



PAINTINGS • DRAWINGS
BY
DOROTHY HOOD

EXTENSOR OF THE SKY, 1973

Collection of the McNay Art Institute
Gift of Gary Hardison, Houston

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DOROTHY HOOD

McNAY ART INSTITUTE • SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
4 JUNE - 2 JULY 1978

LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION

The artist

Ben Adams, San Antonio

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas G. Armstrong, Houston

Mr. and Mrs. A. Les Ballard, Jr., Houston

Miss Nina Cullinan, Houston

Mrs. Benjamin Danziger, Houston

Mr. and Mrs. John P. Hansen, Houston

Gary Hardison, Houston

Blaine Hickey, Houston

Meredith Long and Co., Houston

Mr. and Mrs. Meredith Long, Houston

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Dr. Joe Dean Paxton, Cypress

Kenneth R. Phillips, Houston

Rice University, Houston

Ogden Robertson, Houston

Mrs. Judith S. Robinson, Austin

William A. Robinson, Houston

Mrs. Cynthia R. Taylor, Houston

Walter M. Widrig, Houston

Mrs. Wallace Wilson, Houston

INTRODUCTION

"He claimed his share of . . . the 26 letters of the alphabet and had begun to tame them into a vocabulary that would allow him . . . to speak in his own way." — Isabel Wilder in her forward to Thornton Wilder's "The Alcegiad."

Given the color availabilities and physical materials all other artists have at their disposal, Dorothy Hood has claimed her special palette and spoken in her own way.

In works sometimes of epic scale, in expressions which are often so powerful as to be jolting, she has made statements about the mysteries of the universe, on the one hand, and about personal cataclysms, on the other. Sometimes they are separate; sometimes they overlay one another.

The sensitivities of this Texas-born artist have been honed by enriching associations in Mexico City in the early '40s with leading Mexican and exiled European artists (Orozco, Cuevas, Goeritz, Remedios Varo) and the original members of the Proteo Gallery, as well as by the writings of Pablo Neruda, Alan Paton, Isak Dinesen and Simone Weil. Her thought and painting additionally reflect her responses to teachings of Taoism and the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

Though she lives in Houston where her works are eagerly collected and where she is almost a cult figure, Dorothy Hood is not one to be confined by such specifics as province or passing modes. In recent years she has traveled, exhibited nationally, opened herself to mainstream developments, broadened her own experience in workshop associations in this country and Europe. In one of these, Hood joined Jules Olitski, Anthony Caro, Larry Poons and others in exploring the qualities of clay as an expressive abstract medium. Highly productive, intellectually restless, she shuns the status quo or facile conclusions. Ever reaching out, she has generated a national reputation.

But the limitless skies and the intense atmospheres of the southwest have surely had their influence on this artist whose focus is clear and defined, whose elaboration on canvas is never uncertain or ambiguous, no matter how elusive the content may be.

One legitimate fueling point for Hood has been the excitement an artist of her temperament and curiosity could feel as science seemed literally to tremble on the threshold of the space leap. That she lived in the city which was masterminding the moon probe at the very moment in the late '60s when she was moving out of her acutely expressive drawings into a physically broader canvas, was perhaps fortuitous.

Dorothy Hood set her own mission. Her frame of conscious -- or unconscious -- enclosure widened. She sought deeper, more awesome dimensions for her ontological exploration. Could a painter pictorially probe outer-inner spaces in search of realities of being -- or conjure the sense of it? In paintings, uniquely hers she has confronted that possibility.

The energy, the imagination, the intensity of emotion necessary to push into such realms is enormous. And, as Hood has done it, crashing through subconscious barriers as she went, the artistic episode involved could have its dangers. She sought and has achieved in certain works the miraculous or awesome dimension.

She is at her best when she works with a sense of danger, when she makes the total investment. She uses phrases like "putting yourself out where time is suspended." Quietly, she muses "we must be sure there's a way to pull yourself back."

Her "Space Bolts"(1972) was, in a sense, more literal than some of her works. It was a prelude, an echo-technique, a psychic sonar piece by which she could establish larger parameters. That canvas creates its own excitement. But "Untrodden Paths" (1972) is fierce, even fearsome with an ominous demonlike form, inexplicable yet frighteningly capable of striking some recognitive note, layers down.

