American, 1907–2007)**

A pioneer in fibre art, Lenore Tawney was a sculptor who began making



tapestries in 1954. By 1961, her work shifted to large-scale woven and knotted pieces designed to be hung in the middle of a gallery space. Tawney's art is infused with mysticism, which continues from her early pieces to the assemblages of found objects that defined her later work.

**Tousignant, Claude (Canadian, b.1932)**

A painter and sculptor whose large, flat, stark painting contributed to laying the ground rules for *Plasticien* painting in Montreal. During the 1960s he painted large round canvases of brightly coloured concentric circles that produce dynamic optical effects. His later work, often monochromatic, increasingly emphasizes the objectness of painting.

**Tuttle, Richard (American, b.1941)**

A contemporary conceptual artist who has had a prolific output since the 1960s, working at the intersection of sculpture, painting, assemblage, and poetry. Tuttle's pieces explore the volume, colour, lines, textures, and shapes of humble materials. The artist lives and works in Maine, New Mexico, and New York City.

**Varley, F.H. (Frederick Horsman) (British/Canadian, 1881–1969)**

A founding member of the Group of Seven, known for his contributions to Canadian portraiture as well as landscape painting. Originally from Sheffield, England, Varley moved to Toronto in 1912 at the encouragement of his friend Arthur Lismer. From 1926 to 1936 he taught at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts, now known as Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

**Wagstaff, Sam (American, 1921–1987)**

An early collector of photography, Sam Wagstaff was a New York City curator whose 1964 exhibition *Black, White and Gray* was one of the first to focus on what would become Minimalism. In the 1970s, influenced by his romantic relationship with the photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, Wagstaff shifted his focus to photography. The J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles acquired Wagstaff's collection of photographs in 1984.

**Wilson, Ann (American, b.1935)**

Known for her quilt paintings, a body of work begun in the late 1950s in which the artist used traditional American quilts as her canvases, Ann Wilson is an artist associated with the Coenties Slip community. From the 1970s to the present she has worked in installation and performance, including a series of installations created in collaboration with Paul Thek. Wilson cites Agnes Martin and Lenore Tawney as two major early influences on her work, fostering interests in geometry and textile, respectively.

**Youngerman, Jack (American, b.1926)**

Part of a generation of American Abstract Expressionist artists including Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Motherwell, and Agnes Martin, Jack Youngerman lived and worked in Paris from 1947 to 1956, where he developed an interest in organic forms and hard-edged abstraction. After returning to the United States he settled in New York City, where he was included in Dorothy Miller's seminal exhibition *16 Americans* at the Museum of Modern Art in 1959. Working in

colour, then in black and white, then in colour again, in the 1970s Youngerman expanded his practice to include abstract sculpture in cast fibreglass followed by steel and aluminum, as well as wood cut-outs.

**Zen Buddhism**

A branch of Mahayana Buddhism, Zen Buddhism emerged in China as Chan Buddhism during the Tang Dynasty, migrating to Korea, Vietnam, and Japan in slightly different forms. It emphasizes meditation or dhyana, and seated meditation, or zazen, is a core practice. Under the shogun, Zen Buddhism in Japan attained political power and influence, though by the end of the Edo period it had declined. After the Second World War it gained popularity in the West.





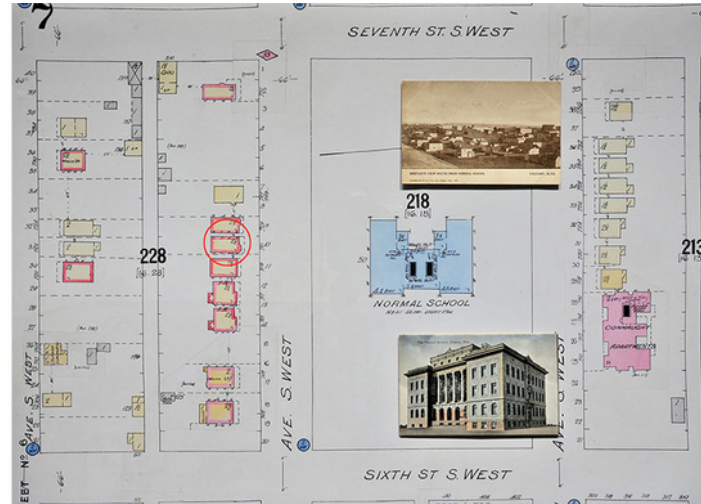
# SOURCES & RESOURCES

Agnes Martin's work has been widely exhibited and written about. Her fascinating life has been well documented in biographies that tell the story of a determined Canadian-born American artist who fought her way into the highest levels of the art world. For most of her professional life, Martin followed a rigid set of self-imposed rules for her art, yet her paintings have motivated seemingly limitless analysis and interpretations over the years and produced a rich body of literature.



