

Joan Snyder (b. 1940, Highland Park, New Jersey, US) made her breakthrough in the late 1960s with 'stroke' paintings such as *Lines and Strokes* (1969) and *Symphony* (1970). Painted in New York City around the same time as the Woodstock Music Festival, Snyder's contribution at this moment of cultural dissent was a rebellion against the male-dominated abstract movements of Minimalism and Colour Field painting, both of which were perpetuating strict adherence to modernist principles.

Snyder worked personal stories into abstract painting and adapted established ideas to fit her own sensibility, introducing gestural flourishes and personal symbolism into a discourse where the avoidance of interpretative clues and evidence of the artist's hand had been the norm. *'The strokes in my paintings speak of my life and experiences. They are sometimes soft ... they sometimes laugh and are often violent ... they bleed and cry and struggle to tell my story with marks and colours and lines and shapes. I speak of love and anguish, of fear and mostly of hope.'*

Snyder focused on these 'stroke' paintings for about a decade. The grid, on which she grounded these and many later works, was adopted as a way of introducing a narrative chronology, rather than a reference to the organising principle of modernism. Snyder's other inspirations for adopting the grid further reflect her personality and passions; her knowledge and love of music, with its staves for musical notation, and her work helping young children, who would draw onto lined exercise paper. She explains: *'I do think my use of the grid came from my own search, not from any Minimalist theory, but that doesn't mean I wasn't affected by what was going on. I, though, wanted more in my paintings, not less ... and I wanted narrative.'*

Towards the mid-1970s, Snyder was moving away from the grid. She continued to create autobiographical, spiritual and sometimes political works, but started to create layers of 'non-art materials' that supported the narrative, as in *Varnishing Theater/The Cut* (1974), where she incorporated thread, chicken wire, fake fur and cheesecloth. As Lance Esplund commented in the *Wall Street Journal*, Snyder's use of totemic objects *'reminds us that no matter how modern and civilized we are, art can still be raw, primitive and talismanic. Without apologies or decorum, Ms. Snyder's work awakens all of the things still wild within us.'*

Snyder's impact on abstract art and materialistic exploration of painting has brought her widespread critical claim and institutional recognition. In December 2018, she will appear in *Epic Abstraction: Pollock to Herrera*, a major exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.