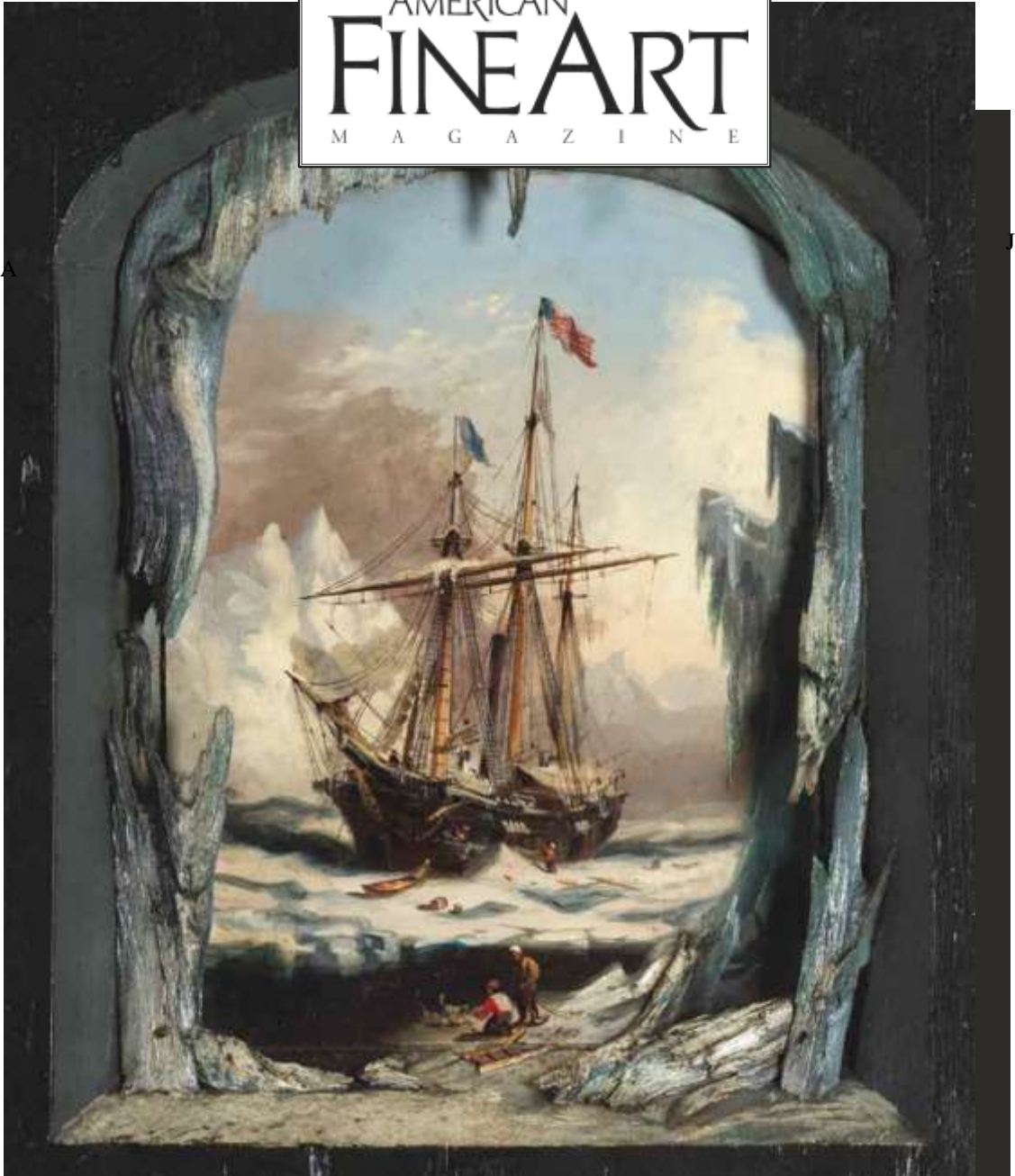


AMERICAN
FINE ART
M A G A Z I N E



Boldness in Art and in Life

Abstract works by pioneer female artist Anna Walinska now on display at Lawrence Fine Art

On view now

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Rosina Rubin looked at her aunt Anna Walinska as almost a second parent, since Rubin's father died when she was young and Walinska lived a few blocks away from her in Manhattan, New York. Rubin saw Walinska almost daily, accompanying her artist aunt to museums as a child.

It wasn't until Walinska's passing at the age of 91 in 1997 that Rubin discovered just how prolific her aunt, who entered the Art Students League of New York at the age of 12, was.

As Rubin set out to clean Walinska's apartment, she discovered more than 2,000 works of art in various mediums and started to delve into the artist's rich



Anna Walinska photographed in 1950. Photo courtesy Atelier Anna Walinska.



