

THE ROOTS OF ABSTRACTION

WORKS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

An abstract painting by Willem de Kooning, featuring a light green background with numerous small, colorful splatters. The central focus is a large, dynamic composition of thick, expressive brushstrokes in orange, red, blue, green, and white, creating a sense of movement and depth.

JIMMY ERNST
WILLEM DE KOONING
THEODOROS STAMOS
HALE WOODRUFF
LOUISE NEVELSON
ROMARE BEARDEN
STEPHEN GREENE
ALFONSO OSSORIO
RICHARD HUNT
SEYMOUR LIPTON
HERBERT FERBER
ROBERT BEAUCHAMP
CONRAD MARCA-RELLI
WILLIAM BAZIOTES

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Essay by Sarah Churchill,

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HOUSATONIC
MUSEUM OF ART

“Every so often a painter has to destroy painting. Cezanne did it. Picasso did it with Cubism, then Pollock did it. He busted our idea of a picture all to hell.”
—Willem de Kooning¹

“A method of painting is the natural growth out of a need. I want to express my feelings rather than illustrate them. Technique is just the means of arriving at a statement.”
—Jackson Pollock²

The Roots of Abstraction

by Sarah Churchill

It was an open revolt. In the now iconic *Life* magazine photograph known as *The Irascibles*, a group of fifteen mostly male artists declared ideological warfare upon those conservative institutions, like *Time* magazine and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, still hostile to the new American Modernism. However, the photograph, some have argued is misleading, conjuring for the public imagination a group that “never was a group.”³ While the Abstract Expressionists shared a collective enemy, they lacked any semblance of a unified or cohesive style, longing instead for what would come to be called the autographic gesture—a signature splash of latex house paint or a violent slash of inky black across a barren field. Expression, they believed, need not illustrate or narrate to effectively communicate. As the critic Harold Rosenberg explained, this generation was reaching for something new, a visual language that would “formulate as exactly as possible what is emotionally real to them as separate persons.”⁴ Their art, he argued, was “the standpoint for a private revolt.” They shared not a commitment to ideology, but a “unique loneliness of a depth that is reached perhaps nowhere else in the world.”⁵

How is it then that such a diverse group, united largely by the desire to stand alone, came to be understood beneath the unifying banner of “Abstract Expressionism?” *The Roots of Abstraction*, presented by the Housatonic Museum of Art in Bridgeport, CT, explores some examples from the New York school and beyond, including Jimmy Ernst, Willem de Kooning, Hale Woodruff, William Baziotes, Romare Bearden, Conrad Marca-Relli, Herbert Ferber and others. Emerging in a postwar period marked by political conservatism, anxiety, trauma and poverty, the term “Abstract Expressionism,” which was coined by the New Yorker critic, Robert Coates, and popularized in the early 1950s, encompassed not only the color field paintings of Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman, but also the action painters Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline, whose inimitable, gestural mark making assaulted the staid sensibilities of the art world. Forging a third path between the pure abstraction and surrealist automatism of the European avant-garde, Abstract Expressionists sought to reinvent Modernism after the Second World War, shifting the fine art capital from Picasso’s Paris to the gritty Greenwich Village art scene of New York City. Their “irascible” energy effected a seismic generational shift in American Modernism, liberating the first generation of Abstract Expressionists from the mind-numbing conformity and rampant consumerism of the postwar landscape. As Barnett Newman explained, “some of us woke up to find ourselves without hope...the awakening had the exaltation of a revolution.”⁶

Exhausted by the extreme poverty of the Depression, scarred by the violence and despair of the Holocaust and Hiroshima and energized by radical leftist political activism, the Abstract Expressionists reconstructed a world broken by human cruelty by trusting their own intuitions and emotions.⁷ But contrary to popular mythology, the New York School did not do it alone. Events in Europe throughout the 1930s and 40s effected an unprecedented immigration of Europe’s leading visual artists, architects and thinkers, including Piet Mondrian, Mark Rothko, Walter Gropius and Josef and Anni Albers, whose mentorship became essential to the New York School. Chief among this group of exiles was the German painter Hans Hofmann, a pivotal figure in the movement who was renowned by his contemporaries as the most influential teacher of his time.⁸ Former Bauhaus professor Josef Albers also headed the famed Black Mountain College and later the design department at Yale University. Collectively, Hofmann, Albers and Rothko, along with his American peers Robert Motherwell, David Hare and William Baziotes, educated and inspired first-and second-generation Abstract Expressionists throughout the 1950s.

In addition to theoretical champions like Rosenberg, critics Clement Greenberg and Elaine de Kooning and *ArtNews* editor Thomas Hess, the Abstract Expressionists were initially bolstered by an emerging network of cutting-edge gallerists. The Art of This Century Gallery, for example, newly opened by Peggy Guggenheim in 1942, was an early advocate. While its existence was

brief, Guggenheim’s gallery was instrumental as a laboratory for the development of the American avant-garde, launching the careers of Jackson Pollock and championing under-recognized female artists, like Lee Krasner, Nell Blaine and Louise Bourgeois. Guggenheim’s gallery, according to Krasner, “was the foundation...where it all started to happen.”⁹ Similarly gallerists such as Samuel Kootz, Charlie Egan, Betty Parsons, Sidney Janis, Leo Castelli and Julien Levy, assisted by the Museum of Modern Art’s legendary director Alfred Barr and curator Dorothy Miller, not only offered financial support to the struggling Abstract Expressionists, they also generated buzz and later, market interest.

