

DOROTHY DEHNER (1901–1994)**“A Number of Ways of Working . . . All Part of the Same Way”**

A creative and independent thinker, Dorothy Dehner worked in the Abstract Expressionist tradition over a career lasting from the late 1920s until her death in 1994.¹ Sculpture, in cast bronze, was the medium in which she found her voice. She began to show her work in the late 1930s, consisting then primarily of works on paper. It was only after her divorce in 1952 from the well-known abstract sculptor David Smith—described in 1947 by the critic Clement Greenberg as “already the greatest sculptor this country has produced”—that she was able to become a full-fledged sculptor herself, manifesting a unique persona and diverse expressive language.² Dehner stated in 1955: “I have a number of ways of working, and they are all part of the same way, and I seldom disregard ways, but add to them and use the old ones and carry them all with me.... I want to express my feelings and thoughts, and I want to distill them so they will be pristine and clear and come back at me ... with a new life they never had when inside me.”³ While her abstract sculptures are influenced by modernist sculptural traditions, their wide-ranging references are to the natural world, the human figure, and the art and architecture of early cultures. Many of her sculptures are totemic, suggestive of mythological and religious icons; others are journeys in time and space.

The chronicling of Dehner’s art and career is indebted to Dr. Joan Marter, Distinguished Professor Emerita of art history at Rutgers University and the coeditor of the *Woman’s Art Journal*. Marter met Dehner in 1977 and over many years of their conversations, she curated exhibitions of Dehner’s work and examined it in significant publications. Marter is also the president of the [Dorothy Dehner Foundation](#). As Marter has pointed out, although Dehner cast her work in the ancient lost-wax method, her sculpture was always about contour rather than mass. She “assembled her works of disparate parts and approached the use of wax as a constructivist, using planar elements.”⁴ Whereas Dehner might have become overshadowed historically by Smith, Marter has aided in establishing the recognition that Dehner richly deserves on her own.

In addition to sculpture—both small- and heroic-scaled—Dehner created drawings, watercolors, prints (engravings and lithographs), works in mixed media, and reliefs. Dehner also wrote poetry and several articles that appeared in art journals. Her prodigiousness is reflected in her ambitious and extensive exhibition history and in the many reviews and scholarly considerations of her work.

Early life

Dorothy Dehner was born on December 23, 1901, in Cleveland, Ohio. Her parents were cultured and intellectual. Her father, Edward Pious Dehner, was a pharmacist who held socialist views and was involved in Cleveland politics. Her mother Lula Uphof Dehner was

active in the suffrage movement. The Dehners encouraged their daughters, Dorothy and her older sister Louisa, to think for themselves, joining art and life, and introducing them to opera and museums. In her childhood, Dorothy began to draw and dance. However, her youth was marred early by tragedy. Her father died from pneumonia in February 1912. In 1915, her mother and maternal aunt, Florence (Flo), moved with Dorothy and Louisa to California, arriving in San Francisco in time to attend the Panama-Pacific Exposition. They settled in Pasadena. When she was in high school, her mother and sister died within a year of each other.⁵ Subsequently, Dehner lived with her aunts Flo and Cora (both unmarried), who became her surrogate parents. In her remaining high school years, Dehner focused her attention on acting and dance. She performed in several dance recitals at Pasadena's Shakespeare Club. In 1921 she enrolled in art and literature classes at UCLA but acting became her strongest interest. In 1923, she left California to study at the American Academy of Dramatic Art in New York.

After some casting calls and small parts, Dehner abandoned a theater career. In January 1925, she departed by herself for Europe, spending nine months in London and visiting Italy, Switzerland, and France. In Paris, she attended the 1925 Art Deco exposition and became enamored of Cubist and Fauvist work by Picasso, Matisse, and other modernists. She recalled that her hair was “standing on end” in front of Picasso's paintings.⁶ On her return to New York in October 1925, she enrolled at the Art Students League, studying drawing with Kimon Nicolaidis. In the following year, she took daytime painting class with Kenneth Hayes Miller and a nighttime class with Nicolaidis.

While boarding in her early League days, at 417 West 118th Street, she met Indiana-born David Roland Smith, a new tenant in the building who had been encouraged to speak to her by their landlord after he inquired about art schools—at the time he was writing copy for a financial company. Dehner recalled in a 1966 article in *Art in America* that the two started talking before dinner time “and the conversation lasted until early morning,” covering “art and artists, religion, families, friends, pets, travel in foreign parts, poetry, and a thousand other things.”⁷ Smith expressed his disappointment in his art classes at Ohio University, where “they taught you how to teach art to others without teaching you how to be an artist.”⁸ Dehner told him about the League and he promptly enrolled, while she served as his informal tutor, shaping his taste in art and literature.

Dehner and Smith married on December 24, 1927. Although they shared intellectual and aesthetic interests, within the first year of their marriage, Smith's violent side emerge for which He blamed Dorothy. Over time, his spells of anger became more frequent.⁹

In 1928 Dehner and Smith accepted an invitation from the artists Wilhelmina Weber Furlong, who was the secretary of the Art Students League, and her husband Tomás Furlong, to visit Golden Heart Farm, the artist colony the Furlongs had established in Bolton Landing, New York, located on Lake George.¹⁰ Following the Furlongs' example, in

the next year, Dehner and Smith bought sixty acres of farmland in Bolton Landing, which they christened Red Moon Farm.¹¹ It included eighty-five acres of woodlands and rolling hills, several barns, and an old farmhouse. The purchase was made possible by an inheritance Dehner received from her parents. The two continued to summer at Bolton Landing in the decades that followed. Dehner's last visit would be in 1950, two years before her divorce from Smith.