Her metaphors are seldom -- no, never -- of an everyday kind. Her view, if she looks down, is not of the floor but of the ocean depths or better, Subteranean Illuminations. If she looks up, it is well beyond any treetops. While she often expresses human emotions of joy, outrage, pity and grief, she does so with a mythic intensity. Her titles and images reflect this. Joe doesn't weep; "Zeus Weeps."

In one of her paintings after the long preoccupation with incisive drawings -- "My Sweet Lion Pierced" (1969) -- she challenged the broader, more plastic and elaborate medium of paint and found her way with it, turning it to the service of intensely personal comment. A summery color suggesting a mood of happiness, was then overlaid by secondary washes, creating a rain of darker hues. The sense of trauma is unmis-

takable. If, in her drawings, she could make a single line scream, in her paintings, she moved into a grander, almost allegorical, scale.

How different, from the same year, is "Gita's Light." This work, like other Hood pieces, counterbalances a large glacial agglomeration on one side of the canvas, against a broad flow of color on the other. Her play of darks and lights, of detailed masses and open planar areas carries through many of her canvases. It is rewarding to study how she seeks illumination out of her darks and builds a sense of shade into bright patches.

One sees large, defined forms posed against carefully executed washes. Luminous encrustations gleam, like coral jewels in an enchanted sea. Hard, brilliant, glass-cut lines or deliberately blurred edges are elements, sometimes with perfectly placed drips of color, in vast cosmic shapes. Irregular, surreal land promontories seem to crack through to an unknown infinity, announced by ethereal back-lighting. Subliminal forms from some Gothic otherworld surge from right to left.

To all these works which explore a number of variables, Hood brings her extraordinary color sense. Magenta, pale orange, electric blue, purple and rust. They are unexpected and sometimes difficult. Some of her warm tones, originally rooted in her Mexican experience, have been brought forward. But the arctic and even astral implication in other tonal juxtapositions have come later.

Hood's African opus stands quite apart. Her intense efforts to reach inside the African sensibility -- to find it and react to it -- may have been a late strike of recognition, a Negro visitation. But there were latent influences over a long period of time: the celebration of African art by earlier 20th century artists, constant reminders, in the news, of the black glory and the black dilemma. The works of Alan Paton and Isak Dinesen were close at hand.

This was a complex and difficult series for Hood. Dissonant things going to their limits. "There's something horrific about the whole African experience . . . their sensuality . . . just goes beyond limits . . . that happened in this series," Hood reveals.

Extensors or limbs, the African colors, come together in these powerful pictures as synecdoche, the singular image of a teeming, large scene overwhelming with its fierce beauty, tragedy, violence, struggle and, with it all, dignity.

"Tixo's Void" (1972) and (1974) are vivid examples of this passage into the artist's oeuvre. Some works of this period are so intensely a part of mystical experience that she has hesitated to put them on view. Tixo, in Bantu is the focal spiritual figure. "Ingell's Spirit" (1972) also from this series, with its red, rust, white, grey and blue coloration, in a Niagara of unspecified icons, the found-objects of the artist's imagination, perfect landscape for an existentialist drama by Beckett.

In "Siyafa" (1974) a central mass suggests a death's head, flashing the reminder of our mortality. The idea is never far from the artist's awareness. The curse of the poet, Hood maintains, is that he is acutely alive and acutely dead, a favorite quote.

The serious observer of Dorothy Hood's paintings, will in a close examination of picture after picture from 1969 to present, discover the forms, the odd juxtapositions, the colors, the *idee fixe* that give her her uniqueness. But they are never repetitive. Like Thornton Wilder with his 26 letters, she chose her elements, tamed them and put them to work to speak for her. Every painting stunningly different; there is not a cliché in the total canon of Dorothy Hood. But in her case, as in that of most distinctive creators, "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose."

