

SARAH GRILO

The New York Years, 1962-70

February 8 - March 30, 2024

Opening Thursday, February 8, 2024, 6:00pm - 8:00pm



Sarah Grilo, *Our heroes*, 1966.

Galerie Lelong & Co., New York is pleased to present a solo exhibition of works by Sarah Grilo, *The New York Years, 1962-70*, the late artist's first with the gallery. Curated by Karen Grimson, the exhibition will focus on a pivotal period in the artist's practice, charting the emergence of her distinct style fusing abstraction with language.

Sarah Grilo's arrival in New York in 1962, following her receipt of a Guggenheim Fellowship, came at a time of intense political upheaval that mirrored visual experimentation, and imbued the artist with a deepened desire to create. Grilo's works reflect this disruption and creativity. Influenced in part by her attraction to U.S. illustrated publications such as *LIFE* and women's magazines, Grilo assimilated language, collage, and

text in her paintings. Working with collage and transfer of text, Grilo isolated phrases such as *America's going...;* *Our heroes*, and *Win, it's great for your ego*, marrying abstraction and drawing with subtle social commentary. Grilo's use of text sourced from U.S. mass media is even more intriguing considering English was a foreign language for the artist.

The exhibition will include a number of paintings which have not been publicly exhibited in over fifty years, since Grilo's 1967 solo exhibition at Byron Gallery in New York. One of the most dramatic works in this selection, *Our heroes* (1966), is a graphic, grid-like composition in gray and bold red interrupted by an amalgamation of text. Combining passages culled from magazines with freehand quotes rendered by the artist, Grilo demonstrates her intuitive, expressive approach to painting. Featuring references to notable current events and debates of the mid '60s, *Our heroes* is emblematic of the cultural framework of the U.S. at the time of its creation. *Win, it's great for your ego* (c. 1965-66) similarly references the atmosphere of war, though the addition of numbers and arrows brings the signage of the bustling New York City streets into the space of Grilo's imagination. Made at the height of the Pop Art movement sweeping the city at the time, *Win* and many of the other paintings in the exhibition link Grilo to artists such as Rauschenberg and Warhol who were in search of inspiration in the everyday and commonplace.

Of this period, Grimson writes: "A galvanizing moment for Grilo's practice, the New York years span her transition from modern to contemporary abstraction. As formal and chromatic explorations gave way to the emergence of discourse and language, Grilo's engagement with politics and mass media became fundamental in her contribution to post-war American painting."

Concurrent to our exhibition in New York, works by Grilo will be presented alongside those of Zilia Sánchez in a dual presentation at Frieze Los Angeles from February 29 - March 3, 2024.

About the Artist

In a career spanning three continents and six decades, Sarah Grilo created paintings and works on paper in a distinctive style fusing abstraction with language. Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1917, Grilo was a member of the Grupo de Artistas Modernos de la Argentina in the 1950s before her receipt of a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1961 prompted a move to New York the following year. It was there that Grilo developed her signature visual language. Influenced in part by her introduction and attraction to U.S. illustrated publications such as *LIFE* and women's magazines, Grilo used transfer techniques to assimilate language and text in her paintings. Sourcing materials directly from popular print publications, Grilo created paintings that reflect and resonate with the world in which they were produced.

In 1970, partly in opposition to the draft for the United States's involvement in the war in Vietnam, Grilo and her family moved to the south of Spain where she continued her approach of gestural abstraction and text. Throughout the early '80s, Grilo lived and worked between Madrid and Paris, settling in Madrid in 1985, where she remained until her death in 2007.

In her lifetime, Grilo exhibited in galleries and museums internationally and her work has been collected by numerous institutions, including MoMA, New York; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain; and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands. Her paintings have been included in recent museum shows including *Making Space: Women Artists and Postwar Abstraction* at the MoMA, New York (2017) and *Action, Gesture, Paint: Women Artists and Global Abstraction 1940-70* at the Whitechapel Gallery in London (2022).

Sarah Grilo was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1917, and died in Madrid, Spain, in 2007.