

ARTNEWS

BETTY PARSONS AT DAVID FINDLAY JR.

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She is most famous for her New York gallery that—from the 1940s through the '70s—showcased the Abstract Expressionists, but Betty Parsons (1900–1982) was also a painter and sculptor. This appealingly intimate show featured 19 of her works, among them painted-driftwood sculptures and gouaches on paper. Unlike the heavy, angsty art of Clyfford Still, Jackson Pollock, and many of the other artists she championed, Parsons's own pieces have a light touch.

The paintings here were colorful and brushy—all as improvisatory as scat singing and just as insouciant. The sculptures were quirky bits of flotsam, painted with lobster-buoy stripes and piled up like children's blocks. *Wood Baby* (1970s), a droll, toddler-size piece with half a wooden spool for a head over something that might be a yoke or outstretched arms, seems part totem and part quiet joke. Made during that same period, when Parsons had a place on Long Island's North Shore, was *House by the Sea*, composed of five scraps of painted wood, evoking a fisherman's shack.

Parsons reveled in her materials, the inconsistent opacity of paint, the weathered grain of wood. She'd leave the paper rippled, the rusty nail jutting out. In this digital era, the physicality of her art may feel fresher now than when she first made it.

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Betty Parsons, *Untitled (7112)*, 1950s, gouache on paper, 16¾" x 13¾".

COURTESY DAVID FINDLAY JR GALLERY, NYC