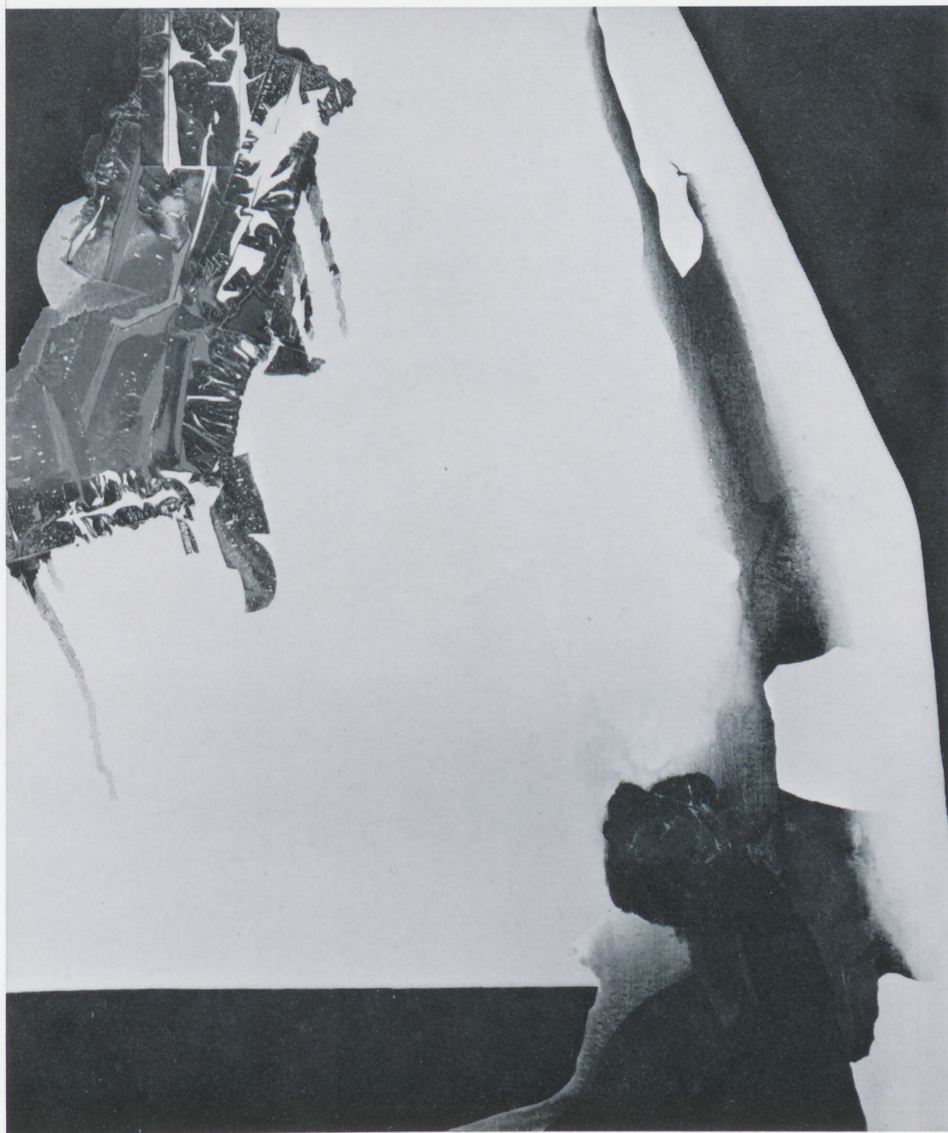
For all that she is a poet capable of grandeur, she starts every new work with the thought that it must be, first, a good painting. It must have validity, must have the right color, a viable plastic source-idea, she insists.

But beyond this painter's extraordinary control of technique, the theme and the beauty of her on-going constants, comes Dorothy Hood's greater truth. "The revelation is of what IS, not what is MADE. Art is made or invented. Only the background is what IS."

