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The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY	Collection:	Series.Folder:
	TOMKINS	IV. C. 6

⑤ Betty Parsons - her career - Primary Newman -
RL's first show - A.S.L. - Betty De la Haye
Discussions - for windows display (New)

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(from Diamondstein videotape)

Betty Parsons Show

"I had reached a very serious impasse in my work. I took a bunch of my paintings in to Betty Parsons' gallery one day, and asked if I could see her. "I only look at paintings on Tuesday," she said. This was Monday. "Well," I said, "couldn't you pretend this was Tuesday?" She said all right, take them in there. I took them into a small room, and sat there surrounded by my paintings, trying to figure out whether I should flee. Betty came in, and I started to show them to her. "You're showing them to me too fast," she said. I was just trying to get out of there. "Well," she said, "I can't give you a show until May." I was just flabbergasted. I didn't want a show -- I was just trying to see whether there was anything in what I was doing that related to the energy of her gallery."

Leo saw his work here for the first time.[?]

had already seen. At that time I just thought, Oh, the next thing is much better. Today I wouldn't do that. Today I'd have more respect for Clyfford Still and Betty Parsons, and I'd know that an early picture might be better than something I'm doing right now. But then I was sure that the next thing would be much better..."

Nothing sold in first show, and only one of those pictures survives (the white numbers in R's studio). The first loss occurred when he took the pix to studio to be photographed. "I was still living by farm principles then, and I got up very early in the morning and took them to his studio. He wasn't really awake, so I left them. Later, he called to say that something terrible had happened. He had lined the pictures up around the living room, then started a fire in the fireplace and gone off to the kitchen to make some coffee. While he was out, he smelled something that wasn't coffee, and came back to find one of the pictures -- which he'd left propped against the fireplace -- burning up. That didn't upset me much, I was painting five pictures a day then. After the show, the pictures went to my in-laws, and then I was divorced and for a long time things were so touchy I couldn't even contact them, and then their house, on Outer Island in off Connecticut, burned down and that was that. So this one (numbers) is the only survivor -- it was taken out of the show and replaced by something else, which is how I happened to have it." Other pix in first show were not like the white numbers, untypical. R. already using collage then, and motion-picture-like sequences of forms, and cutouts from newspapers. (series)

~~9th Street Show - see Castelli (May 1957)~~

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Rauschenberg - BIO-6

R. had his first show with Betty Parsons in 1951, while he was still a student at the ASL. "I went up to see her one day, with a bunch of paintings under my arm -- something I'd never have done even six months later. I just didn't know how you did things. Betty Parsons was the liveliest gallery around at that time, so I went to see her. She asked me, in her low voice, did I want criticism? I said no, I didn't. My pictures were finished. It wasn't criticism I wanted, but it's hard to say just what I did want -- just ~~as~~ a response of some kind. It was the liveliest gallery, and I wanted to see what would happen, that's all. Then she asked me did I want a show. That hadn't even been in my mind. Nothing in my experience or training had prepared me to think in those terms. If you want a show, she said, you can't have it before May because everything is booked. So I had it in May... Betty and Clyfford Still came to my studio to select pictures for the show. I'd painted over most of the canvases Betty had already seen. At that time I just thought, Oh, the next thing is much better. Today I wouldn't do that. Today I'd have more respect for Clyfford Still and Betty Parsons, and I'd know that an early picture might be better than something I'm doing right now. But then I was sure that the next thing would be much better..."

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[The white paintings and black paintings came next. They were done simultaneously, mostly at Black Mountain, and were "partly a reaction against Albers being such a good teacher." Albers believed it was important to know everything there was to know about color, but argued that if you thought one color was better than another you were just expressing a personal preference. R. did white paintings for same reason Cage used silences -- to ~~allow~~ allow room for shadows, reflections etc from outside painting. Black paintings were experiments in form -- torn newspapers gave the form (Note: ^{see also R. 10, 10a, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 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itself, "although the pictures look like complete statements." They were just a means of getting at the same subject.]}

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Black + white paintings done here. Many of these were painted over, but a goodly proportion were stored in Joel Feorakov's studio. Feorakov tried to get one in 1953 Stable Annual - heavy opposition. All the stored pix came out for 1953 Stable show.

Franz Kline there that summer. Liked the black paintings. Joel says he particularly liked one, which ~~made~~ ^{made} him feel "helpless."

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Betty Parsons

Gave R. his first show, on June 2 1951.

Confirms that R. came in with his pictures under his arm, unsolicited. But says this wasn't at all unusual. "That's how most of them come in."

"I could see right off that he was on his own tangent, that he wasn't influenced by anyone else, not in the school of anything. I always felt he was terribly inventive, and full of ideas. He's really a man of ideas."

Also naive -- he had never seen snow before, and the day he came in he was excited about it. Fascinated with everything that went on around him, his own experiences, history, etc. Had great respect for older painters

"I was instantly intrigued by his work. He had brought marvellous white pictures, oils mostly, and predominantly white." Confirms that when she went down with Clifford Still to the studio, he had painted over most of them. This wasn't unusual, either. "Young artists are not good judges of their own work usually."

The show itself: "The critics just laughed. Some other artists were quite interested. The public just ignored it."

Reviews: "Varied and curious work."

"There is nothing niggardly in Bob Rauschenberg's power to invent. His works at the Betty Parsons Gallery introduce bits of looking glass, stylish doodles in black and white, and liberal helpings of silver paint. The fact that his pictures seem to be spawning ground for ideas rather than finished conceptions gives them a restless look..." (SPreston, NYT, 5/18/51)

"...large-scale, usually white grounded canvases naively inscribed with a wavering and whimsical geometry..." (Art News)

"Experimenting with rhythm and balance in his first one-man show, Bob Rauschenberg gives most of his 13 oils a symbolic subject matter." (Arts) E.G., leaf from fortune teller's handbook, black arrow and outline of hand, numbers, etc.

Betty Parsons sees in his present work a sort of nostalgic quality that he didn't have in first show. "You know, the old attic that everyone had. It's not sheer plastic work now, it's part of the literary world too."

Note: Life mag article on R's blueprint technique in April 9, 1951 issue.

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ask: Graham
Barley

Betty Parsons - lunch 1/19/77

Howard Pufzel -- stocky man, a little taller than me. Smoked and drank himself to death. He had a wonderful eye. When he left Peggy to go on his own, she sort of lost interest.

Barney N. was "a good hater." He never spoke to Ad Reinhardt or Ad's wife again after their quarrel, which involved an article Ad wrote in the College Art Journal. Barney claimed Ad had maligned his qualities as a teacher, as a result of which he couldn't get a job. He sued for \$100,000 -- ~~it~~ was thrown out of court. "If they'd had duels then, Barney would have killed him."

The Ab-Ex artists were rather irritated by Duchamp, because of his indifference. He didn't come to their shows. They knew about him, all right, but were annoyed by his non-painting and by his attitude.

