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The Critic's Notebook

by *The Editors*

On Seneca, Alice Trumbull Mason, Bach & more from the world of culture.

This week: On Seneca, Alice Trumbull Mason, Bach & more.



Alice Trumbull Mason painting Mobile Tensions, 1954. Photograph by John D. Schiff.

Alice Trumbull Mason: Pioneer of American Abstraction (Rizzoli Electa) and “Alice Trumbull Mason: Shutter Paintings,” at Washburn Gallery, New York (through January 15): Alice Trumbull Mason (1904–71) is an artist deserving of reevaluation. A new monograph published by Rizzoli, and an exhibition now on view at Washburn Gallery, should help in that rediscovery. A descendant of John Trumbull, “The Painter of the Revolution,” Alice lived and painted at the center of the modernist revolution in American art. An accomplished young portraitist working in an Ashcan style, she became in the 1930s a “pioneer of American abstraction,” as the recent monograph edited by Elisa Wouk Almino ably attests. Marilyn R. Brown, Will Heinrich, Meghan Forbes, Thomas Micchelli, and Christina Weyl, along with Almino, all contribute essays to this handsome volume, which includes a foreword by Emily Mason, Alice’s painter-daughter who died in 2019. Alice Mason’s experimental style ranged widely across forms of expression, from biomorphic curves to hard-edged patterns. An exhibition now on view at the venerable Washburn Gallery, which represents Mason’s estate, looks to her late “shutter paintings,” with prismatic stripes that conceal as much as they reveal. – James Panero

WASHBURN GALLERY

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