Ann Holmes, Fine Arts Editor
Houston Chronicle

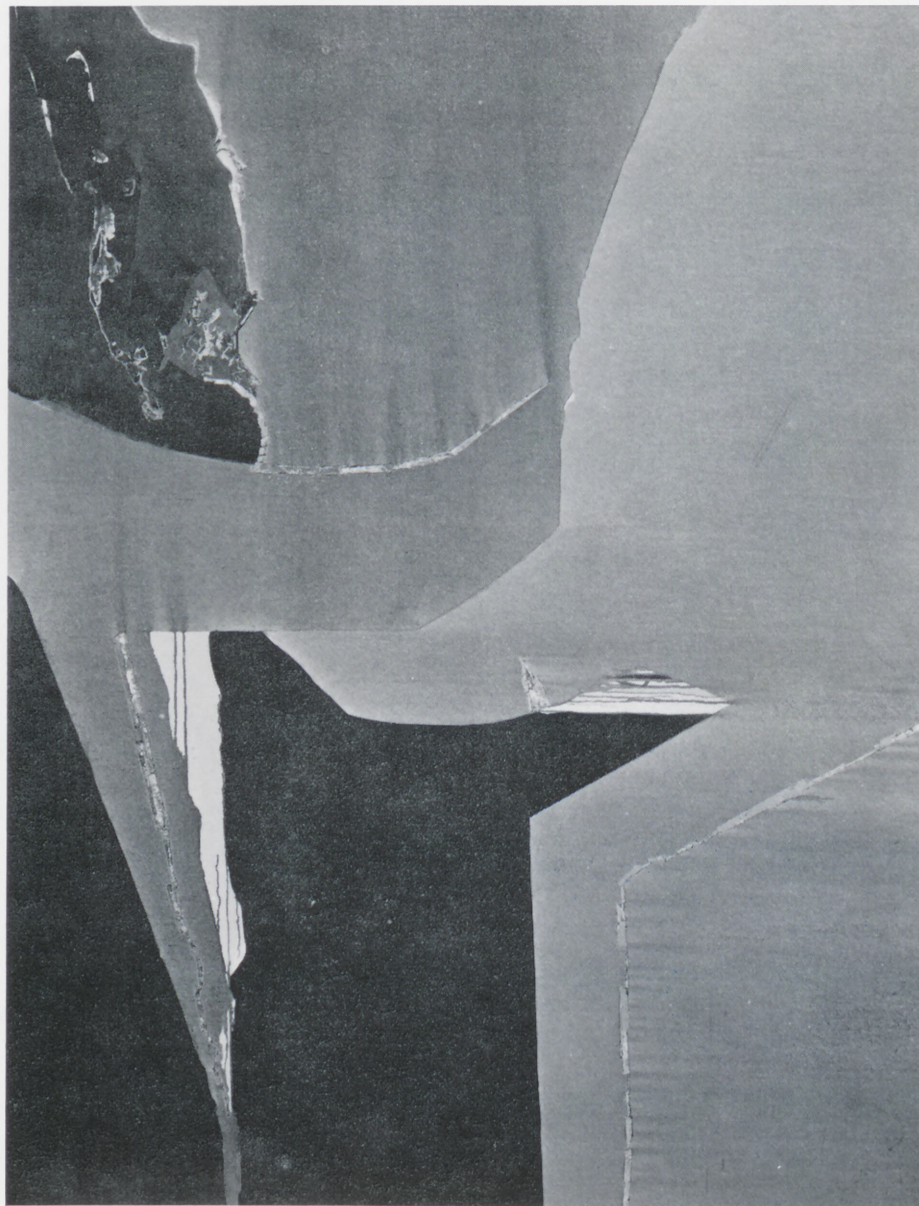
PAINTINGS — OIL ON CANVAS

1. *THE TENDER ADVENTURES OF ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS*, 1965
40 x 36
Lent by Miss Nina Cullinan, Houston
2. *QUESTIONS ABOUT ETERNITY*, 1968
80 x 70
Lent by Mrs. Judith S. Robinson, Austin
and William A. Robinson, Houston
3. *SPACE BOLT*, 1970
120 x 96
Lent by Ben Adams, San Antonio
4. *IMPLODED CLOUD*, 1971
70 x 60
Lent by Meredith Long and Co., Houston
5. *CALYPSO*, 1972
70 x 60
Lent by the artist
6. *GITA'S LIGHT*, 1972
70 x 60
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Les Ballard, Houston



6. *GITA'S LIGHT*, 1975
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. A. Les Ballard, Jr.

