

WASHBURN



THE NEW YORKER

March 7, 2022

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

ART

Anne Ryan

This American modernist—a poet, a painter, and a printmaker—didn't begin to make collages until she was in her late fifties. Seeing a Kurt Schwitters exhibition in 1948 prompted the shift. But Ryan, who was part of the New York School, didn't favor the German artist's Dada-inflected style; instead, her exacting, lyrical sensibility was a quiet strain of Abstract Expressionism. The untitled works, made between 1948 and 1954 (the year Ryan died), on view in this elegant show are small, many just five by four inches. But wisps of torn paper and scraps of fabric assume bold proportions in these compressed compositions. Stray fibres become decisive lines; minor wrinkles offer rich texture. One particularly striking work centers on a black oval, within which a beige crescent and a burgundy parallelogram, bisected by a line of shredded gauze, are terse phrases in an abstract stanza.

—*Jobanna Fateman*

Jan. 28-Apr. 2

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