Though characterized as isolated and alienated, Abstract Expressionists like Pollock, de Kooning and Hare, in fact, relied upon a network of visual artists, writers, poets, musicians, critics and theorists for their social and intellectual sustenance. Facing early institutional resistance, Abstract Expressionists formed romantic partnerships, social groups, atelier-style academies and intellectual societies, such as The Club, a collective community of artists without hierarchy who gathered to discuss topics such as Existentialism and modern psychology. Described as a “source of anarchist mutual aid,” The Club became an important testing ground for artists, a place in which they could articulate and refine their studio practice and ideas.¹⁰ The Ninth Street show, assembled in 1951 by Club members and supported by Leo Castelli, was as much about the New York School as a community as it was about style or artistic movement.¹¹ In the great tradition of artist-organized counter exhibitions, the show was held in a condemned storefront on East Ninth Street and featured more than fifty New York artists, several of which, including Willem de Kooning, Conrad Marca-Relli, Jimmy Ernst, and Herbert Ferber, are currently featured in the exhibition at the Housatonic Museum of Art. The Ninth Street show was a critical success, stunning the New York art world and launching the commercial careers of many of those featured.

The collection at the Housatonic Museum of Art was founded by professor emeritus Burt Chernow. From the start of his tenure in 1967 to his untimely death in 1997, Chernow amassed a collection of some 4,000 donations, with particular strengths in twentieth-century American art and ethnographic material culture from Africa, North America and Southeast Asia. The inaugural exhibition of the collection in January of 1968 boasted works by Robert Rauschenberg, Larry Rivers, Milton Avery, Will Barnet, Elaine de Kooning, Jim Dine, Alex Katz, Andy Warhol, James Rosenquist and Gabor Peterdi among many others. Art critic and curator Lawrence Alloway described it as “not only a teaching collection” but “a sample of the ongoing art world” brought into the contact with students’ daily lives.¹² The collection today includes over 6,000 objects, from a 26th dynasty Egyptian sarcophagus panel to a stunning Cindy Sherman Cibachrome (1998).

While far from encyclopedic, the Housatonic Museum of Art collection is, nonetheless, a remarkable achievement for a two-year public college. Chernow, a graduate of New York University and former museum educator at MoMA, facilitated donations through his art consultancy firm and through personal relationships with artists like Christo and Jean Claude and gallerists like Leo Castelli. As you tour our exhibition, you’ll note that some of the works on display were gifted by the artists themselves. Jimmy Ernst and Hale Woodruff, for example, each gifted paintings and prints in 1968, taking advantage of a generous federal tax credit program which sadly ended in 1969. The college’s close proximity to New York City was critical to Chernow’s success in collecting from the New York School, as he could regularly travel to openings, visit studios and develop relationships with important patrons.

At the time of our collection’s founding Abstract Expressionism had been in decline for several years as the creative energy of the 1950s splintered into the Neo-Dada rebellion of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns and later, into Post-Painterly Abstraction, Pop, Minimalism and eventually Conceptualism. In 1961, Clement Greenberg declared the gestural wing of Abstract Expressionism to be in a state of decline.¹³ First-generation Abstract Expressionists, like Arshile Gorky, Jackson Pollock, William Baziotes and David Smith, had either died or, like de Kooning, were retiring to quieter environs. Of the scene’s decline, painter Mercedes Matter recalled, “there was extraordinary warmth and camaraderie among artists then. The end of that marvelous time came when American art became big business. Success seemed to spoil the climate.”¹⁴

"In a way I feel that the *Women of the '50s* were a failure. I see the horror in them now, but I didn't mean it then. I wanted them to be funny and not look so sad and downtrodden like the women in the paintings in the '30s so I made them satiric and monstrous, like sibyls."
—Willem de Kooning¹⁵

Willem de Kooning’s (1904–97) small bronze *Seated Woman* (1987), cast from a series of thirteen small, terra cotta sculptures begun in 1969, is dense yet powerful, capturing the frenetic and furious scramble of de Kooning’s two-dimensional paintings and drawings.¹⁶ Not a natural sculptor, de Kooning’s late career exploration in the medium resulted from a chance encounter with sculptor and friend Herzl Emmanuel while traveling in Rome. Several of these, including *Standing Figures* (1969–84) and *Reclining Figures* (1969–82), were enlarged and cast in bronze in the early 1980s. This particular bronze, an artist’s proof, was gifted to the Connecticut-born sculptor and Club founder Philip Pavia. The subject matter of *Seated Woman*, a rumpled and monstrously distorted female figure, was of course well familiar to de Kooning, and would come to occupy his attentions for nearly thirty years. Beginning in the early 1940s, de Kooning turned from depicting seated men to *Seated Woman*, completing his first *Seated Woman* in oils c. 1940.