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| 7. <i>ON UNTRODDEN PATHS, 1972</i>
90 x 70
Lent by the artist | 10. <i>SEA ELEGY, 1972</i>
90 x 70
Lent by Gary Hardison, Houston |
| 8. <i>PAIN OF THE PRINCE, 1972</i>
90 x 70
Lent by Dr. Joe Dean Paxton, Cypress | 11. <i>SPACE BOLT IN EQUIPOISE, 1972</i>
90 x 70
Lent by Mrs. Cynthia R. Taylor, Houston |
| 9. <i>RISING IMPLOSION, 1972</i>
90 x 70
Lent by Gary Hardison, Houston | 12. <i>TIXO'S VOID, 1972</i>
90 x 70
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Meredith Long, Houston |



10. *SEA ELEGY, 1972*
Lent by Gary Hardison

13. *EXTENSOR OF THE SKY*, 1973
96 x 120
Collection The McNay Art Institute, San Antonio
Gift of Gary Hardison, Houston

14. *SUBTERRANEAN ILLUMINATIONS*, 1973
70 x 60
Lent by Walter M. Widrig, Houston

15. *WHITE HAITI*, 1973
70 x 60
Lent by John and Mary Margaret Hansen, Houston

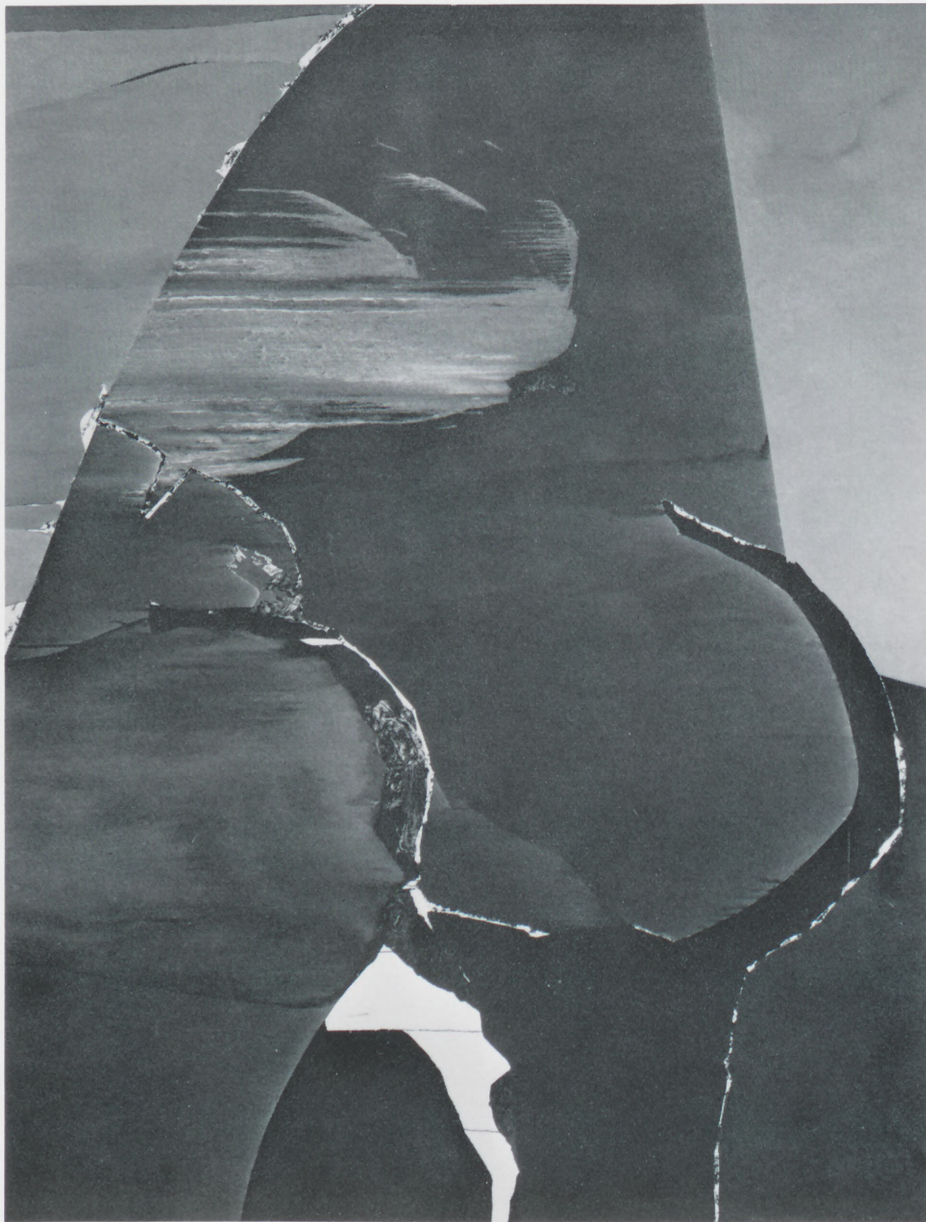
16. *UNDERSEA SCAPE*, 1974
70 x 60
Lent by Blaine Hickey and Ogden Robertson,
Houston