After her return from Europe in 1925, Dehner had taken classes with William Zorach and Robert Laurent, but she felt their work was a weak version of the modernism she had seen in Paris. She was thus ecstatic when the Czech modernist Jan Matulka joined the faculty in 1929. Both Dehner and Smith took his class, which introduced League students to Cubism, German Expressionism, and Russian Constructivism. Dehner incorporated these influences into still lifes in oil and watercolor. At the time she and Smith were among a small group of students at the League to explore abstraction. When the stock market crash in October 1929 led to a decline in the League's enrollment, Matulka was fired. Dehner and Smith then quit the League and studied privately with Matulka until the spring of 1931.¹²

1930s

During their first two summers in Bolton Landing, Dehner and Smith became close to John Graham, the Russian-born painter and collector of tribal art who lived in a nearby farmhouse. Graham was also a colleague in Greenwich Village. There, he introduced them to Stuart Davis, Jean Xceron, John Ferren, and Milton Avery.¹³ With his knowledge of art history, mythology, and Freudian psychology Graham had a significant influence on both artists. Their decision to go to the Virgin Islands in 1931 reflected Graham's admiration for the work of Paul Gauguin's Tahitian idylls. They spent nine months on St. Thomas, where Dehner created her *Virgin Island* series. Painted in a Cubist style the works depicted shells and driftwood. She rendered them by mixing sand into oils applied to gessoed crates.¹⁴ On the trip, Smith produced his first sculpture, carving a piece of coral to form a cubistic head. That summer, Graham, who had just returned from Paris, introduced Smith to the welded sculpture of Julio Gonzalez, leading Smith to buy a used forge and solder several small sculptures. After returning home to Brooklyn, Dehner painted still lifes while Smith brought a welding rig into the apartment. After a period in which Dehner was putting out stray sparks, she directed Smith to a welding shop, where he rented studio space.¹⁵

During the Depression, Dehner created representational imagery, including *The Yard Behind Brooklyn Factory*, 1935 (location unknown), a mixed-media work that constitutes her only foray into Social Realism. Many other artists entered the orbit of Smith and Dehner in the 1930s, including Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Edith Sacher, and Mark Rothko.

In the fall of 1935, Dehner and Smith sailed for Europe, where they remained through the following year. During the trip, which would have a lasting impact on Dehner, the two

artists spent six months in Athens, where they were met emigres who escaped early concentration camps established in Nazi Germany by Hitler for political dissidents. In Greece, the artists made visits to Delphi, the Peloponnesus, Aegina, Crete, and other Greek islands. Dehner created many sketches in black and white of Mycenaean and Minoan ruins, which later became the basis for sculpture. After leaving Greece, the artists visited Paris and London. To satisfy their curiosity about socialism, they also traveled to the Soviet Union. During the trip, Dehner was conscious of the looming threat of fascism and aligned herself with anti-war causes, creating works that expressed an anti-imperialist, leftist position. In September 1936, she and Smith were in a four-artist show at the Crandall Library in Glens Falls, near their Bolton Landing home.¹⁶ At the end of the 1930s, Smith had become focused on welded abstract sculpture, which he presented in his first solo show, held at Willard Gallery in January 1938. In 1939, he was represented by sculpture at the U.S. Pavilion of the World's Fair, New York.

1940s

In 1939, Dehner and Smith moved out of their Brooklyn residence and settled permanently at their Bolton Landing farm, which they prepared for self-sufficient living. There in 1942, Dehner used egg tempera and gouache for her series, *My Life on the Farm 1942* (Dehner Foundation), detailing her daily and seasonal activities.¹⁷ She rendered these works in a miniaturist representational style influenced by medieval manuscripts, such as those of the Limbourg Brothers. In 1944, Dehner received first prize for *Country Living, Bird of Peace* from the Audubon Artists National Academy of Design Contest. That December, she was in a show at the Whyte Gallery, Washington, D.C. At the time, she and Smith both worked on war-related themes. In these, Smith often used Dehner as his model (putting her into the traditional role of the artist-wife), showing her in parts ranging from graceful dancers to tortured figures, such as that of a sprawled bather in a sculpture depicting Dehner washing herself in a wheelbarrow, 1940 ([The Cleveland Museum of Art](#)). At the time, as Marter notes, Dehner's "haunting images of women with emaciated bodies, crying out in pain," Dehner joined the horrors of war "with a personal narrative of psychic turmoil," as Smith's misogyny and violence increased.¹⁸ After a particular incident of abuse, Dehner stayed alone in New York for five months.

