

Enduring Creativity

Louise Bourgeois

Paul Cadmus

John Cage

Dorothy Dehner

Willem de Kooning

Morris Graves

George McNeil

Louise Nevelson

Isamu Noguchi

Dorothea Tanning

Beatrice Wood

Claire Zeisler

This exhibition was organized
by Roni Feinstein, Branch Director,
Whitney Museum of American Art,
Fairfield County. Special thanks
are extended to Cynthia Roznoy,
Gallery Coordinator, Fairfield County,
who assisted with the research
for this publication and co-authored
the artists' biographies. Lois Meredith's
help in locating photographs
is gratefully acknowledged.

Design

Greer Allen

Typesetting

Custom Printing
and Typographic Service

Printing

Rembrandt Press

Paper

Champion Kromekote®

Champion Wedgwood®

ENDURING CREATIVITY

Roni Feinstein

BRANCH DIRECTOR

Whitney Museum of American Art, Fairfield County



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2013

ENDURING CREATIVITY

In an art world and society oriented to the young, where artists in their early twenties attain superstardom and artists not yet forty have retrospective exhibitions, the work of older artists—even those “living legends” who changed the course of art history—is often overlooked or treated with indifference. This exhibition celebrates the continued productivity and creativity of twelve artists in their late seventies, eighties, and nineties, each represented by examples of recent work. The exhibition demonstrates that this work can not only be stimulating, but influential and relevant as well. It can reveal a great deal about critical and aesthetic trends, about the impact of social history on art, and about the very nature of the creative process.

The art world was a different place when most of the artists included in this exhibition first began their careers. It was more intimate and insulated, with a smaller number of artists and fewer galleries. The media had scant interest in the fine arts, and the size of the art audience was extremely limited. The pressure that young artists face today to develop a characteristic style—to “make their mark”—was not as urgent, perhaps because the rewards of fame and fortune now accorded successful artists were then unimaginable. Half a century ago, artists could mature slowly, while they learned, absorbed influences, explored different stylistic avenues, and experimented with various techniques. The slower pace of the art world is exemplified by the career of Willem de Kooning, who had a considerable underground reputation among New York artists in the mid-1930s, but did not have his first solo show in a New York gallery until 1948, at the age of forty-four. Other artists, like Louise Nevelson, took years or even decades to develop their characteristic styles. Nevelson worked seriously as an artist for thirty years and was fifty-eight before she evolved the black-painted walls of wooden boxes for which she became renowned.

While some of the artists included in the exhibition have occupied a prominent place on the art scene since early in their careers, others have had to wait to achieve recognition, either because their individual styles did not crystallize until their later years, as with Nevelson, or because the art world was touting a different brand of creativity. Paul Cadmus, for example, enjoyed a considerable, if somewhat scandalous,

reputation in the 1930s for his frank treatment of certain sexual themes in works whose realist techniques derived from the Old Masters. His work fell out of favor during the 1950s, when Abstract Expressionism held sway, but it rose to prominence again in the 1970s, when realistic painting styles were once again appreciated. The career of George McNeil, whose expressionist canvases were frequently exhibited in New York in the early fifties, suffered a kind of obscurity in the Pop and Minimalist decades of the 1960s and 1970s. He re-emerged in the early 1980s, riding high on the current wave of Neo-Expressionism. Exhibiting with artists fifty years his junior, he produced works whose energy and vibrancy exceeded anything he had done before.

Perhaps the primary social factor that affected the art world and the careers of the artists in this exhibition was the advent of feminism. Many of the women artists represented here were not given serious consideration until the emergence of the women's movement in the 1970s and 1980s. Dorothy Dehner's career, for example, was almost totally eclipsed by that of her famous sculptor-husband David Smith; often she had to set her own art aside in order to support herself and Smith. Although they were divorced in 1952, she did not achieve recognition as a sculptor until the 1980s. At this time, Dehner was finally able to have the small-scale maquettes she had been making for decades enlarged to monumental proportions and welded in steel or cast in bronze. Louise Bourgeois, who began to create highly original and noteworthy sculptures in the 1940s, had to wait until 1982 to have her first museum exhibition, at New York's Museum of Modern Art. Bourgeois, along with Dorothea Tanning, began to be appreciated for her highly individual approach to Surrealism, a movement that suddenly seemed fresh and renewed when handled from a female perspective. In the 1970s, the widespread rebellion against the industrial aesthetic of Minimalism that had dominated the 1960s, coupled with the rise of feminism, also brought new status to handmade, crafted works of art and to so-called "women's work." The ceramic pieces of the California artist Beatrice Wood and the fiber art works of the Chicagoan Claire Zeisler began to be taken seriously not only as craft, but as legitimate works of art.

For several decades, art historians have postulated the existence of an “old-age style” that artists practice in their later years. *Altersstil*, as it came to be called by German scholars writing early in this century, has been described in three ways—stylistically, emotionally, and iconographically, the three categories tending to be seen as intertwined. Taking the last works of Michelangelo, Titian, Rembrandt, Turner, Goya, Cézanne, Monet, and Picasso as examples, historians have characterized old-age style as a shift from the refinement of the artist’s earlier years toward a looser, rougher treatment of materials and a greater freedom of execution. This stylistic change is attributed to a fearlessness that ostensibly overtakes artists in their last years, when they seem to take ever greater artistic liberties as they confront the approach of death. It is also said that a deepening spiritualization, both on emotional and thematic levels, gives their works an elegaic and lofty dimension; that some artists, particularly those of the modern era like Picasso, devoted themselves to themes of eroticism and sexual potency, which is explained as compensation for the debilities of advancing age.

