

ArtSeen

Specific Forms

By Mary Ann Caws



Installation view: *Specific Forms*, Loretta Howard Gallery, New York, 2020. Courtesy Loretta Howard Gallery, New York.

So many delights here, so many forms that I can't help comparing with other displays of form, even within one single author like Lydia Davis as she works out the ways (that's the word she uses) of treating a topic. Here, undeniably, are some great pieces, among which let me choose my very favorites. Look at Al Held's *60 S-2 AP*, in ink and acrylic on paper mounted on board, with a triangle in orange, a half-square in maroon, and a ball of black between them. I loved the brushy edge of the black paint at the top, and the way in which the white paper background did not quite meet the board at the back, and again, the black edging the whole thing. You could spend time, as we did in the gallery, figuring out the relation of paint/ink and paper and board: Held is good at this. I was fascinated by the swoosh of the paint and the texture of Ray Parker's canvas of 1963, in the blue on the left and the brownish-orangish on the right, and how the square and the rectangle work together.

Now I was truly drawn into the two Larry Poons, first, straight ahead in the main room, the large *Rock and Roll* of 1958, the oil on canvas right there, drawing us into the main room, with its green circle reaching the left, the broad red it interrupts in the center, and the crackly orange-brown sliver in that green circle, and then, in the backroom, my overall favorite, his very lovely and very intricate *The Flower It Took Centuries to Make* of 1957, gauche and ink on paper, with the yellow circular form illuminating the circular forms on the right, in their black and ochre forms, yielding a specific form of joy.

MARY ANN CAWS is Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature, English, and French at the Graduate School of the City University of New York. Her many areas of interest in twentieth-century avant-garde literature and art include Surrealism, poets René Char and André Breton, Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury group, and artists Robert Motherwell, Joseph Cornell, and Pablo Picasso. Conceptually, one of her primary themes has been the relationship between image and text.