Considered among the most “aggressive” revisions of the female figure in art history, de Kooning’s canonical *Woman* series (1950–53) also reinvented the gesture in American painting. According to Thomas Hess, de Kooning, like many Abstract Expressionists, was reacting against the then-dominant Parisian School aesthetic, which emphasized balance and refinement. De Kooning’s energetic, slashing strokes, by contrast, “omitted the last stage of finish,” exposing the painting’s compositional obstacles and its solutions.¹⁷ Harold Rosenberg would come to define de Kooning’s gestural mark making as “action painting,” a spontaneous means of artistic production which emphasized an ongoing interaction between the artist and his canvas. According to conservator and art historian Susan Lake, de Kooning was also keenly interested in surface texture, becoming progressively more textured in the 1950s and 60s.¹⁸ In fact, de Kooning often added ground glass, fine pebbles, quartz, even plaster of Paris to enhance the bulk of his materials and create textural contrast across his support surfaces. With the terra cotta series, de Kooning brought the same attention to surface and material into the third dimension.

The female figure, for de Kooning, was an emotionally ambiguous compositional device, having been variously interpreted as either misogynistic or as a response to the sexualization of women in popular consumer culture. Writing in 1969, American art critic Emily Genauer argued that de Kooning’s art perpetrated a kind of violence upon the female archetype.¹⁹ Canonization of such works by institutions like MoMA and theorists like Rosenberg only further gendered American Abstraction, to the exclusion of Abstract Expressionists like Krasner, Louise Nevelson and Grace Hartigan. De Kooning’s *Woman* series broke with the non-figuration of Abstract Expressionist production, plunging his figurative explorations into an emerging debate about gender in postwar society. The demobilization of the 1950s ushered in a period of regressive social conformity in which the enforcement of certain normative gender roles, particularly those relating to women and domesticity, were viewed as essential to the success of a “healthy” and prosperous society. The increasing unhappiness of women with this bargain was later uncovered by the feminist author and activist Betty Friedan, whose 1963 book, *The Feminine Mystique* challenged the ways in which America culture perpetuated the myth of the happy housewife.

“Cages hold the nightmare you carry with you, although they are not necessarily threatening...Black symbolized things hidden, while white, and suggestions of transparency, mean things will break through.”

——Jimmy Ernst²⁰

Disc (1967), an oil on masonite by the German-American painter Jimmy Ernst (1920–84), juxtaposes chaos against containment. At the center, a circle, constituted by a dense web of jagged, intersecting lines, is framed by a square field of warm, muddy brown, the bounds of which impose a kind of order upon the anarchy. Like an explosion, dark shards of grey and black converge against a variegated field of cerulean, olive and rust, creating the impression of space and architecture. It’s as if one of Tatlin’s imagined monuments have burst apart, sending fragments of steel and glass hurtling outward in all directions. Throughout the *Disc* series, pigment is scraped away, generating a sense of motion in the tectonic forms emerging from inky blackness. In other examples from this series, such as the smaller mixed media *Disc 13* (1967), blades and shards fan out in all directions, like turbines amidst a dark and disordered dreamscape.

Part of a series exploring the juxtaposition of a circle within a square, *Disc* is considered one of Ernst’s mature works, a significant departure from his earlier Surrealist, biomorphic automatism. The son of famed Surrealist Max Ernst and the art historian Louise Straus, Ernst grew up between Cologne and Paris, among celebrated Surrealists Salvador Dali, Man Ray, Joan Miro and Yves Tanguy. Fleeing the rise of the Nazi party, he arrived in New York in 1938 where his artistic pedigree provided him entrance to the emerging New York avant-garde. He first worked at MoMA and later became director of Peggy Guggenheim’s gallery Art of this Century, painting in the evenings and befriending Abstract Expressionists like William Bazotes. Ernst had his first solo show in 1943 and shortly thereafter became one of the “Irascible Eighteen,” a group that protested the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s regressive attitude towards contemporary American painting in the 1940s.

Ernst found inspiration in jazz, the unconscious and in the iconography, material culture and rituals of the Hopi and Navajo tribes of the American Southwest. But he was also haunted by a traumatic childhood, the challenges of having what he called a “genius-stranger” father and the agony of his failed attempts to rescue his mother, who was Jewish, from Auschwitz.²¹ “My mother was an art historian and art journalist," Ernst recalled bitterly, "the International Rescue Committee did not consider her important enough to be brought out in time.”²² Considered against Ernst’s traumatic biography, it is difficult not to see psychic confinement or raw nerve endings in the dense webbing that permeates *Disc*. Webs are, in fact, prolific throughout Ernst’s mature paintings, appearing in works like *Sooner or Later* (1962) and *Three Silences* (1976), though they’re rarely as figuratively suggestive as they are in *Disc*.

“I think abstractly because I think that abstraction is another kind of reality...to get the spectator involved it has to extend his vision...so that there is a wider experience open[ed] up to him.”

——Hale Woodruff²³

Best known for his figurative murals and gritty social realism, Hale Woodruff (1900–80) is somewhat less familiar as an Abstract Expressionist. Born and raised in Illinois, Woodruff attended the John Herron Art Institute and the Art Institute of Chicago before embarking on a four-year sojourn in Paris in 1927. Much like his younger contemporary Romare Bearden, Woodruff’s experience in Europe was transformative, connecting him to a group of radical, expatriated African American artists and intellectuals that included painter Henry Ossawa Tanner, performer and activist Josephine Baker and the writer, philosopher and godfather of the Harlem Renaissance Alain Locke. A reluctant teacher, Woodruff became one of the most influential educators of the twentieth century, mentoring many artists, including Jacob Lawrence, Leo Twiggs and Faith Ringgold. He established the first fine art department for Southern Black students at Atlanta University in 1931 and was one of the first African American professors hired at New York University, where he worked until 1968. Along with Bearden and Richard Mayhew, Woodruff also co-founded Spiral in 1963, a collective of African American artists dedicated to examining the role of visual art in the Civil Rights Movement.