Yet the definition of *Altersstil*—indeed the concept itself—is dubious because it is based on misdirected generalizations. There does not in fact seem to be a stylistic or thematic syntax basic to artists of advanced age, any more than there is one basic to, say, young artists or women artists. The styles of a few of the artists in the exhibition, such as Willem de Kooning and George McNeil, have displayed a certain loosening over the past few years. De Kooning’s paintings of the 1980s have often been cited in the recent literature dealing with *Altersstil*, since they are more crudely executed than his previous work, filled with skeletal drawing, primary colors, and a celestial, radiant white light. But the same change cannot be observed in the late work of other artists in the exhibition. And the spirituality that is often associated with the work of older artists may be a perception imposed from without—what one would like or expect to see in such work rather than what is really there. The spirituality that registers in Isamu Noguchi’s recent carved-stone sculptures, Morris Graves’ late still-life watercolors, or John Cage’s drawings also characterizes their earlier work. As for defining *Altersstil* in terms of the recurrence of certain themes, only one work in the exhibition directly addresses the issue of old age—

Paul Cadmus' haunting and moving painting *The Haircut* of 1986, which is fraught with the artist's characteristic symbolism and sarcasm. Cadmus shows an exaggerated version of his aged self, draped in a cloth like a martyred saint, as he waits to be given a haircut by a majestic, obviously vigorous and potent male nude. Lusty erotic imagery plays an important part only in the works of Dorothea Tanning and Louise Bourgeois, whose focus on uninhibited sexuality celebrates the endurance of life, pleasure, and creativity.

The concept of *Altersstil* ultimately breaks down because art is the product of individuals. Different personalities, experiences, training, techniques, and patronage determine the course of a career and hence the kind of work produced in old age. It is basic to the nature of the artistic enterprise that artists do not retire; even when facing ill health, they generally find a way to pursue their art. The inner necessity to create, to express themselves in paint or plaster or stone, is what drove them to be artists in the first place. Art becomes a projection of self, a progeny, a key to immortality. Artists continue on a voyage of self-discovery, searching for the next breakthrough, until the end of their lives.

As we approach the close of the twentieth century, artists and art historians alike have begun to reevaluate the century's various movements and styles, often resurrecting reputations and careers that had been interred by the vagaries of taste. Although the final history of this century art has yet to be written, one cannot but imagine that the artists represented here, who have spent decades fervently and tenaciously pursuing their aesthetic vision, will assume their rightful pride of place.

RONI FEINSTEIN

ARTISTS IN THE EXHIBITION



PHOTO © ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE

Louise Bourgeois *b. Paris, 1911*

A pioneer of personal and idiosyncratic art concerned with body image, gender, and self, Louise Bourgeois made the transition from painter to sculptor in the late 1940s, beginning with a series of Surrealist-inspired personages in wood. In the 1960s, she expanded both her iconography and range of materials. Her experimentation with plaster, latex, and other pliable materials led her to biomorphic imagery suggestive of bodily organs and orifices, breasts, phalluses, and wombs. The content of Bourgeois' sculpture gradually became more expressionist than Surrealist, as she explored such subjective states as fear, vulnerability, sheltering, nurturing, and sexuality.

During the 1970s, Bourgeois concentrated primarily on environmental installations; the individual sculptures produced at this time tended to be architectural in nature. But in the 1980s she returned to the biomorphic imagery that had occupied her earlier in her career, often sculpting the pieces with an enhanced realism and incorporating newly developed motifs. The intestinelike coils surrounding the phallic form in the bronze *Nature Study* of 1986, for example, are new to Bourgeois' art, as are the arms with naturalistically rendered hands that embrace the many-breasted form in the plaster *Cove* of 1987.



LOUISE BOURGEOIS, *Nature Study*, 1986

Nature Study, 1986

Bronze with black patina, 12½ x 33 x 16½ in. Robert Miller Gallery, New York

Nature Study (White Eyes), 1986

Gray and white marble with steel base, 30 x 33½ x 32 in. Robert Miller Gallery, New York

Cove, 1987

Plaster with steel base, 61 x 38 x 20 in. Robert Miller Gallery, New York

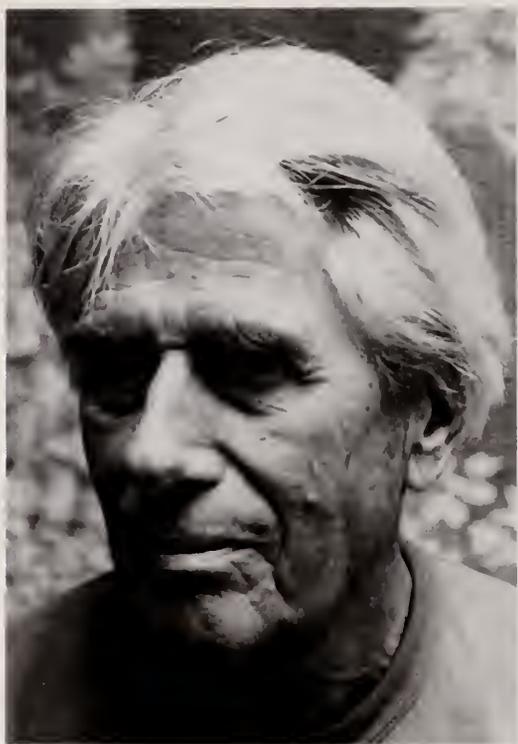


PHOTO ION ANDERSON

Paul Cadmus *b. New York City, 1904*

During the mid-1930s, Paul Cadmus gained prominence in the art world with narrative paintings that focused on themes of sexuality, brutality, and political parody. His canvases tended to be crowded with figures who, with caricatured faces and exaggerated limbs, seemed to enact stories that emphasized the baser aspects of humankind. Around 1940, Cadmus' interest in Renaissance art led him to couple his realist painting style with the fifteenth-century painting technique of tempera on panel.

Cadmus' paintings of the 1980s, produced one a year, in part because of the painstaking nature of

the tempera process, continue to be involved with satirical social commentary. His treatment of this content, however, is now more symbolic and personal and makes extensive use of metaphor. In one of his recent works, for example, a flaming wooden box represents the world ignited by nuclear war. Self-portraits now appear more frequently, and they are used to comment on the artist's role in society or on the aging process. And the idealized male nudes that have long played a part in Cadmus' art now take on a more intense symbolic role, representing either man in his raw, naked state or the longed-for virility of youth.



