

PRESS RELEASE**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****BERRY CAMPBELL PRESENTS *Biala: Paintings, 1946-1986*****March 14 – April 13, 2024****Opening Reception, Thursday, March 21, 2024, 6 – 8 pm**

“While other artists shout, Biala’s canvases whisper. The story they tell is of a near century-long love affair with art, with the act of creating, with life as an artist. Isn’t it wonderful, then, that through her work Biala has invited us to be part of it.”

– Mary Gabriel, Author of *Ninth Street Women*



NEW YORK, NY – Berry Campbell and the Estate of Janice Biala are pleased to announce a major survey of paintings by Janice Biala (1903-2000). The survey featuring over 30 paintings dating from 1946 to 1986, marks the largest gallery exhibition of Biala's work mounted in New York City with many works on view for the first time. A fully illustrated 100-page catalogue accompanies the exhibition which includes introduction by Mary Gabriel, author of “The Ninth Street Women,” and essay by Jason Andrew, manager and curator of the Estate of Janice Biala. This historic presentation coincides with the Grey Art Museum’s seminal exhibition “Americans in Paris, 1946-1962: Artists Working in Postwar France, 1946-1962,” opening March 2 in which Biala will be featured.

One of the most inventive artists of the 20th Century, and the painter most closely aligned with the continuation of a transatlantic Modernist dialogue between Paris and New York, Janice Biala (1903-2000), led a legendary life: a painter recognized for her distinctive style that combined the sublime assimilation of the School of Paris and the gestural virtuosity of the New York School of Abstract Expressionism.

Biala rose from humble yet tumultuous beginnings as a Jewish immigrant from Russian occupied Poland arriving in New York in 1913 settling among the tenements of the Lower East Side. She claimed the name of her birthplace for her own, going on to make personal and unique contributions to the rise of Modernism both in Paris and New York.



Having spent the decade of the 1930s as the last companion to the English novelist, Ford Madox Ford, Biala was the perfect representative of American bohemia in 1930s France and her journey as an artist evolved in tandem with the historic events of the 20th century.

Highlighting this survey is a pivotal group of paintings dating from 1947 to 1952. On view for the first time in New York, these works were painted by Biala upon her triumphant return to Paris in 1947 aboard the *de Grasse*, one of the first passenger transatlantic ships to sail from New York to Europe after World War II. Her return was also a joyous one, “I still find in France all the things I’d hoped for,” she wrote her brother Jack Tworok, “I’d have no use for Paradise if it wasn’t like France.” These works offer an extraordinary opportunity to see Biala’s close connection to European Modernists like Picasso and Matisse, both of whom she had frequently met.

“Though her themes of still life and interiors, landscapes and portraiture remained constant, her approach to portraying them evolved,” writes Jason Andrew in essay for the catalogue accompanying the exhibition:

“Impressionism is a term rarely used in discussing Biala’s work, but it fits with her sensitivity and narrative. Never liberal with factual description in her paintings, Biala pulls us in through a balance of subtle truths—the hard edge of a table, the soft outline of a figure, the dark shadow of a building. It’s a tender abstraction that feels lived in, and one which she honed very early on from her mentor Edwin Dickinson and heightened by the vigilant study of the narratives crafted by Ford Madox Ford.”

Three of the five major paintings included in the 15th annual Salon Les Surindépendants in 1948 are featured in the exhibition. Biala credited this exhibition for bringing the critical attention that would re-establish her reputation, leading to gallery representation at Galerie Jeanne Bucher and moreover praise from the staunchly critical French press.

“Le Louvre,” 1948, is among this group and one of the first paintings to fully capture the architecture of Biala's adopted city. A seminal work, the painting features a view of the city from the Left Bank looking North across the Seine with views of the Louvre and the Jardins des Champs-Élysées. More specifically, Pavillon de la Trémoille appears on the upper left and the various rooftops that make up the Louvre filling the horizon. Pont de Arts stretches horizontally through the painting's center left. Framing the composition is an iron railing in the near foreground.

Alongside this historic group of paintings, Berry Campbell will present important large-scale works including multi-paneled paintings which bridge American and European traditions—portraying a synthesis of cultures and emotions. As an example, the two paneled work “Intérieur à grand plans noirs, blancs, rose,” 1972, on view for the first time, embraces Biala's suggestive approach to space. “Here the continuity of reading the painting from left to right is deprioritized in order to offer multiple vignettes—evocative impressions and multiple views of an interior where angles are represented by juxtaposition of color,” writes Jason Andrew.



In the epic three paneled painting “Les Fleurs,” 1973, three differing perspectives vie for sovereignty as each offers an individually composed interior with bold and blocked in color—bare of human presence. Here the flourishing potted flowers bring the personality.