20. *CROSSING THE GREAT WATER*, 1977
Lent by Mr. Kenneth R. Phillips

17. *SKY LOCUS*, 1975
120 x 96
Lent by The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
18. *SUBTERRANEAN ILLUMINATIONS*, 1975
120 x 96
Lent by the artist

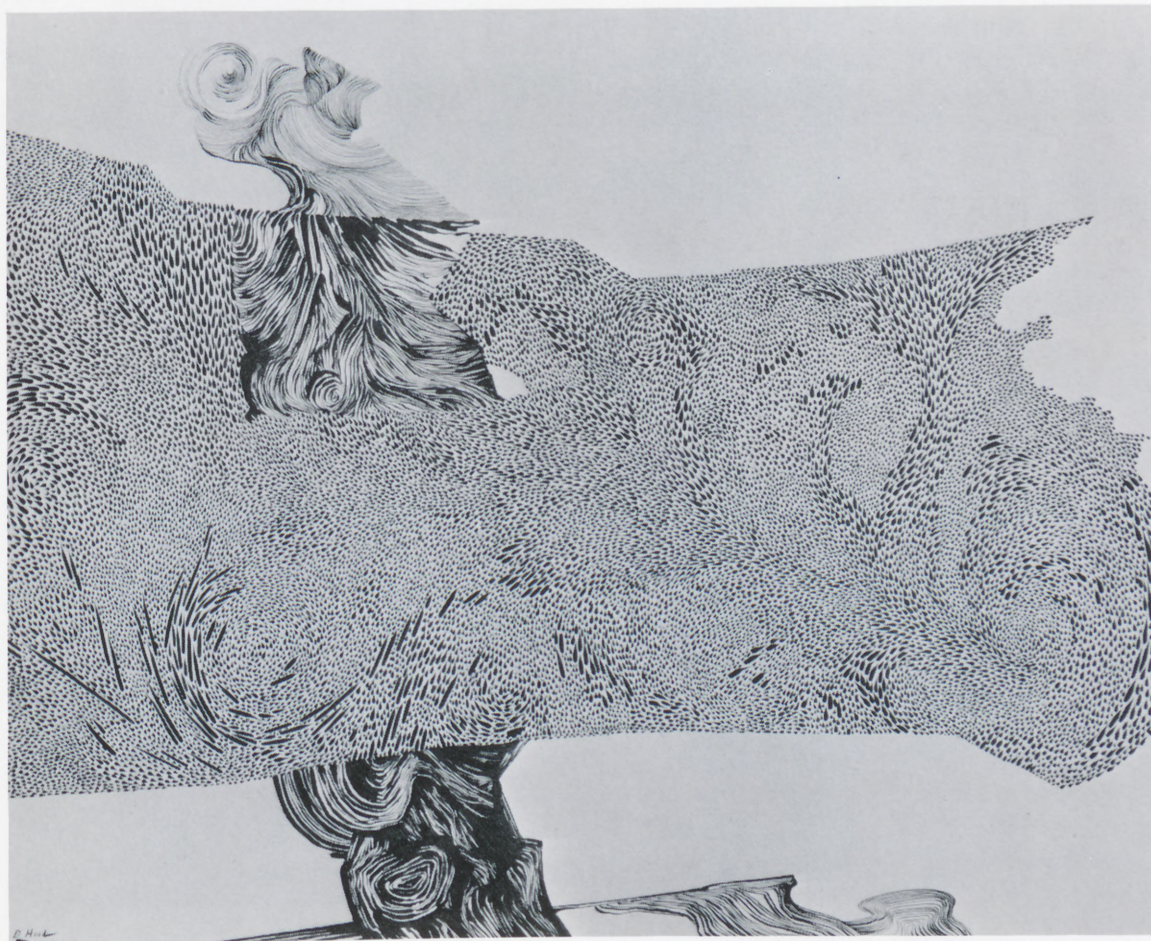
19. *FLORENCE IN THE MORNING*, 1976
70 x 60
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas G. Armstrong,
Houston
20. *CROSSING THE GREAT WATER*, 1977
90 x 70
Lent by Kenneth R. Phillips, Houston