PAUL CADMUS, *The House That Jack Built*, 1987

See No Evil, Speak No Evil, Etc., Version #3, 1985

Crayon on tracing paper over board, 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 20 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Midtown Galleries, New York

The Haircut, 1986

Tempera on gessoed panel, 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 17 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. Midtown Galleries, New York

The House That Jack Built, 1987

Tempera on panel, 33 x 33 in. Private collection, courtesy Midtown Galleries, New York

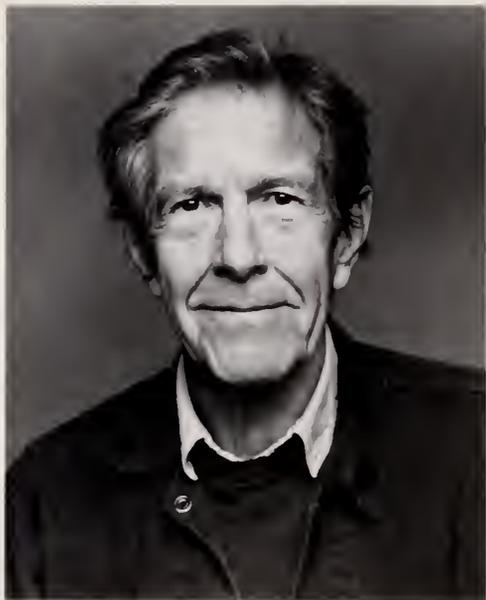


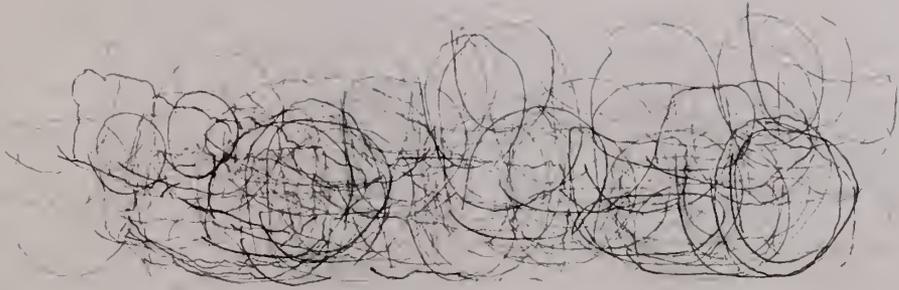
PHOTO: REX RYSTEDT

John Cage *b. Los Angeles, 1904*

For over forty years, composer John Cage has been a leading figure in the world of avant-garde music. Also a poet, essayist, teacher, draftsman, and printmaker, Cage has had a far-reaching impact on the visual arts. All of his activities are united by his preoccupation with Zen Buddhist philosophy. Seeking to free art from the unconscious mind, he turned in the early 1950s to chance operations, using the *I Ching*, the ancient Chinese book of divination. With this tool, he developed structural systems for his works that eliminated personal taste, desires, and ideas.

Cage's *Where R = Ryoanji* series of drawings, begun in the mid-1980s, originated in a musical

composition, a solo piece inspired by Ryoanji, an ancient rock garden in Kyoto, Japan. As in all of his drawings, Cage avoids gesture, here substituting the quasi-mechanical process of tracing. With guidance from the *I Ching*, he determined the number of times each of fifteen rocks was to be traced in a particular drawing (fifteen being the number of rocks in the ancient garden) and the weights of the pencils used. Despite this impersonal system of determination, the *Where R = Ryoanji* drawings, with their disposition of circles scribbled with wriggly lines in varying intensities of light and dark, offer a kind of recurring meditation and generate their own sense of magic.



JOHN CAGE, *Where R = Ryoanji 14R/12*, 1987

Where R = Ryoanji 10R/6/2, 1987

Pencil on paper, 10 x 19 in. Margarete Roeder Fine Arts, New York

Where R = Ryoanji 11R/7, 1987

Pencil on paper, 10 x 19 in. Margarete Roeder Fine Arts, New York

Where R = Ryoanji 14R/12, 1987

Pencil on paper, 10 x 19 in. Margarete Roeder Fine Arts, New York



PHOTO ARTHUR TRESVI

Dorothy Dehner *b. Cleveland, 1901*

After almost three decades of painting and drawing, Dorothy Dehner began to make sculpture in 1952, at the age of fifty-one. The development of her sculpture over the past thirty-five years has involved a process of simplification, of paring down. A series of bronze abstract works modeled in the round in the late fifties consisted of vertical accumulations of organic and quasi-geometric forms. In the early sixties, Dehner moved to a more rectilinear form language in which open and closed boxes were set in planar configurations and cluttered with detail, their structures and their nervous energy often recalling the pictographs found in the work of many of her Abstract Expressionist contemporaries. By the late sixties, Dehner was

working with broader planes that, while still rich in surface texture, placed greater emphasis on shape.

After a brief period of working in wood in the late seventies, Dehner turned to Cor-Ten steel for large-scale pieces that are monumental in presence, expansive in structure and, generally, economical in form. They are sculptures with a strong graphic quality in which lines and forms are dramatically silhouetted against open space. Like Dehner's earlier sculpture, the new works are either vertical or horizontal—suggesting figures, landscapes, or landscapes with figures. The recent pieces, however, feature an openness and freedom far removed from the anxious, confining rhythms of her earlier work.



DOROTHY DEHNER, *Signpost*, 1987

SunDown, 1984

Cor-Ten steel, 38 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 67 in. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Hochberg

