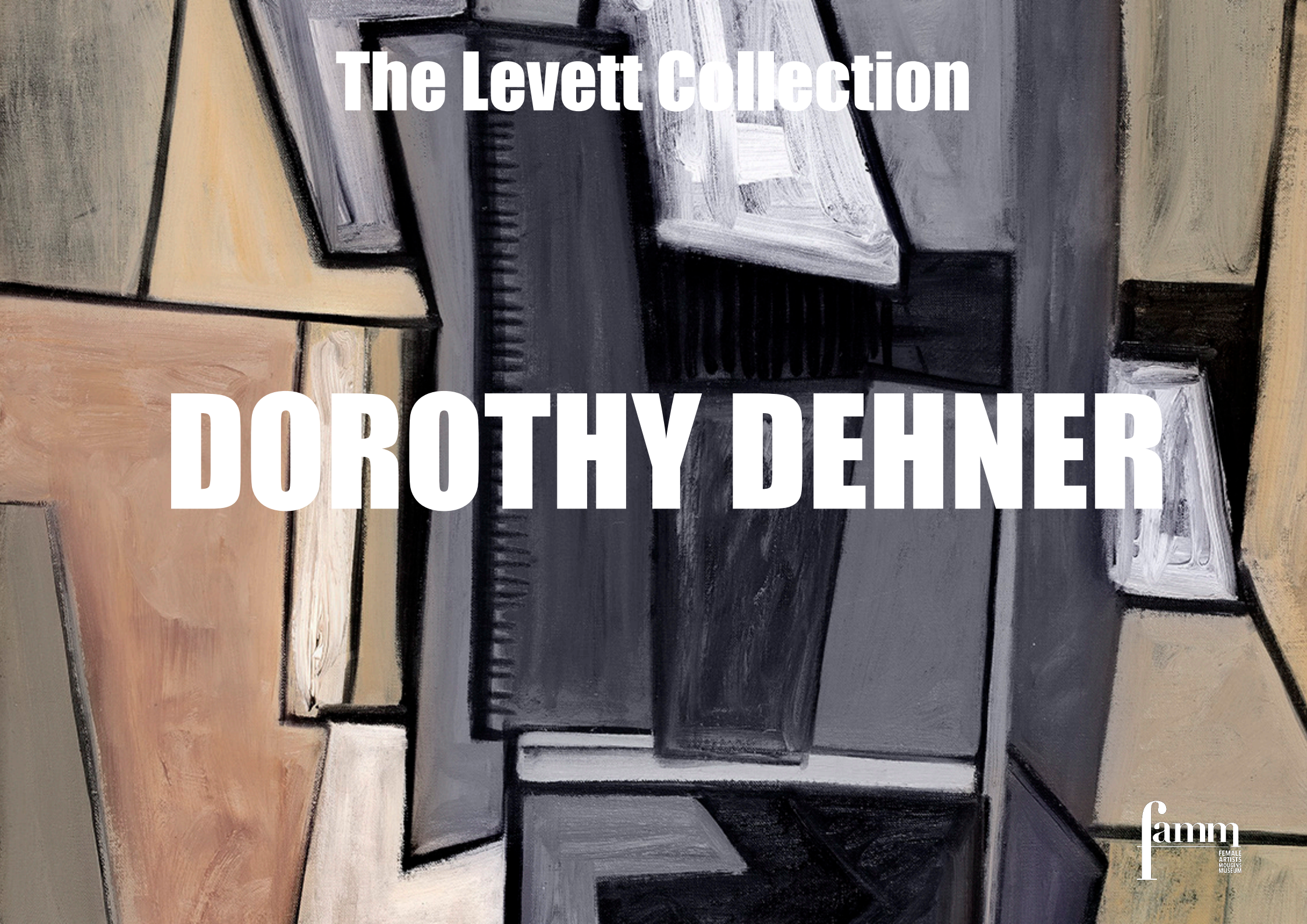

The Levett Collection
DOROTHY DEHNER
famm
FEMALE ARTISTS MOUGINS MUSEUM

Biography



Dorothy Dehner (b.1901, Cleveland, Ohio – d. 1994, New York City)

Dorothy Dehner spent her adolescent years in Pasadena, California where she studied modern dance. After one year at the University of California, Los Angeles, she moved to New York to continue her interest in drama. After appearing in several Off-Broadway productions, she began her travels in Europe. Stimulated by her contact with European Modernism, she enrolled at the Art Students League upon her return to New York in 1925. Two years later she married David Smith, and the couple studied with Jan Matulka from 1929 to 1931. A trip to Europe in 1935 had a profound impact on her art. By the end of the 1940s Dehner made a series of drawings with a repertory of biomorphic forms that related to Paul Klee, Joan Miro, and Mark Rothko among others.