18. *SUBTERRANEAN ILLUMINATIONS*, 1975
Lent by the Artist

DRAWINGS — BLACK INK ON GRAY PAPER

1. *DEVASTATED LOG WITH EMERGING PLUME*, 1961
26 x 20
Lent by Miss Nina Cullinan, Houston
2. *FLOWER*, 1965
26 x 20
Lent by Mrs. Cynthia R. Taylor, Houston
3. *UNTITLED*, 1965
26 x 20
Lent by Mrs. Cynthia R. Taylor, Houston
4. *COSMIC ATTRACTIONS*, 1970
20 x 26
Lent by Mrs. Wallace Wilson, Houston
5. *SPACE BONNET*, 1970
26 x 20
Lent by Mrs. Benjamin Danziger, Houston



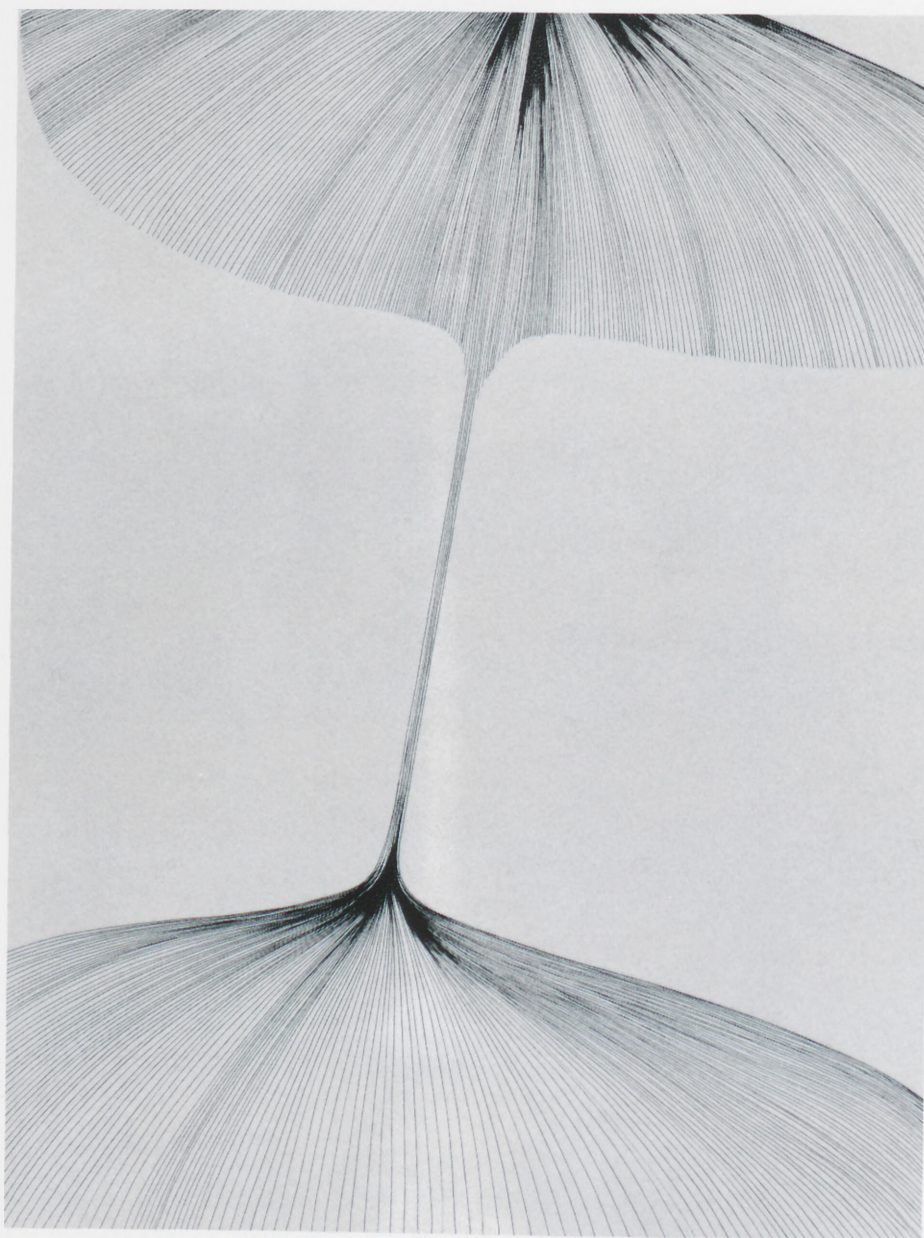
1. *DEVASTATED LOG WITH EMERGING SPIRIT*, 1962
Lent by Miss Nina Cullinan