The exhibition also features a gallery dedicated to Biala's works on paper and in particular, her collage work. As the artist noted, towards the end of the 1950s, her transatlantic returns from Paris to New York took their toll on her paintings. So, she turned her attention to collage. Embracing the “immediate effects,” which “you can't possibly get in painting,” Biala embarked on an intense exploration of the medium. The subjects in Biala's collages range from intimate interiors to the wild and thrilling portrayal of a cassowary.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Biala (b. 1903, Biala, Poland; d. September 24, 2000, Paris, France) was a Polish-born American painter known in Paris and New York for her sublime assimilation of the School of Paris and the New York School of Abstract Expressionism. During her eight-decade career, her work was characterized by a modernist reinterpretation of classical themes of landscapes, still-life, and portraiture, animated gesturally with punctuated brush work held fast by her keen eye for observation.

As an immigrant arriving from a Russian-occupied Poland to a Jewish tenement house on the Lower East Side in New York in 1913, Biala, then Janice Tworkov, faced a new culture and adolescence at the same time. Decamping to Greenwich Village with her older brother, Jack Tworkov, she became immersed in a bohemian life. Like Jack, Janice was an avid reader, with “The Three Musketeers” being her favorite book. She would later tell French novelist and art theorist André Malraux that it was because of Porthos that she became an artist.

While visiting an exhibition of French painting at the Brooklyn Museum in the Spring of 1921, Janice discovered the work of Cézanne. She enrolled in classes at the Art Students League and the School of the National Academy of Design. In the fall of 1922, Janice came upon the work of Edwin Dickinson who inspired her, in the summer of 1923, to hitchhike to Provincetown to study with him.

By late 1920, Janice was an established artist with a growing reputation. She was a frequent exhibitor at the G.R.D. Studios (NY), a gallery that would fuel the careers of many important American artists. She remained at the forefront of the fledgling art colonies of Provincetown, MA, and Woodstock, NY, generating close friendships with Dickinson and another prominent American artist, William Zorach. In fact, it was at the suggestion of Zorach that Janice changed her name to simply Biala, after the town where she was born, so as not to confuse her work with that of her brother.

During a fateful trip to Paris in 1930, Biala met and fell in love with the English novelist Ford Madox Ford. A formidable figure among writers, artists and the transatlantic intelligentsia, Ford introduced Biala to the many artists within his circle forging a new Modernism in France including Constantin Brancusi, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Ezra Pound, and Gertrude Stein, among others. Upon Ford’s death in 1939, she fled Europe under the growing Nazi threat and in a harrowing feat rescued Ford’s personal library and manuscripts while carrying as much of her own work as she could.

Returning to New York City, Biala became a fixture among the rising avant-garde artists living and working around Washington Square. She met and married Daniel “Alain” Brustlein, a noted illustrator for *The New Yorker*. While her work was represented by galleries rooted in European Modernism, namely the Bignou Gallery, she was one of the few women influencing the rising Abstract Expressionist movement in New York.

In October 1947, Biala and Brustlein boarded the French Line’s *de Grasse*, one of the first transatlantic ships to sail to Europe after the war. They settled in Paris but almost immediately began traveling throughout Europe, encountering the histories of cities such as Rome and Pompeii. This was the beginning of a lifetime split between Paris and New York. In 1949, she was awarded Honorable Mention at the Prix de la Critique in Paris.



In April 1950 in New York City, Biala was one of only three women—the other two were Louise Bourgeois and Hedda Sterne—invited to attend a private and exclusive discussion known as the Artist’s Session at Studio 35. The Whitney Museum of American Art became the first public institution to acquire Biala’s work in 1955. In April 1956, a feature article, “Biala Paints a Picture,” appeared in *Art News* with photographs by Rudy Burckhardt. A series of exhibitions in the late 1950s celebrated her newfound embrace of collage.

During the 1960s and into the 1970s, Biala completed many of her largest scale works to date. These include works that incorporate painting and collage, expanding on the themes of interiors and portraiture. Variations of the open window, not unlike Matisse’s “Open Window, Collioure,” 1905, also appear this period. Additionally, a concert of studies and paintings on Diego Velázquez’s “Equestrian Portrait of Elisabeth of France,” c.1635, or “Reine Isabella,” demonstrate Biala’s continued interest in Velázquez and Spain. Lastly, views of the storied cities of Poitiers in France and Spoleto in Italy are uniquely associated with these decades as is the incorporation of painted collaged elements. In 1966, she was awarded Honorable Mention 10th Prix International du Gemmail, and in 1971, awarded a Bronze Medal from Prix Paul-Louis Weiller from the Institut de France.

Biala continued to exhibit internationally during the final decades of her life. Major themes dominating the early part of these final decades include large sweeping landscapes featuring the shores of Provincetown or the sea circling Venice. A return to the architecture of Paris appears in a series of major paintings focused on Notre Dame. Themes of interiors as well as a return to compositions inspired by Velázquez dominate these later years. Her work continued to meld abstraction with imagist concerns. Works are described as “intimate,” “alluring,” and “secretive.”