After her divorce from sculptor David Smith in 1952, Dehner's first solo exhibition was held at New York's Rose Fried Gallery. In the early 1950s she studied engraving at Atelier 17. In 1955, Dehner began working at the Sculpture Center, and had constructions that she created in wax cast in bronze at a foundry.

For the next thirty-nine years, Dehner's predominant interest was creating sculpture in bronze, wood, and fabricated steel. She assembled her sculptures from disparate parts and approached the use of wax as a constructivist by using planar elements. Working in an improvisational style called "direct wax construction," Dehner can be situated within the sphere of the Abstract Expressionists. Like other artists in this group she exhibited at the Marian Willard Gallery, and attended meetings at the Eighth Street Club.

Dehner has had works in group exhibitions in museums such as, The Museum of Modern Art New York, Denver Art Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, City Art Museum St .Louis, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Guild Hall Museum New York, The Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown or Nassau County Museum of Art. She has also had a number of solo retrospectives including The Jewish Museum, New York 1965, Katonah Museum of Art, New York 1993, Cleveland Museum of Art 1995 and others.

Dorothy Dehner's works are in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the National Museum for Women in the Arts, Washington, The Philipps Collection, Washington, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, the National Museum of American Art,Washington, Storm King Art Center, New York, Seattle Art Museum, Minnesota Museum of Art, St. Paul, Jewett Art Center, Wellesley College, AT&T Heafquarters, Basking Ridge, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Phoenix Art Museum, Museum of Art in Boston, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The Satte University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, Munson-Williams-Proctor Institue Museum of Art, Utica, NY, The British Museum, London, Dresden Museum, Germany and McNay Art Museum in San Antioni and the Mougins Museum of Classical Art in the South of France.

Photo: Dehner studio, c.1959 (taken by artist), Courtesy of the Dorothy Dehner Foundation

Sculptures



The All-American Girl, 1955
Unique work
Bronze on wood base, ht. 33.6 cm

CL1043

Provenance:
Twining Gallery, New York
Kraushaar Gallery, New York
Estate of a Prominent Connecticut Collector
Doyle, New York

Museum exhibitions:
Dorothy Dehner: A Retrospective of Sculpture, Drawings and Paintings, Baruch College/ The City University of New York, 15 March - 16 April 1991

Gallery exhibitions & Art Fairs:
Dorothy Dehner: Sculpture and Watercolours, Willard Gallery, New York, 7 - 31 May 1957
Significant Others: Artist Wives of Artists, Kraushaar Gallery, New York, 9 January - 13 February 1993

Publications in books, exhibition & auction catalogues:
Dorothy Dehner: Sculpture and Watercolours, Willard Gallery, New York, 7 - 31 May 1957, n° 3 illustrated (exh. cat.)
Dorothy Dehner: A Retrospective of Sculpture, Drawings and Paintings, Baruch College/ The City University of New York, 1991, n° 32 (exh. cat.)
Significant Others: Artist Wives of Artists, Kraushaar Gallery, New York, 1993 (exh. cat.)
M. R. Witzing (ed.), *Voicing Today's Visions. Writings by Contemporary Women Artists*, 1994, p. 23

Publications in magazines, newspapers & online articles:
Smith R. 'A Window on Lives Lived in the Shadows', *New York Times*, 14 Februaury 1993

This is one of the artist's earliest bronze sculptures, from the year when she began sculpting in bronze and featured in the 1993 New York Times article shown below:



GALLERY VIEW/Roberta Smith

A Window on Lives Lived in the Shadows

A show spotlights the work of 'significant others' — 21 unsung women married to artists.

"Significant Others" displays many less-than-scholarly features as well. Group shows of this kind, whether they're about women artists, black artists or portrait miniaturists, tend to be overstuffed, and this one is no exception. Inside the mid-size Graham gallery, 32 paintings, drawings, sculptures and photographs by 21 artists are on view. (Fourteen artists' names are listed in the press release, but the range from painter to photographer to filmmaker is stretched to the point of implausibility.)

"The All-American Girl," by Dorothy Dehner, the wife of David Smith.

"Sketch," by Doris Lee, the wife of Arnold Blanch. Unfortunately, she enjoyed a modicum of success as a painter and Museum...

