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Carmen Herrera in her Flatiron apartment with recent paintings. Herrera wears: Cashmere coat, DIOR, price on request. Double-face wool vest, VÍCTOR ALFARO, \$2,395. Earrings, brooch, all, CARMEN HERRERA x CHUS BURES. For details (including crew credits throughout), see Shopping Guide. Styled by David Vandewal

WOMEN IN

FROM A PAINTER HITTING HER STRIDE AT THE AGE OF 100 TO A 35-YEAR-OLD GALLERIST/ARTIST/STUDIO MANAGER AT THE CENTER OF NEW YORK'S BUZZIEST SCENE, THESE 14 VISIONARIES ARE CARVING OUT FRESH, FEARLESS WAYS TO RULE THE ART WORLD—AND THEY'RE DOING IT THEIR WAY. BY MOLLY LANGMUIR
PHOTOGRAPHED BY PATRIC SHAW CURATED BY CARY LEITZES

ART

Carmen Herrera —The Undersung Hero

Up a flight of paint-splattered stairs in New York City's Flatiron district lies the studio apartment in which painter Carmen Herrera, 100, has lived and worked for the past 55 years, gradually distilling her ideas into abstract canvases—geometric fields of vibrant colors segmented by stark, straight lines—whose power is only amplified by their extreme simplicity. Raised in Cuba, the youngest of seven children, in 1938 Herrera married an American, Jesse Loewenthal, and moved with him to New York, where she began to get serious about painting. Then in 1948, after the couple relocated to Paris, Herrera fell in with a group of expats experimenting in abstraction, a school loosely known as the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, and exhibited alongside Piet Mondrian and Josef Albers. Still, her work never sold. "She had three things working against her," says Tony Bechara, a fellow artist and longtime friend. "She was

a woman. She was Cuban. And she was shy." The rejection stung, and yet, "it liberated me," Herrera says, to make art as she pleased. Finally, four years after Loewenthal's death in 2000, a gallerist planning a show of female geometric painters visited Herrera's apartment and was astounded by what he found; he not only put her in the exhibition but also linked her with megacollectors like Estrellita Brodsky and Agnes Gund. Somehow, her moment had arrived. ("They took their time," she says dryly.) Her paintings are now part of the collections of MoMA and the Tate Modern; next fall, the Whitney Museum of American Art will host a solo show with four decades of her work, starting in the '40s. "That's the chapter when she should start entering your art history textbook," says Whitney curator Dana Miller. "There is this mythic aspect to her biography, but even with no backstory, the work speaks for itself."