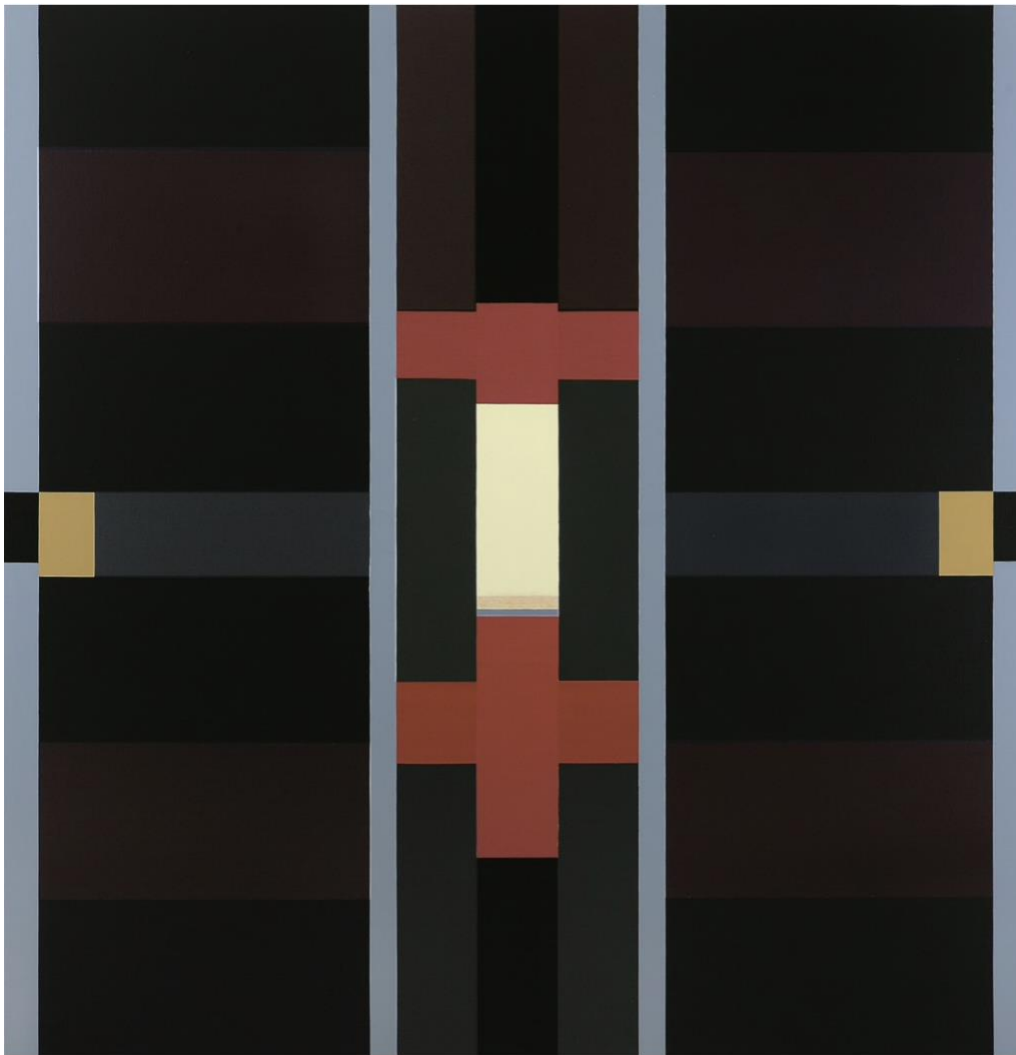


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Fanny Sanín exhibition at Women in the Arts museum follows movement to spotlight female abstract artists

By Sonia Rao
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Fanny Sanín's "Acrylic No. 2," part of the "Equilibrium" exhibition at the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Female abstract artists such as Sanín historically went unnoticed or were accused of copying men. (Fanny Sanín/National Museum of Women in the Arts)