"*The All-American Girl*, 1955, is a small bronze "totem" which incorporates the top section of the body of a woman in a cage-like structure. One of Dehner's earliest sculptures, *The All-American Girl*, satirizes the middle-class values of the American housewife in the 1950s. The bottom section of this sculpture encloses the house with its new appliances and the church. Stacked above this Dehner represents the husband, the womb, the baby and, at the top, *The All-American Girl* who dominates this domestic hierarchy.

Although the artist now thinks that *The All-American Girl* portrays its theme too literally, this sculpture marks the beginning of Dehner's use of the totem-like stacking of forms as an element of construction."

Excerpt from J. Marter and S. Kraskin,
A Retrospective of Sculpture, Drawings and Paintings,
Baruch College / The City University of New York, 1991, no. 32



Landscape With Sun, 1955
Bronze, 43.18 x 27.30 x 10.16 cm



The Old City, 1957
Bronze, 33.66 x 52.07 x 17.78 cm

Provenance:
The Artist
The Dorothy Dehner Foundation
Eric Firestone Gallery, New York, USA

Provenance:
The Artist
The Dorothy Dehner Foundation
Eric Firestone Gallery, New York, USA

This is one of the artist's earliest bronze sculptures, from the year when she began sculpting in bronze.

CL1113

CL1100



Jacob's Ladder No. 2, 1957
Unique work
Bronze, 78.7 x 22.2 x 18.4 cm

Provenance:
The Artist
Collection of Mr and Mrs Leon G. Simons
Collection of Ellen Simons
Private Collection, New York
Levis Fine Art, New york

Museum exhibitions:
Dorothy Dehner: Ten Years of Sculpture, The Jewish Museum, New York, 11 March - 11 April 1965, plate #7
Musée d'Art Classique de Mougins (MACM) France, from September 2020

Publications in books, exhibition & auction catalogues:
Dorothy Dehner: Ten Years of Sculpture, The Jewish Museum, New York, 1965, llustr. # 3 (exh. cat.)
Ville de Mougins, "C'est quoi cette oeuvre", in *Mougins Infos*, Summer 2021, no. 79, p. 29



Rites at Sal Safaeni Number 2, 1958
Unique work
Bronze, 62.2 x 25.7 x 7 cm
CL1010

Provenance:
Dorothy Dehner, New York, NY
The Museum of Modern Art Junior Council, New York, NY
Collection of Elizabeth and Peter Rubel, New York, NY - acquired from the above (Mr. Rubel was the Vice Chairman of the MoMA Junior Council Committee)
Sotheby's, New York, NY, September 22, 2011, Sale No. N08766, Lot 85
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

Museum exhibitions:
Recent Sculpture USA, US touring exhibition, 1959-1960, n° 14:

- The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, 13 May - 16 August 1959
- Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO, 12 October - 22 November 1959
- Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, 22 February 22 - 3 April 1960
- City Art Museum (now Saint Louis Art Museum), St. Louis, MO, 3 May - 12 June 1960
- Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, 14 September - 16 October 1960

Gallery exhibitions & Art Fairs:
Metal: American Sculpture, 1945-1970, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, 6 November 2015 - 9 January 2016
Globalism Pops BACK Into View: The Rise of Abstract Expressionism, Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, 21 November 2019 - 25 January 2020

Publications in books, exhibition & auction catalogues:
Recent Sculpture USA, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1959, n° 14, n.p. (exh. cat.)

Publications in magazines, newspapers & online articles:
'METAL: American Sculpture, 1945-1970', *Michael Rosenfeld Gallery* website, installation views, 2015, https://www.michaelrosenfeldart.com/exhibitions/metal-american-sculpture-1945-1970/installation-views/19
'Globalism Pops BACK Into View: The Rise of Abstract Expressionism', *Michael Rosenfeld Gallery* website, installation views, https://www.michaelrosenfeldart.com/exhibitions/globalism-pops-back-into-view-the-rise-of-abstract-expressionism/installation-views/11







Chess Set, 1958
Bronze and silver, 3.8 x 10.2 cm

This original cast chess set in silver and bronze is one of only two chess sets that she made, both cast in 1958.
A less-detailed pewter edition of 25 was made from them in 1993

Provenance:
Acquired from the artist
Carroll Family Collection, New York
Rosenberg & Co., New York

Museum exhibitions:
Dorothy Dehner: Ten Years of Sculpture, The Jewish Museum, New York, 11 March - 11 April 1965
Dorothy Dehner, The Hyde Museum, Glen Falls, NY, 21 May - 18 June 1967

Publications in books, exhibition & auction catalogues:
Van Weeren-Griek H., *Dorothy Dehner: Ten Years of Sculpture*, The Jewish Museum, New York, 1965, n° 41 illustrated, (exh. cat.)
Dorothy Dehner, The Hyde Museum, Glen Falls, NY, 1967, n° 32 (exh. cat.)



