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Six Portable Murals

posted by [Jonathan Griffin](#) on July 17, 2013



The only painting to be included in the exhibition "California Design 1930–1965: Living in a Modern Way," at LACMA in 2011, was by the little known artist Elizabeth McCord. Her work had originally been included in an exhibition titled "Six Portable Murals," organized by the Los Angeles Art Association in 1951.

"Six Portable Murals" advertised itself as a showcase of paintings "designed especially for mid-century architecture." Why the organizers would choose to describe the art in this way is a conundrum, especially considering the stature of the artists included, such as Knud Merrild and Lorus Feitelson.

As a current exhibition of her paintings at See Line Gallery shows, McCord too was an accomplished colourist, and an innovator long before the term 'Hard Edge' was coined in 1959, and before the expressionist Richard Diebenkorn became associated with the Ocean Park area of Santa Monica when he moved there in 1966.

That she has not enjoyed the exposure, until now, of her male peers perhaps speaks about the prejudice that female artists faced in mid-century California, relegated to making décor rather than progressive artistic experiments. Maybe, too, the framing of the exhibition as 'portable murals' reveals a broader popular unease about the status of abstraction in the 1950s; the intriguing possibility remains that it was the artists themselves who coined the exhibition's title.

Image: Elizabeth McCord, *Green Circle*, 1948. Acrylic on board under glass, 18X14.



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