DeKooning was a prime mover at the Club. Not a very good talker ~~at~~ -- clumsy with words, even -- but he said things the others found important. ~~Kline~~ Barney by contrast was a marvelous talker. Also Kline.

When did they start to quarrel and fight? When they began to receive recognition.

Jock Truman quotes Richard Lindner on early days at Parsons when they would all help hang one another's shows. After the installation there would be dinner at Betty's, with dancing and lots to drink, and then the whole thing would be over. If anybody happened to buy something from the show, the word would go out that the artistx was losing his touch.

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Parsons - 6

Many young Soho types, some carrying motorcycle helmets. Young "motorcycle artist" (*Michael Robbins*) talking about Evel Knievel's flight which he saw in close circuit TV at the Garden: what impresses him is the Knievel statement that we all face death all the time, but that he chooses his own time and place and will die magnificently (but then he nearly drowned ignominiously instead).

Howard Blume and Annette Kuhn from the VV, who went to Maine with Betty -- "We took two cars, and she always beat us; we drive 65, so she must go at least 80"). Many old friends of Betty's (Witzel). Also people who come to every opening, whom she's never met -- & "a little creepy." A poet she met on the France in July, one who read his poems four times per voyage to pay for passage.

"It's a lively show, don't you think?" Betty says. No critics -- they come tomorrow or the next day.

A little after seven, Betty starts turning lights off to shoo people out. Later she gave a small dinner party ~~at her house~~ for the artist and his wife and a few others -- Simone, the Blumes -- her custom.

September 11th, Wednesday

Betty spent part of the morning on 23rd street buying a desk for the new gallery upstairs -- didn't find just what she wanted ("invisible but good-looking"), but close enough.

Lunch at Chez Georges - Betty said the Blumes were two of her new young collectors. Howard bought a small Taggart, which he took six months to pay for. Now he wants to buy something else from her. She refused to recommend anything. "I told him to pick it out himself. He knows everything in my gallery is good, it's just a question of what he prefers."

(Betty's conversation comes in quick, shorts bursts; vivid and immediate, with not much inclination to elaborate or follow-up on ideas).

Has her eye always been so sure? "Yes. Oh, at first I used to pray that I'd be proved right. ~~When it~~ Later, when it began to seem that my intuitive reactions had been right, I tried to analyze what I'd picked, to find out why I'd reacted that way. What I responded to was the sense of something behind the work, some statement.* Cezanne said he was trying to paint what was behind the apple. And it was amazing how people disagreed then. Someone would come in and say, 'Those Rothkos are marvelous, but what do you see in Pollock?' And then the next person loved Pollock but couldn't stand Rothko.

"I also look for an expanding world, for things that project outside the canvas rather than back into it. Now it's become impossible to expand any more, and I think artists will ~~be~~ ^{begin} exploring their inner worlds -- that's the future. I've always thought the West was an important factor in the art

* "I like authority and conviction, so long as it's also sensitive."

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Parsons - 7

of the forties and fifties here. Pollock came from Cody, Wyoming; Clyfford Still ~~from~~ ^{born in} ~~Washington~~, Rothko ~~from~~ ^{born in} ~~Washington State~~, Bradley Walker Tomlin ~~from Oregon~~. All these enormous spaces. Europe is a walled city -- at least it's always seemed that way to me. Everything is within walls. ~~Rothko~~ Picasso could never have done what Pollock did. Pollock was a great historical figure, he really released the imagination of this country, freed the creative urge. Newman was a kind of statesman in painting, reaching out ~~in~~ to Europe and still encompassing these new Americans. And still-- I always thought of him as the eagle and the stallion.

"It was such an incredible period. Tony Smith was another, I think he's tremendously important. Put a Tony Smith outside and it holds down the horizon. A sculpture by David Smith doesn't do that, it just holds down the wall. It really was a magic period. It'll be another hundred years before anything like that comes again.

"I remember having a conversation with Kurt Valentin, up in Provincetown one summer. I liked Kurt very much, he was a good friend and a fine dealer. He asked me what I thought about these new artists, and I said I thought they were fascinating. 'I must be going blind,' he said, 'but I can't see them at all.' So I got them -- they would all probably rather have been with Kurt.

"Barney Newman was my friend and inspiration. He kept my level very high. He was a rounded man -- he knew a lot about politics, for example, I think he even ran for mayor of New York once. And Alfred Barr -- I don't know if I could have survived without him."

(Always says 1936)
Betty came east in 1937, worked first in the gallery of Mrs. Cornelius Sullivan, a founder of MOMA. They showed Irish artists, and Betty did shows on a commission basis (460 Park Ave). Then she was with Wakefield, then with Mortimer Brandt from 1942-1946.

Newman took her to Pollock's studio the first time. Pollock was drunk and very rude, and Barney was afraid she would be offended. But she saw right away that he was a fantastic artist. She really inherited Pollock from Peggy Gugg. "The personal thing never enters into it with me." Later she got along fine with Pollock.

Many of her artists have left because they thought they could make more money elsewhere. "That's been the story of my life. Most artists don't think I'm tough enough, that I don't go out and solicit, call up people all the time. I don't. I know how people hate that sort of thing because I hate it myself, so I don't do it. And I think a lot of artists would have been better off if they'd stayed with me. Maybe not financially but professionally. Becoming famous can be such a terrible responsibility. They would have been better off and happier staying -- both Rothko and Pollock told me that. Richard Lindner was with me for five years. I gave him two shows, and couldn't sell him. Finally we both wept on each other's shoulders and decided he would be better off somewhere else. He went to Cordier and Ekstrom, and that same year Pop Art arrived and he began selling like hot cakes. Lindner has something of Pop in him, altho he's not a Pop artist. Anyway that's been the story of my life.

Ellsworth Kelly story - Betty ~~was~~ was selling his things, but he felt he

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could do better elsewhere. Betty was then feuding with Sidney Janis, who had secretly ~~bought~~^{leased} the entire floor of the building their galleries were in and ordered her out; she went to court, spent all one summer fighting it, and won, but then moved anyway because she didn't want to ride up in the elevator with Janis. When Kelly said he was leaving, Betty said he could go to any dealer in NY except Janis -- "he's my enemy, and if you go to him I won't speak to you again." Kelly did go to Janis. Some time later Kelly turned up in St. Maarten one Xmas. Betty shook hands with him and turned away without a word. He came up later and ~~asked~~ asked if she would like him to leave the island, and she said yes, because otherwise he would spoil her Xmas. He left. Then last year he moved to Leo Castelli, whom Betty likes, and the next time they met they fell into each other's arms as friends again.

Saul Steinberg -- met him thru Zadkine; at the time, Saul was working on a book of drawings parodying the Baedeker -- never finished it. Showed him at the Wakefield, along with his wife Hedda Sterne.

"But I missed Jasper Johns entirely. He came to the gallery twice, and I turned him down. I just couldn't see it at the time, although now of course I can. It was the same with Morris Louis..."

