

Gertrude Abercrombie (1909-1977) was an American painter based in Chicago. She was raised in a Christian Science background by parents who were traveling opera singers. After earning a degree in Romance languages at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1929 she studied briefly at the Art Institute of Chicago and at the American Academy of Art. From 1934-40 Abercrombie worked as a painter for the Works Progress Administration. In 1940 Abercrombie married Robert Livingston and they had a daughter Dinah in 1942. In 1948 after a divorce, she married music critic Frank Sandiford and began a lifelong close association with such jazz musicians. At her home she hosted bohemian parties and jam sessions that included such musicians as Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Sonny Rollins and Sarah Vaughn. Inspired by her dreams and rich inner life, her work contained fantastical and psychological scenarios such as nocturnal landscapes with moons, owls, bare trees and winding paths. She also created mysterious domestic scenes replete with Victorian sofas and meticulously arranged décor along with female figures accompanied by cats, crystal balls, and other witchy accoutrements. Abercrombie's paintings varied in size with a number of unique postage-stamp-sized miniatures, and she repeated favored subjects in many combinations creating a theatrical world of her own.

Marjorie Cameron (1922-1995) was an American artist and poet and briefly, the wife of rocket scientist Jack Parsons (1946-1952) who introduced her to Thelema, the occult order established by Aleister Crowley. She became a key figure within occult circles in Los Angeles, and among her friends were Samson De Brier, Curtis Harrington, and Kenneth Anger. Cameron appeared in Harrington's films *The Wormwood Star* and *Night Tide*, as well as Anger's *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*. Her drawings attracted attention and she began exhibiting in the 1950s. A photograph of Cameron was featured on the cover of the artist Wallace Berman's art journal *Semina*, which included her drawing *Peyote Vision*. Declared pornographic by the police, this drawing led to the raiding of Berman's 1957 exhibition at Feris Gallery in Los Angeles. Cameron's pen-and-ink artwork reflects her magical beliefs and visionary experiences, depicting supernatural entities and powerful female figures. Often compared to the Surrealists, particularly the artists Leonora Carrington and Leonor Fini, Cameron's life and work has exerted much influence on contemporary artists.

Leonora Carrington (1917-2011) was a British-Mexican Surrealist artist. Introduced to Surrealism in 1936 when she met the German artist Max Ernst who was having an exhibition in London. Their romantic involvement led to her moving to Paris and becoming involved with André Breton and his circle. Her creative life in the south of France with Ernst was interrupted by the tragic events of World War II leading to her internment in a mental asylum in Santander, Spain. After a year in New York City with other European emigre Surrealists, she relocated to Mexico City where she became involved with another Surrealist community of artists escaping the war. There she befriended French poet Benjamin Péret and his Spanish partner the painter Remedios Varo, who would become her lifelong friend.

Together the two women explored their interests in the occult with a particular emphasis on aspects of the feminine sacred. Alchemy, witchcraft, astrology, tarot, shamanism and the teachings of G.I. Gurdjieff and P. D. Ouspensky were some of the many topics they became involved with. Carrington was also a writer of plays and short stories, in addition to painting, sculpture and designing costumes and stage sets for the theater. She has been to the subject of numerous international one-woman exhibitions in the past few decades in Mexico City, Milan, Paris, and elsewhere. Forging a pioneering feminist symbolic language, Carrington continues to exert a profound influence on artists today.

Sylvia Fein (1919-2024) was raised in Wisconsin where she studied painting at the University of Wisconsin Madison, becoming part of a group of magical realist painters, including Gertrude Abercrombie, referred to as the “surrealists of the Midwest.” Married in 1942 to William Scheuber, she moved to Mexico while he served in the military. For three years she lived and painted in Ajijic, a picturesque town on the shores of Lake Chapala, developing a lifelong love of Mexico. Upon her husband’s return they moved to the East Bay of California where they began boating in the Delta region, inspiring many of her landscapes and seascapes. Fein began exhibiting her work successfully and in the 1946-47 Whitney Annual her work was hung alongside such surrealists as Max Ernst and Roberto Matta. In 1951 she completed an MFA from the University of California Berkeley. Her work was rediscovered and included in the 2011 exhibition *In Wonderland: The Surrealist Adventures of Women Artists in Mexico and the United States*, held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City.