## KEY EXHIBITIONS

Martin participated in her first exhibition in 1948 at the University of New Mexico. From then until the end of her life in 2004 she was included in hundreds of group and solo exhibitions all over the world. Her work continues to be well represented in major museums over a decade after her death.<sup>1</sup>



LEFT: Installation view of *Agnes Martin: The mind knows what the eye has not seen*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan, January 26, 2019–April 28, 2019, photograph by Don Hall. RIGHT: Mixed media map of Vancouver showing the School of Decorative and Applied Arts, installed in the exhibition *Agnes Martin: The mind knows what the eye has not seen*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan, January 26, 2019–April 28, 2019, photograph by Don Hall.

**1948**

*Seventh Annual Exhibition by Members of the Art Faculty*, Fine Art Gallery, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, 1948.

**1955**

Albuquerque Museum of Modern Art, New Mexico.

June 12, *Annual Exhibition for New Mexico Artists*, Art Gallery of the Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe.

November, *Emma Lou Davis and Agnes Martin*, Art Gallery of the Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe.

**1956**

February 26–April 7, *Taos Moderns*, Jonson Gallery, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

**1958**

December 2–20, *Agnes Martin, Section Eleven*, Betty Parsons Gallery, New York.

**1962**

March 20–May 13, *Geometric Abstraction in America*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

November 27–December 15, *Agnes Martin*, Robert Elkon Gallery, New York.

**1965–66**

February 25–April 25, *The Responsive Eye*, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Travelled to St. Louis City Art Museum, Missouri, May 20–June 20; Seattle Art Museum, Washington, July 15–August 23; Pasadena Art Museum, California, September 25–November 7; Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland, December 14, 1965–January 23, 1966.

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- 1966** September 21–November 27, *Systemic Painting*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.
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- 1967** October 4–29, *10*, Dwan Gallery, New York. Travelled to Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles, May 2–29, 1968.
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- 1971** April 20–May 25, *Agnes Martin*, School of Visual Arts Gallery, New York.
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- 1972** June 30–October 8, *documenta 5*, Neue Galerie Schöne Aussicht, Kassel; Museum Fridericianum Friedrichsplatz, Kassel, Germany.
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- 1973** January 22–March 1, *Agnes Martin*, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Travelled to Pasadena Museum of Modern Art, California, April 3–May 27.
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- 1974–75** October 1974–September 1975, Inaugural Exhibition, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.
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- 1975** March 1–April 1, *Agnes Martin: New Paintings*, Pace Gallery, New York.
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- 1977** January 23, *Gabriel*, Leo S. Bing Theater, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
- February 15–April 3, *1977 Biennial Exhibition*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.
- Agnes Martin: Paintings and Drawings 1957–1975*, organized by Arts Council of Great Britain, London. Travelled to Hayward Gallery, London, March 2–April 24; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, May 13–June 19.
- June 24–October 2, *documenta 6*, Kassel, Germany.
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- 1978** July 2–October 15, *La Biennale di Venezia*, Venice.
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- 1980–81** March 18–April 6, *Agnes Martin*, organized by Pace Gallery, Wichita State University, Kansas. Travelled to Denver Art Museum, Colorado, May 24–June 29; La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, California, August 15–September 28; Seattle Art Museum, Washington, November 13–December 31; Portland Art Museum, Oregon, January–February 1981; Akron Art Institute, Ohio, March 14–May 10, 1981; Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri, June 2–August 2, 1981; Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Alberta, August 29–October 11, 1981; Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, November 13–December 20, 1981.
- June 1–September 30, 1980, *La Biennale di Venezia*, 39th International Arts Exhibition, Section of Visual Arts, American Pavilion, Venice.

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- 1982** February 23–March 14, *Agnes Martin*, organized by Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary, Alberta, and the Mendel Art Gallery Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts, Montreal.
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- 1986** May 16–July 6, *The Sixth Biennale of Sydney: Origins, Originality + Beyond*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
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- 1987** January 31–February 28, *The Idea of North*, 49th Parallel, Centre for Contemporary Canadian Art, New York.
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- 1989** October 25, 1989–February 25, 1990, *Agnes Martin / Donald Judd*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
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- 1991–92** March 22–May 12, *Agnes Martin: Paintings and Drawings 1974–1990*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Travelled to Museum Wiesbaden, Germany, May 26–July 21; Westfälisches Landesmuseum, Münster, Germany, August 4–October 6; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, October 24, 1991–January 6, 1992.
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- 1992–94** November 6, 1992–January 31, 1993, *Agnes Martin*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Travelled to Milwaukee Art Museum, Wisconsin, February 12–April 4, 1993; Center for the Fine Arts, Miami, May 22–August 1, 1993; Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, September 10–October 31, 1993; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, November 16, 1993–February 21, 1994; Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe, March 26–May 15, 1994.
- 
- 1993** January 16–February 13, *Indiana, Kelly, Martin, Rosenquist, Youngerman at Coenties Slip*, Pace Gallery, 142 Greene Street, New York.
- September 8–October 24, *Agnes Martin: Paintings and Drawings 1977–1991*, Serpentine Gallery, London.
- 
- 1995** April 15–June 18, *Agnes Martin*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan. Travelled as *Matrix / Agnes Martin* to University Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, California, July 12–September 24.
- 
- 1996** March 14–May 25, *The Innocence of Trees: Agnes Martin and Emily Carr*, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.
- 
- 1997–98** June 15–November 9, *La Biennale di Venezia, Future, Present, Past*, 47th International Arts Exhibition, Venice.
- October 19, 1997–June 1, 1998, *The Guggenheim Museums and the Art of This Century*, Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain.
- October 31, Permanent installation opened, Agnes Martin Gallery, Harwood Museum of Art, University of New Mexico, Taos.