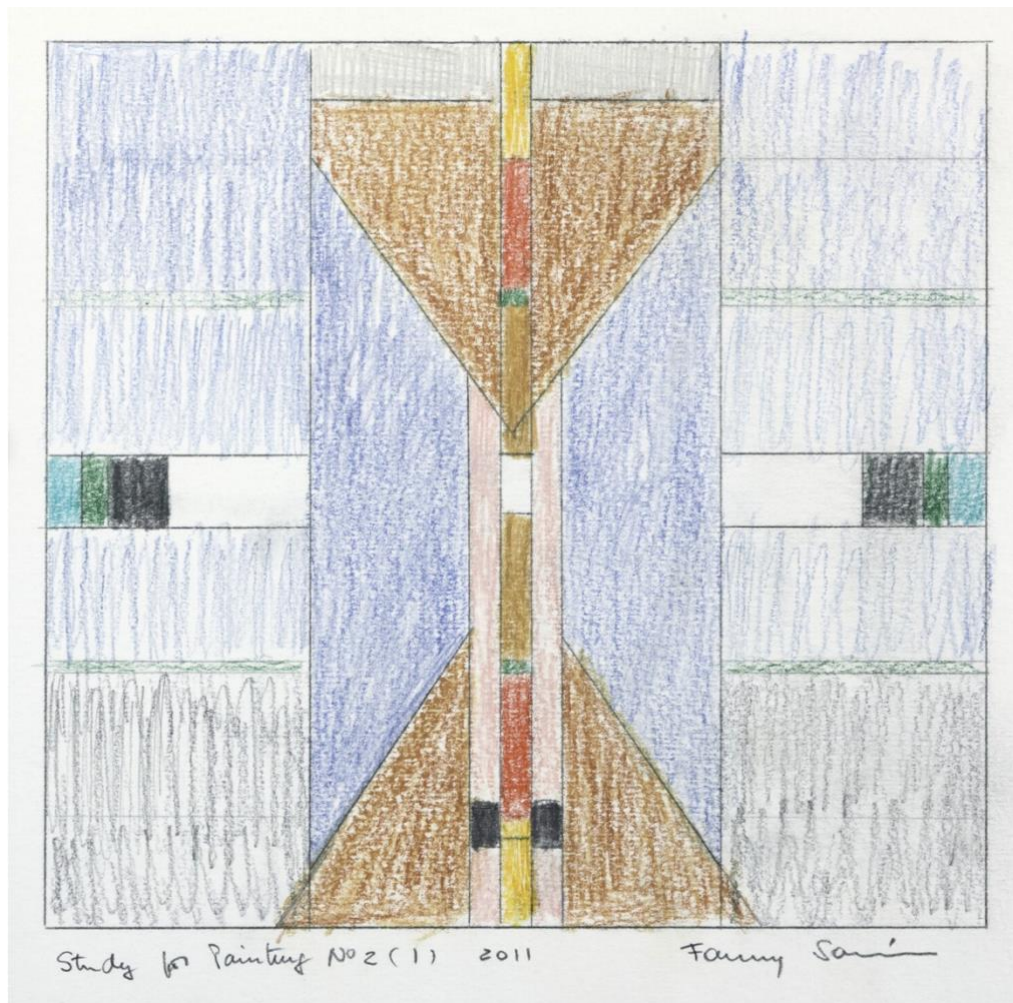
Fanny Sanín creates from within.

The Colombian-born artist's abstract geometric paintings, a pair of which are now on view at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, aren't based on objects in the physical world, but generated from within her mind. The solo exhibition, "Equilibrium," aims to highlight Sanín's meticulous process, showcasing preliminary drawings alongside two completed paintings.

“It’s the idea that an abstract composition can be just as painstakingly detailed and planned as a representational image,” says associate curator Ginny Treanor.

Most of the 36 works on display use bold colors and sharp lines. Eleven colored-pencil drawings accompany Sanín’s 2011 “Acrylic No. 2,” a 62-by-60-inch work on canvas. Five acrylic studies precede her 2016 “Composition No. 1,” a 25.5-by-40-inch acrylic and pencil composition on paper. “Equilibrium” also includes her work from the 1960s and ’70s, some of which fall under abstract expressionism.

The exhibition is part of a larger movement that seeks to shed light on female abstract artists, who have often been overlooked or accused of copying the work of male artists. “Women of Abstract Expressionism,” a larger exhibition that opened at the Denver Art Museum last year, got the effort going.



Sanín’s “Study for Painting No. 2 (1).” In the early modern period, women were steered to still lifes or portraiture — not abstraction. (Fanny Sanín/National Museum of Women in the Arts)

“If you think of someone like Lee Krasner, who was Jackson Pollock’s wife, or Elaine de Kooning, Willem de Kooning’s wife — they were a little overshadowed by their significant others,” Treanor says. “The exhibitions that focus on women in abstraction are important to reveal that women have been doing this and it is an important part of the story.”

Treanor adds that there may have been fewer female artists working in abstraction because, in the early modern period, women were steered toward still-life painting or portraiture. The playing field wasn't equal and purposefully so.

“There was this idea of women not having the same intellectual capacity as male artists,” she says. “Someone like Fanny Sanín, when it comes to this pure concrete abstraction, really shows the fallacy in that way of thinking.”

Sanín's work has been a part of the NMWA collection for almost three decades, but this is the first time the museum has dedicated a show exclusively to a geometric abstract artist. Under the umbrella of abstract art, Treanor says, geometric forms seem to attract less attention than expressionist ones.

“I think that's across the board, too — for men *and* women,” she says. “I don't know why that is.”

The hope is to raise awareness of Sanín as an artist, Treanor says, to “place her within this larger trajectory of geometric abstraction.”

“We wanted to highlight Fanny, who's been working in this mode since the late 1960s,” she adds. “She's really someone who's been at it for a long time — she's always done it. She is part of that broader history.”