POP ART - "It seemed like comic relief. The 40s and 50s were so serious. The Pop artists wanted to relax and make fun of everything. I don't mean to say it was trivial. I think Andy Warhol is a great genius, of the negative kind. And Oldenburg is a great historian, a journalistic historian. Can't you imagine when people in the future come to look back on our time, and saying 'Is that really a toilet? Is that really a sewing machine?' He's preserved all those things."

Out on the street after lunch: "I think I just heard a man say, 'I'm going to find the moon.'"

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Parsons --

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Jack

all that's torn down now. She had a wonderful Irish setter, and she showed mainly Irish artists -- Yeats and people like that. She was a very funny, witty woman. Her gallery was at 460 Park Avenue. Her husband was a corporate lawyer, and he made a lot of money and they used it to buy art -- they bought Picasso and Modigliana and all the famous names before they were famous. When her husband died she started the gallery. I arranged exhibitions for her and sold things on a commission basis. Finally she got tired of the gallery and decided to sell everything. She arranged for a great auction, and then the night before the auction she died."

Wakefield Gallery

"Peggy Phipps' family owned the Wakefield Bookshop, on *E. 55 bet. Park & Mad.* They had a space in the cellar, and they asked if I would be interested in running a gallery there. I accepted. I had complete control of the gallery, and just managed to squeak through without ever making any money to speak of. At first it was mostly illustrators -- I remember we showed Bemelmans. But then I began to make some discoveries. I found Adolph Gottlieb -- I think he'd shown elsewhere previously, but I showed his first abstract pictures. And Gorky. And (look up in catalog)

Brandt Starting Her Own Gallery

"The Wakefield moved uptown, and there was no space for a gallery there. But Mortimer Brandt got hold of me -- I guess I'd gotten a reputation of sorts by then. He showed mostly Old Masters. ~~xxx~~

(to 11 E. 57)

Brandt had the whole floor at 15 E. 57th. When he moved out, he told Betty to do what she liked with the space. "I had started to realize that maybe I had something," and had decided to open her own gallery. "I started on a thousand dollars of my own money and four thousand that I borrowed. That was all. Hedda Sterne and Saul Steinberg gave me a thousand. Harry Knight (who had helped to finance the Lindbergh flight) gave a thousand. ~~The~~ Henry Schnakenberg, the painter, gave a thousand."

~~(Dumpy Oelrichs -- Mrs. Dorothy Hydell Oelrichs -- did not take part. Betty says that ~~xxx~~ Dumpy helped her in lots of ways in those years, paying doctors and dentists bills and taking her on trips- "she was awfully good to me.")~~

Dumpy Hydell was someone Betty met shortly before her divorce. She was working then for one of the Hearst magazines. Then she married Herman Oelrichs, and they had a great house in Newport and invited Betty to visit. Betty took "a great many trips" with her over the years. *After Oelrichs died she married Prince Lichtenstein.)*

"I couldn't afford the whole floor, so I rented half of it to Sam Kootz. I got on pretty well with Sam. He was very friendly."

Peggy Guggenheim -- There was no passing of the torch. Peggy wanted to leave "and it turned out that I was the only one who was crazy about those paintings." ~~Egen~~ Peggy didn't realize their potential -- she gave away ten or fifteen Pollocks to small museums, and regretted it later. Betty signed a contract with Peggy on Pollock -- if she sold a painting, she took her commission and sent the money to Peggy, who was still subsidizing Pollock then. "I got sort of irritated with Peggy. She was suspicious of me over the Pollock arrangement, ~~and she~~ She did have kind of an eye, though, and very good advice. She's kind of an artist, in a strange way. But she's adolescent -- she's always been a child. I felt she made a great mistake in leaving the country when she did."

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Still - "He was always very nice to me." Until Betty heard from others that he was thinking of leaving the gallery and going to Janis. She wrote him a furious letter, saying he was perfectly free to leave any time but why not come and tell her? Why should she have to hear this from other people? Still wrote back an equally angry letter, full of insults, and they never spoke again.

Still also quarrelled with Newman, on theoretical grounds. He never had another gallery - people had to buy from him direct. Eventually he made an arrangement with the Albright-Knox, giving them a great deal of his work, on condition that the Albright never own or hang a Newman (they never have).

Still influenced all the younger artists in California. See his letters in Parsons file?

Gorky - "Gorky had a bad destiny, he really did. Terrible things always happened to him. He taught a camouflage class during the war, which I took, and we became great friends. We started drawing from the nude model in my studio one winter, and saw a lot of each other" (Betty showed me a drawing of hers from that time, and one of Gorky's -- "look how much movement he's got in it, compared to that mine's as stiff as a stick"). He taught me a lot about esthetics. He was a marvelous teacher. He used to carry around postcards of Ingres drawings, which he'd pull out to make a point. He was a fascinating, mysterious man. He sang, he even yodelled, and he played the guitar very well. I can still remember him talking about the orchards in Russia in the spring, how the orchards looked -- God, I'll never forget it. All the other artists admired him enormously. He had been so influenced by Picasso -- it wasn't until the last few years of his life that he ~~broke out of it~~ came out of it and found his own style."

John Graham - "He was a yogi. At the age of 88 or whatever it was he could still stand on his head. He was a fantastic connoisseur. He started the collection of Pricilla Peck, the first art editor of Vogue. I remember him saying once, 'All I want of my wife is that she obey me. He would have had a time of it today...'"

Stamos - "I found him. He was only twenty, and doing the most beautiful pastels. Edward Root fell in love with them, and bought six or seven at a time. I think he had more to say then than he does now. He really had a bad character." Betty's fight with him arose when she found he had cheated her, and confronted him with it. Now he's in a lot of trouble as one of executors of the Rothko estate.

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Betty took on Hoffman, Rothko, Pollock and Still from Peggy. She never put any more money into the gallery after that first \$5000. It was a going operation from the start.

Barney Newman (and Ad Reinhardt)

"We were friends right away. I always encouraged him to come in and talk when I was running the Wakefield, and he gave me so many ideas. He was the one who suggested the pre-Colombian exhibition. Annalee had a big job in the public schools then, and I think this was what kept them going. Barney and Gorky were the two who clarified, or taught me more about aesthetics than any book I ever read.

"Barney retired from the art world for ten years. He was very hurt by ~~the~~ the attitude of his friends, who used to say he was not an artist but an intellectual theorist. He had a big row with Reinhardt -- he sued Ad for \$100,000, and they never spoke to each other afterwards. If there had been duelling then they would have fought a duel. Ad was very strange. Barney left the gallery on account of Ad -- he didn't want his pictures rubbing up against Ad's. If that fight hadn't existed the whole art world would have been a better place, I think."

"Those artists used to love each other. They'd hang each other's shows, they'd do anything for one another. I used to say it went from love to hate in four years. Ad was the most neurotic of all of them. He hated galleries. He loved me, but he also hated me because I was a dealer. When his things didn't sell he'd want to know why not, and when they did he'd take them out of the gallery. He was always very independent in terms of money because he taught, and he had college tenure. But when he saw all these other guys selling their pictures, he got very upset..."