Signpost, 1987

Fabricated steel, 74 x 27 x 33 in. Twining Gallery, New York



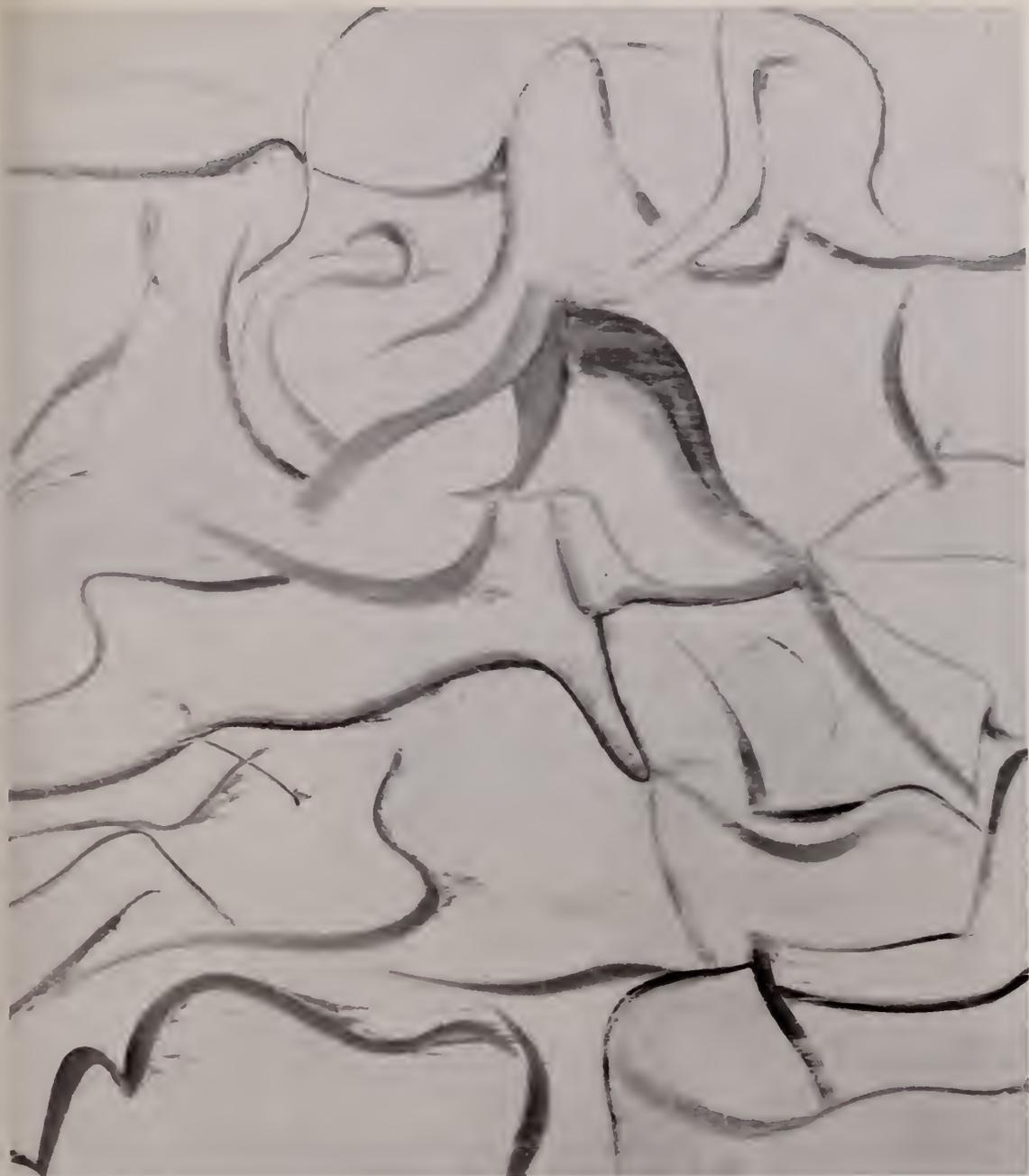
PHOTO © NANCY CRAMPTON

Willem de Kooning *b. Rotterdam, 1904*

By the late 1940s, Willem de Kooning had become a leading figure of Abstract Expressionism—a painterly, gestural, and emotionally spontaneous aesthetic that dominated the American art scene during the next decade. De Kooning's emphasis on painting as an unpremeditated act and his assertion of the physicality of paint have been of unrivaled importance to his fellow Abstract Expressionists as well as to successive generations of painters.

De Kooning's art of the 1980s represents a unique fusion of the abstract and figurative modes he has worked in throughout his career. Moreover, it reveals a sharp change in mood and a reductiveness of pictorial means. As art

historian Robert Rosenblum described it: "The slathering, crusty brushwork that typified the surfaces of de Kooning's paintings from the late 1940s on, the frequent sense of congestion and impasse that gave his canvases of the late 70s the character of tormented struggle and search have finally evaporated here in a buoyant, airborne realm." Sinuous, flamelike contours drawn in primary colors float over surfaces suffused with radiant white light. Contours often hint at body parts and landscape elements, but they resolutely defy definition as recognizable forms. Nothing in de Kooning's earlier oeuvre anticipated the sense of resolution and the ethereal simplicity found in these recent works.