Haunted by the revelations of the Holocaust and the atomic age, Dehner created her *Suite Moderne* series in 1946–48, including figures in ghoulish "dances of death." In December 1944, she was given her first solo show, held at the Whyte Gallery. She was included in the Tenth Annual Exhibition of Artists of the Upper Hudson, Albany, New York (1945) and participated in shows at the Butler Art Institute, Youngstown, Ohio (1947), and the Munson-Williams-Proctor Art Gallery (February 1948). At the time, she and Smith were inspired by some of the same images, including a skeleton of a prehistoric bird on display at the American Museum of Natural History (Dehner, *Bird of Peace*, 1946, private collection and Smith, *The Royal Bird*, 1947–48 Walker Art Center, Minneapolis). Dehner's skeletal creature above barren jagged rocks appears as a menacing predator that can be read as an

allusion to the anguish of her private life with Smith at Bolton Landing. In the late 1940s, inspired by Ernst Haeckel's seminal study of natural forms, *Kunstformen der Natur* (1904), she created a series of drawings in gouache and ink, in a wet-on-wet method, emphasizing the animate energy of microscopic unicellular organisms.¹⁹

Dehner's first major solo exhibition was in December 1948 at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York. Smith stated in the exhibition's catalogue introduction: "Throughout our rough times and good times, she has painted seriously, and has been my encouraging critic."²⁰ He commented that he always "intended her career to be as important" as his and noted that in her work "are qualities of the dance, delicacies, refinements, and harmonies, which I greatly admire because they are so far from my own world."²¹ In her 2005 article on the artistic relationship between Dehner and Smith, Marter observed that Smith's statement "represents a generous moment on [his] part, for when Dehner finally began to show her work more regularly in New York City, their relationship fell apart. On one occasion Smith threatened to tear up all of her drawings when she was transporting them to New York for consideration in the Whitney Annual Exhibition."²² The dualities in the works in Dehner's Skidmore show was the focus for a reviewer in the *Post-Star* (Glens Falls, New York), who commented that the paintings were both about the modern world and "timeless things of nature," revealing "a delightful whimsy" and "a seriousness that borders on the morbid."²³ In the 1940s, Dehner began creating sculpture in secret, experimenting with wax, but destroying her work before Smith could see it.²⁴ Yet sculpture remained an obsession for her, yet to be realized.

1950s

For Dehner, 1950 was a year of trauma and new beginnings. Smith continued his abusive behavior and then informed Dehner that he had fallen in love with one of his students at Sarah Lawrence College, where he was teaching at the time. With the aid of Skidmore College art instructors Maryetta and Robert Davidson, Dehner moved to Saratoga Springs, where she attended Skidmore, graduating with a BS in Applied Art in 1952, the year of her divorce from Smith.²⁵ His marriage to Jean Freas would produce two daughters but would only last five years.

In May 1952, Dehner showed works in watercolor and black ink in her first solo exhibition in New York City. Held at the Rose Fried Gallery, the show received several reviews. In the *New York Times*, Howard Devree mentioned that the works tended toward symbolism and in the *New York Herald Tribune*, Emily Genauer stated: "Miss Dehner's is an auspicious debut, bespeaking skill, sensitivity, and individuality."²⁶ In *Art Digest*, Dore Ashton related Dehner's sensibility to that of Paul Klee and commented that few artists of the day could "handle line with the lyric fidelity" demonstrated by Dehner.²⁷ She spent July 1952 working at Stanley William Hayter's Atelier 17 printmaking studio, learning the art of engraving.²⁸ There she met the sculptor Louise Nevelson, who became a lifelong friend. She spent the

following year photographing Nevelson's work in Nevelson's two Greenwich Village brownstones, but the current location of these photographs is unknown.

In 1955, Dehner married Ferdinand Mann, a widower and the father of one of her students at the Barnard School for Girls, where she was teaching art at the time.²⁹ That year, she began to be represented by Willard Gallery, and the first of her seven solo shows at Willard, featuring watercolors, was mounted in May. A review appeared in *Artnews*, noting, "she expresses humor in the nature of her stroke and form, and in the subject that seems to derive from the brush or pen more than to follow it."³⁰

Dehner finally ventured into sculpture in the mid-1950s. She stated in a 1994 interview: "I didn't make any sculpture until I left David. I defy any woman who is married to David Smith to become a sculptor. I couldn't even be an artist with David. Deep, deep, deep inside I felt that I was an artist. I was painting all the time, and I did some damn good work. . ." However, as sculpture has long been her craving, she recalled that "the minute I started doing sculpture I felt it was something that I had done all my life."³¹

Dehner's propulsion toward sculpture was evident in watercolors in her solo show in January 1956 at Wittenborn Gallery, New York. *Artnews* commented that her titles were like poetry, expressing "concrete and wiry abstractions," both "open and linear" and resembling "ancient clay seals."³² An example from this time is *Over the River*, 1956 (Berry Campbell) in which overlapping bridge spans appear to spring upward as if in a dance with an allegro tempo. In the following year, Dehner flung herself fully into sculpture, molding wax to be used for bronze casting. She developed her knowledge of the ancient lost-wax method at the Sculpture Center, New York, and sculpture would dominate her art for the rest of her career, supported by drawing and printmaking.

