

eric firestone gallery

For Immediate Release:

After Magic: Early Works by Pat Passlof: 1948–1962

**40 Great Jones Street, New York
September 9 – October 31, 2026**

Opening Reception: Wednesday, September 9, 2026 | 6–8PM



Pat Passlof, *Sky Pasture*, 1961
oil on canvas
68 x 144 in.

Courtesy Milton Resnick and Pat Passlof Foundation

Eric Firestone Gallery is pleased to announce *After Magic*, an exhibition of early works by Pat Passlof. Passlof, a major figure of the New York School of Abstract Expressionists, was fundamental in downtown galleries and the intellectual milieu of the 1950s. This is the gallery's second solo exhibition of Passlof's work, following a strong five-year period in which institutions, writers, and the market have reinforced her position in the canon, and its historical re-investigation.

The exhibition includes approximately 35 small paintings, dated between 1948–62, along with two monumental canvases from the period. It documents the artist's earliest work, from her 1948 summer at Black Mountain College, to the early 1960s, when she was living on Tenth Street in downtown New York. Works from this period were exhibited at the artist cooperative she co-founded, the March Gallery, and the famed Green Gallery, directed by Dick Bellamy.

The exhibition chronicles the artist's formal evolution over a decade and a half, from compositions that include geometric and organic shapes, to works characterized by their all-over painterly surfaces and dynamic color chords. Passlof's palette ranged from earth tones to soft pastels, to rich reds and blues. Each painting represented its own unique journey, never pre-meditated or repeated.

eric firestone gallery



Pat Passlof, *Untitled*, 1961
oil on paper mounted to canvas
15 1/2 x 20 in.

Passlof had a deep involvement with cosmology, astrology, and divination, which is connected to her painting. She studied the *I Ching*, the ancient Chinese divination text or “Book of Changes,” which maps human experience through 64 hexagrams. She obsessively drew the astrological charts of her friends, professional colleagues, and historical artists, in order to better understand them. She would later title an extensive series of paintings *Eighth House*, referring to the zodiac house that governs relationships, regeneration, and death. Another later series was titled *Hamlet’s Mill*, or *HM*, referring to a 1969 text that connects ancient myth and cosmology to early scientific knowledge.

In a 1975 text, Passlof wrote “What I’m after is contradictory, capricious, paradoxical and full: in short, magic. Abstraction for me means more, not less.” This philosophy governed Passlof’s work from the beginning of her career. She believed that the process of painting would reveal and mirror the self and the spirit. Rather than starting with an idea, emotional expression or the ego, Passlof suggested beginning a painting with a “throw,” to use the divination term. She suggested, “to begin: become a kind of magical fisherman/woman casting your net over the entire canvas in the shortest possible time keeping strokes open and the emphasis evenly distributed.”

Passlof also relied on intuition to make important decisions. For example, as an undergraduate at Queens College, she discovered Willem de Kooning’s work at his 1948 Charles Egan Gallery exhibition. She decided to study at Black Mountain College, based on a hunch that de Kooning would be there. This proved true; de Kooning was brought in as a last-minute substitute for Mark Tobey.

Although Passlof’s early work was rooted in Abstract Expressionism, her personal philosophy differed from the canonical reading of the movement. As opposed to focusing on roiling movement, Passlof believed in the “stillness of a breath.” Rather than attempting to express the cosmos, Passlof focused her gaze on small things, saying: “You have to find the metaphor for it between blades of grass.”

The shapes in her early paintings may be read as translations or abstractions from a still life. She particularly was drawn to triangles, perhaps because of the spiritual associations of this shape, and its symbolism as house and home. Her progression into all-over brushwork was a form of meditative practice. The painting was “discovered” rather than rendered, and in order to “breathe,” it could not be locked “like a jigsaw puzzle.”

eric firestone gallery

Eric Firestone Gallery has represented the Estate of Pat Passlof since 2020. In this period, recognition of the artist and the market for her work has expanded exponentially. The gallery presented its first exhibition of her work in 2021. A solo presentation at Frieze Masters, London, in 2022 was critically acclaimed and sold out. Over the past decade, major paintings have been acquired by the Whitney Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, Crystal Bridges Museum of Art, and the North Carolina Museum of Art. Her work is included in FAMM (Female Artists of the Mougins Museum) and was featured in the 2023 exhibition *Action, Gesture, Paint: Women Artists and Global Abstraction 1940–70*, at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, and the current U.S. traveling exhibition *Abstract Expressionists: The Women*.

About the artist:

Pat Passlof (1928–2011) was born in Georgia and grew up in New York City, attending Queens College. In the summer of 1948, she studied painting with Willem de Kooning at Black Mountain College, and continued to study with him privately after they returned to New York. That fall, De Kooning introduced her to Milton Resnick. She and Resnick began to live together in the mid-1950s and married in 1962.



Pat Passlof in her studio on 10th Street, c. 1958.
Image credit: Jesse Fernandez, copyright Estate of Jesse Fernandez.
Courtesy Milton Resnick and Pat Passlof Foundation

In 1949, Passlof helped renovate the Eighth Street loft, which was the first location of “The (Artists’) Club,” attending every talk and panel. She considers this the basis of her art education, although she did complete her BFA at Cranbrook in 1951, before returning to her loft on Tenth Street. Noticing that many of her peers rarely spoke when they came to the Club, she decided to organize an alternative “Wednesday Night Club.”

In 1956, Passlof helped found the March Gallery, where she had two exhibitions and helped organize many shows of other artists, including Mark di Suvero’s first exhibition. She designed collections of artists’ poetry, called *Pandemonium*. In 1961 she had a solo exhibition at Dick Bellamy’s Green Gallery, and also participated in group shows.

Beginning in 1963, she lived and worked in the Lower East Side, in a former synagogue. Her husband, Resnick, had his own synagogue building as a live/work space. In addition, they spent time in the Shawangunk Mountain

eric firestone gallery



Pat Passlof, *Untitled*, 1959
oil on paper mounted to canvas
17 x 14 in.

area of upstate New York.

In the 1970s, Passlof became central to the organization “Women in the Arts,” reviewing panels and lectures for its magazine. She also wrote for “Craft Horizons” and occasional reviews for Arts Magazine. In the 1960s and 70s she also showed at the Globe Gallery, the Feiner Gallery, and the Landmark Gallery. Passlof was a dedicated professor who taught at Richmond College, CUNY, from 1972 to 1983; and the College of Staten Island, CUNY from 1983 until 2010. Her philosophy of painting was communicated through her teaching, and in the form of letters to students. These are collated in the 2018 volume *To Whom the Shoe Fits: Letters to Young Painters*, edited by David Jacobsen Loncle.

In her final years, Passlof prepared for what would become the Milton Resnick and Pat Passlof Foundation. Situated in what was Resnick’s home and studio, the former synagogue on Eldridge Street, the Foundation works to preserve the legacy of the artist-couple, and to present exhibitions of other painters and related arts programming.

AFTER MAGIC: EARLY WORKS BY PAT PASSLOF: 1948–1962

Eric Firestone Gallery

40 Great Jones Street, New York, NY 10012

September 9 – October 31, 2026

For further information, contact: press@ericfirestonegallery.com