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- 1998** April 26–August 2, *Agnes Martin / Richard Tuttle*, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas. Travelled to SITE Santa Fe, New Mexico, August 15–October 18.
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- 2002** February 1–May 26, *Agnes Martin: The Nineties and Beyond*, Menil Collection, Houston.
- 
- 2005** June 1–August 7, *The Shape of Colour*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.
- June 12–November 6, *La Biennale di Venezia, The Experience of Art*, 51st International Exhibition, Venice.
- 
- 2006–07** December 1, 2006–February 25, 2007, *Art Metropole: The Top 100*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.
- June 16–September 23, 2007, *documenta 12*, Kassel, Germany.
- 
- 2009–11** May 27, 2009–February 21, 2011, *Elles@centrepompidou: Artists Femmes dans la Collection du Musée National d'Art Moderne*, Centre de Création Industrielle, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne/Centre de création industrielle, Paris.
- 
- 2010–12** February 12, 2010–ongoing, *Agnes Martin*, Dia:Beacon, New York.
- September 22, 2010–January 2, 2011, *Agnes Martin: Work Ethic*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.
- October 30, 2010–February 13, 2011, *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture*, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Travelled to Brooklyn Museum, New York, November 18, 2011–February 12, 2012; Tacoma Art Museum, Washington, March 17–June 10, 2012.
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- 2011** September 16–October 29, *Agnes Martin, The '80s: Grey Paintings*, Pace Gallery, New York.
- 
- 2012** February 25–June 17, *Agnes Martin: Before the Grid*, Harwood Museum of Art, University of New Mexico, Taos.
- 
- 2013–14** January 26–May 12, *Agnes Martin: The New York-Taos Connection (1947–1957)*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York. Travelled to Tacoma Art Museum, Washington, January 25–April 20, 2014. Travelled as *Agnes Martin: The Early Years 1947–1957* to University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque, September 13–December 15, 2013.
- 
- 2015–17** June 3–October 11, *Agnes Martin*, Tate Modern, London. Travelled to Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, November 7, 2015–March 6, 2016; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, April 24–September 11, 2016; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, October 7, 2016–January 11, 2017.

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- 2016–17** September 30, 2016–January 29, 2017, *Los Angeles to New York: Dwan Gallery*, 1959–1971, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Travelled to Los Angeles County Museum of Art, March 19–September 10, 2017.
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- 2017** April 15–August 13, *Making Space: Women Artists and Postwar Abstraction*, Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- 
- 2018** September 22–December 21, *Agnes Martin: The mind knows what the eye has not seen*, Esker Foundation, Calgary, Alberta.
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#### SELECTED WRITINGS BY THE ARTIST

Martin began writing about her own art in the early 1970s, presenting an idiosyncratic view on life and art inspired by her own personal philosophy, Taoism, Zen Buddhism, and Christian traditions. Her collected writings were published in 1991 by the Kunstmuseum Winterthur in Switzerland.

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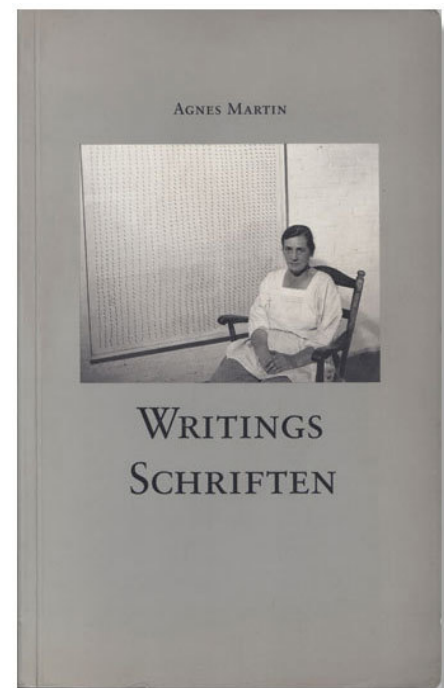
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#### SELECTED CRITICAL WRITINGS ON THE ARTIST'S WORK

Martin's work has been well recorded in critical writing. She has been the subject of two biographies, a catalogue raisonné, numerous exhibition catalogues, magazine articles, and reviews.