Dehner's May 1957 Willard show included twenty-six bronze sculptures and eighteen watercolors and drawings. *Artnews* commented: Dehner seems "happier in her new than in her old medium, that of painting," noting that the pieces on view were small, in bronze and polished silver. The dynamic works interwove narrative and mythological associations, while often seeming miniature environments that invited interaction. *Artnews* took note of their "mazes and scaffolding," and figures that, reclining alone or in couples, had "sometimes angular, skeletal or spiky aspects" with "rounded, swelling vegetative forms, studded little tongues and cantilevers, that overlap and crisscross in the structures."³³ Among them was Dehner's silver *Reclining Figure*, consisting of two sprawled shapes resembling ancient padlocks, which was captioned in an illustration in *Artnews* as "traps to catch the residue of dreams." In the show, *Bible Story* featured a totemic design with intricate positive and negative shapes stretching upward in conversation. Related to it is a work titled *Conversation*, 1954 (Berry Campbell), rendered in brush and ink.

Dehner's 1959 Willard exhibition traveled to Skidmore College, the Gres Gallery, Washington, D.C., and the Clearwater Art Museum, Florida. As observed by *Artnews*, "sprung ribs, tangles of shining brass, and vertical fins . . . added a lively grace" to works that looked "tough enough to survive any kind of environment."³⁴ *Signpost*, a spikey and yearning tree, was captioned "self-sufficiency" in the article. Other sculptures from this time evoke mythical heroes and religious icons in totemic designs, such as in *Reliquary Kingdom No. 2*, 1959 (Dehner Foundation) and *Untitled*, 1958 (Berry Campbell, DEH-00074).

1960s

In *Artnews*, Lawrence Campbell reviewed Dehner's November 1960 and February 1963 exhibitions at Willard. Of the 1960 show, he wrote, "Each work is a kind of journey," observing that in some "one travels across a wall or down it in a series of steps with frequent interruptions"; while some are "freestanding clusters"; and others are "as intimate as amulets." Campbell was captivated by Dehner's patinas, noting, "She has brought life back to the dead metal of the foundry by coloring, polishing, and rubbing with love and affection."³⁵ Dehner's 1963 Willard show consisted of cast-bronze sculptures in a series collectively called *Landscapes*, in which she cut out shapes and assembled them in arrangements of closed and open forms along with jumps—up, down, and sideways, such as *Siena #1* (Berry Campbell) and *Low Landscape, Sideways*, 1962 (The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, New York). Also featured were ink and brush drawings, several consisting of ideas for sculpture. Campbell described Dehner as "one of a group of Americans who extend the tradition limitations of sculptural expression."³⁶

In 1964, Dehner began to collaborate with Joel Meisner, who had formulated a self-venting plaster that reduced the cost and labor involved in bronze-casting. Its use spurred Dehner to produce larger bronze sculptures and wall-mounted reliefs. In March–April 1965, a ten-year retrospective of her work was organized by the Jewish Museum, New York. By this time, Smith had begun to reach out to her in friendship. Confident in his own success as a sculptor, he conveyed respect for her work in the medium and as an artist, while expressing his hope for her success. After seeing Dehner's show at the Jewish Museum, Smith remarked in a letter of on April 9, 1965, on its many pieces and stated, "you have sure been working hard and prodigiously."³⁷ This may have been among Smith's last communications with Dehner. On May 24, 1965, he died in a car accident in Vermont, at age fifty-nine. Dehner, who kept many articles on Smith following his death, contributed to a memorial article on him published in *Art in America* in 1966 and spoke at length about him in an oral history interview conducted for the Archives of American Art in 1965–66, in which none of the interview questions addressed her work.³⁸ A solo show of Dehner's work opened at the Hyde Collection in Glens Falls, in May 1967, drawing so many out-of-town visitors that the show was extended into July.³⁹

1970s

Dehner's May 1970 show at Willard was reviewed in *Art in America* by Grace Glueck who singled out *Ladders No. 1* and *No. 2*, 1968, as "triangle and circle emblems set above each other in open frames [that] give the effect of mini-monuments to some arcane primordial cult."⁴⁰

In 1970, Dehner began to create wood sculpture, using a constructivist technique with which she joined small wooden elements, as in *The City to the Bridge*, 1970 (Berry Campbell), where the forms of the bridge resemble a city skyline. As Marter has noted, Dehner's wooden constructions have a "strong association with architecture and works that Dehner refers to as "toy-like" can also be considered to include fragments of memory and time."⁴¹ Dehner continued to develop her work in wood into the late 1970s, producing inventive symbolic structures. Examples are *Long Journey*, 1977 (Berry Campbell), in which a bridge seems itself a journey through time; *Voyage*, 1977 (Berry Campbell), in which block-like pieces form a ship and its movement; *Sentry 1 (Minotaur)*, 1978, perhaps a memory of Crete, in which an unstable vertical is topped by the curvature of bulls' horns; and *Gateway #1*, 1978 (Berry Campbell) and *Gateway #2*, 1979 (Metropolitan Museum of Art), which evoke the turrets of medieval fortresses in shrunken worlds. During the 1970s, Dehner also mastered lithography, attending a workshop at the Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque in 1970–71. Her lithographic work includes her *Lunar* series featuring planetary and geometric shapes that suggest Klee-like whimsy.