Leonora Fini (1907-1996) was an Argentine-Italian surrealist artist known for her paintings, book illustrations and designs as well as for her unique performative persona. Although born in Buenos Aires, her mother returned to Trieste to avoid custody battles with her estranged husband, disguising her daughter as a boy to avoid detection. After a teenage bout with temporary blindness, Fini decided to become an artist and moved to Milan where she began to show her work. In 1931 she moved to Paris and quickly befriended many of the Surrealists, although her independent nature resisted joining any movement she often showed alongside them, for example she was included in Peggy Guggenheim’s 1943 *Exhibition by 31 Women at her Art of This Century* gallery in New York. Influenced by the Italian Renaissance, her figural work depicted mythic women in erotic tableaux, with themes of death and decay prevalent. In addition to the inclusion of powerful witches and sphinxes, Fini also played with androgynous figures. Fini designed perfume bottles for Elsa Schiaparelli and also took on costume design projects for the ballet and theater. Her personal life was as radical as her artwork, she was openly bisexual and lived in a long-term polyamorous relationship.

Madge Gill (1882-1961) was an English visionary artist whose profuse body of work she claimed was created automatically in mediumistic trance. Her early life was difficult due to

her being an illegitimate child and was hidden away and then sent to Canada to work as a domestic servant. In 1900 she returned to England to live with an aunt who introduced her to Spiritualism and astrology. After her marriage at 25 she suffered some severe traumas – one of her sons died, she gave birth to a stillborn girl and then almost died from an illness that left her blind in the left eye. As thirty-eight she began mediumistically channeling a spirit she called “Myrninerst,” resulting in thousands of drawings done with ink. These varied greatly in dimension and material, from postcard-sized paper to huge sheets of fabric. Gill also created channeled textiles –embroideries, crochets, knitting and weavings. Her images often have women’s faces embedded within architectural settings or complex patterns. Gill did not sign her name or sell this work because she said that “she” did not make them. Considered a cornerstone outsider artist, her work is in many museums including the Collection de l’Art Brut in Lausanne.

Juanita Guccione (1904-1999) was born Anita Rice, but settled on Juanita Guccione as her professional name. Raised in Massachusetts, she became a model in New York City and studied art at Pratt Institute and the Art Students League of New York. During the early 1930s she lived with the Ouled Naïl people in Bou Saada, an artists’ colony in eastern Algeria producing a large and remarkable body of work portraying them in their environment. Traveling among Bedouin nomads in the Sahara, her landscapes and portraits of them were provided an extraordinary glimpse into their world and the Brooklyn Museum gave them a show in 1935. Upon her return to New York Guccione worked designing murals for the WPA and studied painting privately with Hans Hofmann. Her artwork ranged stylistically from social realism, cubism, surrealism and abstraction but she shied away from exhibiting it. A number of her paintings are populated by amazonesque women in fantastical settings, probably inspired by the independent and matriarchal Ouled Naïl that she spent so much time with. Guccione left behind a large body of work that is only recently being appreciated for its haunting and mysterious qualities. Later in life she became friends with the American psychic, artist and author Ingo Swann (inventor of “Remote Viewing”), sharing his many esoteric interests.

Helen Kendall (1892-1970) was an American artist who studied under Arthur Wesley Dow and went on to teach at Hampton Institute in Virginia where she was influential instructor for John Biggers. She also maintained a studio in New York City at Carnegie Hall with the African American soprano Dorothy Maynor, another graduate of the Hampton Institute. She was an active member of the Non-Objective abstractionists organization in New York City, whose artists and collection led to the establishment of the Guggenheim Museum. Kendall’s abstractions were often reflections of musical compositions. She exhibited with Wassily Kandinsky, Rudolf Bauer, Rolf Scarlett, Irene Rice Pereira and Hilla Rebay in New York and Paris (Palais des Beaux-Arts and Galerie Carpentier). Kendall was involved with the spiritual movements of Theosophy and Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophy and their ideas

concerning color and art were influential. She was the long time companion of artist Rolph Scarlett, and they often worked alongside in his studio.

Emma Kunz (1892-1963) was a Swiss healer and artist and published books on such subjects as telepathy, prophecy and her drawings. Not a trained artist, she created large-scale drawings on graph paper with pencil by means of radiesthesia, a kind of psychic healing. Using a pendulum to map out a spiritual and medical “portrait” of her clients, she considered her drawings to be multidimensional holograms. In 1942 Kunz discovered a healing rock in Würenlos where she set up a healing center. A powered form of the rock is still sold there and at Swiss pharmacies. Kunz left behind over 400 drawings or spiritual “charts” – complex abstract constructions that emit a numinous power. Her work has drawn much attention and has been exhibited at the Drawing Center in New York, the Serpentine Gallery in London and at the Emma Kunz Centre founded in 1986 at her home in Würenlos.