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Cover of Dieter Schwarz, ed., *Agnes Martin: Writings/Schriften* (1991).

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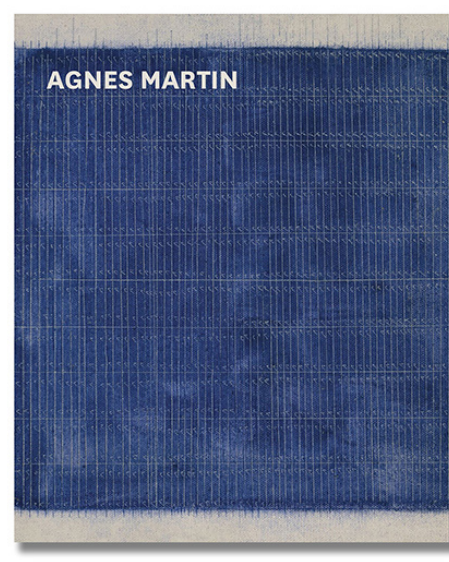
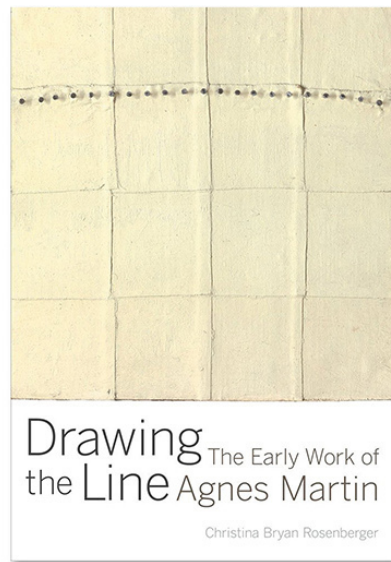
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LEFT: Cover of Christina Bryan Rosenberger, *Drawing the Line: The Early Work of Agnes Martin* (2016). RIGHT: Cover of Frances Morris and Tiffany Bell, eds., *Agnes Martin* (2015).



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Lippard, Lucy. "The Silent Art." *Art in America*, January-February 1967.

Martin, Henry. *Pioneer, Painter, Icon*. Tucson, AZ: Schaffner Press, 2018.

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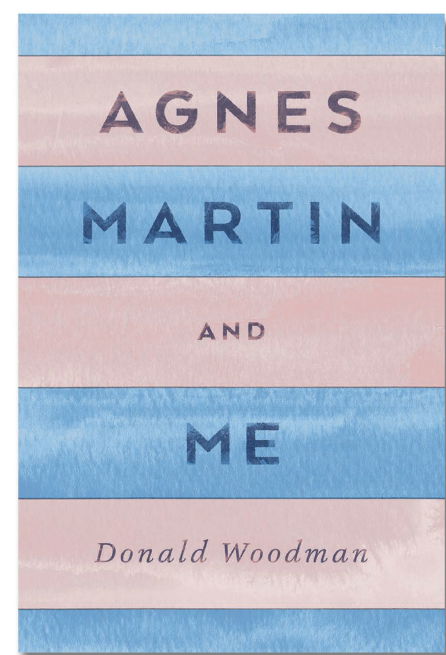
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## KEY INTERVIEWS WITH THE ARTIST

Interviews give us a unique insight into Martin's life and art. She often used them to communicate how she felt her work fitted into the broader movements of Abstraction in America.



Cover of Donald Woodman, *Agnes Martin and Me* (2015).

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#### FURTHER READINGS

Martin was associated with several movements of American Abstraction and important artists and dealers of her time.

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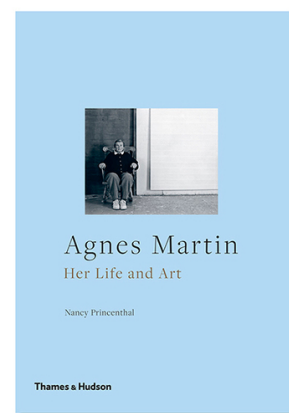
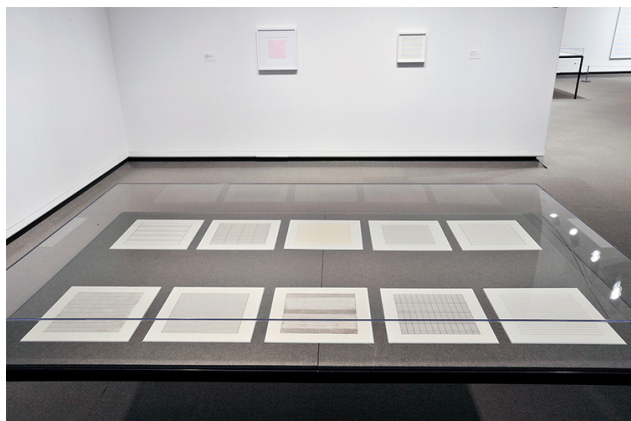
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LEFT: Ephemera collection installed in the exhibition *Agnes Martin: The mind knows what the eye has not seen*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan, January 26, 2019-April 28, 2019, photograph by Don Hall. RIGHT: Cover of Nancy Princenthal, *Agnes Martin: Her Life and Art* (2015).