"I still think Barney was the most unusual, the most brilliant of them all. He was fascinating to talk to about religion. He couldn't stand the Oriental ~~king's attitude~~ attitude... And his first red picture with that plunging line -- how excited he was by that. He found he could say everything he wanted to say with that image. ~~Until I was~~ ~~forty~~

"Until I was forty-seven I painted what I felt about what I saw. In 1947 I had an operation, a rather serious one. Dumpy took me out west, and we stayed with the Wright Luddingtons. They made me just sit quietly. One day Wright took me to the rodeo in Santa Barbara. I got so excited by it, by the color and the movement, that I went home and did my first abstract picture -- I just suddenly saw what to do and why and how you did it. I couldn't have conveyed that rodeo any other way. And I also saw why I liked these other painters so much, because I could see what they did."

Each one achieved his own breakthrough, following many transitions. "Mark Rothko went through many transitions before he got to those bars of light."

"Having lived in Europe for such a long time, I realized that they were saying something that no European could say. Europe is a walled city, as I've said. They were trying to convey the expanding world. Barney was doing it vertically, Rothko horizontally, Ad by trying to make his paintings more and more invisible, I guess. Still was the most romantic of them. But Barney was the closest to me always.

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Hans Hofmann - "Hofmann was a great friend to all of them. He was very dynamic. He had a fantastic passion for painting. The reason he left the gallery -- I gave him three or four shows. He said, 'I'm an old man, and I feel I should be with an older dealer.' So he went to Kootz."

Tony Smith, whom she met thru Barney, used to help hang her shows too. He was teaching at Bennington then, along with Paul Feeley and Gene Baro. "It was the most important art school in the world at the time. "

"I even had Bob Motherwell for a year, altho I never gave him a show."

"I remember when I had my tenth anniversary show, Barney helped to select it, and Tony hung the pictures. Clem Greenberg wrote the catalog. We showed all the painters I'd introduced. Now I think Clem has become too much of a dictator.

Okada - He "thought he wanted to go to Staempfli." But he came back in a few months. "He s a poet and a philosopher, but very naive."

Agnes Martin - "When she came to the gallery she was very shy and nervous. We talked, and I looked at her work and liked it, and I bought one. That summer I went to New Mexico. She was working as a librarian in Taos, and I saw her work again and thought it was fascinating. I gave her her first show at Section Eleven, and it caused quite a stir. She then moved to New York, down to Coentes Slip where Jack Youngerman abd Ellsworth Kelly and other artists were. I gave her another show, and it didn't do too well. Then one day she came to me and said she wanted to leave the gallery -- she said she thought it would be a very smart thing to leave the best gallery in New York."

The Four Horsemen

Still, Rothko, Pollock, and Newman came to Betty one day -- "like the four horsemen of the Apocalypse." "Thd/ came to my house for dinner. They ~~we~~ sat on the sofa in front of me, and suggested that I drop everyone else in the gallery and they would make ~~me~~ the most famous dealer in the world. They were right, too, but I didn't want to do a thing like that. I said, with my nature I liked ~~an~~ bigger garden. Also I saw that it wouldn't really work. They were just beginning to break the ice, but nobody was really buying them yet. But they all liked me, and they thought they were paying me a great compliment, and they were. They understood, though, why I wasn't interested." Betty thinks the main spokesman for the group was probably Rothko, who was very articulate.

On Being An Art Dealer

"I realize that art dealing is necessary, unfortunately. Artists don't want to be bothered with selling, or with showing their work in their studios. But I think that a lot of dealers have taken such awful advantage of their artists. I don't like most of the dealers in this city. I think Marlborough, Janis and some others have had a very bad influence. A few of them are really interested in finding the creative spirit, but the story of my life has been that I find someone and then they come along and grab him. I'm not in a position to subsidize an artists, never have been; and I don't believe in ~~ixx~~ subsidizing. Dealers usually make a tremendous profit out of that arrangement, I'd much rather

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Artists she admired -- Van Gogh. "In sculpture, the Egyptians better than the Greeks. And then as I went along, the pre-Colombians, My last love was the Indians. In Indian sculpture you get the sensuousness of ~~life~~ this life and the longing for the spirit -- it's just incredible. A man with his arm around a woman, looking up at the heavens. Also likes ~~Giotto~~ Giotto, Fra Angelico, Turner. Does not like de la Tour -- "he has a formula, and that irritates me." ~~Also likes~~ Rothko and the others liked Turner, too.

"Mies van der Rohe said something that's stuck with me -- I have a bad memory but some things I don't forget. Mies said that there is a great deal of talent around, but that there are only two things that really count -- energy and clarity. Some people have one without the other. But both are necessary."

Addenda:

Critics - "They're all very competent in terms of art history, but when it comes to the contemporary art world they tend to be very unsympathetic. Wicked, even. Canaday has been vicious to me, because he just doesn't see the work. He's a very nice fellow outside the art world, but he's really said vicious things.

"And that earlier Times critic, Stuart Preston. Once he came to a Newman show and said, 'Betty, any more shows like that and they'll put you off the street.' He got off the elevator ~~xxxx~~ one day when we were having a Clyfford Still show, took one look and got right back on again. I dragged him back into the gallery, and I took him to a small room where there was one single painting by Still, and I said to him just stay in here for five minutes, will you please? He stayed for five minutes, and when he came out he gumbled something about maybe there was something there.

"Emily Genauer is someone I won't even go in the same room with. She'd ask me a lot of questions, and then she'd misconstrue everything I'd said. I didn't dare even talk to her."

Egan - Betty went into his gallery when he was having a deKooning show. Egan told her deK was so badly off he couldn't go to the dentist to have his teeth fixed. Betty bought two gouaches, for \$70. (Now either would be worth \$10,000). She gave one away, still has the other. Egan was very excited, said the sale would help a lot. (Betty says her artists all admired deKooning, but felt that his work had a European quality and was thus different from theirs. "And it does, I think.")

"I am gregarious but not social." (Betty, in Aft News, March 1968).

On Minimal: "it is related to architecture -- which is related to the spirit -- and has elegance." (Art News, March 1968)

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Betty Parsons Gallery -- misc. 21

Opened October 2, 1946, at 15 East 57th Street. Had twelve shows a year regularly through the fifties. A windowless room with pale grey walls, rather austere. ~~Wood floor.*~~

First show was Northwest Indian Art, arranged with assistance of Newman.

Section Eleven - annex of the gallery from 1958-1961, which introduced many new artists. Funded by Susan Morris Hilles, rich friend in Conn.

Betty "moves about the gallery in low-heeled shoes, dressed usually in a sombre-colored knitted suit, her grey-blond hair straightly framing a strong, square, mobile, make-up-less face." (Aline B. Louchheim in Vogue, Oct. 1 1952).

Cutting the roster - When they moved from 15 E 57 to 24 W. 57 Betty didn't want to work so hard, Jock says, and they cut the stable down to about 12 artists. About 20 were dropped. Betty's then assistant sent a ~~rather~~ "rather brutal" letter out, and Jose Guerrero, who was having a show just then but being dropped, took all his pictures out. Very soon they were back to to 30 or 40%.

