

**tenth anniversary
exhibition**

the

aldrich museum

of

contemporary art

1964-1974

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The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art celebrates the tenth anniversary of its founding in October 1964 by Mr and Mrs Larry Aldrich.

Ten years of exhibitions, widely ranging in their presentation of contemporary approaches to art have established a nationally recognized institution with a reputation for distinctive selection of works by the most advanced artists.

The first exhibition of 1964 presented a selection of 75 paintings and 20 sculptures, the nucleus of the present Aldrich collection. Mr Aldrich, now retired from the fashion business, became interested in collecting art in the '30s and by 1951 had accumulated a significant collection of Impressionist, Post-impressionist and Expressionist paintings. His interest then began to shift to the acquisition of newer more contemporary work, and by 1963, finding that he was totally involved with the art of today, he sold most of his original collection at auction and the following year decided to open a museum in Ridgefield based on his new collection and devoted to showing the work of living artists.

Following the first exhibition the museum program presented four exhibitions each year, including special loan exhibitions from important contemporary collectors, artists and galleries as well as an annual exhibition of selections from the growing and changing Aldrich collection. From 1964-1974 the museum has held 29 full-scale exhibitions, each utilizing all of its galleries on the three floors of the museum.

The museum was originally called "Old Hundred" from the historical nickname of the building which derived from its use between 1783 and 1883 as a meeting place in the evening for townspeople for discussions of local and national interest, and as a grocery and hardware store

by day. In 1883, Grace King Ingersoll, descendant of Lieutenant King who had been an original owner of the store, remodeled the building to become her home. From 1929 to 1964 it served as a Christian Scientist church.

By 1968 the museum, then called the Larry Aldrich Museum formalized itself by its present name as The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art and in 1969 became a tax-exempt Public Institution.

Until 1971, the exhibition series, *Highlights of the Art Season*, held consecutively for seven seasons from the summer of 1965, shared the annual exhibition program with special exhibitions which have included: *Brandeis University Creative Art Awards 1957-1966* (1966); *Cool Art* (1967); *Aldrich Fund Acquisitions for the Museum of Modern Art* (1969); *Lyrical Abstraction* (1970); *26 Women Artists selected by Lucy Lippard* (1971) and a distinguished series of collectors' exhibitions featuring selections from the contemporary collections of *Richard Brown Baker* (1965); *John G. Powers* (1966); *Susan Morse Hilles* (1967); *Hanford Yang* (1968) and *Charles Cowles* (1969).

In 1972, following the last *Highlights* exhibition surveying the 1970-71 art-season, a new series of annual exhibitions was inaugurated, titled *Contemporary Reflections*. The exhibition program is now devoted to two major annual exhibitions: *Contemporary Reflections* in the spring and summer and the *Fall Exhibition* featuring selections from the expanding museum collections, and new acquisitions, gifts and extended loans to the collection, of each year.

In the *Tenth Anniversary Exhibition, 1964-1974* the museum presents a selection of works from the Aldrich Collection which emphasize the course of change in both the interest of collecting and the focus of the exhibition policy over these ten years. The pattern of this change and the

direction of the museum in its on-going innovative role among small museums devoted to contemporary art may be discerned in its selections as more and more venturesome towards the showing of the accomplished living artist early in his or her career and in response to the most immediate events in the continuing flux of the art world.

The exhibition presents once more a selection from the nuclear first exhibition of 1964 with 15 artists who have remained significant among the artists of the '50 and '60s and are still important within the Aldrich Museum Collection. They are Pierre Alechinsky, Mary Bauermeister, Jane Freilicher, Grace Hartigan, Hans Hartung, Robert Indiana, Paul Jenkins, Ellsworth Kelly, Andre Marfaing, Rakuko Naito, William Ronald, Ludwig Sander, Pierre Soulages, Ernest Trova, and Zao Wou-ki (the first contemporary artist collected by Mr. Aldrich). Several of these artists included in the first exhibition are represented by new or later works, other than those seen in that opening show.

The current selection does not signify a hierarchal judgement of the earlier collected works, rather a fresh look in context of the collector's timely movement of interest (a larger group of these works was featured in the *Fall Exhibition, 1973*).

The choice of early works collected was focussed in part upon contemporary European artists of the '50s seen on repeated business trips to Paris by Mr. Aldrich and in part upon American artists whose talent centered on the Abstract-expressionist conviction shifting towards the Optical and Geometric Abstract exploration.