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### CHRISTOPHER RÉGIMBAL

Christopher Régimbal is a senior exhibitions manager at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. After completing his master's in art history at Concordia University in Montreal, he spent eight years at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery and the Art Museum at the University of Toronto as curatorial assistant, and then as the exhibition and projects coordinator. He has coordinated more than thirty exhibitions of modern and contemporary art in museums and galleries across Canada and Europe, including *Gauguin: Portraits* (National Gallery of Canada, 2019), and *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada, c. 1965-1980* (Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, 2010-2014). Régimbal also served as curatorial assistant for the Canada Pavilion at the 2009 Venice Biennale.

In addition to his work as an art administrator, Régimbal has published essays and curated exhibitions on postwar and contemporary art. His writing has examined abstract painter Eleanor Mackey, the collective General Idea, and celebrated Minimalist pioneer Sol LeWitt. In 2011 he curated a solo exhibition on the American artist Bruce Nauman. His essay "Institutions of Regionalism: Artist Collectivism in London, Ontario," published in *Fillip* in 2014, examined one of the earliest manifestations of artist-run galleries in Canada and its lasting effect on the Canadian art scene.



**"Visiting the Agnes Martin exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 2016 was a transformational experience. Seeing the horizontal lines of Martin's late canvases framed by the gentle slope of Frank Lloyd Wright's distinctive inclined gallery, I couldn't help but think 'these two things belong together.' Here is a Canadian-born American artist who is so entwined with the New York art story yet in whose work you can still catch glimpses of the wide open prairies of Saskatchewan. One of the most significant Canadians ever to work abroad, Martin's paintings are admired the world over. It is time to bring her story home to Canada."**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## From the Author

Many thanks to the wonderful team at the Art Canada Institute, especially Sara Angel, Anna Hudson, Michael Rattray, Kendra Ward, Lara Hinchberger, and Stephanie Burdzy; it was a privilege to be invited to engage with the life and art of such a fascinating artist, and I couldn't imagine sharing this journey with more enthusiastic collaborators. Thank you also to the anonymous peer reviewers who greatly contributed to this manuscript. I would like to acknowledge my colleagues at the National Gallery of Canada and single out Cyndie Campbell and Philip Dombowsky at the Library and Archives for their exceptional resources and research support. Thank you to Tiffany Bell and Christa Martin for being so willing to share their knowledge and time. I am also grateful to The Sabourin Family Foundation for their generous patronage. Finally, I would like to extend a profound thank you to my wife, Amy, for her support and encouragement.

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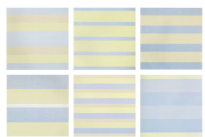
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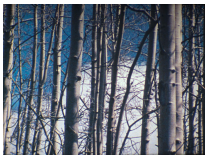
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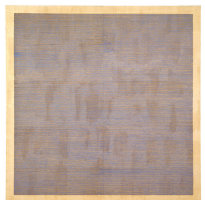
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Significance & Critical Issues: Agnes Martin, contemporary still from *Gabriel*, 1976. (See below for details.)



Style & Technique: Agnes Martin, *Falling Blue*, 1963. (See below for details.)



Sources & Resources: Guy Cross, *Agnes Martin's studio table, Taos, New Mexico*, c.2000s. Collection of the artist. © Guy Cross ([www.guycross.com](http://www.guycross.com)).



Where to See: Installation view of *Agnes Martin* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2016-2017. © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York. All Rights Reserved. Photo credit: David Heald.