In 1951, according to invy with Betty over WNYC, "my average prices were from \$400 to \$750." She also said that large pictures looked just as well in a small room -- "They enlarge the room. They back the walls away. They create space rather than diminish it."

Hoffmann was first to leave her - his last show was spring 1947. He asked Betty to select a large and a small oil as parting gifts. Then in 1952, when Pollock moved to Janis, he gave her IN MEMORIAM. "We were very good friends right up to the end," she said. "He was never drunk in my gallery," (ArtNews, March 1968).

Betty discovered Ellsworth Kelly in Paris in 1956.

* The floor at 15 E 57 was bare wood, scrubbed once or twice a week. It was more like a studio or a barn than a gallery. "We~~x~~ were the last to go to the elegant look," Jock says. And they're still far from the glass-and-stainless steel look of Marlborough or Pace.

Stieglitz story: Betty had \$300 to spend on a painting - this was before her divorce. She went into Stieglitz's gallery and asked the price of a Marin watercolor. Stieglitz looked at her and said, curtly, that it was \$6000. "He didn't like me. I suppose I was wearing a mink coat...It was years before I dared ask the price of a picture again." (Art News, Mar 1968)

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EXHIBITIONS

Pre-Columbian Stone Sculpture (May-June 1944)

At the Wakefield - 64 E. 55th St.

Newman catalog note: "The sense of dignity, the high seriousness of purpose evident in this sculpture makes clearer to us why our modern sculptors were compelled to discard the mock heroic, the voluptuous, the superficial realism that inhabited the medium for so many European centuries..."

Northwest Coast Indian Painting (Sept-Oct) 1946)

Opening show at the new gallery.

Newman: "...for among these simple peoples, abstract art was the normal, well-understood, dominant tradition."

The Ideographic Picture (Jan-Feb 1947)

Jock says the most important show Betty ever had. Art history teachers come in every year asking for the catalog. Included were Hofmann, Pietro Lazzari, Boris Margo, B.B. Newman, Ad Reinhardt, Mark Rothko, Theodoros Stamos, Clifford Still).

Newman: "The basis of an aesthetic act is the pure idea. But the pure idea is, of necessity, an aesthetic act. Here then is the epistemological paradox that is the artist's problem...the idea-complex that makes contact with mystery..."

"Spontaneous(ly?), and emerging from several points, there has arisen during the war years a new force in American painting that is the modern counterpart of the primitive art impulse...For here is a group of artists who are not abstract painters, although working in what is known as the abstract style."

Ten Years (Dec-Jan, 1956)

Anniversary show, selected by Barney and hung by Tony Smith. Hofmann, Tomlin, Pollock, Rothko, Still, Stamos, Newman, Murch, Reinhardt, Pousette-Dart, Sterne, Congdon, Steinberg, Anne Ryan, Boris Margo, Ossorio, Coggeshall, Sonia Sekula, Maud Morgan, Jeanne Miles. Sculptors: Herbert Ferber, Emil Hess, Adaline Kent, Seymour Lipton, Day Schnabel.

"Where the Parsons Gallery stands is on the threshold of the future. Everyone wishes the firm continuance and good luck." (Carlyle Burrows in NY Herald Tribune, Dec 25 1956).

See Clem Greenberg quote, "more the studio and production side of art", from catalog note.

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Saul Steinberg - 9/14/74 at Springs

Her gallery has been the springboard for a great deal. The early shows there had a wonderful look, almost home-made. "Barney was always the strategist, the historian, the dogmatist of the art world. He liked talk, and if you think of painting as a *cosa mentale* talking is as important as being an artist. There is no security any more, since Barney died."

Saul had his first show with Betty in 1942, soon after he arrived in US. Met her thru Zadkine. "I used to make pictures of English women and natives -- that ~~idea~~ still interests me. It is also erotic. The National Geographic is the avant-garde of erotic art, with those photographs of naked bushmen. She gave me a show, and three months later I was in the Navy and on my way to China."

"I would say about Betty, that she's always been uninvolved, untouchable. One of the attractive things about her is that she resembles fiction more than anything else. She exists in the way that Raskolnikov exists, or Julien Sorel. It is important for a dealer not to be too well defined -- it is good to have your fictitious side. The best dealers are more like Nibelungen, keepers of the treasure."

"In 1952, instead of going to Janis and abandoning her, I joined Janis and kept Betty. It suited me fine in the beginning -- they were both on the same floor, and I wanted a very large show, and Betty and Sidney were on good terms then although Janis was already snatching away her artists."

~~Betty~~ "The profession of a dealer is very difficult, very delicate. A dealer is the intermediary between two of the most important things in life -- fame and money. There is also the pimp quality. The fact that Betty is a fictitious character makes it easier to deal with her, although it also makes things less precise. Janis, now, is completely brass tacks. He is not a ballet dancer at all -- he is more the foxtrot, Roseland. But there is a Faustian quality about dealers, because of their having to do with fame and money. They become strange, like swans or giraffes. The only thing that would really distress me about a dealer would be paternalism, trying to take me under the wing. Betty is remote. So is Janis."

"Betty has the fictitious quality even physically. She looks like a photograph from a different period. You know who it is but you are not quite sure."

"Her remoteness also made her dealing in abstract art more credible."

Is she strong? "Strong is not the word, exactly. I would say that she knew what she wanted to do. You never know whether she agrees with what you say, or whether she thinks you are insane and so she had better say yes. ~~She~~ When you talk with her, she says 'yes yes yes' -- but does she mean yes?"

Catalyst quality -- "She has a tremendous capacity for admiration."

Good manners -- very rare among dealers. "Her aristocratic behavior is also fictitious. Sometimes I believe that at night she goes into the public library, on a shelf there..."

The fiction - "It is what I think about her, what stays in my mind about her. I'm not quite sure she is real. But it is something I like very much."

Saul did portrait of her as an "adoring, serenading dog" that's how she

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is. She has the baby forehead of this dog, I think it is a spaniel. Also the baby ~~forehead~~ philosophical forehead of Leonardo, and of babies, and of spaniels. The dog is also part sphinx, of course. If you look at Betty, you see the sphinx, the Garbo-like quality. And strictly entre nous, the sphinx is doggy."

"I would say about Betty, that she's always been uninvolved, unattachable. One of the attractive things about her is that she resembles fiction more than anything else. She exists in the way that Beckwith exists, or Julian Sorel. It is important for a dealer not to be too well defined -- it is good to have your fictitious side. The best dealers are more like Libman, keepers of the treasure."

"In 1952, instead of going to Paris and abandoning her, I joined her and kept Betty. It suited me fine in the beginning -- they were both on the same floor, and I wanted a very large show, and Betty and I were on good terms then although I was already unloading her art."