Woodruff’s talents and interests were diverse. Extending across figural representation, abstraction, Mexican Muralism, Regionalism and Pan-Africanism, he often worked in and across multiple visual languages throughout his life. Following an apprenticeship with Diego Rivera, he produced his best known works, a series of murals at Talladega College (1938–42), Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company (1949) and Clark Atlanta University Art Gallery (1951), before moving towards abstraction in the 1950s and 60s. *Two Figures: Abstraction* (c.1958) belongs to a later period of his work in which expressionistic color, vigorous brushwork and gestural spontaneity intersected with pictographic forms inspired by African sculpture, painting, and textile design. Instead of avoiding specific cultural or biographical references, as was typically advocated for in the New York School, Woodruff mined sources in African art, rooting his influences in cultural difference. He argued that Black artists should begin with the particulars of their own experience, but stressed that their work should also be universal in presence and impact.²⁴

Woodruff worked against the backdrop of racial segregation throughout his career, even among the supposedly enlightened art world avant-garde. Though many of those associated with Spiral were Abstract Expressionists, their work was ignored by critics like Clement Greenberg as too autobiographical.²⁵ Yet, African American artists of this era were forced to reckon with the transhistorical “universalism” of white American modernism, in which the forms and features of non-Western art were often appropriated by white artists without regard for social or ethnic specificity.²⁶ Woodruff’s mural cycle, *The Art of the Negro*, for example, depicted the development of modern art as resulting from transcultural contact, trade and colonization between African and European cultures. In works like *Two Figures: Abstraction*, he subjects the figure to fracturing and stylization, marrying his interests in both African material culture and American modernism.

"When I conjure these memories, they are of the present to me...Because after all, the artist is a kind of enchanter in time."
——Romare Bearden²⁷

Romare Bearden's (1911–88) *The Conversation* (1979) exemplifies Bearden's mining of memory, mythologies and emotional realism as rich sources of his personal visual vocabulary. Placing African American cultural life within the context of universal themes, such as religion or migration, Bearden's exploration of ritual and celebration of Black cultural life, much like James Van Der Zee's photographic portraiture, reclaimed the dignity of "the new Black citizen" from the poisonous battlefield of American visual politics. His childhood in rural North Carolina, coming of age in Harlem and Pittsburgh in the 1920s and emergence as a major artist at the height of Abstract Expressionism, intersected squarely with battles over the iconographic representation of African Americans.²⁸ Bearden's lithograph, *The Conversation*, exemplifies an autobiographical approach common to his mature works, exploring a personal symbolism constructed by passing trains, roosters and neighborhoods populated by conjure women and references to African material culture.

A critical figure in the Harlem Renaissance, Romare Bearden is best known for his series of collages and photostats known as *Projections*. Completed in 1964, the series marks Bearden's departure from Abstract Expressionism and uncompromising return to lyrical figuration and narrative. Merging his political activism with interests in Western art, African sculpture, Mexican mural painting and music—especially blues and jazz—Bearden's prints, collages and paintings throughout the 1960s and 70s embodied the urgency of the Civil Rights Movement and the negotiation of race and identity politics in America. According to his biographer Mary Schmidt Campbell, Bearden insisted that his work was neither propaganda nor sociology.²⁹ Rather, he described his approach as an exploration of the "prevalence of ritual," an attention to the choreography of daily life in Black America.³⁰

The Conversation follows Bearden's 1977 cycle of collages and watercolors based on Homer's epic poem, the *Odyssey*, in which Bearden gave Homer's *Odyssey* modern cultural relevance, seeing in the epic battle for Troy, a parallel to the rioting and protests of the American Civil Rights Movement. Mining both African and Western art historical tradition, Bearden combined colorful Byzantine flatness, Ancient Near-Eastern abstraction and West African tradition and ritual with the figurative Modernism of Matisse and Picasso. *The Conversation*, like Bearden's *Odyssey* series, plays with sharp-edged abstraction and bold fields of flat color. The two female figures at right reflect Bearden's fascination with African material culture. The dress of the woman on the left may reference Kuba cloth or West African Kente textiles. The women's exaggerated silhouettes, a composite of frontal and profile views, recall Kalabari water spirit masks and Yoruban sculptural traditions.

**"I am concerned with the Ancestral image...
the picture created is the embodiment of the Ancestral world
that exists on the horizon of mind and coast."**
——Theodoros Stamos³¹

IFLS (1979), part of Theodoros Stamos's (1922–97) *Infinity Field, Lefkada Series*, confronts the viewer with its stark simplicity and meditative boundlessness. As fellow color field painter Barnett Newman explained, "We are creating images whose reality is self-evident and which are devoid of the props and crutches that evoke associations with outmoded images, both sublime and beautiful...that can be understood by anyone who will look at it without the nostalgic glasses of history."³² Through an embrace of primitive and archaic subject matter, Stamos, alongside Newman, Clyfford Still and Mark Rothko, sought to redefine 18th-century philosopher Edmund Burke's concept of the sublime for a modern audience. They approached a new kind of visual transcendence and "universal truth" through fields of bold color evoking emotion in the viewer according to his or her experience of the work. Perhaps indebted to Newman's trademark downward stroke, or "zip," Stamos interrupts modulated fields of violet with thin, luminous streaks and slashes, which interrupt the composition's ragged patches of color and divide them into windowlike forms.