In June 1989, *The New York Times* published “Three Who Were Warmed by the City of Light” by Michael Brenson featuring Biala, Joan Mitchell and Shirley Jaffe. Upon her death in 2000, her obituary appeared in *The New York Times* written by Roberta Smith. Punctuating her stellar career, Smith remarked, “[her art] spanned two art capitals and several generations [...] belonging to a trans-Atlantic tradition that included French painters like Matisse, Bonnard and Marquet, as well as Milton Avery and Edward Hopper.”

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Christine Berry and Martha Campbell opened Berry Campbell Gallery in Chelsea, New York, ten years ago. The gallery has a fine-tuned program representing artists of post-war American painting that have been underrepresented or neglected, particularly the women of Abstract Expressionism. Since its inception, the gallery has developed a strong emphasis in research to bring to light artists overlooked due to age, race, gender, or geography. This unique perspective has been increasingly recognized by curators, collectors, and the press. Last year, Berry Campbell moved to 524 W 26th Street, one of the most prestigious blocks in Chelsea. The 9,000 square foot space was previously inhabited by art world icons such as Paula Cooper Gallery and Robert Miller Gallery. For further information please call at 212.924.2178, visit our website at berrycampbell.com, or email at info@berrycampbell.com.

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“The Studio,” 1946, oil on canvas, 39 ½ x 22 ½ in (101.6 x 86.4 cm); “Le Louvre,” 1948, oil on canvas, 36 x 28 1/4 in (91.4 x 71.8 cm); “Still Life at the Table,” 1948, oil on canvas, 31 1/4 x 45 in (79.4 x 114.3 cm); “Les Fleurs,” 1973, acrylic on canvas (triptych), overall: 45 x 108 in (114.3 x 276.9 cm); Janice Biala, c. 1965. Photo: Henri Cartier-Bresson © Henri Cartier-Bresson / Magnum Photos

Biala: Paintings, 1946-1986**March 14 – April 13, 2024****Berry Campbell, 524 W 26th Street, NYC**

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SELECTED IMAGES AND CAPTIONS:

<p>The Studio, 1946 Oil on canvas 39 ½ x 22 ½ in (101.6 x 86.4 cm)</p>	 A cubist painting of an interior studio. A figure is seated at a table in the center, surrounded by various objects and furniture. The color palette is dominated by greens, yellows, and browns.
<p>Le Louvre, 1948 Oil on canvas 36 x 28 1/4 in (91.4 x 71.8 cm)</p>	 A cubist painting of an outdoor scene, possibly a courtyard or a harbor. It features a large, dark, rounded structure in the foreground and a building with a red roof in the background. The color palette is dark and muted.
<p>Nature Morte à la Table, 1948 Oil on canvas 31 1/4 x 45 in (79.4 x 114.3 cm)</p>	 A cubist still life painting of a table set with various objects, including a hat, a bowl, and a glass. The color palette is warm, featuring yellows, oranges, and browns.
<p>Deux Femmes et Théière, 1950 Oil on canvas 23 3/4 x 39 1/2 in (60.3 x 100.3 cm)</p>	 A cubist painting of two women seated at a table with a teapot and cups. The color palette is muted, featuring greens, yellows, and browns.

Red Interior with Child, 1956

Oil on canvas
33 x 26 in (83.8 x 66 cm)



Casoar (The Cassowary), 1957

Collage, torn paper with oil on canvas
56 1/2 x 33 in (144.8 x 83.8 cm)



White Interior with Black Kettle, 1961





Oil on canvas
76 3/4 x 51 in (194.9 x 132.1 cm)



Untitled (Orange interior), 1967

Oil on canvas
57 1/2 x 63 7/8 in (146.1 x 162.2 cm)



<p>Pompeii Interior, 1972 Oil on canvas (diptych) Overall: 63 1/2 x 44 3/4 in (162.6 x 113.7 cm)</p>	 A diptych painting depicting an interior scene. The left panel shows a dark, shadowed area with a small figure. The right panel is dominated by a bright blue wall and a white structure, possibly a doorway or a piece of furniture, with some small objects on a surface in the foreground.
<p>Les Fleurs, 1973 Acrylic on canvas (triptych) Overall: 45 x 108 in (114.3 x 276.9 cm)</p>	 A triptych painting showing a still life arrangement. The central panel features a white table with a vase of blue flowers. The left panel shows a red vase with red flowers. The right panel shows a dark, striped vase with a bouquet of red and blue flowers. The background consists of various colored panels in red, blue, and yellow.
<p>Nature Morte Rose, Rouge et Noire, 1977 Oil and acrylic on canvas 38 1/4 x 51 in (99.1 x 132.1 cm)</p>	 A still life painting with a vibrant, abstract background. The foreground shows a red chair, a table with a white object, and a red vase. The background is composed of various colored panels in red, pink, blue, and black.
<p>Black Still Life with Artichokes, 1986 Oil on canvas 32 x 39 7/8 in (81.3 x 100 cm)</p>	 A still life painting on a dark background. The top edge shows a white teacup and saucer, a white coffee cup and saucer, and two green artichokes. The bottom edge shows a green artichoke and some brown leaves.