"The profession of a dealer is very difficult, very delicate. A dealer is the intermediary between two of the most important things in life -- time and money. There is also the gimpy quality. The fact that Betty is a fictional character makes it easier to deal with her, although it also makes things less precise. I mean, now, in completely precise terms, he is not a ballet dancer at all -- he is more the sort of Roseland. But there is a Russian quality about dealers, because of their having to do with time and money. They become strange, like swans or giraffes. The only thing that would really distress me about a dealer would be generalism, trying to take me under the wing. Betty is remote. So is Irena."

"Betty has the fictitious quality even physically. She looks like a photograph from a different period. You know who it is but you are not quite sure."

"Her remoteness also made her desirable in abstract art more credible." Is she strong? "Strong is not the word, exactly. I would say that she knew what she wanted to do. You never know whether she agrees with what you say, or whether she thinks you are insane and so she had better say yes. But when you talk with her, she says 'yes yes' -- but does she mean yes?"

"Catspat quality -- she has a tremendous capacity for admiration." Good manners -- very rare among dealers. "Her aristocratic behavior is also fictitious. Sometimes I believe that at night she goes into the public library, on a shelf there..."

The fiction -- "It is what I think about her, what stays in my mind about her. I'm not quite sure she is real. But it is something I like very much."

Paul did portrait of her as an "adoring, reverencing dog" -- that is how she

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Dorothy Miller - 9/18/74

Met Betty about 1939, when she was at the Wakefield Gallery. Dorothy and Alfred Barr went to all the galleries then but not to the Wakefield, which was off the map. They met at a lunch given by Deborah Calkins, the woman who got modern art into Fortune; waiting in the anteroom, Dorothy saw Betty, also waiting, whom she didn't know, and thought she was exceptionally beautiful -- "She didn't look like Garbo, as some people said, but she was very striking, very blond, her hair worn just the way it is now but very blond. I wondered who the hell she was."

Peggy Guggenheim really didn't pass the torch to Betty -- "all she was interested in was getting to Venice."

Barney Newman was always around, and one felt he really ran the gallery. He was always explaining, giving his theories. Betty herself always seemed excited, nervous. Dorothy didn't know she painted herself until years later.

Art world very different in the thirties. Very few dealers interested in American art - Marian Willard, Antoinette ~~Polsner~~ ^{Canberra} (?), Edith Halpert, Georgia Passadoit (?) ((all women)). Got to know these dealers awfully well. Betty was always totally honest, but not a businesswoman at all. Never propped her artists -- "I sometimes felt she was almost too ladylike for that." But MOMA acquired because of Barr's eye anyway.

Her important artists went elsewhere because they weren't selling. Kootz got Bazziotes, Egan got some others, Janis got the rest. Before that, Betty's gallery seemed like a cooperative. The artists were all great friends. They were still friendly when Dorothy did her 15 Americans show in 1952, but within a year afterwards they were all quarrelling. Still and Rothko fought, Newman was suing Rinehardt, etc.

The most Pollock ever got from Janis was \$3000, for Blue Poles. The picture was priced at \$7000 - Janis knocked off \$1000 and took 50%. Dorothy had it in a travelling show, was just about to cable MOMA to buy it when she got a cable saying it was sold - to Fred Olsen, of Olin Mathhiesen, in 1958. Olsen later sold it for \$32,000. Last year the museum in Canberra bought it for \$2 million.

Parsons gallery - "We always thought of it as one of those with the most class, but not very successful. Okada keeps her going. Also I imagine her rich friends help.

Some years ago Betty decided to cut the number of her artists in half, and discard the second raters. This was when she was still at 15 E 57th. In a short time she had as many as before, many of whom were less good than the discards.

Her taste is pretty eclectic, and she does tend to show her friends too much. But the average dealer asks first, Can we sell it? Betty doesn't. She asks, 'Do I like it?' Marian Willard the same.

Tuttle doesn't interest Dorothy as much as ~~Chuck~~ Boterf.

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Tony Smith - 10/9/74 at 647 Berkeley Ave., Orange (OR 2-3922)

Lives in a large brick Georgian house, ivy-covered, in an old suburban park. He was born about a mile away, in S. Orange, in house his daughter now lives in. He bought this one some years ago, thinking brick would be ~~much~~ safer than wood shingle -- he had a lot of paintings then by all his old friends. But after the Newark riots and the increasing vandalism in the area he decided to give away the paintings, to museums. Now the house looks rather barren. In back, filling the entire lawn, is his huge modular sculpture "Smug" (the first such was "Smoke," the next "Smog," and when it came time to name this one his secretary suggested "Smug" and it took). When I remarked that it had the visionary look of the paintings we had been talking about, he said, "Well, thanks, but I don't think I'm in that league."

Smith is still handsome in spite of his illness. Silver-grey hair sweeping back from his forehead in waves; a fringe of white beard; large, very bright eyes behind rimless glasses; good features. He talks deliberately, in a rather high voice like Shawn's. He was born in 1912, is 62, and says he won't live to be 64. He can't sleep at night, goes to bed in early a.m. and sleeps until two or three pm. He had a full tumbler of vodka with ice when I arrived, and put away two more of them during the three hour interview. He started by saying he'd had had luck with interviews, and wishes I wouldn't quote or even identify him by name in the piece.

Betty, he said, was someone he was very fond of, but she had really "bitched" things for herself as a result of her own character. "What she cared about was discovering talent. You know those stones she picks up on the beach at her Long Island house, and brings home and paints? And then they just pile up in a corner somewhere. Well, she treats artists a little the same way."

Ad Reinhardt, he says, had twenty-two shows at Parsons without selling a painting (check this).

He feels that Betty was really closer to the lesser talents in the gallery, people like Coggeshall and Stamos. Maybe she was even a little afraid of the top four. "Clyfford Still -- I quake when I see him." ~~xxxx~~ Of course she was very close to Newman. But all four were a little mad.

"They really changed the art of our time. They changed it from a matter of formal and spatial relationships to a visionary experience. Art became a totality, not a series of relationships. For the first time in Western art these men created an instantaneous experience, a ~~xxxx~~ unified vision. In previous art, what you had was a surface, to which marks were applied. But with them there was no differentiation between the surface and the work.."

Tony first heard about Betty at a party at Stamos' loft on 26th street - an exotic space hung with rugs and fabrics like an Oriental tent. Stamos had done a portrait of Betty that was very striking, like something out of a gothic novel. He didn't meet her when she was running the Wakefield. The impression she gave there was of being responsive to sensibility, but not to art of any great strength. He also thinks there ~~xxx~~ were overtones of the ballet there. The magazine View, Surrealism, Charles Henri Ford, and the ballet were closely related then, and he thinks of Betty as being part of that.

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Tony Smith - 2

When Peggy Guggenheim left for Europe, her advisor Howard Putzel continued the gallery for about a year, but then he died. Peggy's artists got together in Provincetown that summer (Tony thinks), and discussed whether to stay together or split up and go to different galleries. There were very few contemporary galleries then in NY, and they were in a dilemma. Finally they decided to try to stay together, and to go to Betty Parsons who was still running the modern section of Brandt then.