The growth of the Aldrich Collection during the middle and later '60s took on a new zest and scope concomitant with the opening of the museum. A dominant concern with hard-edge painting, the shaped canvas, with kinetic and light construction works (with an increasing emphasis on new approaches, new materials) and in particular the minimalist reductive viewpoint informs many of the outstanding works acquired. These qualities are revealed in this exhibition through the works of: Frank Stella, Nassos Daphnis, Robert Mangold, Kenneth Noland, James Rosenquist, Sven Lukin, Check Boterf, Charles Hinman, Robert Mallory, James Seawright, Howard Jones, Stanley

Landsman, Stephen Antonakos, Chryssa, Lucas Samaris, Ernest Trova, Robert Smithson, Craig Kauffman, Carl Andre, Agnes Martin, Eva Hesse, Leroy Lamis.

All of these artists were included in the *Highlights* exhibitions (1965-1971) and the works in these shows were each acquired and shown simultaneously with groups of invited works from the artists' galleries who loaned three or four works for these highly stimulating selections from the outstanding New York Gallery one-person shows of the corresponding years. The *Highlights* exhibitions presented over 548 works by 170 artists, painters and sculptors, American and European, of first rank in the sustaining art world of New York, many of whom were also represented in the series of collectors' exhibitions held during those years. Thus while works of the Pop artists were not collected by the museum they were importantly shown in the museum during the late '60s as well as other artists and directions not to be seen in the collection which reveals the inclinations of the choice and pursuits of its originator.

The Aldrich Museum entered the '70s with a special exhibition of some 42 works collected by Mr. Aldrich at a peak of enthusiasm centering upon the appearance of new artists with a distinct movement away from the geometrical, hard-edge and minimal. The works, by contrast, were characterized by soft vibrant colors, fluid use of pigment, cloud-like or atmospheric concepts of shifts of amorphous form and color with enigmatic densities that possess a sensuous and "romantic" appeal. Not seeing this pendulum movement as antithesis to what had been done and collected—Mr. Aldrich assembled a group of paintings in which a pure delight in the enlargement of the scope and sensibility of contemporary art could be experienced.

After the Ridgefield showing this entire collection of the *Lyrical Abstraction* exhibition was given to the Whitney Museum of American Art and was shown at the New York Museum before subsequently being sent on a national tour circulated by the Whitney Museum.

The influences revealed by this survey of current directions continues into the '70s. Several artists working from the *lyrical abstract* persuasion have entered and/or reen-

tered the Aldrich Collection through gifts, more recent purchases and extended loans from Patrons, and Friends of the museum.

The experience of collecting, showing and "sending on its way" the *Lyrical Abstraction* exhibition afforded fresh contacts with many artists at the time as yet without gallery representation. Visits to the artists' studios brought insights into a prevailing situation, sharply bringing to attention the large numbers of significantly arriving artists with developed bodies of works, with fresh vitality and exploratory viewpoints, who are not in the galleries or museums for whom attention is greatly warranted.

The lag in opportunity for adequate seeing or "exposure" and the actual of what is happening in the creative ferment of the time is an area where innovation in finding, selecting and presentation is open for essential challenges.

Based on this observation the active interests of the Aldrich Museum have shifted toward real efforts and undertakings, not against the gallery scene, but toward the acceleration of the public acquaintance with contemporary endeavor in art in N.Y., and its geographic environs and the recognition of it. The Aldrich Museum seeks to present an organized and informed investigative approach to both exhibiting and collecting—a kind of annual report on its findings in the studio scene as evidenced by visits to studios of artists not represented by galleries, yet who prove accomplished and deserving of attention due to their achievement in the current art world.

The spring and summer exhibition feature is the museum's *Contemporary Reflections* annual representing this approach to exhibiting and collecting responsive to the artist without gallery representation. This year the third showing of the newer artists was held.

In this Tenth Anniversary Exhibition, the new artists in the museum collection of the art of the '70s are represented through the works of the 18 artists introduced in *Contemporary Reflections* exhibitions of 1972, 1973 and 1974. They are: Joan Thorne, Martha Diamond, Jack Whitten, Arleen Schloss, Ron Janowich, J. Nebraska Gifford, Jim Parker, Fred Brown, Ted Stamm, Gary Smith, Stewart

Hitch, Fred Guyot, William L. Haney, Louis Lieberman, Olivia de Bernardinis, Steve Kelsey, Elliott Lloyd and Joyce Cole. The collection is comprised of 100 selections from the 168 works by 155 new artists shown in the three *Contemporary Reflections* exhibitions.

