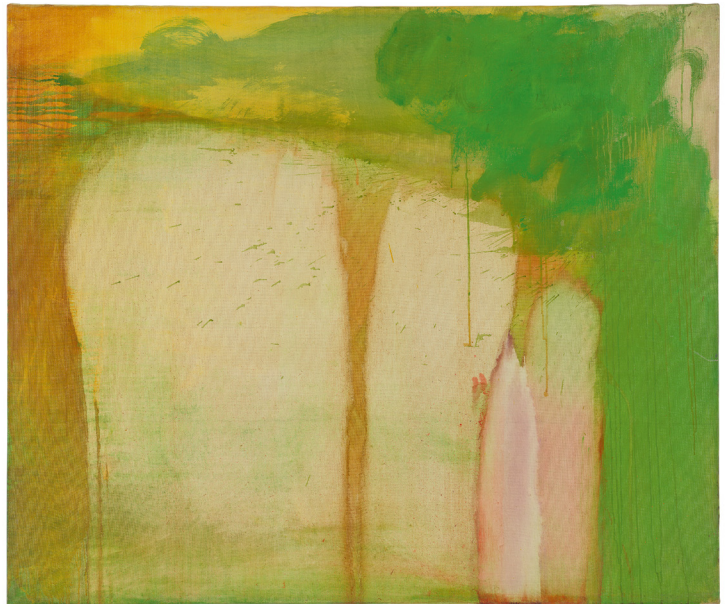


# At the Galleries

By Karen Wilkin | Spring 2024

IMPRESSIVE EXHIBITIONS BY WOMEN WERE CONSPICUOUS this past season, ranging from intimate records of close observation to explorations of not-quite Euclidian geometry, from playfully updated history paintings to an elegiac, multi-screen video installation, and an improvisation on a celebrated Old Master prototype. There were memorable shows by male artists, as well, although in today's climate, it may be dangerous to say so. A distinguished curator at a major museum lost his job a few years ago when he stated the presumably neutral fact that the institution was not going to stop collecting the work of white males.

At one of Miles McEnery's multiple Chelsea spaces, Emily Mason's "The Thunder Hurried Slow" presented paintings mainly from the late 1970s, with a few from the late 1960s and early 1970s. (The title comes from an Emily Dickinson poem.) In 1965, Mason (1932-2019) and her painter husband Wolf Kahn had moved back to New York, after almost a decade in Europe, and a few years later purchased the Vermont farm where they would spend summers for the rest of their long working lives. Given when they were made, it's not an overstatement to say that the works in the recent show seemed to reflect Mason's deep experience of Italy and Italian art, as well as her growing familiarity with the light and landscape of New England. Noteworthy for their ample scale and radiant color, and built, for the most part, with economical, layered, transparent sweeps, the paintings on view gave us Mason at her best. *Hear the Wind Blow* (1972) and *And the Sea Beyond*



*Greener Lean*, 1978, Oil on canvas, 42 x 50 inches, 106.7 x 127 cm

(1972) played bright, soft-edged rectangles against glowing yellow fields to hint simultaneously at dazzling light and man-made structures, before engaging us simply as *painting*. Similarly, *Greener Lean* (1978) and *Powder Blue* (1979), both named for their dominant hues, claimed and held our attention with their contrasts of paint applications, from responsive and runny to assertive to almost unseeably transparent, at the same time that the fresh spring palette of the former triggered associations with the natural world, and the pale hues of the latter recalled bleached skies and Italian frescos. It was good to see Mason painting with such confidence and authority.