In the mid-1970s, Dehner created a series of wood reliefs inspired by the *I Ching*, an ancient Chinese divination manual based on the study of sixty-four hexagrams of whole and broken lines, performed with wooden sticks. Dehner's interest in this subject stemmed from many of her past projects that had involved "primitive symbolism, magical hieroglyphics, as well as nature itself."⁴² In each of the works, the sticks form archetypal and mathematically conceived patterns while seeming to conduct rituals with cosmological, musical, and philosophical implications. Some evoke art historical traditions, such as John Peto's rack pictures (BC, DEH-00073) and Russian Constructivist designs (DEH-00057). Dehner also used the sticks in freestanding sculptures that are either totemic (BC, DEH-0076) or suggestive of surrealism, as if extruding body parts (BC-DEH00078).

In November 1974, Dehner's second husband died. Throughout their life together, Mann had been a constant source of support for her and her work. She slowly grieved his loss while recovering from heart surgery she received in June. Dehner's last show of the decade was at the Parsons-Dreyfuss Gallery in March–April 1979, including wood pieces and related drawings in India ink and pencil. Marter's review of the show was her first publication on Dehner.⁴³

1980s through the present

Dehner resumed her focus on metal casting in the 1980s. In April 1981, she exhibited twenty-nine small cast bronzes, watercolors, and a few works in heroic proportions in Corten steel (that were fabricated based on earlier works) at the A. M. Sachs Gallery, New York. In a review in *Art in America*, John Yau noted the tactile qualities in the “glowing bronze silhouettes” in the smaller works, which despite their scale were not precious.⁴⁴ In 1985, Dehner’s national reputation was firmly established and a show of her work of the past two decades was held at the Wichita Art Museum. In the catalogue, Howard E. Wooden stated that Dehner was “one of the most widely respected contemporary sculptors in America,” while noting that at eighty-four, she continued to be prolific and committed to abstract works that are “emotionally charged and possess a kind of iconic presence.”⁴⁵

Other solo lifetime exhibitions held subsequently include a retrospective of Dehner’s prints at Susan Teller Gallery, New York (1987); shows of large welded pieces at Twining Fine Art, New York (which had begun to represent Dehner early in the decade) and at Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pennsylvania (1988); at the Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. and Twining (1990); Baruch College Art Gallery, City University of New York (1991); Perimeter Gallery, Chicago (1992); a retrospective curated by Marter held at the Katonah Museum of Art (and traveled to the Hyde Collection and the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.) (1993); and a sixty-year retrospective at the Corcoran (1994).

Dehner continued to produce art into the early 1990s. In 1992, her vision declined to the point that she was legally blind, but she was able to produce maquettes for sculptures from earlier drawings with the aid of a fabricator.⁴⁶ At age ninety-one, she told an interviewer that she loved being old “because I love what I am whenever I am, whether I’m four years old, or fifteen or thirty-two . . . I love my life.”⁴⁷ On September 22, 1994, Dehner died after a fall down the back stairs of her New York City apartment. A memorial was held at the Art Students League that November. In 1995, a posthumous retrospective, guest curated by Marter, opened at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Dehner has subsequently been the subject of scholarly articles and her work has been featured in shows such as *Women and Abstract Expressionism, 1945–1959*, curated by Marter for Baruch College (1997); *To Live is To Paint: Wilhelmina Weber Furlong and Dorothy Dehner & American Modernism*, held at The Phyllis Harriman Mason Gallery, The Art Students League (2022); and a solo show at the Neuberger Museum of Art, New York (2023), including works donated to the museum by the Dorothy Dehner Foundation.

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DOROTHY DEHNER (1901-1994)

CV

Born, 1901, Cleveland, Ohio
1925, Art Students League
1952, BS, Skidmore College
1982, Honorary Doctorate, Skidmore College
Died, 1994, New York, NY

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

Whyte Gallery, Washington, D.C., 1944.
Hawthorn Studio, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, 1948.
Rose Fried Gallery, New York, 1952.
Morris Gallery, New York, 1952.
Albany Institute of History and Art, New York, 1952.
Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, 1955.
Wittenborn Gallery, New York, *Dorothy Dehner, Etchings and Engravings*, 1956.
Willard Gallery, New York, *Dorothy Dehner, Sculpture and Watercolors*, 1957.
Willard Gallery, New York, *Dehner Bronzes*, 1959.
Columbia University (Avery Hall), New York, *Dorothy Dehner, A Selection of Bronzes*, 1961.
Willard Gallery, New York, 1963.
Albany Institute of History and Art, New York, 1964.
The Jewish Museum, New York, *Dorothy Dehner: Ten Years of Sculpture*, 1965.
The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, New York, *Dorothy Dehner*, 1967.
Bernard M. Baruch Gallery, City University of New York, Dorothy Dehner, 1970.
Willard Gallery, New York, Dorothy Dehner, 1970.
Parsons-Dreyfus Gallery, New York, *Dorothy Dehner, Sculpture and Drawings*, 1979.
A.M. Sachs Gallery, New York, 1982.
Associated American Artists, New York, 1987.
Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pennsylvania, *Dorothy Dehner, Sculpture and Works on Paper*, 1988.
Twining Fine Art, New York, *Dorothy Dehner: Heroic Sculpture*, 1990.
The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., *Dorothy Dehner*, 1990.
Baruch College Art Gallery, City University of New York, Dorothy Dehner, 1991.
Perimeter Gallery, Chicago, Dorothy Dehner, 1992.
Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio, *Dorothy Dehner: Drawings, Prints, Sculpture*, 1995.
Kraushaar Galleries, Inc., New York, *Dorothy Dehner/The 1970s*, 2005.
Kraushaar Galleries, Inc., New York, *Dorothy Dehner/The Intimate Gesture: A Selection of Drawings and Prints from the 1950s*, 2011.
Valerie Carberry Gallery, Chicago, Illinois, *Dorothy Dehner: Compositions and Constructions*, 2015.
Rosenberg & Co., New York, *Dorothy Dehner*, 2021.
Berry Campbell, New York, *Dorothy Dehner: A Retrospective*, 2024.