WILLEM DE KOONING, *Untitled XV*, 1983

Untitled XV, 1983

Oil on canvas, 80 x 70 in. Collection of Emily Fisher Landau

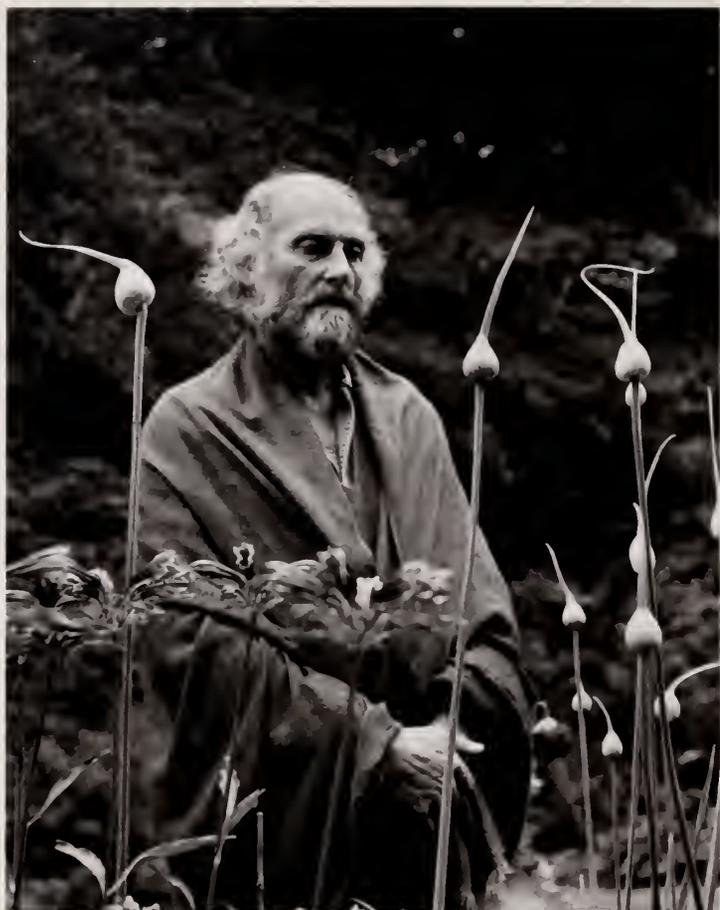


PHOTO: IMOGENE JENNINGS/SHAN

Morris Graves *b. Fox Valley, Oregon, 1910*

During the 1930s, Morris Graves developed a repertory of symbols—the moon, the bird, the snake—which he used to express the spirituality he found in nature. Because he was involved with Eastern mystical thought, his style shows the profound influence of Oriental painting and calligraphy: his economically rendered symbols were generally isolated against empty, monochromatic grounds. Although this romantic and expressive work made Graves a prominent figure in the art world, he painted little during the 1950s and 1960s, when his aversion to the industrial and urban development of his Pacific Northwest home led him to travel extensively in search of a more idyllic site.

Since 1973, settled once again on the Pacific coast, Graves has devoted himself to still-life paintings in which flowers in simple vases and bottles, fruits and vegetables, and other humble objects, often rendered in rich, glowing colors, are set against muted, tonal grounds. In these rather large, tempera-on-paper works, the mystical sensibility and quietude of Oriental art are combined with Western still-life traditions, which explain the new emphasis placed on the definition of shapes and forms in space. While less expressionistic and more descriptive and controlled than his earlier paintings, these recent still lifes continue to evoke Graves' love of nature and his belief in a pervasive life force.



MORRIS GRAVES, *Poverty Winter Still Life*, 1982

Poverty Winter Still Life, 1982

Tempera on paper, 26 x 46 in. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Hatch

Farmer's Market Plant Stand, 1983

Tempera on paper, 44 x 26½ in. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Hatch

Remembrances of Things Past, 1986

Tempera on paper, 26 x 36 in. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Hatch

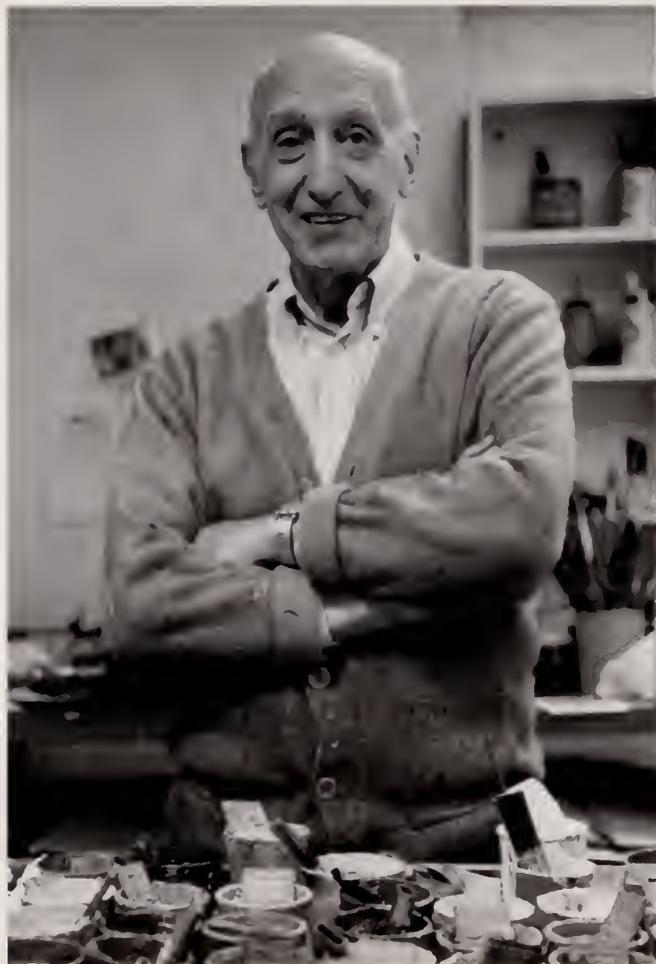


PHOTO ROBERT E. MATES

George McNeil *b. New York City, 1908*

In George McNeil's expressionist paintings of the 1950s, figures and objects were neutral vehicles for animated brushwork. In the late 1970s, however, McNeil began to explore the emotional life of the figures he painted. He has said that this shift from the dominance of stylistic criteria to a narrative emphasis derived from the "don't-give-a-damn" feeling that comes with advanced age, after your "mature, secure work" is done. He started to produce works in series, taking as his subjects discotheques and punk rockers, football players, and, more recently, urban street scenes. Rendered in raucous colors and featuring drastic jumps in scale and space, these paintings present wildly distorted figures and disembodied limbs floating on the picture

surface—an energy and vibrancy that belie the artist's advanced age.

McNeil's work is generally linked with that of the younger generation of Neo-Expressionists, not only in style, but also in a shared concern for the human condition. But whereas the younger artists tend to concentrate on the darker aspects of the human psyche, McNeil's themes express both the anxieties and pleasures of modern man. He also stands apart from the younger generation in his virtuoso paint handling and masterful control of forms in space, the latter derived from his study in the early 1930s with Hans Hofmann and perfected during a lifetime spent pursuing his craft.



GEORGE MCNEIL, *Dolce Disco*, 1986

D and C, 1980

Oil crayon on paper, 22¼ x 28 in. Collection of the artist, courtesy M. Knoedler and Co., Inc., New York

Dolce Disco, 1986

Acrylic on canvas, 78 x 128 in. Collection of the artist, courtesy M. Knoedler and Co., Inc., New York

Times Square, 1987

Acrylic and collage on canvas, 78 x 64 in. Collection of the artist, courtesy M. Knoedler and Co., Inc., New York



PHOTO ELYNN G. LIBERT

Louise Nevelson *b. Kiev, Russia, 1900*

For the past thirty years, black wood assemblages have been the most enduring presences in Louise Nevelson's art. Although Nevelson has occasionally used other colors and materials, nothing surpasses these black sculptures in mystery and emotive power. They first appeared in her environmental exhibition "Moon Garden + One" in 1958, which coincided with the veritable explosion of Assemblage on the New York scene at that time. Stacked wooden boxes filled with black-painted wood relief groupings of found objects covered the walls of a New York gallery, while a few black wood assemblages stood in the center of the dimly lit room. Nevelson's inspiration for these sculptures came from pre-Columbian archaeological sites she had visited and from the New York City sky-

line; also influential was the fact that her father had been a builder and owner of lumberyards.