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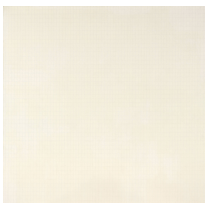
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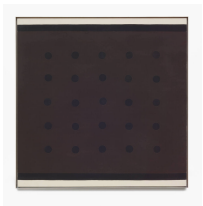
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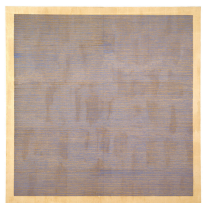
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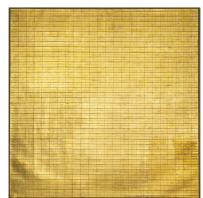
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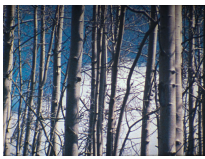




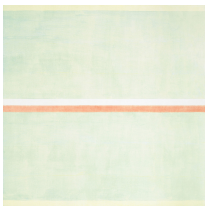
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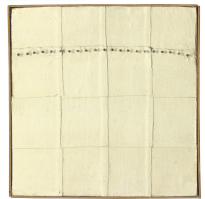
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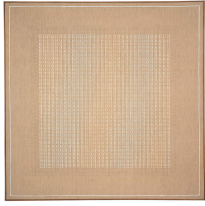
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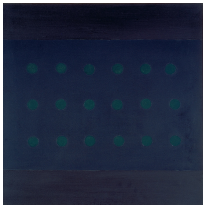
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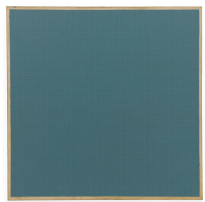
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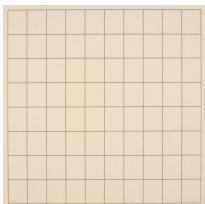
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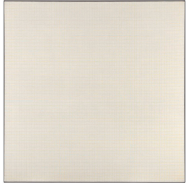
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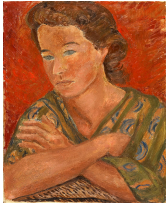
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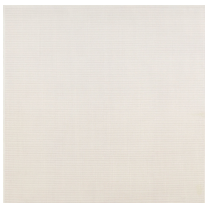
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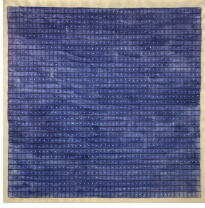


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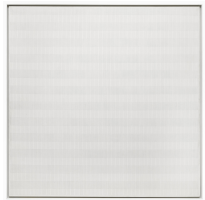


Seven artworks installed with Donald Judd's yellow benches (© 2019 Judd Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOCAN) in a purpose-built gallery designed by Martin, 1993-94, Agnes Martin Gallery, Harwood Museum of Art, Taos, New Mexico. © Agnes Martin / SOCAN (2019). Photo credit: Tina Larkin.





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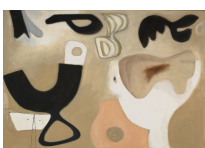
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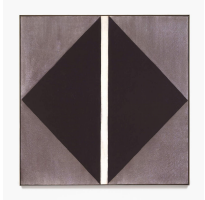
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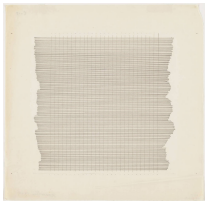
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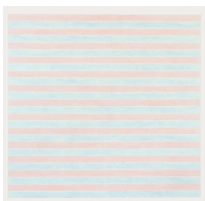
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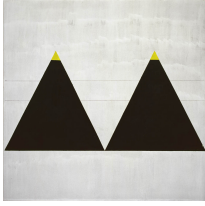
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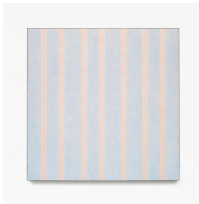
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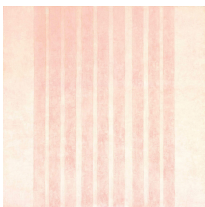
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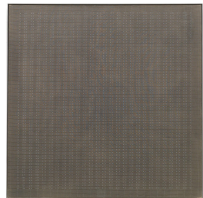


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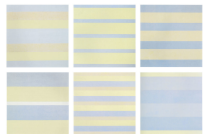




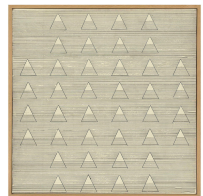
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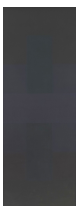
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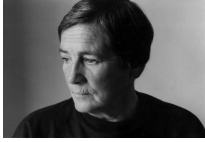
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Agnes Martin, Cuba, New Mexico, 1974, photograph by Gianfranco Gorgoni. © Gianfranco Gorgoni.



Agnes Martin, holding cat, with her siblings Maribel, Malcolm Jr., and Ronald, 1920s, photographer unknown.  
Collection of the Martin Family Archive. Courtesy of Christa Martin.



Agnes Martin in the Agnes Martin Gallery of The Harwood Museum of Art, Taos, New Mexico, 2002,  
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Agnes Martin in her studio, c.1955, photograph by Mildred Tolbert. Collection of the Mildred Tolbert Archive,  
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Agnes Martin in her studio, Taos, New Mexico, 2004, photograph by Lark Smotherman. © Lark Smotherman.