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GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, 1942.

San Francisco Museum of Art, California, 1942.

Albany Institute of History and Art, New York, 1943.

Albany Institute of History and Art, New York, *9th Annual Exhibit, Artists of the Upper Hudson*, 1944.

Audubon Artists, New York, 1946.

Whitney Museum, New York, *Annual Exhibition of Contemporary Sculpture, Watercolors, and Drawings*, 1951.

Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Posters by Painters and Sculptors*, 1952.

Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Painting and Sculpture Acquisitions*, 1953.

Willard Gallery, New York, *Watercolors*, 1955.

Brooklyn Museum, New York, *International Watercolor Exhibition, 18th Biennial*, 1955.

Willard Gallery, New York, 1956.

Stable Gallery, New York, *Fifth Annual Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture*, 1956.

Museum of Modern Art, *Drawings Recently Acquired for the Museum Collection*, 1957.

Willard Gallery, New York, *Sculpture, Various Times and Various Cultures*, 1957.

Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome, 1957.

Brooklyn Museum, New York, *Trends in Watercolor Today*, 1957.

Riverside Museum, New York, *Directions in Sculpture*, 1957.

Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Recent Sculpture U.S.A.*, 1959.

Riverside Museum, New York, *Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors, Eighteenth Annual Exhibition*, 1959.

Stable Gallery, New York, *New Sculpture Group*, 1959.

Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Recent Acquisitions*, 1959-1960.

Galerie Claude Bernard, Paris, *Aspects de la Sculpture Americaine*, 1960.

Stable Gallery, New York, *New Sculpture Group, Fifth Exhibition*, 1960.

Museum of American Art, *Annual Exhibition, Contemporary Sculpture and Drawing*, Whitney 1960-1961.

Holland-Goldowsky, Chicago, *New Sculpture Group*, 1961.

Rome-New York Art Foundation, Inc., Rome, *The Quest and the Quarry*, 1961.

Stable Gallery, New York, *New Sculpture Group, Sixth Exhibition*, 1961.

Riverside Museum, New York, *Twelve New York Sculptors*, 1962.

The Waddington Galleries, London, *Small Sculpture: Robert Adams, Dorothy Dehner, Elizabeth Frink, Barbara Hepworth*, 1962.

American Federation of Arts, New York, *New Directions, Sculpture*, October 1962-1963 (traveled throughout the United States).

Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors, Inc., New York, *22nd Annual Exhibition*, 1963.

Sculptors Guild Exhibition, New York, 1963.

Sculptors Guild Exhibition, New York, 1964.

Riverside Museum, New York, *Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors, Twenty-third Annual Exhibition*, 1964.

Triennale de Milano, Palazzo dell'Arte Parco Sempione Milano, 1964.

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The Sculptors Guild, New York, *Landscape in Abstraction*, 1967.
Sculptors Guild Exhibition, New York, 1967.
National Association of Women Artists, *Annual Exhibition*, New York, 1970.
Sculptors Guild Exhibition, New York, 1972.
Sculptors Guild Exhibition, New York, 1973.
Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, New York, 1973.
Storm King Art Center, New Windsor, New York, 1976.
The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, New York, *Artists of Lake George, 1776-1976*, 1976.
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, *Modern Masters: Women of the First Generation, Women Artists Series at Douglass College*, 1982.
Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, *Dorothy Dehner and David Smith: Their Decades of Search and Fulfillment*, 1984.
Museum of Modern Art, New York, *American Prints: 1900-1960; Recent Acquisitions: Illustrated Books, 1985-1986*.
Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, *Standing Ground: Sculpture by American Women*, 1987.
New York Studio School, *The New Sculpture Group, A Look Back: 1957-1962*, 1988.
The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., *John Graham: Artist and Avatar*, 1988 (also shown at Neuberger Museum, State University of New York at Purchase; Newport Harbor Art Museum, California, and University Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley, and Smart Gallery, University of Chicago).
Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn, New York, *Centennial Exhibition, National Association of Women Artists*, 1988.
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *Enduring Creativity*, 1988.
Knoxville Museum of Art, Tennessee, and Queensborough Community College, New York, *American Women of the Twentieth Century*, 1989.
Baruch College Art Gallery, City University of New York, *Paths to Discovery: The New York School*, 1992.
Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Adding It Up: Print Acquisitions 1970-1995*, 1995.
Guild Hall, East Hampton, New York, *Women and Abstract Expressionism*, 1997.
Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Giacometti to Judd: Prints by Sculptors*, 1998.
Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Abstract Expressionist New York: Rock Paper Scissors*, 2010-2011.
Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Abstract Expressionist New York: The Big Picture*, 2010-2011.
The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, New York, *Five Decades of Collecting 1963-2013*, 2013.
Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Making Space: Women Artists and Postwar Abstraction*, 2017.
Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Degree Zero: Drawing at Midcentury*, 2020-2021.
Southampton Arts Center, New York, *Heroines of the Abstract Expressionist Era: From the New York School to The Hamptons*, 2023.
Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, New York, *Artists Choose Parrish*, 2023.
Berry Campbell, New York, *Perseverance*, 2024.
Heckscher Museum of Art, Huntington, New York, *The Rains are Changing Fast: New Acquisitions in Context*, 2024.
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., *Revolutions: Art from the Hirshhorn Collection, 1860-1960, 2024-2025*.

