



Beyond Baroque Exhibition in the Mike Kelley Gallery  
681 Venice Blvd, Venice, CA 90291  
June 1-July 31, 2021

## Paulina Peavy: Etherian Channeler

Curated by Laura Whitcomb

Paulina Peavy's (1901–1999) path as an artist centered around her convening with beings and forces beyond the visible plane to create her work, similar to the artists Hilma af Klint, Forrest Bess, and Agnes Pelton. Peavy's story is unprecedented as she claimed to channel a discarnate entity named Lacamo who "travelled on an etherian ship." Peavy's paintings use layering in ways unique to the art canon. Beginning in the 1930s, each of the multiple layers she added created new layers of meaning over a successive fifty-year timeframe. Guided by Lacamo, each layer symbolically represents a new revelation, thereby activating the viewer's ability to convene with the unknown. The final layers, completed in the 1980s, present abstracted crystalline formations as a way to equip the viewer with the tools to receive and absorb Lacamo's wisdom. Peavy's cosmology merged ancient philosophies with astrocultural practices. This exhibition will explore the complex intersection of these phenomena and their foretelling of a utopian future accomplished through the dissolution of gender.

Peavy's roots in California, where she lived and painted from 1923 to 1943, were deeply embedded in the emerging abstract art scene of the 1920s, where enthusiastic explorations of the occult were embraced. A student of Hans Hofmann at Chouinard Art Institute in 1931, she joined the circle of California's first Surrealists led by Lorser Feitelson. She moved with members of the occult-inclined Group of Eight as well as the Synchronists, the first abstract art movement in America. Beginning in the late 1920s, Peavy played a vital role in the emerging West Coast art scene. She established a gallery, school, and salon under her name, where she conducted her own classes. Here she hosted classes of the foundational Los Angeles Art Students League, and showed these artists' works alongside her own. Her legacy in the emerging West Coast art scene has been forgotten, in no small part because she had already moved to New York City when the West Coast art scene was gaining its most influential chroniclers, in addition to the fact that her cosmology was considered too radical for mainstream culture to accept.

In California Peavy showed at some of the most significant galleries of her time, including the Stendahl Gallery in Los Angeles. She was included in the opening of the San Francisco Museum of Art, and thirty of her paintings were exhibited during the Golden Gate International Exposition of 1939-40, where Diego Rivera exhibited mural work. Peavy had close alliances with muralists, such as Orozco, and like them shared a fascination with the occult.

In the early 1930s Peavy became a member of a Spiritual Science congregation (later the Cosmic Unity Church No. 9) led by Ida L. Ewing in Santa Ana. It was there that she first channeled Lacamo, her astrocultural entity. Lacamo revealed layers of wisdom based on a cosmology of 12,000-year cycles with 3,000-year seasons, in the process guiding her to create paintings she often co-signed with Lacamo. In order to channel Lacamo she made elaborate masks that combine surrealist touches with indigenous themes. Peavy masked herself with a composite representation of humanity to communicate with the unseen world.

Peavy was encouraged to move to Manhattan after the positive response to her 1935 exhibit at Delphic Studios in New York City, a gallery that exhibited work by other important occultist painters. Many of Peavy's painted panels from the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition (some oversized at 72"x42") were also exhibited in New York. Peavy lived and worked in New York from 1943 until close to the end of her life. She died in Bethesda, Maryland in 1999, at the age of 98, a witness to nearly the entire twentieth century.

This exhibition will be the first showing of her work in California since 1943. On display are nine early channeled paintings from the 1930s, each of which sought to confront the patriarchal themes inherent in Christianity. These paintings evolved layers over time, until their completion in the late 1980s. Also included are Peavy's intricate works on paper; these invoke magical writing to present abstract cartographic portals to other worlds. Peavy's masks and award-winning films detailing the complexities of her cosmology will be playing in the theatre. In addition, a rare collection of astrocultural and esoteric books will be presented along with her manuscripts, and poetry.

## Events

On July 30th the exhibition will close with several performances at a location soon-to-be-announced.

Interdisciplinary Artist **Gavilán Rayna Russom**, will craft a performance based on Peavy's masks.

**David Tibet and HÖH** production of Harry Oldfield's recordings of crystals will present a dialogue with the last stages of Lacamo's messages for Peavy.

**Braden Diotte** (collaborator with Faust, Neurosis, EXO//ENDO) presents an instrumental selection from his opera, *Extraordinary Angels*, based on the history of George Van Tassel and the Integratron.

A series of events featuring other sound artists exploring **Frederich Jürgenson's** EVP archive of phantom sound recordings will also be announced and performed as part of the exhibition's auxiliary programming.

### Gallery Appointments:

info@beyondbaroque.org

### Press:

Laura Whitcomb

contact@labelcuratorial.com

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