



**Berta Walker**  
**GALLERY**  
heart by VARUJAN BOGHOSIAN

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## ERNA PARTOLL:

### *"Symphonies of shape and color"*

Celebrating the arrival of spring, Berta Walker Gallery is featuring the art of Erna Partoll as part of its celebration of women's month. Also shown is a group exhibition including Nancy Craig, Grace Hopkins, Cynthia Packard, Sky Power, Laura Shabott, Nancy Whorf and a collection of African bronze and carved wood sculpture.

Berta Walker Gallery is open Saturdays, 12-4, and always by appointment and "Walker's Windows" greet visitors day and night.



Erna Partoll

Erna Partoll has exhibited with Berta Walker Gallery for almost 30 years. Her abstract paintings focus on color and composition with archetypal shapes of circle, square, wave, and arc. The art speaks to the viewer with exuberant colors and a deeply resonating geometric vocabulary, including spheres within spheres, undulations that are like the roll of a hill or the timeless movement of water, and angles that rise up like mountains. "I grew up in Switzerland, in the mountains," she explains. "The mountains are very powerful, just like the ocean. These environments put you in perspective as a human being, in relation to being or not being, which triggers a whole range of responses." Partoll's intuited visions are not simple landscapes, they are symphonies of shape and color. They are elemental. They are portals, offering access to a more instinctive relationship with the universe around us.

Born 1932 in St. Gallen, Switzerland, Partoll left home at the age of 21 and, after several years of traveling and working in different countries, arrived in the United States in 1960. She enrolled at the Art Students League in New York and studied with Theodoros Stamos for four years. She also studied with Will Barnet, another influential teacher at the League. At the time Partoll was studying with Stamos, he was working on color fields like his good friend, Mark Rothko. Thus, Partoll grounded her understanding of color work in this environment and notes: "Colors give the illusion of depth. They go back and forth and have a sense of space. That is the flow of painting." Partoll works in acrylics and layers color over color with glazes in order to gain depth and clarity. For Partoll, that focus on shape and depth is critical for creating a good composition, her

ultimate goal. And when that goal is achieved, the image expresses an emotion, a feeling caught in time. "Painting is capturing something in time and holding it there. A good painter can capture time." In her recent interview with Susannah Elisabeth Fulcher for the *Provincetown Independent*, Partoll noted: "You don't have to paint the waves exactly as you see them, but if you are able to transpose the energy of that moment onto the canvas, that will resonate within another person."



Erna Partoll and African sculptures

Writing about her childhood in Switzerland, Fulcher notes that Partoll never considered art to be a professional possibility. "My father's idea was that I should become a secretary, so I found a job in an insurance company in Switzerland after school and hated it." Fulcher notes: "Demonstrating remarkable independence for a young single woman in the early 1950s, Partoll set off on a journey that would take her to London, Paris, Montreal, Toronto, New York City, and, in her late 30s, Provincetown." Partoll emphasized: "I was interested in languages and curious how people live in different places." She is candid that while she always found ways to support herself, at times it was quite difficult. "I was a mother's helper in London, a translator in Paris. I took courses in literature and history at the Sorbonne and spent countless hours in museums." When Partoll arrived in New York, she studied days and took night classes at the League while working days and/or nights at office jobs. In New York, Partoll found what she'd been looking for all her life: the opportunity to devote herself to her passion for painting and working in the arts.



Erna Partoll

[Provincetown Independent article on Erna Partoll](#)



Erna Partoll



Erna Partoll



Nancy Craig, Laura Shabott and African King and Queen



Grace Hopkins and Erna Partoll

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