Charlotte Lebaubier (1883-1958) was a French writer and artist who worked under the alias **La Phalérinienne**. Her second marriage was to the French poet, writer and Dada associate Louis Gonzague in 1921. Frick also used numerous pseudonyms and it was he who gave her the nickname La Phalérinienne as a playful reference to “Phalère,” a pseudonym he previously used when writing for the theatrical journal *Comœdia*. Lebaubier worked in pencil and watercolors that described as “colored perceptive drawings” some of which were used in her husband’s poetry books.

Paulina Peavy (1901-1999) was an American visionary born in Colorado Springs. She graduated from Oregon State College (OSC) in 1923 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Vocational Education; she completed studies equivalent to an MA at the Chouinard School of Fine Art in Los Angeles before it became a degree-granting institution and eventually was absorbed into the present-day CalArts. Peavy’s roots in California, where she lived and painted from 1923 to 1943, were deeply embedded in the emerging abstract art scene of the 1920s, which embraced enthusiastic explorations of the occult. She was a student of Hans Hofmann at Chouinard and joined the circle of California’s first Surrealists led by Lorser Feitelson. Her professional and social circles included members of the occult-inclined Group of Eight as well as the Synchronists, who formed the first abstract art movement in America. Beginning in the late 1920s, Peavy played a vital role in the emerging West Coast art scene: she established a gallery, school, and salon under her name, where she conducted her own classes. She also hosted classes of the foundational Los Angeles Art Students League and showed these artists’ works alongside her own. Her legacy was almost forgotten, in part because she moved to New York City when the California art community was gaining its most influential chroniclers; in addition, her cosmology was considered too radical for mainstream culture to accept.

Perhaps the most profound moment of her life and career occurred in 1932, while attending a séance at the home of Ida L. Ewing in Santa Ana. Peavy claims to have encountered a spirit/UFO from another world named Lacamo. From that moment forward, Peavy painted with a brush that “moved on its own,” and her artistic path centered around her convening with beings and forces beyond the visible plane. While in California, Peavy showed at some of the most significant galleries of her time, including the Stendahl Gallery in Los Angeles. She was included in the opening of the San Francisco Art Association Annual group show, which opened in January 1935 at the San Francisco Museum of Art (now SFMOMA), and thirty of her paintings were exhibited during the Golden Gate International Exposition of 1939-40 at the Temple of Religion. Peavy was encouraged to move to Manhattan after the positive response to her 1935 exhibit at Delphic Studios in New York City, a gallery that exhibited work by other important occultist painters including Agnes Pelton. Many of Peavy’s painted panels from the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition (some at 72”x42”) were also exhibited in New York. And it is in New York where Peavy more fully realized her complex cosmology, including the revelation of the secrets of the universe from Lacamo, secrets that became the subject matter of her art, costume, poetry, films, and manuscripts. Peavy wrote numerous manuscripts describing her cosmology, including *The Story of My Life with a U.F.O.* during the 1980s. Peavy lived and worked in New York from 1943 until close to the end of her life. She died in Bethesda, Maryland, in 1999, at the age of 98, a witness to nearly the entire twentieth century.

Agnes Pelton (1881-1961) was born in Germany to American parents, and moved to the Brooklyn, New York as a child. Pelton studied at the Pratt Institute, graduating in 1900. She continued her studies with Arthur Wesley Dow in Ipswich, Massachusetts where she assisted him in his summer school. Dow greatly influenced her ideas on landscape painting, endowing nature with spiritual values. Pelton exhibited two paintings at the 1913 Armory Show and in 1919 visited Mabel Dodge Luhan in Taos, New Mexico. This visit changed her style and Pelton began to paint realistic portraits and desert landscapes that were shown in Santa Fe. In 1921, following her mother’s death, she gave up her Greenwich Village studio and moved to Long Island and beginning in 1926 began working in abstraction. Pelton settled in Cathedral City, California in 1931 where she remained for the next thirty years. Deeply interested in Theosophy and the Agni Yoga spiritual belief system of Nicolas and Helena Roerich, her work expressed underlying spiritual forces. She was a close friend with the pioneering astrologer Dane Rudhyar who also influenced her ideas on art. The Southwest modernist painter Raymond Jonson invited her to co-found his Transcendental Painting Group in 1938 in New Mexico. Pelton did not join them physically, preferring to stay and work in Southern California. In 2019 she had a major retrospective at the Phoenix Art Museum, *Agnes Pelton: Desert Transcendentalist* that then traveled to the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Irene Rice Pereira (1902-1971) was the older sister of the painter Juanita Guccione. When her family moved to Brooklyn after the death of her father Pereira immersed herself in the artistic life of Greenwich Village and enrolled in night classes at the Art Students League. There she studied with Jan Matulka who exposed her to the European avant-garde inspiring her to study at the Académie Moderne and with Amédée Ozenfant in Paris. In 1935 she helped found the Design Laboratory, a cooperative school of industrial design established under the WPA and based on the Bauhaus. Pereira painted throughout her life and by the late 1930s had moved towards abstraction. In 1943 she was included in Peggy Guggenheim's show *Exhibition by 31 Women* at the Art of This Century Gallery in New York and in 1946 was included in the Museum of Modern Art's exhibition *1946: Fourteen Americans*. Because she signed her work as "I. Rice Pereira" many assumed she was a man. Pereira was also a writer published many essays on art and esoteric subjects, for example, her book *The Lapis* (1954-55) dealt with her dreams about the alchemical Philosopher's Stone. Her work is held in many museum collections throughout the United States.