The youngest of the first-generation Abstract Expressionists, Theodoros Stamos was a largely self-taught painter whose early interests in automatism and biomorphic imagery positioned him, along with Adolph Gottlieb and William Baziotes, among the more poetic-symbolic side of Abstract Expressionism. Like Rothko, whom he befriended in 1947, Stamos was interested in primitive, mythological imagery and the pursuit of a transcendental truth, which he reconciled through experiments in color designed to envelope and overwhelm the viewer's perception. His mature paintings index his responses to place. *IFLS*, for example, was inspired by the Greek island of Lefkada where Stamos spent much of his time from 1970 until his death. The autographic nature of lithography, a process which captures the exact mark of the hand upon the stone or plate surface, made this medium ideal for Abstract Expressionism.

Despite his involvement with the New York avant-garde at the height of its meteoric rise, Stamos remains a minor figure among his peers, his reputation having suffered irreparably from an art world scandal in the 1970s. Stamos, one of three executors of Rothko's estate, was convicted of conspiring to defraud the Rothko family following Rothko's suicide in 1970. He lost his house in the judgement and the market for his work suffered for decades.³³ Nonetheless, he was regarded as a "natural phenomenon" by his friends and contemporaries. In an essay published in the catalogue of Stamos's second solo exhibition at the Betty Parsons Gallery, Barnett Newman warmly praised Stamos's work as "subtle and sensuous...able to catch not only the glow of an object in all its splendor but its inner life with all its dramatic implications of terror and mystery."³⁴

“I always wanted to show the world that art is everywhere, except that it has to pass through a creative mind...I don't think you can touch a thing that cannot be rehabilitated into another life. And once I gave the whole world life in that sense, I could use anything.”
——Louise Nevelson³⁵

Lullaby for Jumbo (1966), a photographic collage screen-printed against a striking, butter-colored background, is one of a dozen serigraphs dedicated to the avant-garde British poet Edith Sitwell. Like Nevelson (1899–1988), Sitwell was an uncompromising figure whose work was nearly overshadowed by her eccentricity. Yet, both women navigated the gender politics and conservatism of their respective eras to successfully pioneer developments in mid-century modern art and poetry.

"Lullaby for Jumbo," from the portfolio series, "Façade: In Homage to Edith Sitwell," is as abstract and playfully ambiguous as Sitwell's poem of the same name. The assemblages photographed are figuratively suggestive while also reflecting Nevelson's passion for Cubist abstraction and interest in the monumental and totemic qualities of Mayan material culture. In the foreground, a photograph of Nevelson's wooden assemblage unfolds like an altarpiece. Wings huge and grey, the elephantine form recalls the absurdly slow surrealism of Stillwell's spoken word performance.

Working largely in found wood and debris scavenged from the streets of her Manhattan neighborhood, Nevelson initially eschewed the industrialism of contemporaries like the sculptor David Smith in favor of materials for which she had a more biographical familiarity.³⁶ A young Jewish emigrant from the Ukraine, Nevelson's father kept the family afloat peddling scavenged goods before eventually becoming a successful real estate developer and lumberyard owner.³⁷ Nevelson's assemblages, which she began constructing in the 1940s, recall the haphazard *Merzbilds* of the German Dadaist Kurt Schwitters, as well as the more poetic shadowboxes of Joseph Cornell. Yet unlike either, Nevelson cloaked her dense accumulations of detritus in monochromatic black, white or gold, cleansing them of all reference to the world outside her work.

Attempts to assess Nevelson's sculpture in terms of its gendered themes or aesthetics have been met with derision by feminists and by Nevelson herself. ³⁸ While fundamental to the history of feminist art, Nevelson, like fellow Abstract Expressionists Lee Krasner, Elaine de Kooning, Grace Hartigan and Helen Frankenthaler, preferred to be seen as artists first, not as women. Yet the art world too frequently struggled to see female Abstract Expressionists beyond their gender. A review of Nevelson's first solo show in 1941 revealed the sexism inherent to the industry: "We learned the artist is a woman, in time to check our enthusiasm. Had it been otherwise, we might have hailed these sculptural expressions as by surely a great figure among moderns."³⁹

The Abstract Expressionists fought and starved, partied and pontificated, paving the way for the unruly progeny who followed. Post-painterly Abstraction moved towards cleaner lines and more clearly defined and colorful abstract forms. Minimalists, like Donald Judd, and Neo-Dadaists, like Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, rejected the grandiose biographical emotionalism and autographic gesture in favor of anonymity, sleek industrialism and chance. Nonetheless, the Abstract Expressionists battled the establishment and captured the attentions of the entire mid-century art world. Theirs was the fertile ground upon which twentieth-century American art took root.

END NOTES

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¹⁸ See Susan Lake, *Willem de Kooning: The Artist's Materials* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2010).

¹⁹ Emily Genauer, *Newsday*, 1969, as cited by The Art Story Contributors, "Willem de Kooning."

²⁰ Phyllis Braff, "The Art and Angst of Jimmy Ernst," *NY Times*, (Aug. 11, 1985) section 11LI, Page 14 <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/08/11/nyregion/the-art-and-angst-of-jimmy-ernst.html>, accessed 6/10/20

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²³ C. Gerald Fraser, "Hale Woodruff Looks Back on a Lifetime of Painting," *New York Times*, 69, May 6, 1979

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³⁰ Carroll Greene, “Romare Bearden: The Prevalence of Ritual,” MoMA (1971) PDF

³¹ Anna Novakov, “Theodoros Stamos,” *Art Gallery International* (November/December 1988), p. 17.