Katmandu #1 (Holy City), 1959
Unique work
Bronze, 66.04 x 107.95 x 7.6 cm

Provenance:
Estate of the artist
Eric Firestone Gallery, New York

Museum exhibitions:
Annual Exhibition 1960: Contemporary Sculpture and Drawings, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 7 December 1960 - 22 January 1961
Dorothy Dehner: Ten Years of Sculpture, The Jewish Museum, New York, 11 March - 11 April 1965
Women and Abstract Expressionism: Painting and Sculpture, 1945-1959, US touring exhibition:

- Sidney Mishkin Gallery, Baruch College, New York, 20 March - 17 April 1997
- Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton, NY, 10 May - 15 June 1997

Publications in books, exhibition & auction catalogues:
Annual Exhibition 1960: Contemporary Sculpture and Drawings, Whitney Museum of American Art. New York, 1960, p. 43 [listed as Katmandu], (Exh. cat.)
Van Weeren-Griek H., *Dorothy Dehner: Ten Years of Sculpture*, The Jewish Museum, New York, 1965, n° 24 (exh. cat.)
Marter J., *Women and Abstract Expressionism: Painting and Sculpture, 1945-1959,* Sidney Mishkin Gallery, Baruch College. New York, 1997, p. 26, (Exh. cat.)



Mask: Fragment of the Sun, 1959
Bronze, 35.56 x 43.18 x 7.62 cm

Provenance:
The Artist
Private Collection, New York, USA
Private Collection, Georgia, USA
Levis Fine Art, New York, USA

Museum exhibitions:
Dorothy Dehner: Ten Years of Sculpture, The Jewish Museum, New York, 11 March - 11 April 1965

Publications in books, exhibition & auction catalogues:
Van Weeren-Griek H., *Dorothy Dehner: Ten Years of Sculpture*, The Jewish Museum, New York, 1965, front cover (exh. cat.)





Untitled, 1959
Unique work
Bronze, 51.4 x 14.9 x 12.4 cm

Provenance:
Artist's studio
Rosenberg & Co., New York, USA

Gallery exhibitions & Art Fairs:
Dorothy Dehner Bronzes, Willard Gallery, New York, 1-26 November 1960
Ann Christopher | Dorothy Dehner, Rosenberg & Co., New York, 3 January - 26 March 2022

CL1098



Nightscape, 1959
Bronze, 43.18 x 34.29 x 26.04 cm

Provenance:
The Artist
The Dorothy Dehner Foundation
Eric Firestone Gallery, New York, USA

CL1110



Untitled (Hanging Sculpture), 1960
Unique work
Bronze, 81.28 x 12.7 x 10.16 cm

CL1009

Provenance:
The Artist
The Estate of Dorothy Dehner
Eric Firestone Gallery, East Hampton, USA

Museum exhibitions:
Dorothy Dehner: Ten Years of Sculpture, The Jewish Museum, New York, 11 March – 11 April 1965
Dorothy Dehner, Sixty Years of Art, US touring exhibition, n°38:

- Katonah Museum of Art, New York 13 June - 5 September 1993
- The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, NY, 16 October - 28 November 1993
- Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 18 December 1993 - 7 March 1994

Gallery exhibitions & Art Fairs:
Aspects de la sculpture américaine, Galerie Claude Bernard, Paris, September - October 1960

Publications in books, exhibition & auction catalogues:
Aspects de la sculpture américaine, Galerie Claude Bernard, Paris, 1960
Dorothy Dehner: Ten Years of Sculpture, The Jewish Museum, New York, 1965, (exh. cat.)
Tully J., "The New Sculpture Group – A Look Back 1957 – 1962" on Judd Tully website, 1 January 1988, (1960 installation view) https://juddtully.net/criticism/the-new-sculpture-group-a-look-back-1957-1962/
Marter J., *Dorothy Dehner, Sixty Years of Art*, Katonah Museum of Art, 1994, p. 12 (1960 installation view), p. 41 pl. 38 (exh. cat.)
Marter J., 'Abstract Sculpture of Atomic Age' in *Art of Another Kind: International Abstraction and the Guggenheim, 1949-1960*, New York, 2012, p. 58 (1960 installation view)