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SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Adirondack Museum, Blue Mountain Lake, New York
AT&T Headquarters, Basking Ridge, New Jersey
The British Museum, London, United Kingdom
Brooklyn Museum, New York
Buffalo AKG Art Museum, New York
Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio
The Columbus Museum, Georgia
Denver Art Museum, Colorado
Dresden Museum, Germany
Femmes Artistes du Musée Mougins, France
New York State Executive Mansion, Albany
The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York
The Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
The Hyde Collection, Glens Falls, New York
Jewett Art Center, Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts
McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Minnesota Museum of American Art, St. Paul
Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute Museum of Art, Utica, New York
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida
Museum of Modern Art, New York
Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, Texas
National Museum for Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.
Indianapolis Museum of Art Galleries at Newfields, Indiana
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania
The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.
Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona
Seattle Art Museum, Washington
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.
Sonoma Valley Museum of Art, California
Städel Museum, Frankfurt, Germany
Storm King Art Center, New Windsor, New York
Telfair Museums, Savannah, Georgia
University Art Museum, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
Wichita Art Museum, Kansas
The William Benton Museum of Art, University of Connecticut, Storrs

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut

Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick

¹ Writings on Dehner by Joan M. Marter consist of “Dorothy Dehner,” *Arts* 54 (1979), Dehner clippings, Dehner papers, Archives of American Art; “Dorothy Dehner,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 1 (Autumn 1980–Winter 1981): 47–50; “Dorothy Dehner: Journeys, Dreams, and Realities,” in *Dorothy Dehner: A Retrospective of Sculpture, Drawings, and Paintings*, exh. cat. (New York: Baruch College, The City University of New York, 1991); *Dorothy Dehner, Sixty Years of Art*, exh. cat. (New York: Katonah Museum of Art, 1993); *Dorothy Dehner and David Smith: Their Decades of Search and Fulfillment*, exh. cat. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, State University of New Jersey, 1984); and “Arcadian Nightmares: The Evolution of David Smith and Dorothy Dehner’s Work at Bolton Landing,” in Ellen G. Landau, ed., *Reading Abstract Expressionism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005): 625–45. Primary source material on Dehner can be found in the [Dorothy Dehner papers, 1920–1987](#) and “Oral history interview with Dorothy Dehner, October 1965–December 1966,” conducted by Garnett McCoy with a discussion of Smith by Rosalind Krauss, both Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. The Dorothy Dehner Foundation also includes a detailed chronology of Dehner’s career and examples of her work. Other notable recent scholarly articles on Dehner include Elizabeth deBethune and Dorothy Dehner, “Dorothy Dehner,” *Art Journal* 53 (spring 1994): 35–37; Paula Wisotzki, “Dorothy Dehner and World War II: Not Just Life on the Farm,” *Archives of American Art Journal* 55 (Spring 2016): 4–25; Paula Wisotzki, “Art, Dance, and Social Justice: Franziska Boas, Dorothy Dehner, and David Smith at Bolton Landing, 1944–1949,” *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 7 (Fall 2021), <https://doi.org/10.24926/24716839.12446>, accessed April 14, 2024; Jillian Russo, “To Life Is to Paint,” in *To Live Is to Paint: Wilhelmina Weber Furlong, Dorothy Dehner, and American Modernism*, exh. cat. (New York: Art Students League, 2022); and Sophie Lachowsky, “Shifting Scale, Framing Objects: Dorothy Dehner and Women Sculptors Among the Abstract Expressionists,” *Women’s Art Journal* 44 (Spring–Summer 2023): 3–15. Dehner is also chronicled in biographies of David Smith, such as Michael Brenson, *David Smith: The Art and Life of a Transformational Sculptor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2022).

² Clement Greenberg, “Art,” *Nation* 164 (April 5, 1947): 405. The article was a review of the Whitney Museum annual.

³ Quoted in Marter, “Sixty Years,” p. 6.

⁴ Marter, “Arcadian Nightmares.” p. 635.

⁵ Lula died from tuberculosis in 1915 and Louise died in 1916.

⁶ Dorothy Dehner interview conducted by Karl Fortess, February 15, 1973, Dehner papers, Archives of American Art.

⁷ Dorothy Dehner, “David Smith: First Meetings,” *Art in America* 54 (January–February 1966): 22.