³² Barnett Newman, “The Sublime is Now,” in *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews*, ed. John P. O’Neill (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 170–3.

³³ Judith H. Dobrzynski, “A Betrayal The Art World Can't Forget; The Battle for Rothko's Estate Altered Lives and Reputations,” *New York Times*, (November 2, 1998), section E, p 1. <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/02/arts/betrayal-art-world-can-t-forget-battle-for-rothko-s-estate-altered-lives.html?pagewanted=all> accessed 6/11/20.

³⁴ Sam Hunter, “Theodoros Stamos: History and Recent Paintings,” *Arts Magazine* (June 1988), 57.

³⁵ Louise Nevelson, *Dawns & Dusks: Louise Nevelson, Taped Conversations with Diana MacKown* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), 81.

³⁶ Donna Seaman. "The Empress of In-Between: A Portrait of Louise Nevelson." *TriQuarterly*, Spring 2008, 9+. Gale Literature Resource Center <https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.drew.edu/apps/doc/A193184010/LitRC?u=madi95127&sid=LitRC&xid=9e59d92f>, accessed June 19, 2020.

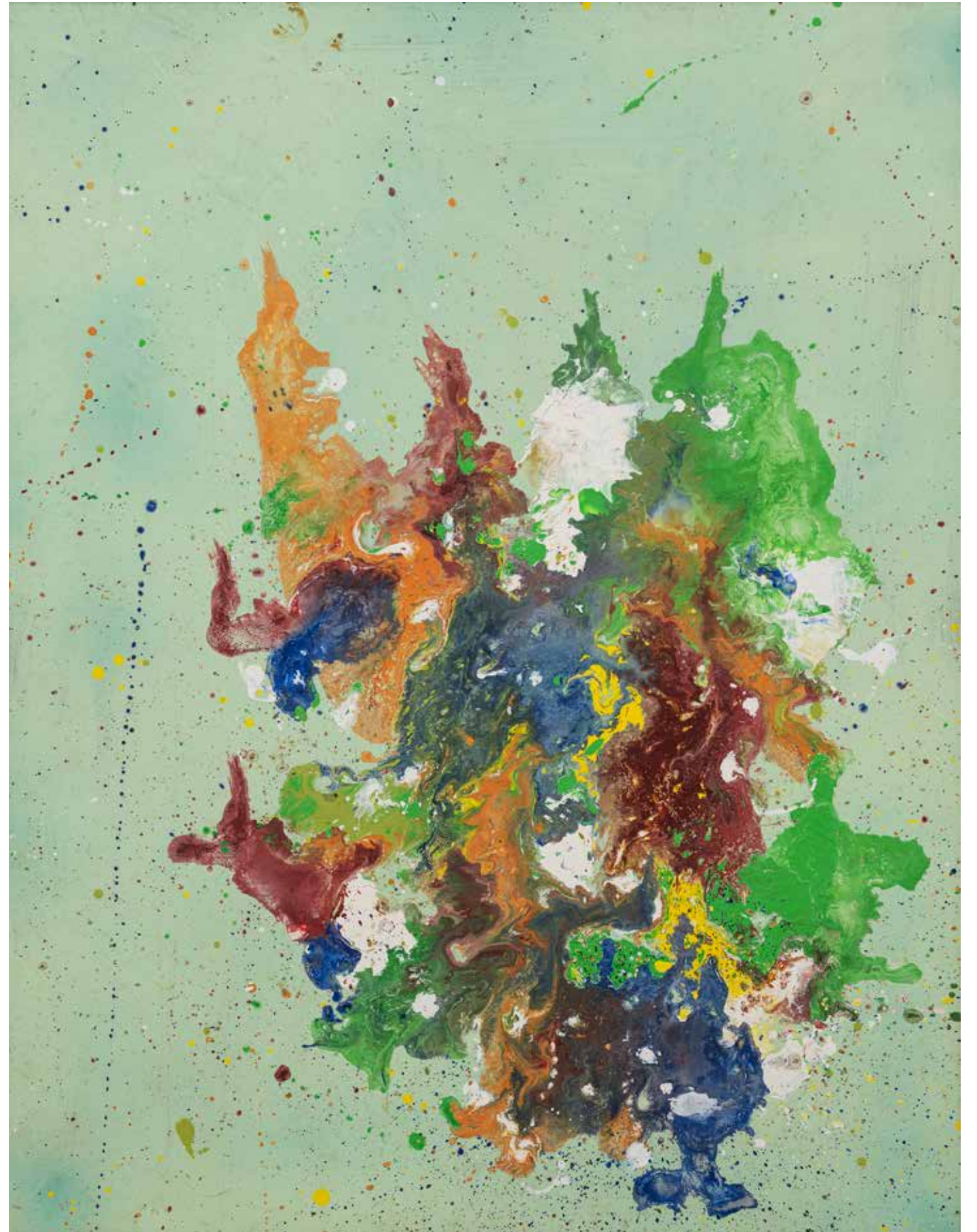
³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays*, (Westview Press, 1988), 147–158; Brooke Kamin Rappaport, “Louise Nevelson A Story in Sculpture,” *The Sculpture of Louise Nevelson: Constructing a Legend*, Brooke Kamin Rappaport, ed. (New York, New Haven and London: The Jewish Museum and Yale University Press, 2007), 5.