Carpenter's Love Letter #1, 1961
Bronze, 49.53 x 25.20 x 8.89 cm

Provenance:
The Artist
The Dorothy Dehner Foundation
Eric Firestone Gallery, New York, USA

Museum exhibitions:
Dorothy Dehner: Ten Years of Sculpture, The Jewish Museum, New York, 11 March - 11 April 1965

Gallery exhibitions & Art Fairs
Dorothy Dehner, Willard Gallery, New York, USA, 5 February - 2 March 1963
Dorothy Dehner, Anticipating a Thrid Dimension, Kraushaar Galleries, New York, USA, February - March 2001

Publications in books, exhibition & auction catalogues:
Dorothy Dehner: Ten Years of Sculpture, The Jewish Museum, New York, 1965 (exh. cat.)

CL1099



Untitled, 1962
Unique work
Bronze, 31.75 x 95.25 x 40.64 cm

Provenance:
Estate of the artist
Eric Firestone Gallery, New York

CL160





Looking North (green), 1964
Unique work
Bronze, 17.8 x 36.8 x 15.2 cm

Provenance:
Dorothy Dehner, New York, NY
Kraushaar Galleries, Inc., New York, NY
Private Collection, Memphis, TN
Shannon's, Milford, CT, October 27, 2011, Lot 146
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

Gallery exhibitions & Art Fairs:
Dorothy Dehner: Bronze Sculptures, Willard Gallery, New York, NY, 15 November - 10 December 1966, n° 3

Publications in books, exhibition & auction catalogues:
Dorothy Dehner: Bronze Sculptures, Willard Gallery, New York, 1966, n° 3
American & European Fine Art October 27, 2011, Shannon's, Milford, CT, 2011, Lot 146



*Oracle and Prophet**, 1964
(incorrectly listed previously as *Untitled (landscape)*),
Unique work
Bronze, 54.6 x 85.1 x 41.9 cm

Provenance:
Estate of the artist
Acquired from the above in 2019 by Rick Friedman
Sotheby's New York, Modern Day Auction, lot n° 115, consigned by above

Museum exhibitions:
Heroines of Abstract Expressionism, US touring exhibition:

- The Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, 19 September - 31 December 2019
- Nassau County Museum of Art, 14 November 2020 - 25 April 2021

Publications in books, exhibition & auction catalogues:
Holloway Fort M., Harrison H.A., Marter J., *Heroines of Abstract Expressionism, 2019*, p. 38 checklist (exh. cat.)
Sotheby's New York, *Modern Day Auction*, 17 Novembre 2021, lot n° 115

Publications in magazines, newspapers & online articles:
Brickman D., Heroines of Abstract Expressionism at Fenimore Art Museum, *Get Visual* blog, 21 Decembre 2019, installation view, http://dbgetvisual.blogspot.com/2019/12/heroines-of-abstract-expressionism-at.html
Nassau Museum website/exhibitions/installation views, 2020, https://nassaumuseum.org/project/fem-and-heroines-of-abstract-expressionism/







Windows and Doors #2, 1966
Unique work
Bronze, 39.4 x 38.1 x 38.1 cm

Provenance:
Willard Gallery, New York
Devera Victor, Worden, Illinois
Wright, Chicago, Important 20th Century Design Session 2, 22 May 2007, lot 506
Acquired at the above sale by the previous owner
Christie's New York, Post-War and Contemporary Art Day Sale, lot n° 435

Gallery exhibitions & Art Fairs:
Dorothy Dehner: Bronze Sculptures, Willard Gallery, New York, NY, 15 November - 10 December 1966, n° 27

Publications in books, exhibition & auction catalogues:
Dorothy Dehner: Bronze Sculptures, Willard Gallery, New York, 1966, p. 24 n° 27
Wright, Chicago, *Important 20th Century Design Session 2*, 22 May 2007, lot 506
Christie's New York, *Post-War and Contemporary Art Day Sale*, 12 Novembre 2021, lot n° 435

A slightly earlier work, titled *Doors*, 1965 is in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.