The extended *Mirror-Shadow* series of black-painted reliefs of the 1980s uses Nevelson's familiar vocabulary of wooden boxes, slats, hoops, and furniture elements, while at the same time introducing something new. Whereas her earlier work tended to be arranged in stabilizing, rectilinear grid formats, the widespread use of the diagonal in the recent work adds a dynamic element. Similarly, the small wooden shards found frequently in earlier pieces here yield to massive, heavy forms whose dominance generates a sense of muscular energy and tension.



LOUISE NEVELSON, *Mirror-Shadow XXVIII*, 1986

Mirror-Shadow XXVIII, 1986

Painted wood, 78 x 84 x 21 in. Collection of Marc Straus and Jeffrey M. Ambinder

Mirror-Shadow XXX, 1986

Painted wood, 50 x 53 x 16 in. Collection of Richard and Stephanie Chestnov

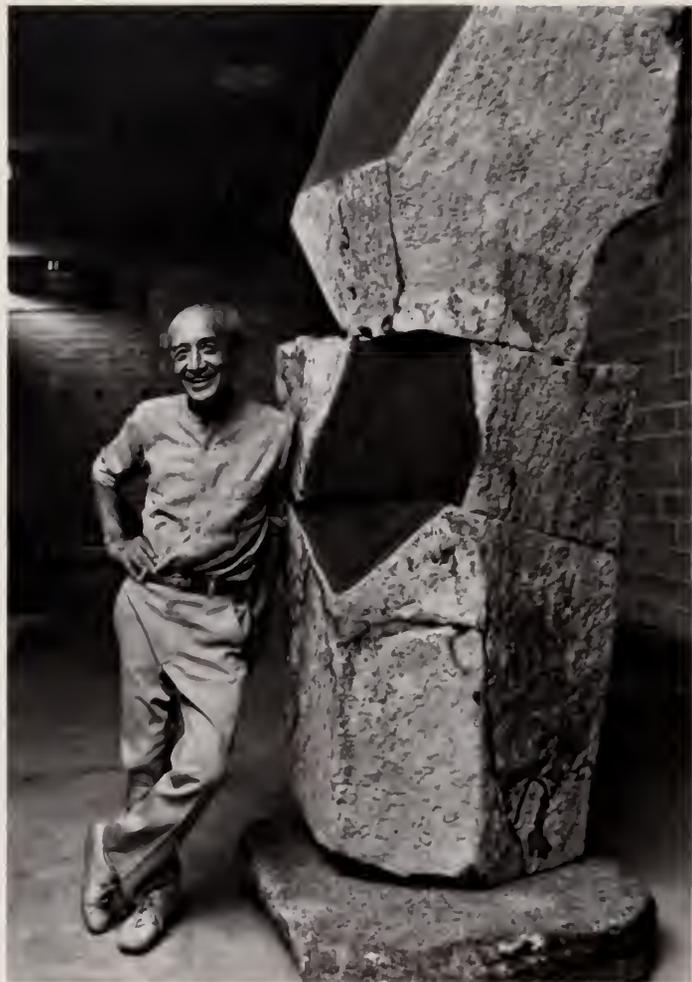
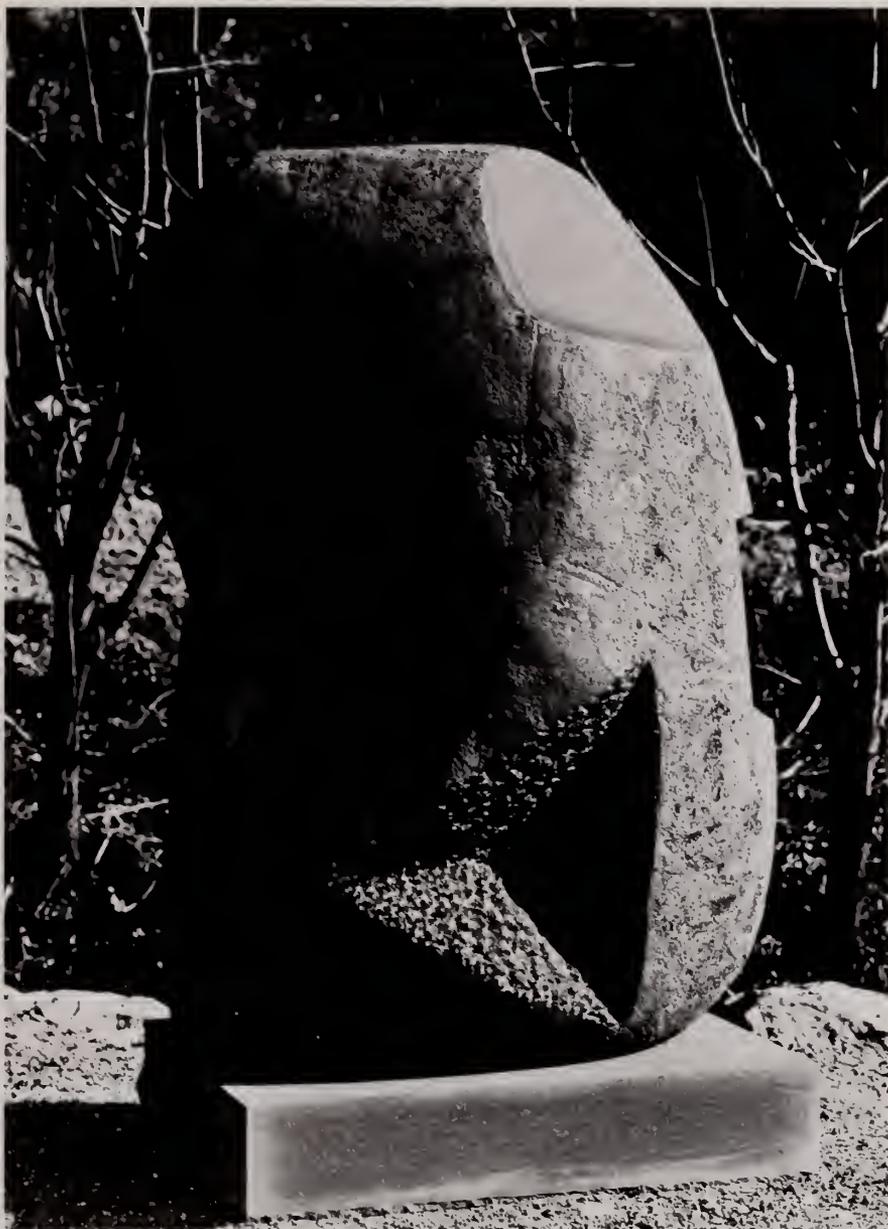


