

LARRY POONS

“FIRST THOUGHT, BEST THOUGHT” THE PARTICLE PAINTINGS

YARES ART
745 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, NEW YORK
212-256-0969

Opening reception: November 9, 5:30–7:30pm



In Assisi, 2000. Acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 78 ½ x 104 in. (199.4 x 264.2 cm).

YARES ART is pleased to present *Larry Poons: First Thought, Best Thought —The Particle Paintings (1996–2002)* on view in New York, November 9, 2019–February 15, 2020. In addition to his “Particle Paintings,” the exhibition will also feature a selection of Poons’s most recent works (2018–2019).

This show highlights the rarely exhibited and spectacular panoramic compositions Larry Poons produced from the mid-1990s through the early 2000s—which echo author Allen Ginsberg’s “First Thought, Best Thought” motto through their apparent spontaneity. This will be the first exhibition in Yares Art’s newly expanded galleries to focus exclusively on this exceptional period of Poons’s oeuvre, offering the public a unique opportunity to discover paintings that count among the artist’s most imaginative, brilliant, yet underrecognized achievements.

In the 1960s, Poons reached critical success at an early age for his iconic “Dots” and “Lozenges” paintings—hard-edge, abstract compositions that placed the artist at the forefront of American painting. Ever the restless innovator, Poons subsequently abandoned hard-edge abstraction to refine a technique in the 1970s and ’80s centered on pouring and throwing paint, resulting in his famed “Throw” paintings, where elements of chance and gravity play major roles in the creative process.

By the early 1990s, a different aesthetic, exemplified in the “Particle” paintings, had emerged. The artist created his “Particle” paintings by attaching onto the canvas bits and chunks (i.e. “particles”) of various items, such as foam, rubber, polyester fiber, and other various raw materials. These elements slowed down the flow of the paint creating a radical visual alteration from his earlier “Throw” paintings.

During the mid-1990s, Poons started to draw shapes and lines on raw canvas, pre-determining a general composition, which he would subsequently fill up with “particles” and eventually paint. The underlying “particles” became more pronounced, and acted as part of an elaborate “under-drawing” in each composition, blurring the lines between abstraction and representation. Poons gradually abandoned his paint-throwing technique, and instead began to apply the paint directly onto the raw canvas and “particles” with brushes—or, at times, even his hands. The luxuriant surfaces in works such as *From Life’s Other Side* and *Sinistra* (both 1996), appear almost as sculptural reliefs, with drop shadows indicating hyperactive networks of lines and shapes.

Though fundamentally abstract, the resultant images suggest epic narratives with nuanced allusions to landscape, interior spaces, and an often personal iconography—such as musical notation, hinting at the artist’s early ambitions in musical composition. Vibrant works such as *The Compression Sisters* (1998), and *In Assisi* (2000), encompass rhythmic arrangements of staccato lines and searing colors, reminiscent of works by American modernist painter Stuart Davis, one of the heroes of Poons’s youth.

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PRESS RELEASE

Also during the 1990s, Larry Poons and his wife Paula traveled the country extensively to participate in motorcycle races—remarkably, his brightly colored “Particle” Paintings often suggest enhanced interpretations of the American landscape. Many paintings on view, including *Arizona* and *Utah* (both 1997) were painted in a temporary outdoor studio in Islamorada, where Poons was deeply inspired by the tropical landscape and brilliant sunlight of Florida.

Born in Tokyo in 1937 to American parents, Poons relocated with his family to the United States at a young age, where he later studied music composition at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. Recognizing his greater talent for visual art, he transferred to the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, where he studied painting. His career skyrocketed soon after he moved to New York in the early 1960s.

Larry Poons’s work is included in many prominent public and private art collections throughout the world, including the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Cleveland Museum of Art; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Georges Pompidou Center, Paris the Santa Barbara Museum of Art; the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; the Tate Modern, London; the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Netherlands; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, among other institutions.

Larry Poons: “First Thought, Best Thought”/The Particle Paintings is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with an essay by Alex Bacon, and an introduction by David Ebony, co-author, along with Barbara Rose and Karen Wilkin, and David Anfam of *Larry Poons* a forthcoming monograph published by Abbeville Press.



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