Hanging Piece, 1968
Bronze, 13.97 x 102.87 x 18.41 cm

Provenance:
The Artist
The Dorothy Dehner Foundation
Eric Firestone Gallery, New York, USA

Gallery exhibitions & Art Fairs:
Dorothy Dehner, Willard Gallery, New York, USA, 21 April - 23 May 1970



Untitled, 1968
Bronze, 57.2 x 38.7 x 33 cm

Provenance:
Estate of the Artist
Kraushaar Galleries, New York, USA
Private Collection, Texas, USA
Kraushaar Galleries, New York, USA

Museum exhibitions:
Dorothy Dehner: Drawings, Prints, Scultpure, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11 July - 5 November 1995, no. 74

Publications in books, exhibition & auction catalogues:
Dorothy Dehner: Drawings, Prints, Scultpure, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1996, no. 74 (exh. cat.)



Dorothy Dehner: Drawings, Prints, Scultpure
Installation View ©Cleveland Museum of Art



Untitled Brooch, 1977
Bronze with metal pin and fasterner, 4.4 x 6.3 x 0.6 cm

Provenance:
Gift of the artist to Helena Simkhovitch
Thence by descent in the family
Doyle, 20th Century Abstraction, New York, USA

CL1131



Tall City, 1985
Bronzewith marble base
Sculpture: 96.5 x 22.3 x 15.9 cm
Base: 7.6 x 6 x 7.6 cm

Provenance:
Estate of the artist
Sotheby's, Modern Auction Day, New York, USA

CL1149

Paintings & Drawings



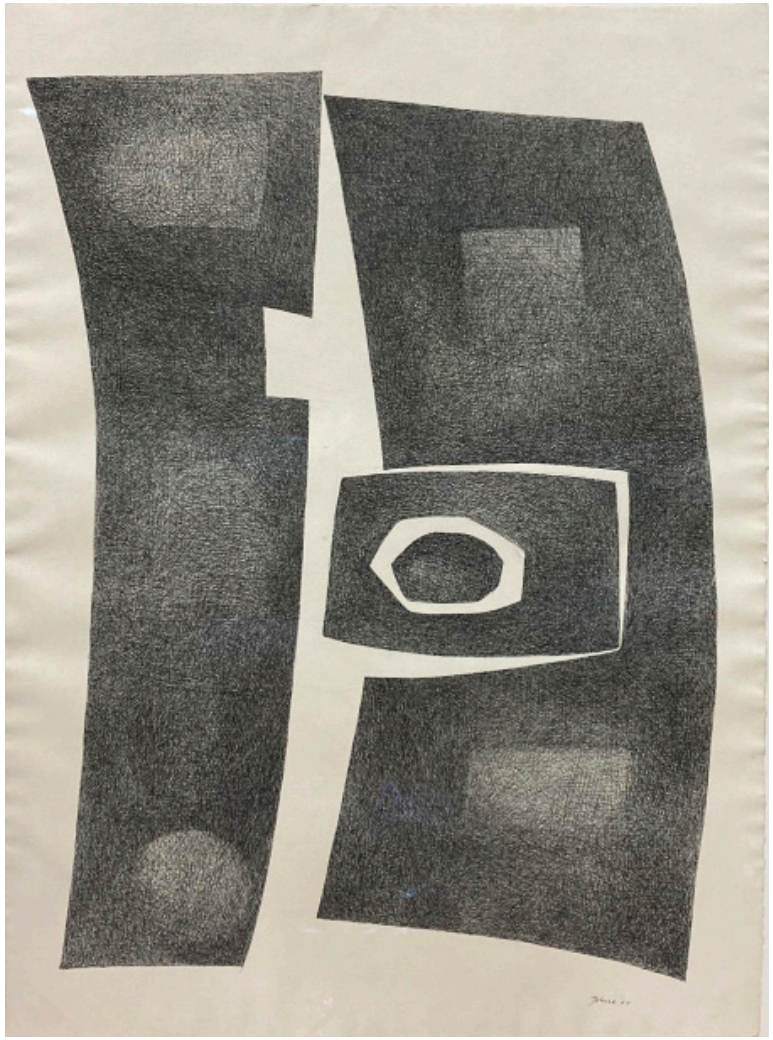
Dark Harmony, 1953
Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 60.96 cm

Provenance:
The Artist
Private collection
Stair Galleries, 20th Century, Modern & Contemporary Fine Art Auction, 3 June 2017, New York, lot 357
Mark Borghi, New York, USA



Three Dancers, 1957
Copper plate for etching
Unframed: 22.86 x 29.84 cm
Framed: 45.72 x 53.34 cm