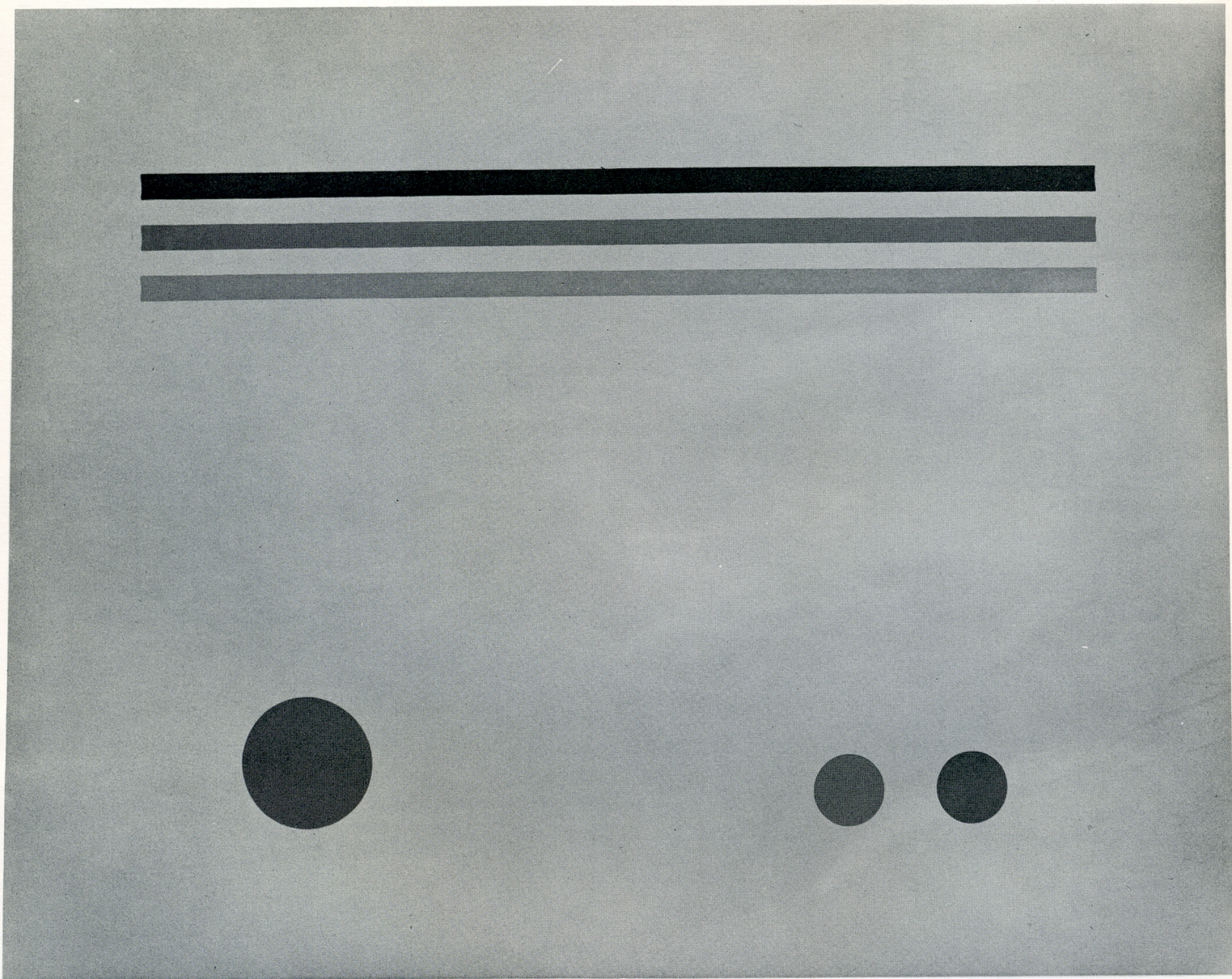
Among the most important activities developing out of this collection are making available loan shows to other museums, and particularly for 1975-76 when a traveling loan exhibition of works selected by the American Federation of Art will be circulated to U.S. Museums, Art Centers, and University Galleries for a two year tour arranged by that organization. Other museums of the Northeast States are being served with loan selections scheduled to precede the national tour.

The *Tenth Anniversary Exhibition* also features the new acquisitions, gifts and extended loans granted to the museum during the current year and the addition of a new sculptural work for the museum garden, commissioned for this occasion from the artist Alex McFarlane, whose work was shown in the 1974 *Contemporary Reflections* exhibition.

Acknowledgements and Dedication:

On this Tenth Anniversary, the President and Trustees of the Aldrich Museum and its staff wish to extend a very special acknowledgement to all its contributors, Patrons, Friends and Donors to the collection; to the collectors who made their collections available; to the many art dealers whose cooperation with the artists represented, made the *Highlights* Exhibitions possible and to the new artists, who have, through their understanding of present museum efforts to further the cause of the "emergent" artist, all have contributed most generously to the genuine gain of the public who attend the museum to share what is most exciting and current. Without this fullness of spirit and extensive cooperation by so many persons and gallery organizations the special programs and exhibitions of these first 10 years could not have been.

Carlus Dyer, Director
September, 1974



Ron Janowich: Untitled, 1974