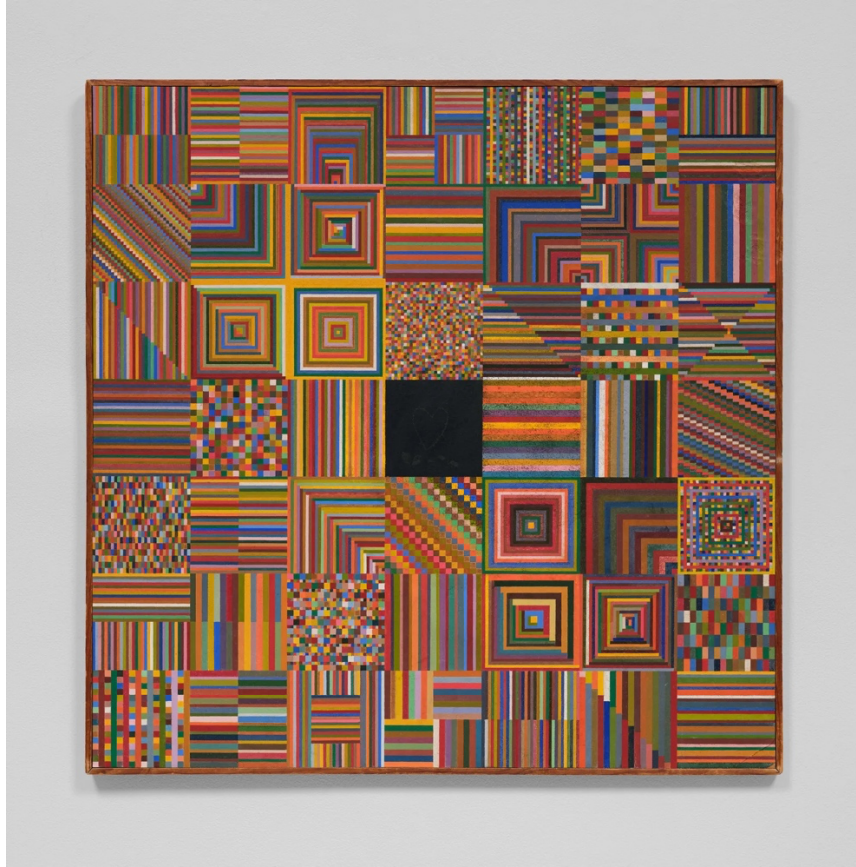


THE NEW YORKER



“Calm Center.” Art work by Ray Johnson / Courtesy Craig F. Starr Gallery; Photograph by Thomas Barratt.

If the late performer, artist, and conceptualist **Ray Johnson** (1927-95) was known to you primarily as a chief architect of Pop art, this show will come as a revelation—and a relief. Though in much of his work Johnson’s restless energy can be inspiring, one can feel fatigued by his desire to be heard, and noticed. But these exquisite paintings and collages are meditative: Johnson eschews words and symbols for shapes that are soulful and calm. And even as some of the incredible detail he gives to pieces like “Calm Center” (ca. 1949-55) is eye-boggling, you don’t get lost in Johnson’s bravura hand so much as you want to be close to the formal distance that haunts the work. Beautifully lit and laid out, this show is like a well-ordered dream, filled with care and tenderness.

—Hilton Als