Anna Walinska (1906-1997), *Dancers*, 1956. Oil on paper, 12 x 18 in.

history. Walinska, whose work is on view in museum collections such as those at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Portrait Gallery, had a one-woman retrospective at the Jewish Museum in New York in 1957, as she created many artworks that focused on the Holocaust as a theme.

While she may not have achieved the commercial success of some of her male peers while she was active, Rubin and the Atelier Anna Walinska she founded have successfully worked to expose her work to new audiences. Nearly 20 of her abstract works from the '50s and '60s are currently on view at Lawrence Fine Art in East Hampton, New York, an exhibition that explores the artist's pursuit of abstraction of form and abstraction of color.

"She produced an incredibly cohesive body of work," says Lawrence Fine Art

owner and gallery director Howard Shapiro. "Perhaps this is because, as a woman, excluded from the commercial mainstream, she did not feel the pressure to accommodate herself to changing commercial demands."

Walinska was bold in areas related to her personal life, as well, traveling to Paris at the age of 19 to live, create art and enjoy the culture. After returning to New York briefly, she headed back to Paris and lived there for a decade before coming back to New York, which she moved to from her birthplace of London in 1914. In 1954, she embarked on a six-month trip around the world, traveling around Europe and Asia and spending four months in Burma. Her worldly influences are greatly evident in her collection at Lawrence Fine Art, in pieces such as 1955 oil on paper *Burmese Landscape, #2*.



Anna Walinska (1906-1997), *Three Musicians*, 1953. Oil on paper, 24 x 18 in.



Anna Walinska (1906-1997), *Burmese Landscape, #2*, 1955. Oil on paper, 36 x 24 in.



Anna Walinska (1906-1997), *Survivors*, 1953-56. Oil and casein on paper, 44 x 29 in.

Most of her abstract works from the '50s and '60s time period are muted in color, focusing on blacks, whites and grays with some accent blues and yellows peppering works like 1952 gouache on paper *Three Musicians* and 1953-56 oil and casein on paper *Survivors*. Shapiro says he sought out works by Walinska that had previously been shown for this exhibition, which is part of the gallery's *Rediscovering Masters* program, highlighting artists whose careers bear reappraisal.

"There are a lot of artists whose work deserves to be forgotten, but her works are of a superior quality," Shapiro says. "We think her career was simply not as well-known as some of her New York school peers simply because she was a woman."

Walinska is interestingly tied to other artists in the *Rediscovering Masters* program. She was the first person to show Arshile Gorky's work in New York, at her Guild Art Gallery she founded. Gorky was good friends with Aristodimos Kaldis, another *Rediscovering Masters* artist, and he was Armenian-American, like fellow *Rediscovering Masters* artist Arthur Pinajian. Besides showing Walinska's work at the gallery, Shapiro has brought her work to the *Boston International Fine Art Show* and *Art Basel Miami*.

About 40 of Walinska's works will be part of the *Celebrating 100 Years of Women Painters* exhibition, March 1 through 30, at the Union League Club in New York City. The exhibition showcases a retrospective of Walinska's art from 1918 to 1983, and it also features work by women painters including Margery Ryerson, Florence Robinson, and Meg Mercier. The exhibition, curated by Diane McManus Jensen, is in conjunction with Women's History Month and serves to bring attention to women traditional and abstract painters spanning a century.

"Anna Walinska was a stellar example of a pioneering artist," says Jensen, owner of Jensen Fine Arts in Brookline, Massachusetts. "She achieved enormous recognition for her work in her lifetime, and it is now important to reflect and appreciate her accomplishments. Today, we are astounded by the auction prices brought by the male artists Anna associated with in Paris. While so much attention is on these artists, it is a perfect time to revisit and acknowledge the outstanding oeuvre she has contributed to the art world."

Shapiro mentions the striking similarities some of the works in the Lawrence Fine Art exhibition bear to Willem de Kooning, and he says Walinska's "purity of vision" is one of her most significant qualities as an artist.

"When I look at her paintings, I think this is an artist who is really stretching and aiming to pull something out of herself that is really difficult to do," Shapiro says. "Her works are all about bringing out that inner passion and inner vision."

Rubin echoes Walinska was very interested in expressing what she saw, rather than images that were commercially viable, which also led her to using such a wide variety of mediums. Viewers of her work at Lawrence Fine Art will see not only traces from her global travels, but of her friendships with cultural figures and the influence of her religious heritage.

"I think in some ways, that lack of commercial potential for her is part of what gave her the freedom to paint what she needed to paint," says Rubin. "Her work is aesthetically beautiful. One of the wonderful things about the fact she painted from the late teens to mid-1990s is you find a lot of different mediums and subjects and types of work. If you put it all together and look at it, you don't necessarily peg it as all work from one artist. Different people with different tastes can often find something they like."



Anna Walinska photographed in 1958 with Justice William O. Douglas in Grey Gallery, Baltimore. Photo courtesy Atelier Anna Walinska.