

eric firestone gallery

Miriam Schapiro (b. Toronto, Ontario, 1923; d. Hampton Bays, NY, 2015) is widely known as a pioneer of the Women's Art Movement and a leading force in American post-World War II art. Following her formal training at the University of Iowa, she moved to New York with her husband, Paul Brach, and integrated into the New York School. Recognized for her colorful and sensuous abstractions of this period, Schapiro showed regularly at André Emmerich Gallery, where in 1958, she was the first woman to have a solo exhibition. Despite considerable success, she felt an outsider to the male-dominated Abstract Expressionism scene and her work of this period explores themes of feminine interiority.

In 1967, Schapiro moved to California where she became a lecturer at the University of California San Diego. Here, she was exposed to a scientific community at the university and cool West Coast formalism. Inspired by her coastal, sun-soaked landscape, Schapiro transformed the bright colors, seascapes, and modern architecture of Southern California into monumental hard-edge paintings. Connecting with computer physicists, Schapiro commissioned a custom program that allowed her to transform her hand-drawn shapes through digital manipulation into new distortions, which she then painted.

In 1972, Schapiro came to CalArts where, along with Judy Chicago, she formed the Feminist Art Program, a radical curriculum for women art students. The program's first class produced *Womanhouse*, an installation and performance space that gained international attention and remains a landmark exhibition for feminist art. Upon returning to her studio practice, Schapiro incorporated collage into her formal compositions using gendered materials to create her signature femmages. Continuing in this vein, Schapiro became a founder of the Pattern and Decoration movement in the mid-1970s.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Schapiro explored the decorative, often working with collaged materials of lace, sequins, chintz, and other ornamental elements. Getting further away from traditional painting traditions, she created shaped works including her iconic hearts, fans, and vestitures.

Committed to a feminist imperative, Schapiro traveled around the country lecturing on feminism and art, earning the nickname "Mimi Appleseed". Schapiro remained active into the early 2000s, integrating themes of art historical 'collaborations', theater, and her Jewish heritage into her later work.

Schapiro earned numerous honors and awards over her career, including the 2002 College Art Association Lifetime Achievement Award and six honorary doctorate degrees. Schapiro's work is held in collections worldwide, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Museum of Modern Art, all in New York; the Museum of Fine Art, Boston, the Hirshhorn Museum, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C., the Peter and

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Irene Ludwig Collection, Cologne, Germany, and the Museum of Moderner Kunst, Vienna, among others. In 2018, the Museum of Arts and Design in New York presented *Surface/Depth: The Decorative after Miriam Schapiro*, presenting Schapiro's femmage work alongside the work of contemporary artists. She is represented by Eric Firestone Gallery where she was the subject of two solo presentations: *The California Years* (2016), and *The André Emmerich Years* (2023). In 2024 she was included in four separate museum exhibitions focusing on art and technology: *Particles and Waves: Southern California Abstraction and Science, 1945–1990* at the Palm Springs Art Museum; *Radical Software: Women, Art & Computing 1960–1991* at Mudam Luxembourg (traveling to Kunsthalle Wien); *Electric Op* at Buffalo AKG Art Museum; and *The Living End: Painting and Other Technologies, 1970–Present*, at the MCA Chicago. Schapiro will also be the subject of a focused survey opening at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL in the spring of 2025.

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