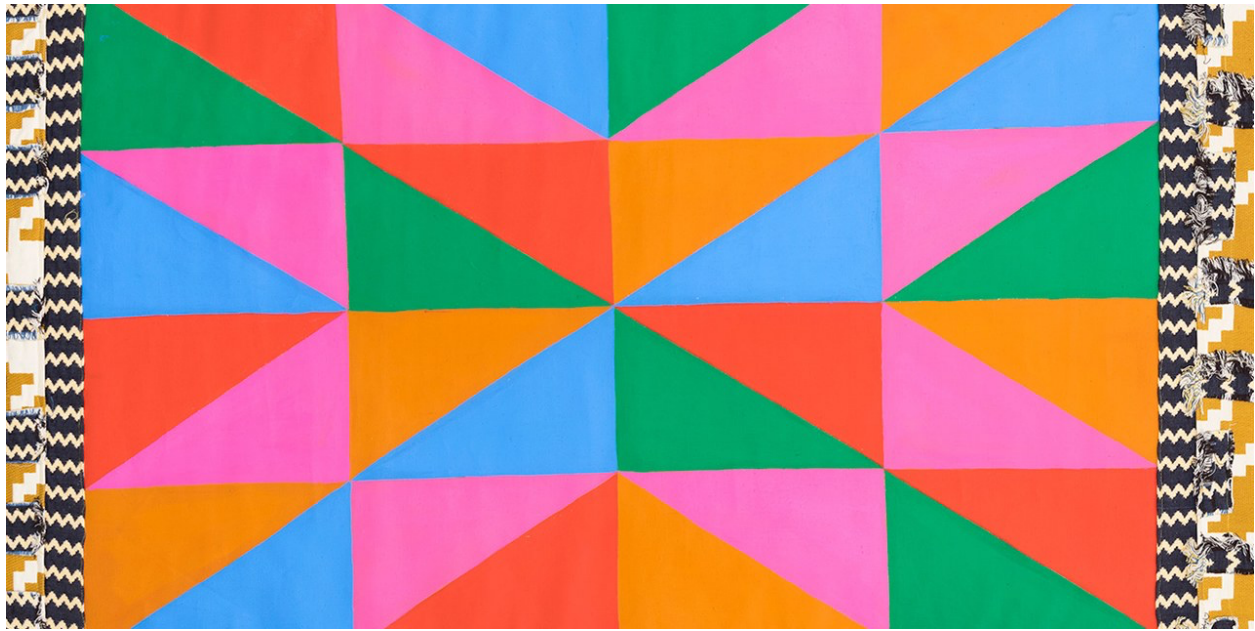


# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST



A work by pioneering quilt artist Faith Ringgold that is included in the exhibition. The show will be on view through May 2020. Photo: Roman Dean

## Exhibition

### **The Pattern and Decoration Movement Is the Missing Feminist Piece of Our Maximalist Moment**

A new MOCA exhibition reminds viewers of P&D's quilts, wallpapers, and long-overlooked significance

By

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The new [MOCA Los Angeles exhibition](#), *With Pleasure: Pattern and Decoration in American Art 1972–1985*, is a maximalist delight to behold. Replete with feathers, glitter, embroidery, quilts, wallpaper, and other such explosions of expression, the works included pay collective homage to decorative arts from all over the world.

But taking delight in ornament was more than an aesthetic choice for participants in the pattern and decoration movement, often referred to simply as P&D. Some experts even credit its collective outburst of creativity as the first artistic movement developed by a majority of female artists. Women like [Miriam Schapiro](#), [Joyce Kozloff](#), and Cynthia Carlson, who were just as interested in feminism as they were in breaking down the hierarchy of fine art of the 1970s, were the individuals who made it happen. “What had ruled the day—and I’m being glib when I phrase it this way—was the cool, gray

minimalism that was sanctioned as true art and gerrymandered to include only those who were white and male,” exhibition curator Anna Katz explains of the movement's origins, when speaking to AD PRO.



Jane Kaufmann's monumental pink, purple, and floral quilt—which uses a striking assortment of different stitches. This and other works are included in an accompanying exhibition catalogue out from Yale Press. Photo: Courtesy of LA MOCA

Sound familiar? It's a sentiment that rings true within the context of our own time—not just in light of a resurgent interest in maximalism, but also in terms of the current cultural and political climate. In the '70s, P&D artists weren't interested in traditional hierarchies. Instead they embraced the patchwork quilts and floral motifs often demeaned as women's imagery and turned them into expressions of gravitas.

Jane Kaufmann didn't sleep under her colorful beaded crazy quilt—she hung it on a wall with the grandeur of a painting. The work uses over 100 different types of stitches as an homage to many generations of anonymous women whose handicrafts did not merit the attention of fine art. Cynthia Carlson applied her floral wallpaper installations—symphonies of color, pattern, and stencils—to walls by filling pastry piping bags with paint and using them to create decorative swirls. The finished piece defied the idea that likening art to wallpaper was an insult. Miriam Schapiro took the kitsch appeal of a heart and transformed it into an eight-foot abstract painting, part of a body of work she called *femme*. A portmanteau term that combines the words *female* and *collage*, *femme* codified women's practices of interior decoration, sewing, and scrapbooking into a forceful visual presence.

In spite of the influence of P&D on interior design—think [Gloria Vanderbilt's pattern-on-pattern bedroom](#), where chintz, paisley, and plaid all lived in harmonious juxtaposition, and [Diana Vreeland's red Billy Baldwin–designed living room](#)—the Museum of Contemporary Art exhibition is the first scholarly survey of this American art movement. Even though, Katz points out, P&D was commercially successful, critically received, and institutionally recognized, it was overlooked by the traditional art-historical establishment. (This also explains how she got through a Ph.D. before ever even hearing about it.)

“But let me say this,” Katz stresses. “The most interesting way to figure out how we got to our present moment—with its meteoric rise of ceramics, unabashed decorative and maximalist sensibilities, and high number of artists who are appropriating craft and craft traditions—is to look at the influence of pattern and decoration.” A women-centric north star, it would seem.



One of Miriam Schapiro's femmage hearts, the 1985 work *Heartland*. Photo: Zach Stovall