First exhibition at Betty's own gallery was Newman's show of Northwest Coast Indian Art. It had great variety and very high quality - a tremendous diversity of objects never seen before, from the basement of the Natural History Museum. It set the tone for an entirely different kind of gallery. Most of the NY galleries then ~~were~~ reflected the European pattern: small paintings in frames, wall-to-wall carpeting - the painting as an object of decoration. Betty's was the first to have the appearance of an artist's studio or a contemporary loft. White, absolutely bare, no decoration - it had almost a seaside air, with the freshness and cleanliness of a fishing village. Even MOMA under Alfred Barr had a sort of Bauhaus chic, with Mies chairs and touches of elegance. Betty's was absolutely spare, and a very long way from Mies van der Rohe chic of any kind. It was not a middle-class interior. Tony thinks this was largely a matter of Betty's own temperament. Maybe Hofmann's wife was an influence, too.

The Tiger's Eye was an important element in the emerging art - look up Newman's articles in it.

Betty gave her artists absolute freedom in that stripped, clean space. The artists were not a very cohesive group at first -- Pollock didn't even come to Rothko's first show there. But as time went on, the freedom that Betty gave them became a challenge to them all. She never interfered with the hanging of their shows, which they did for one another. Rothko made the first really big paintings that were not murals (Pollock, who had studied under Benton, tended to see big paintings as murals). Betty never said a word about their size -- whereas Sam Kootz was always telling his artists that big pictures wouldn't sell. Her reticence was like an invitation to do something, to use that space (vacuum).

The gallery had marvelous proportions (Tony thinks her present space is terrible). Most galleries were long and narrow, but here you could hang an eighteen-foot picture on one wall and another big canvas on another wall and they would complement instead of fighting with each other.

"I can't even remember Betty taking part in the hanging of our shows. She would stand there in the doorway and watch everything, but she wouldn't say a word." Once, Rothko wanted to show more paintings than the gallery could accommodate. So he and Tony and a few others came in late one afternoon with lumber and tools and food and beer and stayed there, locked in, overnight, building a floating wall in the room; Betty had said only that her lease prevented her from nailing anything to the floor or ceiling.

Berney used to say something about how she allowed her gallery to be the closest thing to an artist's studio. Pollock changed his image from figurative to the kind of overall painting that made him famous, Barney made his breakthrough, and Rothko made his. "I honestly think it wouldn't have happened without Betty. She really was a kind of inspirational figure. But once they were recognized as the most important artists of the century, they also expected to be carried along by Betty -- and this was not her sort of thing. She really wasn't a dealer in that traditional sense.

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Tony Smith - 3

None of her sculptors were comparable to the painters. The visionary, unified image never existed in sculpture. Tony says he can only compare it to the effect of someone crossing the desert and suddenly, reaching the top of a hill, seeing in front of him the great gate of a mosque. The only other experience in art that's really comparable. The gothic cathedral is a sum of many parts, but the mosque gate is inseparable from its parts.

Tomlin was not on the same level as the big four. He was still making marks on a background. Pollock stood up from having Tomlin stay, when they went to Betty and asked her to drop the others.

Tony was against Pollock's moving to Janis. Lee was very insistent on it, and very bitter against Betty for not selling him. Janis could guarantee Pollock an income. Pollock himself didn't want to talk about it. He was a much gentler man than he's been pictured; rough only when drunk. The really terrifying one was Still. After quarrelling with Ossorio one summer, Still appeared at Ossorio's house in Easthampton one morning, and proceeded to cut his own painting (very large) out of its frame, which was right beside the front door. Ossorio came downstairs just as he was leaving with the canvas rolled up under his arm.

cf. with Ossorio

The anima image - from Jung (cf Yolande Jacobi's synopsis of Jungian archetypes, now in paperback). The anima is the source of inspiration, backing, reassurance. But the danger is in confusing the anima with a real person. Once they left her, they became very bitter against Betty, altho he never heard Newman talk against her. Rothko had such enormous vanity that he came close to the imperial madness in what he would expect. Once, hearing that Tony had admired a painting of Pollock's, he demanded an explanation: "I thought you were committed to me."

All three were totally mad. Their quarrels were assinine, petty, and incomprehensible. The first real bitterness surfaced after Pollock's death, when his prices suddenly jumped. "Jackson never thought of himself as a god. He thought he was the best, but on a relative scale."

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Hedda Sterne - 9/14/74 at Springs

She met Betty in 1943, two years after coming to this country from Rumania. She was "exactly the same as she is now." Adolph Gottlieb was also having his first show there, and he told Hedda that apparently it took the same length of time to arrive from Bucharest as it did from Brooklyn.

"Betty is like a great dancer. She dances her way through life. She has a fantastic ability to adjust to new realities, and she is always graceful."

Her openness -- "Anybody doing anything could have had their first show ~~with Betty~~ with Betty. She's such a traveller -- she is always open to new things. Whatever puzzled her, whatever intrigued her -- that was what she responded to. And at the same time she remains undyingly herself. It must be in her genes -- she has wisdom spontaneously, she is naturally wise. It is a kind of courage and a native originality."

The artists helped her finance her own gallery at first -- may be unique? She started on a shoestring. Peggy Guggenheim had left and her artists were stranded. "Later they all left Betty for fame and money. But of all the galleries around then, she is almost the only one still going, so I don't think she could be such a bad businesswoman. Betty took the chances."

Hans Hofmann one of her first helpers.

"Betty always has the courage to trust her instincts, what I sometimes call the 'night brain.' She herself is a real authentic person, who acts always in her own way. Things find her, not the other way round. That's why I say she is so Chinese. There is a correspondence between the events of her life and her fate. In Betty you cannot separate body & spirit.

"And at the end of her life everything goes up for her, up and up and up."

Helping artists -- anybody from out of town could always stay in her studio apartment.

How she stands at ~~her~~ her openings -- her mind elsewhere?

"She never loses a friend, unless she wants to. There is a terrific continuity in her life."

When she travels, she paints. She is perfectly at home anywhere. She has her own aura that she takes with her -- she is at home anywhere in the world."

Newman the greatest influence on her. He strengthened her faith in that whole group. But she would never be disloyal. Altho she may appear vague and whimsical, she is a very strong personality. Also, "she is without laziness."

Process -- the old-fashioned spirit of America, to be interested in the journey rather than the arrival, the making rather than the result. This is going out now, but she has it very strongly.

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Richard Tuttle - 743 11th Ave., 9/17/74

^{Rahway,}
Born 1941, New Jersey. Came to NY after college ^(Trinity, in Hartford) planning four years at Cooper Union, but quit after a couple of months. Then a brief stint in Air Force - mutually incompatible. Back in NY, he went to a Whitney opening, and Jock Truman asked a friend of his if he knew anybody who wanted a job at the gallery, and Tuttle said he did. He says it's an ideal job for an artist -- afternoon hours only, \$50 a week then (1964), and chance to associate with artists.