6. *BRANCUSI'S FLOWER*, 1972
26 x 20
Lent by Rice University Art Collection
Gift of Helen Chillman

7. *THE DARK CONTINENT RISES*, 1972
26 x 20
Collection The McNay Art Institute, San Antonio
Gift of Gary Hardison, Houston

8. *FLYING IN OUTER SPACE*, 1973
20 x 26
Lent by the artist

9. *FLYING IN OUTER SPACE*, 1974
20 x 26
Lent by the artist



6. *BRANCUSI'S FLOWER*
Lent by Rice University, Houston

DOROTHY HOOD

Born in Bryan, Texas

Educated at the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, and the Art Students League, New York

1943 - 1961 Lived in Mexico City and Puebla, Mexico, travelling extensively in Central and South America

1961 Returned to Houston, Texas, where she has continued to teach at the School of Art of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Exhibition at the Philadelphia Art Alliance

1965 Exhibition at the Witte Memorial Museum, San Antonio

1970 Exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston

1971 Exhibition at Rice University, Houston

1972 Exhibition at the Everson Museum, Syracuse, New York

1973 Won the Childe Hassam Award at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York

1974 Worked at the Ahrenberg Atelier in Chexbres, Switzerland, as she has subsequently three times

“Drawings of Dorothy Hood” exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, which travelled to the Everson Museum, New York State University, and the Art Museum of South Texas.

Publication by the Everson Museum of Dorothy Hood Drawings

Exhibition at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York

Represented at the International Kunstmesse in Basel, Switzerland

1975 Exhibition at the Michener Galleries, The University of Texas at Austin

Exhibition at Davis and Long Gallery, New York

Exhibited at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York

Dorothy Hood did the settings for the ballet “Allen’s Landing” for the Bicentennial Celebration of the Houston Ballet

1976 Included in “New Work in Clay by Painters and Sculptors”, sponsored by Syracuse University and the Everson Museum.

Settings for the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, for the Toronto Truck Theater’s “Gold for the Gods” celebration and play “Royal Hunt of the Sun”.

Exhibited at the Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf

Included in “American Artists ’76: A Celebration”, McNay Art Institute, San Antonio

1978 One-person exhibition at the McNay Art Institute, San Antonio

Exhibition at Davis Long Contemporaries, New York

Included in work from Southwestern collections selected for one-year showing at the vice-presidential mansion, Washington, D.C.

Miss Hood's work is included in the collections of

Alverthorpe Collection, Jenkintown, Pennsylvania

Art Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi

The Brooklyn Museum, New York

Everson Museum, Syracuse, New York

Fort Worth Art Center, Fort Worth

La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, California

McNay Art Institute, San Antonio

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art, California

University of Texas Museum, Austin

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Witte Memorial Museum, San Antonio

The Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts

as well as other institutional collections in Switzerland, Mexico City, and the United States.

ADDENDUM

17. *SKY LOCUS* — The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Museum purchase with funds provided by The National Endowment for the Arts and an Anonymous Donor.