Agnes Martin in New Mexico, 1940s, photographer unknown. Courtesy of Peyton Wright Galleries, Santa Fe,  
New Mexico.



Agnes Martin in New Mexico, c.1947, photographer unknown. Courtesy of Peyton Wright Galleries, Santa Fe,  
New Mexico.



Agnes Martin near her property in Cuba, New Mexico, 1974, photograph by Gianfranco Gorgoni.  
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Agnes Martin's senior class photo on page 33 of Klipsun, the annual publication of the senior class of the Washington State Normal School, 1936 (detail). Special Collections, Heritage Resources, Western Libraries, Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington. Photo credit: Western Libraries Heritage Resources, Western Washington University.



Agnes Martin with Arne Glimcher in front of her studio in Cuba, New Mexico, 1974, photograph by Fred Bueller.



Agnes Martin with Ellsworth Kelly in his studio at 3-5 Coenties Slip, New York, 1957, photograph by Hans Namuth. Collection of the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona. © 1991 Hans Namuth Estate.



Agnes Martin with Ellsworth Kelly on Wall Street, 1958, photograph by Hans Namuth. Collection of the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona. © 1991 Hans Namuth Estate.



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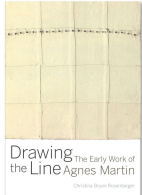


*Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange, Red*, by Ellsworth Kelly. Collection of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (67.1833). Courtesy of Matthew Marks Gallery, New York. © Ellsworth Kelly Foundation.

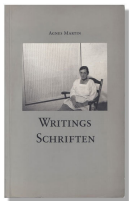




*Charred Beloved II*, 1946, by Arshile Gorky. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1971 (16690). © 2019 Estate of Arshile Gorky. Photo credit: Wikicommons.



Cover of Christina Bryan Rosenberger, *Drawing the Line: The Early Work of Agnes Martin* (2016). Courtesy of the University of California Press. © 2016 by the Regents of the University of California.



Cover of Dieter Schwarz, ed., *Agnes Martin: Writings/Schriften* (1991). © Hatje Cantz Verlag GmbH, Berlin. Photo credit: Stephanie Burdzy.



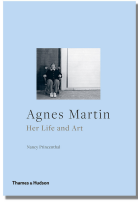
Cover of Donald Woodman, *Agnes Martin and Me* (2015). © Donald Woodman /Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo credit: Donald Woodman.



Cover of exhibition publication for *Agnes Martin Section 11 Exhibition*, Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, December 29-January 16, 1959. Betty Parsons Gallery records and personal papers, circa 1920-1991, bulk 1946-1983, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



Cover of Frances Morris and Tiffany Bell, eds., *Agnes Martin* (2015). © 2015 Tate, London; D.A.P. / Distributed Art Publishers, New York.



Cover of Nancy Princenthal, *Agnes Martin: Her Life and Art* (2015). © 2015 Thames & Hudson. Photo credit: Thames & Hudson, London.



*Dear Agnes, October 1-December 31, 2017*, by Tammi Campbell. Courtesy of the artist and the Esker Foundation. © Tammi Campbell. Photo credit: John Dean.



Left to right: Delphine Seyrig, Duncan Youngerman, Robert Clark, Ellsworth Kelly, Jack Youngerman, and Agnes Martin on the roof of 3-5 Coenties Slip, New York, 1958, photograph by Hans Namuth. Collection of the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona. © 1991 Hans Namuth Estate.



Emily Carr with her pets in the garden of her home at 646 Simcoe Street in Victoria, 1918, photographer unknown, Flora Alfreda Hamilton Burns fonds, BC Archives Collection, Royal BC Museum and Archives, Victoria, British Columbia (HP51747).



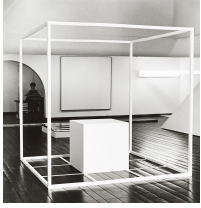
*L'empêqueur de Tourner en Rond*, by Claude Tousignant. Collection of the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, Richard Brown Baker, B.A. 1935, Collection (2008.19.304). © Claude Tousignant.



Entrance to Agnes Martin's former studio and home in Galisteo, New Mexico, 1992, photograph by Mary Ellen Mark. Courtesy of Falkland Road Inc. © Mary Ellen Mark Library / Studio.



Ephemera collection installed in the exhibition *Agnes Martin: The mind knows what the eye has not seen*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan, January 26, 2019-April 28, 2019, photograph by Don Hall. Courtesy of the MacKenzie Art Gallery.



Installation view of *10* exhibition at Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles, May 2-27, 1967. Dwan Gallery records, 1959–circa 1982, bulk 1959–1971, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



Installation view of *Agnes Martin*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, November 6, 1992–January 31, 1993, photograph by Geoffrey Clements. © Whitney Museum of American Art.