"I never had any idea of showing at Betty's - that wasn't even in my head." But some of his things were taken for a group show at Pasadena Museum, and then Mrs. Burton Tremaine, who likes to get there ahead of the dealer, bought several pieces, and so he felt obliged to ask Betty for a show.

"I'll always remember ~~what she said~~ her comment. She said, 'Richard, do you really want to get involved in all this?'" The gallery was opening late the following September (1965), and Betty said she'd put a few things around, but nobody would come. A lot of people did come, and Tuttle has been showing there ever since.

Gallery is unique, he says, because of Betty's attitude that "the slower the better." She has always thought an artist should mature slowly, used to say she would never show anyone under 35. Will not push an artist, and is interested primarily in his growth as an artist.

But Tuttle has often thought of going elsewhere, mainly because "with my last three shows, I've felt that Betty didn't really understand my work." Jock Truman has given him support lately, not Betty.

His situation there is still a good one, he says, because he has not become a friend of Betty's. This is the danger -- when an artist becomes her friend, competitiveness gets into it because she is an artist also. "And she abuses her friends." Tony Smith (over the house), Agnes Martin. Without friendship the relationship still has vitality, but when friendship develops it becomes complicated. Tuttle thinks this is the real reason artists leave her, not money.

"Betty never celebrates an artist. There's too much competition for that." It is not true that she's a bad businesswoman; she's a very good one, and has made lots of money for Okada, Ossorio and others. She can make money any time she wants. But that's not her real interest. She cares about growth. Betty says that none of the artists who have left her have done anything since -- meaning that they haven't continued to develop in their work. Tuttle agrees with this, with one exception (Agnes Martin) - says Rothko had reached his ultimate style when he left, etc.

"There are really two Betty's. One is the person who's always comfortable with artists -- all artists adore Betty, -- and then there's the aristocrat. There's the little girl and the sophisticate. I remember once, a group of us at dinner were discussing Buckminster Fuller's idea that we could do without money, that if someone needed a pair of shoes he would just go to the shoemaker and take one, and the shoemaker would get food from someone else, and so forth. Betty, who had been very quiet, spoke up at last and said, "But how would people pay their servants?"

Betty the empire-builder - Tony Smith's comment. This is one of the problems of becoming her friend.

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Tuttle (cont)

Her intuition in choosing whom she'll show, Tuttle says, is as much personal and social as it is esthetic. She has to like you and feel comfortable with you, as well as liking the art. All become part of her empire.

"Some people make their destiny and others are made by it." Tuttle says Betty is the latter. She happened to inherit the abstract expressionist group -- didn't really choose them. Because of her years in Europe it was easier for her than for others to see their work -- she could relate it to Surrealism, and to the Europeans who came here during the war; she had seen it coming, in a sense.

"I think of her as a kind of 20th century spirit. In a way, we've ^{all} just been working out ideas of energy that were first stated much earlier. In 1905, the dialectic between cubism and fauvism had already been stated. Einstein had discovered $E=MC^2$. A lot of what we've been doing ever since is just working out the equivalents of these discoveries. Betty was in touch with all that. There's a real correlation between her life and what's happened in this century."

Tuttle says she gives him complete freedom in hanging his shows, announcements, etc. Also, that if anything she sets his prices too high.

Travels - Trip to Turkey in 19 , with Betty and Mr. & Mrs. Gordon Washburn. They went to Istanbul, then down the coast of Anatolia to Ankara and into the Hittite country. Betty sketching all the time. She is a real traveller, not a tourist; she really absorbs everything, though not much interested in guide books and historical lore. Going to see the tomb of Ataturk, Tuttle found himself angered by the vast expense lavished on it, when the rest of the country was so poor. Thought how much better to have spent the money on tractors. Betty disagreed: "This is what the poor like." (noblesse oblige).

Tuttle likes Betty's painting, says it's comfortable to live with -- "You wouldn't want to live with Blue Poles, but Betty's things are very pleasant, and very much part of her own personality." With her wood sculpture, he sees her social talent at work: Each piece of wood is a person, "whom she has brought together for a party."

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Parsons - quotes

"For one reason or another, she has elected to play the role of midwife for practically all the most gifted and original American artists of her time...She has filled her role with style, conviction, and a personal manner and outlook on the machinations of art dealing, and the duties of projecting the work of her artists, which reflect all the subversive conspiratorial sympathies of an admiring fellow-artist — and nothing whatever of the usual power aspirations or money worship of art dealers at their worst."

*Bryan Robertson, preface to
Whitechapel catalog, 1968.

"Betty said once that a watercolor was like a telegram, which was why she liked the medium. That is to say, it is economical and pungent, brief but momentous. In various media beside watercolor, Betty has focused this incisiveness and speed on her gift for color."

- Lawrence Alloway, Whitechapel catalog

"No gallery anywhere has equalled her record. She has always selected from the point of view of an artist, never of a gallery director...A visitor to the Parsons Gallery is immediately struck by a mood unlike that of a commercial art gallery. It is more like an artist's cooperative, except that the spectrum of styles and talents is much wider than most artist's juries would permit."

- Lawrence Campbell, ARTNews, Jan. 1973

"Mrs. Parsons has never lacked for courage. It is not a virtue signally associated with art dealers...but then she is not, at least for me, primarily a dealer...In a sense like that in which a painter is referred to as a painter's painter or a poet as a poet's poet, Mrs. Parsons' is an artist's-and-critic's-gallery: a place where art goes on and is not just shown and sold."

- Clement Greenberg, quoted by Alloway in Vogue, Oct. 1, 1955
from catalog to "Ten Years" show. 1963

John Perreault, in Art in America, reviewed the Montclair retrospective as an "eye-opener," added: "A New York retrospective is not unimaginable, indeed, it is required." Her paintings have a "nonaggressive spirituality." Her painted wood pieces have great sense of humor.

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Carlyle Burrows, "Art Reviews: New Shows Strong in Experiment"

...

"Of the galleries experimenting with new talent and producing advanced exhibitions, the Stable is one of the most auspicious in a setting interestingly transformed from an equine habitat to one of art. Starting off the season with paintings and other art by Rob Rauschenberg and Cy Twombly, two young newcomers to the abstract field, this show place is informed to a degree. Neither artist, whatever else he demonstrates, scarcely tends to advance the idea of economy, in paint or space consideration. For, modern non-objective art is nothing if not prodigal of means, much less of the ideas which sustain them.

Rauschenberg's rippled, papier mache surfaces concealing in monochrome a faint incentive toward montage; afford a shimmering, then ascetic expression not unpleasing to the eye, once the latter becomes accustomed to wide spaces of inert color. But, apart from painting, this artist's invention in stones and old wood beams, selected carefully for their poetic interest and sensitively arranged, is considerable, and compensates with formal appreciation of "sculpture" what in painting his taste clearly lacks. Twombly's paintings, meanwhile, touch delicately upon the sources of life, being tacitly traceable to landscapes and earthly subjects. In freely brushed contours of black and white, they are more in an accredited trend for expressive abstract themes, from which they derive a pleasurable meaning and much taste."