

There are at least 100 reasons not to miss this electrifying survey of 70 paintings, 4 sculptures, 37 drawings, a print series and painting installation in London, or later in Düsseldorf, Los Angeles, and New York City. Having already seen two major Martin surveys, I was surprised to discover so many quirky sculptures, idiosyncratic drawings, and vibrant paintings unavailable earlier surveys. Few abstract paintings are as 'secretly' dynamic as hers, requiring careful scrutiny. It goes without saying that they (like most artworks) defy

arrived at the grid).
noccence of trees (her explanation of how she first
eighteen months in a truck), searching for the in-
twist is her resettling in Taos for good (following
philosophy. This exhibition's least mysterious
ink, probably due to her interest in East Asian
feels pregnant with wavering lines akin to sumi-
Aboriginal paintings. A 1955 biomorphic painting
(1957) exhibit topographical overviews akin to
(1954), 'Untitled' (1955), and 'Harbor No. 1'
less edgy, pre-New York paintings like 'Untitled'
by 'Heather', 'Beach', and 'Rain' (all 1958). No
rectangles to evoke landscapes, exemplified here
Long before Brice Marden, she paired colored
rolling marbles produce ripple effects.

Wave' (1963) suggests a handheld game whereby
tooned a tiny 1962 painting with found nails. 'The
in metal became 'Burning Tree' (1961). She fes-
mounted on wood. A large claw-like object tipped
ever grid, 'Water' (1958) presents nine bottle caps
steel bolts to evoke flower beds. Perhaps her first-
repaired a sailboat rudder, partly studded with
chick-full of art supplies. For 'Garden' (1958), she
her studio at Coenties Slip, a docklands district
over, having already had copious escapades in
to Be Wild' (1968). Aged 55, New York City was
for adventure," prefiguring the mega-hit 'Born
for rumm'n, [and] head out on the highway lookin'
painter Agnes Martin (1912-2004) got her "mo-
After painting 'Adventure' (1967), American

A MESSAGE MINIMALISM WITH

in Tate Modern London
Agnes Martin

The next room features eight grey paintings dat-
ing from 1977 to 1991, giving viewers the chance
lowing a five-year furrow.
edly marked Martin's return to making art fol-
song of a popular Barbara Streisand film) suppos-
grids, 'On a Clear Day' (1973) (also the 1970 title
extraordinarily, eloquent screen prints of serene
ing, pulsing, rhythmic energies. A series of 30
for music, one easily senses her paintings' vibrat-
imaginations. When one considers her fondness
or composition notebooks awaiting her pupils'
rather reminiscent of either empty sheet music
sion.' And indeed, several of her paintings are
since it is 'the most abstract of all art expres-
Martin considered music the highest form of art,
the perspective of the still-standing.

lating a black trapezoid, depicts a burial plot from
'Homage to Life' (2003), a grey ground encap-
red bisecting an all-over foamy sea-green wash.
horizontal bands of yellow, white, and orange-
'Gratitude', my personal favorite, features four
evokes bundled newborns aligned in a nursery.
pastel-stripe painting titled 'Blessings' (2000)
brothers and golden ingots. A super washed-out,
red gesso undercoat forms a grid, equates blood
'Friendship' (1963), a gold-leaf painting whose
zonal dashes makes 'Starlight' (1963) magical.
blue ground hosting black vertical and hori-
(1959) suggests sunflower fields. The celestial
buoyant grid of golden discs encompassing 'Buds'
women artists adopted in the early nineties. The
veys something, anticipating an approach many
a message,' she felt that meaningful art con-
Among the first to flirt with 'minimalism with

MUSIC

ing viewers in art experiences.
paintings occupy the space around them, envelop-
love. Never truly minimal, her phenomenological
(2000) readily admits, each painting is a labor of
paint application! As 'I Love the Whole World'
when it comes to tedious, laborious, painstaking
stood. One thing is certain, she proves fearless
ate such vigorous surfaces could be better under-
that the intense under-painting required to cre-
only wishes that some could have been x-rayed so
(yes drips), and ever-so-slight pencil marks. One
surfaces, pools of color, layers of washes, drips
photography, but hers are replete with textured

Agnes Martin (1912-2004), 'The Garden', 1958, Des Moines Art
Center (Iowa, USA). © 2015 Agnes Martin / Artists Rights Society
(ARS), New York