⁸ Dehner, “David Smith,” p. 22.

⁹ Described in Stanley E. Marcus, *David Smith, The Sculptor and His Work* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1983), p. 24.

¹⁰ On Dehner and Furlong at Bolton Landing, Russo, “To Life Is to Paint.”

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- ¹¹ Dehner named the farm after a Native American designation for August.
- ¹² Dehner Foundation chronology.
- ¹³ “Oral history interview with Dorothy Dehner, p. 6.
- ¹⁴ Marter, “Dorothy Dehner: Journeys,” p. [4].
- ¹⁵ Described in Marcus, p. 31.
- ¹⁶ Florence Webster, “Exhibition of Four Artists on Display Here,” *Post-Star* (Glens Falls, New York), September 24, 1935.
- ¹⁷ For the Life on the Farm series, see Wisotzki, “Dorothy Dehner and World War II,” which “rethinks Dehner’s relationship to World War II and recasts the series as leftist commentary on social life in the US at the time,” and “Art, Dance, and Social Justice,” which considers how Dehner, Smith, and Franziska Boas “wove radical content into their art practices, professional positions, and community roles,” providing a “case study of American modernist practices in dance and visual arts in the mid- to late 1940s.
- ¹⁸ Marter, “Arcadian Nightmares,” p. 632.
- ¹⁹ Marter, “Arcadian Nightmares,” p. 634. Ernst Haeckel, *Kunstformen de Natur* (Leipzig and Wien: Verlag des Biblio-graphischen, 1904).
- ²⁰ Statement by David Smith in *Dorothy Dehner: Drawings and Paintings*, Skid-more College, Saratoga Springs, New York, December 6-14, 1948, n. p. Cited in Marter, “Arcadian Nightmares,” p. 635.
- ²¹ Marter, “Dorothy Dehner,” 1979. Dehner clippings, Dehner papers, Archives of American Art.
- ²² Marter, “Arcadian Nightmares, p. 635, 644n33, cites Statement by David Smith in *Dorothy Dehner: Drawings and Paintings*, Skid-more College, Saratoga Springs, New York, December 6-14, 1948, n. p.
- ²³ Joseph J. Dodge, “The Visual Arts,” *Post-Star* (Glens Falls, New York), December 3, 1948, p. 6.
- ²⁴ Marter, “Arcadian Nightmares,” p. 635.
- ²⁵ Dehner Foundation chronology.
- ²⁶ Howard Devree, “By Contemporaries,” *New York Times*, May 11, 1952, p. X9;
- ²⁷ Dore Ashton, “Dorothy Dehner,” *Art Digest* (May 15, 1952): 19.
- ²⁸ On Dehner’s work at Atelier 17 and the role of engraving as her transition to sculpture, see Lachowsky, pp. 4–5 and Emily Genauer, “Dorothy Dehner,” *New York Herald Tribune*, May 9, 1952.
- ²⁹ Founded in 1886, the Barnard School for Girls merged with the Horace Mann School in 1972. Ferdinand Mann (unrelated to Horace Mann) was the owner of Modern Classics, a fine art reproduction company.
- ³⁰ F. P., “Dorothy Dehner, Gina Knee, Sibley Smith,” *Artnews* 54 (May 1955): 50.
- ³¹ Dehner in deBethune and Dehner, p. 37.
- ³² F. P., “Dorothy Dehner,” *Artnews* 54 (January 1956): 67.
- ³³ E.B. “Dorothy Dehner,” *Artnews* 56 (May 1957): 14.
- ³⁴ H.D.H., “Dorothy Dehner,” *Artnews* 57 (February 1959): 16.
- ³⁵ L[awrence] C[ampbell], “Dorothy Dehner,” *Artnews* 59 (November 1960): 16.
- ³⁶ L[awrence] C[ampbell], “Dorothy Dehner,” *Artnews* 61 (February 1963): 15.
- ³⁷ David Smith to Dorothy Dehner, April 9, 1965 in archives of Dorothy Dehner Foundation for the Visual Arts. Cited in Marter, “Arcadian Nightmares,” p. 640.
- ³⁸ Dehner, “David Smith: First Meetings” and [Dorothy Dehner papers, 1920–1987](#) and “Oral history interview with Dorothy Dehner,” Archives of American Art.
- ³⁹ “Sculpture Exhibition Extended,” *Post-Star* (Glens Falls, New York), June 17, 1967, p. 5.

⁴⁰ Grace Glueck, "Collectible vs Conceptual: New York Gallery Notes," *Art in America* 58 (May 1970): 37.

⁴¹ Marter, "Sixty Years," p. [7].

⁴² Hans van Weeren-Griek, "Introduction," in *Dorothy Dehner*, exh. cat. (New York: Jewish Museum, 1965).

⁴³ Marter,

⁴⁴ John Yau, "Dorothy Dehner at A. M. Sachs," *Art in America* 69 (April 1981): 146.

⁴⁵ Howard E. Wooden, *Dorothy Dehner: Recent Sculptures*, exh. cat. (Wichita, Kans.: Wichita Art Museum, 1985), p. [5].

⁴⁶ deBethune and Dehner, p. 35.

⁴⁷ deBethune and Dehner, p. 36.