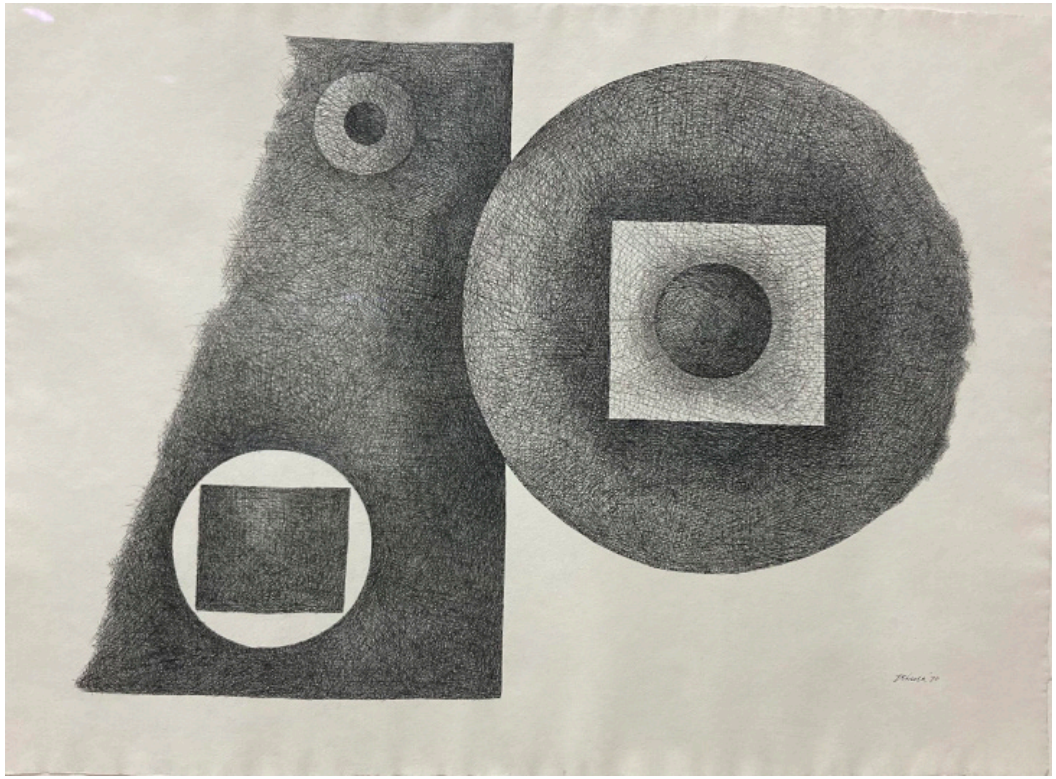
Provenance:
Acquired at The Dorothy Dehner Foundation



Untitled, 1965
Pen and ink on paper
Unframed: 76.2 x 56.51 cm
Framed: 85.72 x 66.04 cm