Installation view of *Agnes Martin: The mind knows what the eye has not seen*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan, January 26, 2019–April 28, 2019, photograph by Don Hall. Courtesy of the MacKenzie Art Gallery.



Installation view of *Agnes Martin: Recent Paintings*, The Pace Gallery, 142 Greene Street, New York, December 7, 1990–January 12, 1991. Courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



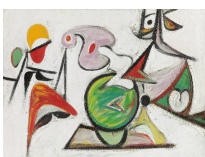
Installation view of *Agnes Martin, Richard Tuttle: Crossing Lines*, Pace Gallery, New York, November 2, 2017–January 27, 2018, photograph by Kerry Ryan McFate. Courtesy of Pace Gallery.



Installation view of *Dear Agnes, October 1–December 31, 2017*, by Tammi Campbell, in the exhibition *Dear Agnes: Tammi Campbell, Agnes Martin, and Sarah Stevenson* at the Esker Foundation, Calgary, September 22–December 21, 2018, photograph by John Dean. Courtesy of the artist and the Esker Foundation. © Tammi Campbell.



Installation view of *documenta 5*, Kassel, Germany, June 30–October 8, 1972, photographer unknown. Harald Szeeman papers, Getty Research Institute Special Collections, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. © J. Paul Getty Trust.



*Khorkom*, c.1938, by Arshile Gorky. Private collection. © 2019 Estate of Arshile Gorky. Photo credit:



Sotheby's.



Lenore Tawney in her Coenties Slip studio, New York, 1958, photograph by David Attie. Courtesy of the Lenore G. Tawney Foundation, New York.



*Mandelman and Ribak*, 1949, photograph by Justin Locke. Beatrice Mandelman and Louis Ribak Pictorial Collection (PICT 000-1002). Courtesy of the Center for Southwest Research and Special Collections, University of New Mexico Libraries, Albuquerque, New Mexico.



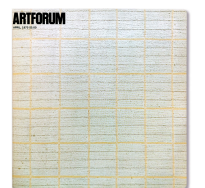
*Mexico*, undated c.1950s, by Beatrice Mandelman. Rosenberg & Co., New York. Reprinted with permission from the University of New Mexico Foundation, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Photo credit: Rosenberg & Co.



Mildred Kane and Agnes Martin playing cribbage in Kane's cottage, Elk Lake, Oregon, 1940s, photographer unknown. Courtesy of Susan Sharp. Photo credit: Kathleen Brennan.



Mixed media map of Vancouver showing The School of Decorative and Applied Arts installed in the exhibition *Agnes Martin: The mind knows what the eye has not seen*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan, January 26, 2019–April 28, 2019, photograph by Don Hall. Courtesy of the MacKenzie Art Gallery.



*Orange Grove* featured on the cover of *Artforum* 11, no. 8 (April 1973). Photo credit: Stephanie Burdzy.



Photograph of fifteen of the so-called Irascibles, November 24, 1950, published in *Life* magazine January 15, 1951, photograph by Nina Leen. *Left to right, front row*: Theodoros Stamos, Jimmy Ernst, Barnett Newman, James Brooks, and Mark Rothko; *middle row*: Richard Pousette-Dart, William Baziotes, Jackson Pollock, Clyfford Still, Robert Motherwell, and Bradley Walker Tomlin; *back row*: Willem de Kooning, Adolph Gottlieb, Ad Reinhardt, and Hedda Sterne. Photo credit: Wikicommons.



*Portrait of Mistress Mills in 1750*, 1929, by Joan Miró. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, James Thrall Soby Bequest (1236.1979). © 2019 Successió Miró.



Residents of Coenties Slip, New York, 1958, photograph by Jack Youngerman. *Left to right*: Delphine Seyrig, Duncan Youngerman, Lenore Tawney, Jerry Matthews, Ellsworth Kelly (*foreground*), Robert Indiana (*background*), Dolores Matthews, and Agnes Martin. Courtesy of Washburn Gallery, New York. © Jack Youngerman.



*Self-portrait*, 1919, by Frederick Horsman Varley. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Purchased 1936 (4272). © Varley Art Gallery / Town of Markham.



The Slide Trail outside Taos, New Mexico, with Taos Mountain in the distance, 2018, photograph by Cindy Brown for the *Taos News*.



View of Main Street, Macklin, Saskatchewan, 1912, photographer unknown.



Wagons built as props for Agnes Martin's second film, *Captivity*, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1977, photograph by Donald Woodman. © Donald Woodman /Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



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# AGNES MARTIN

Life & Work by Christopher Régimbal

## French Layout Associate

Ophélie Henrard

## Design Template

Studio Blackwell

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Art Canada Institute

Massey College, University of Toronto

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