PHOTO © ANZAI

Isamu Noguchi *b. Los Angeles, 1904*

Beginning his career as a representational sculptor in the early 1920s, Noguchi quickly moved to abstract works profoundly influenced by the stark, simple forms of Japanese pottery and by the totemic qualities and biomorphism of Surrealist art. Surrealism was particularly important in the vertical, anthropomorphic sculptures made of flat, smooth, interlocking stones that dominated his art in the mid-1940s. Whether he worked in polished stone, wood, or metal, Noguchi always showed great respect for the natural properties of his materials.

Since 1981, Noguchi's primary sculptural material has been basalt, a dense and heavy igneous rock. His interference with this black or greenish-black stone tends to be minimal: he will carve or bore into the rock to reveal its interior and to introduce contrasts of color, texture, and shadow, but he preserves the rough and rugged quality of the earth-spawned stone. As in his earlier work, some of the sculptures evoke living things, such as *Fishface No. 2* (1983). But the true reference of these late pieces is to a fossilized memory of nature. The works have an earthbound quality that seems to express the sculptor's oneness with the earth, a conjoining of the self with nature.



ISAMU NOGUCHI, *Fullness with Void*, 1984

Fishface No. 2, 1983

Basalt with wood base, 14 x 37 x 15½ in. Collection of Joseph and Marcy Sirulnick

Fullness with Void, 1984

Basalt with granite base, 43¾ x 29¾ x 19¾ in. The Pace Gallery, New York



THE ARTIST'S ROOM

Dorothea Tanning *b. Galesburg, Illinois, 1910*

In Dorothea Tanning's hands, the Surrealist exploration of the unconscious and of dream states has remained vital and alive. During the 1940s and 1950s, living in New York, Arizona, and southern France, Tanning painted in a representational Surrealist manner—detailed, illusionistically rendered scenes of women or female children with long, trailing hair in bizarre, dreamlike situations, for example, encountering giant sunflowers or strange, hybrid animals. Although the compositions were highly imaginative and evocative, the sharp delineation of the forms was rooted in traditional Surrealism.

In Tanning's paintings of the past two decades, however, a highly individualized and inventive Surrealism has emerged. Amorphous female nudes with blurred contours and dissolving limbs are set in undefined, atmospheric spaces. Sometimes partially covered in swirling draperies and often accompanied by odd putto-like forms, the nudes are generally in positions of self-absorption and sensual abandon, their heads thrown back and limbs extended. The meaning of these quasi-operatic scenes is always ambiguous and indeterminate, so that the images register as projections of the unconscious mind.



DOROTHEA TANNING, *Mean Frequency (of Auroras)*, 1981

Mean Frequency (of Auroras), 1981

Oil on canvas, 45 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 35 in. Kent Fine Art, New York

Poppies, 1987

Oil on canvas, 51 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 38 in. Kent Fine Art, New York



Beatrice Wood *b. San Francisco, 1893*

As Anaïs Nin wrote: “Beatrice Wood combines her colors like a painter, makes them vibrate like a musician. They have strength even while iridescent and transparent. They have rhythm and the luster both of jewels and of human eyes. Water poured from one of her jars would taste like wine.” During the teens, Beatrice Wood was a draftsman and member of the New York Dada circle that included Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, and Walter and Louise Arensberg, the pioneering collectors of vanguard art. Shifting careers in 1933, she took up ceramics. In the early 1950s, living in California, she began to produce the extraordinary luster surfaces that have been a primary characteristic of her mature ceramic work.

Before Wood, luster had generally been a surface decoration on a previously glazed form; Wood, however, used in-glaze luster produced during a single glaze firing. Although she did not invent this technique, she brought to it and to the ceramic medium a new expressiveness and theatricality. Over the years, she has produced vessels, vases, and bowls in a stunning range of colors and textures. While some of her works are elaborate in shape—for example, teapots and long-stemmed chalices with knobs, loops, and whimsical figurative motifs—others are basic and rudimentary. Almost all, however, recall primitive and naive pottery traditions, in part because she tends to disregard technical perfection, so that her shapes are generally slightly “off” and her surfaces unevenly glazed.



BEATRICE WOOD, *Large Luster Urn*, 1987

Chalice, 1987

Earthenware with glazes, 13¼ x 6¼ in.

Collection of Stephen and Pamela Hootkin, courtesy Garth Clark Gallery, New York and Los Angeles

Double Handled Bowl, 1987

Earthenware with glazes, 5¼ x 9 in. Garth Clark Gallery, New York and Los Angeles

Gold Footed Bowl, 1987

Earthenware with glazes, 6 x 6 in. Garth Clark Gallery, New York and Los Angeles

Large Luster Urn, 1987

Earthenware with glazes, 14¾ x 14½ in.