Hilla Rebay (1890-1967) was a German and American abstract artist and co-founder and first director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. The museum's core collection was assembled under her advisement, and it was she who selected Frank Lloyd Wright to design its iconic building. Studying art in Cologne and Paris she exhibited her work at the 1913 Salon des Indépendants in Paris. In 1915 Rebay was introduced to non-objective modern artworks by Hans Arp, which changed the course of her life and work. In 1920 she, along with Rudolf Bauer and Otto Nebel founded the artist group Der Krater. In 1927 Rebay emigrated to New York City and became an avid art collector and friend of Solomon R. Guggenheim, whom she advised in his collecting. Their Museum of Non-Objective Painting opened in 1939 in temporary quarters on East 54th Street and its atmosphere, with incense and music, reflected the esoteric ideas behind the paintings of Wassily Kandinsky and other artists on display. Her abstract paintings explored the complex relationship between art, spirituality and music.

Adele Watson (1873-1947) was an American painter and lithographer who lived and worked much of her life in Pasadena, California. She studied for a time at the Art Students League of New York having her first solo show in 1916 at Folsom Galleries and went on to exhibit at such places as the National Academy of Design. Watson was interested in the spiritual dimensions of nature and its beauty, a subject also favored by her friend, the poet and artist Khalil Gibran who drew her portrait in graphite. Inspired in part by Arthur B. Davies's symbolist paintings, Watson depicted otherworldly nudes set in natural landscapes, later merging the two into anthropomorphic vistas. Recently her work was included in the 2022-23 exhibit *At the Dawn of a New Age: Early Twentieth Century American Modernism* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, which holds two of her paintings in its permanent collection.

Marie Wilson (1922-2017) was an American painter from Northern California. After studying at Mills College in Oakland and she went on to receive her MFA at University of California, Berkeley. In 1950 Wilson met Gordon Onslow Ford and the Greek artist Jean Varda and became engaged with the Dynaton movement. In 1952 she moved to Paris with Wolfgang Paalen and began working with the leading figures of European surrealism. André Breton included her work into his exhibitions and publications *Würenlos*. Her abstract paintings incorporated both geometrical and biomorphic formal elements with her later work featuring symmetrical arrangements. Wilson developed an artistic language that reflected her interest in diverse spiritual traditions, such as Indigenous and pre-Columbian mythology, Zen Buddhism, Hinduism and western occultism. After being introduced to automatism by the Surrealists, Wilson used this technique to ritualistically connect to the spiritual forces guiding her work.

Agatha Wojciechowsky (1896-1986) lived her earlier years in Germany, and then sailed to the United States in 1923 to be a governess in a German baron's household. She married, became a US citizen and moved to New York City and established a practice as a spiritualist medium. In the early 1950's, without any background or training in the arts, Agatha began drawing. First, letters and automatic writing appeared, and then abstract drawings and faces. Wojciechowsky was reaching for something timeless in the spiritual realm; her work is the expression of that quest. In 1963, her first solo exhibition, *The Spirits*, was held at Cordier and Ekstrom (NY), which had introduced Jean Dubuffet's collection of *Art Brut* to the American public a year earlier. In 1966, Wojciechowsky's works were included in the group show *Soloists*, featured alongside those by Romare Bearden, Dubuffet, Duchamp, Noguchi, Picabia and Man Ray. In 1964, art dealer Rudolf Zwirner happened upon her work at MoMA and later presented shows with the artist and in 1978 produced a catalog. Agatha Wojciechowsky, along with many other artists of the post war era, was reaching for something timeless, in the spiritual realm. Her work is the expression of that quest. "This is the work of different entities who take over and step into my body, directing my hand. I really have nothing to do with it."