³⁹ As cited in Laurie. *Louise Nevelson: A Passionate Life* (New York: Summit Books, 1990), 143.42

PHOTO CREDITS: Paul Mutino

BOOK DESIGNER: Michael Wasik



William Baziotes, (1912-1963), *Untitled*, n.d.; oil on masonite; Gift of Dr. Barry Musikant, 1984.22.01



Romare Bearden, (1911-1988), *The Conversation*, 11/175, 1979; lithograph on cream paper; Gift of Bruce Cappels, 1991.19.07



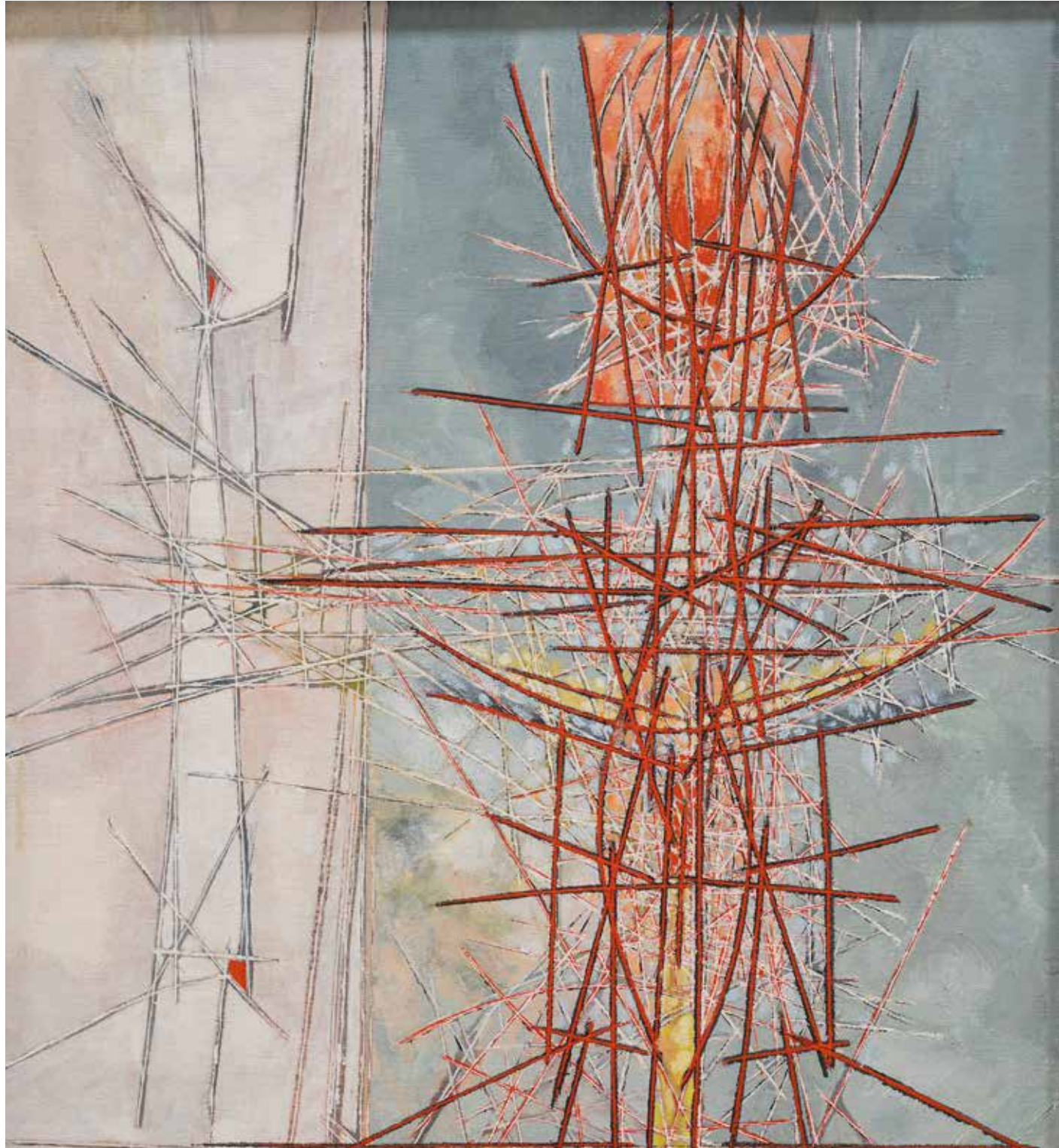
Robert Beauchamp, (1923-1995), *Untitled*, 1956; oil on board; Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Kahn, 1981.12.01



Willem de Kooning, (1904-1997), *Seated Woman*, 1956; bronze on marble base; Gift of Phillip Pavia, 1996.29.02



Jimmy Ernst, (1920-1984), *Disc*, 1967; oil on masonite; Gift of the artist, 1968.41.01



Jimmy Ernst, (1920-1984), *Untitled*, 1958; oil on canvas; Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Gilbert Rose 1985.06.01