Collection of Marian Skeist, courtesy Garth Clark Gallery, New York and Los Angeles

Large Pilgrim Bottle, 1987

Earthenware with glazes, 12½ x 9½ in. Garth Clark Gallery, New York and Los Angeles



PHOTO © WAGENASSER

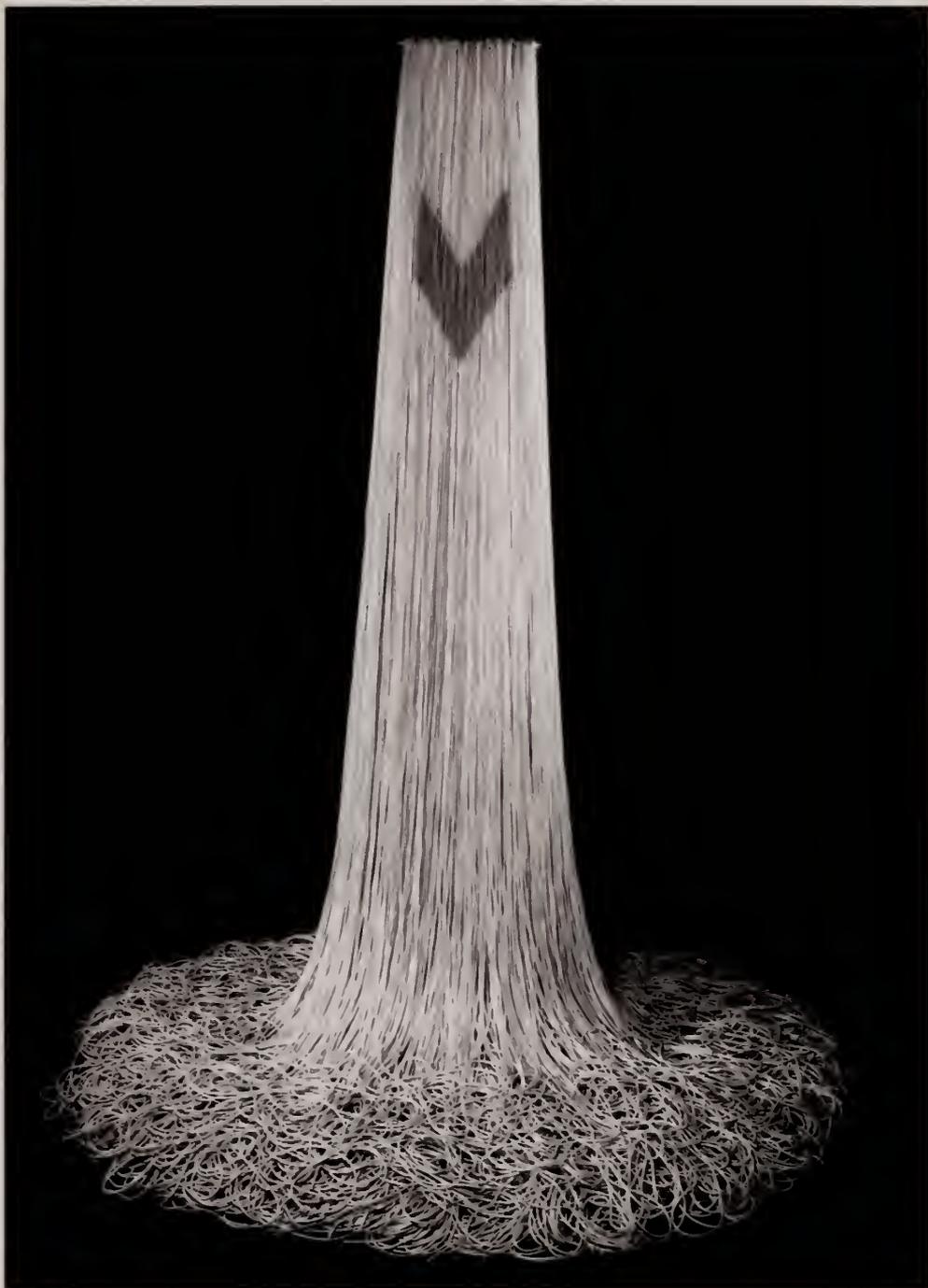
Claire Zeisler *b. Cincinnati, 1903*

Perhaps no other artist has played such a crucial role in establishing fiber art as a fine art than Claire Zeisler. As she strives for what she calls “shapes that can only be achieved through fiber,” she creates a new vocabulary in threads and textiles, a vocabulary that is still developing.

An art collector in the 1930s, Zeisler became an art student in the 1940s, studying with Alexander Archipenko and Lázló Moholy-Nagy at Chicago’s Institute of Design. By the late 1950s, she had turned to weaving as her primary form of artistic expression. Beginning with functional loomed weavings, such as placemats, she quickly graduated to the production of small-scale wall hangings. In the mid-1960s, Zeisler

developed knotting techniques with which she created large wall reliefs, many of which feature cascades of individual fiber strands—the “fall of hair” that became her characteristic motif.

In 1968, Zeisler made a radical shift in the structure of her art; she began to use armatures that permitted her works to be free-standing. Her fiber pieces then assumed a monumentality and sculptural presence that divested them of all reference to their craft origins. In works that remained bound to the wall, such as her recent pieces of chamois and leather, simple manipulations such as cutting and stitching yield surfaces complex in texture and detail.



CLAIRE ZEISLER, *Red Chevron*, 1981

Red Chevron, 1981

Hemp and felt, 79 x 10½ in. Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago

Chamois II, 1984–85

Chamois and ink, 48 x 48 in. Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago

Private Affair III, 1986

Synthetic fiber, 74 x 28 x 28 in. Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago

PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

Garth Clark Gallery, New York and Los Angeles (pp. 28, 29); Geoffrey Clements (p. 17); Sheldon Collins, courtesy Twining Gallery, New York (p. 15); Allan Finkelman (p. 9); Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago (p. 31); ©Paul Macapia (p. 19); Robert E. Mates (p. 21); Midtown Galleries, New York (pp. 10–11); The Pace Gallery, New York (pp. 23, 25); Performing Artservices, Inc. (p. 12); The Witkin Gallery, Inc., New York (p. 18).

Whitney Museum of American Art
Fairfield County
One Champion Plaza
Stamford, Connecticut 06921

HOURS

Tuesday–Saturday, 11:00–5:00

GALLERY TALKS

Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, 12:30

STAFF

Roni Feinstein
Branch Director

Janet Satz
Manager

Cynthia Roznoy
Gallery Coordinator

The Museum and its programs are funded by
Champion International Corporation

April 15–June 15, 1988

Whitney Museum of American Art, Fairfield County