Provenance:
Acquired at The Dorothy Dehner Foundation

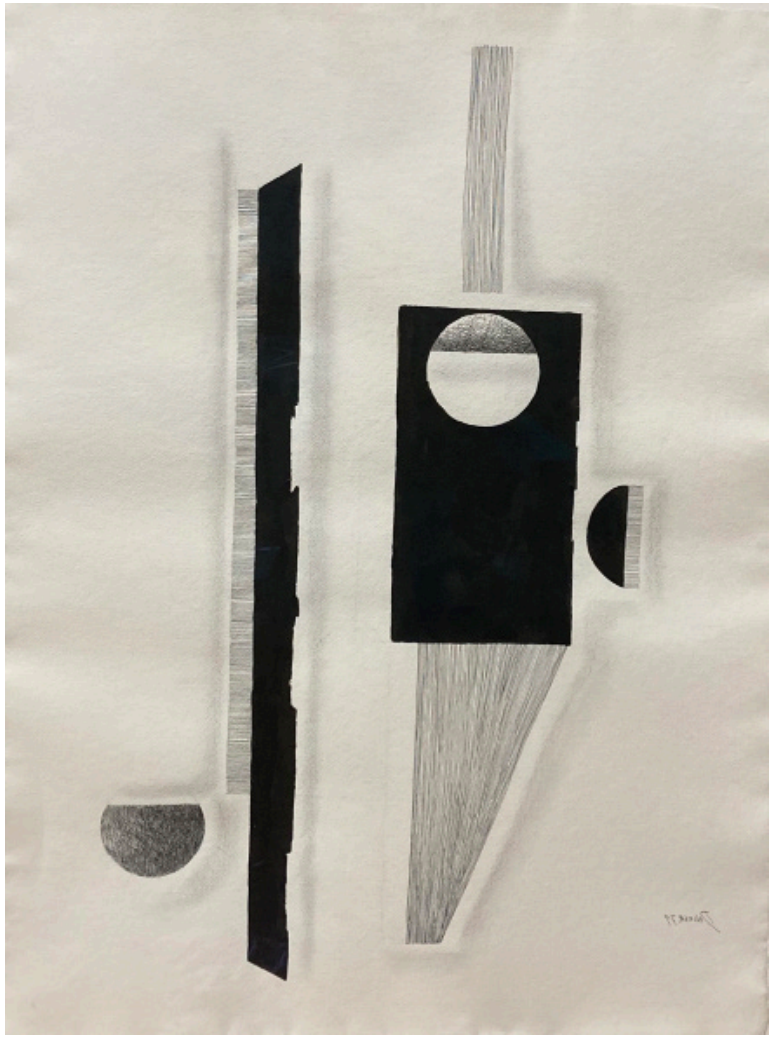
CL1153



Untitled, 1970
Pen and ink on paper
Unframed: 58.42 x 76.2 cm
Framed: 66.04 x 86.36 cm

Provenance:
Acquired at The Dorothy Dehner Foundation

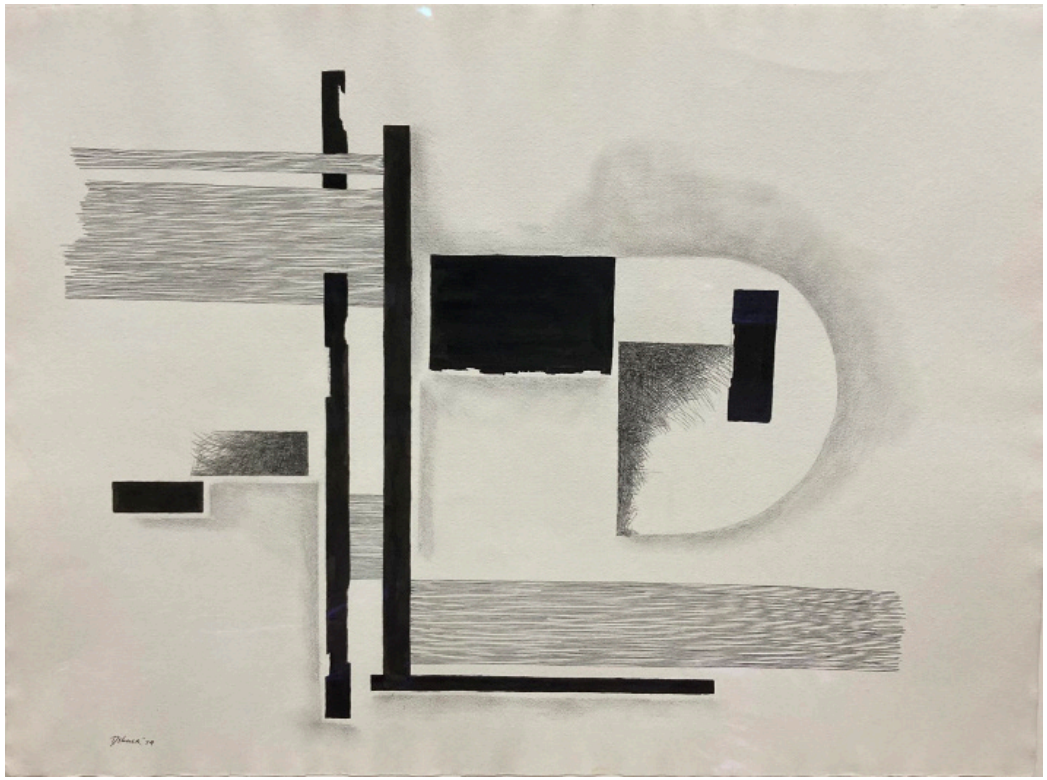
CL1151



Untitled, 1979
Pen and ink on paper
Unframed: 76.2 x 57.15 cm
Framed: 86.36 x 65.40 cm

Provenance:
Acquired at The Dorothy Dehner Foundation

CL1152



Untitled, 1979
Pen and ink on paper
Unframed: 57.78 x 77.47 cm
Framed: 65.40 x 86.36 cm

Provenance:
Acquired at The Dorothy Dehner Foundation

CL1154