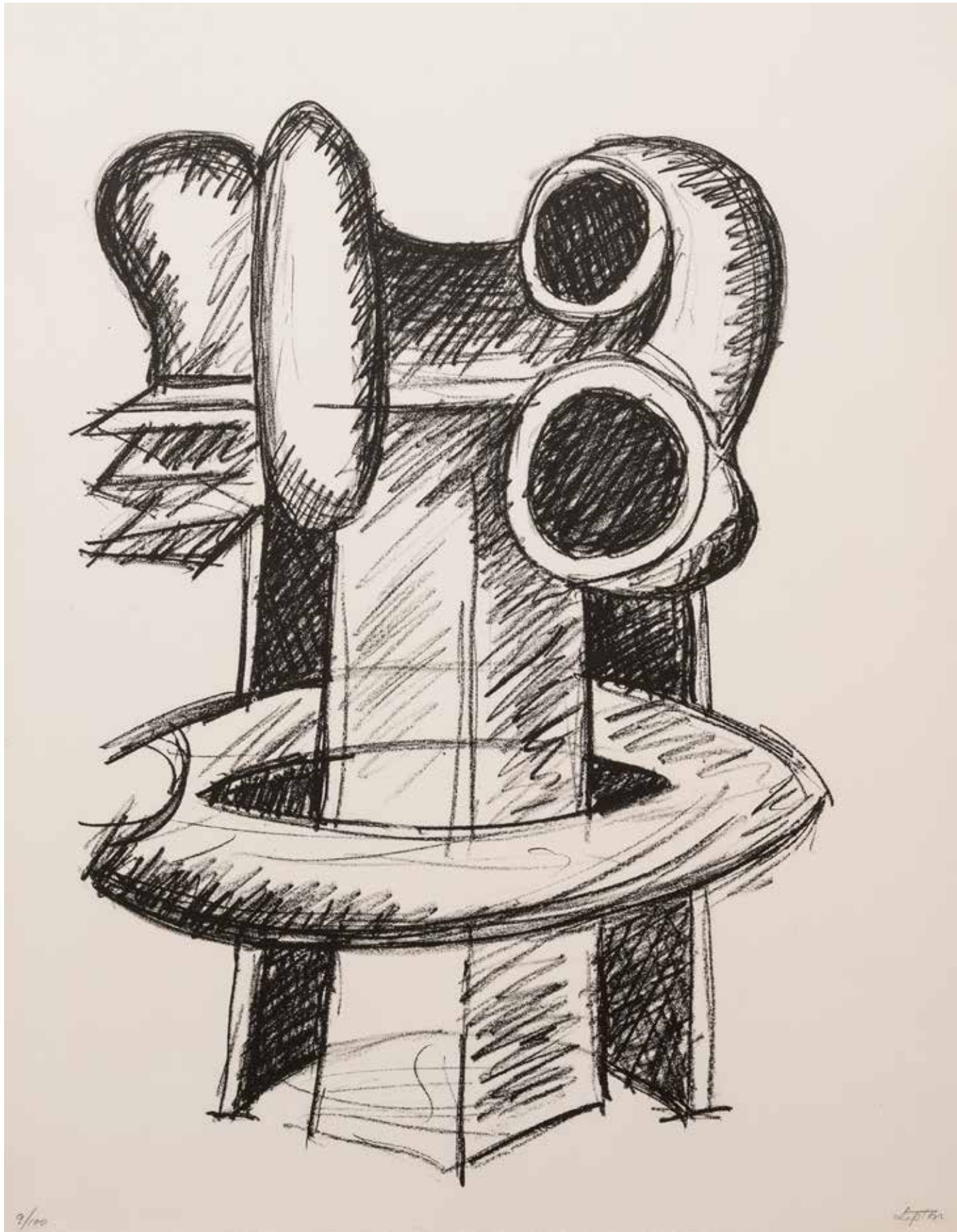
Herbert Ferber, (1906-1991), *Peace*, 1970; lithograph on cream wove paper; Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Kahn 1984.24.05



Richard Hunt, (1935) *Untitled*, ca. 1970s; lithograph on wove paper; Gift of Samuel Dorsky 1978.61.01



Richard Hunt, (1935) *Untitled*, ca. 1970s; lithograph on wove paper; Gift of Samuel Dorsky 1978.61.02



Seymour Lipton, (1903-1986), *Oracle: Study for Clairvoyant*, 1969; lithograph on cream wove paper; Gift of Burt and Ann Chernow 1989.04.14



Conrad Marca-Relli, (1913-2000), *Ville Neuve*, 1982; lithograph on cream wove paper; 1991.19.69



Louise Nevelson, (1899-1988), *Lullaby for Jumbo*, 1966; photographic collage screen print on paper; Gift of Mr. Hugh Levin 1993.23.18.02



Alfonso Ossorio, (1916-1990), *Blow in the Face*, 1963; mixed media assemblage; Gift of Fred Ossorio 1977.34.01



Theodoros Stamos, (1922-1997), *The Ship of Odysseus*, n.d.; oil on masonite; Gift of Benjamin Weiss 1967.43.01



Theodoros Stamos, (1922-1997), *IFLS*, 15/100, 1979; lithograph on cream paper; Gift of Aaron Miller 1995.27.09



Hale Woodruff, (1900-1980), *Two Figures: Abstraction*, ca.1958; oil on canvas; Gift of the artist 1968.16.01



Stephen Greene, (1917-1999), *Blue Light*, 1966; oil on canvas; Gift of Justin and Vivian Ebersman 2012.11.02

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