

## To Smithereens: Rosalyn Drexler, 1961–1964

For the 2018 edition of Frieze Masters: Spotlight, the gallery presents *To Smithereens: 1961–1964*, a solo-exhibition of paintings by Rosalyn Drexler from the early 1960s. The objects included—thirteen of the artist’s most iconic works—chart the development of her unique brand of hand-painted Pop art as well as her career-long fascination with images of violence.

A fixture of the Pop scene in the 1960s, Drexler created images that fit comfortably into the period’s visual landscape. She cut reproductions from magazines and popular journals, pasted them to canvas, and overpainted the collage, thereby covering and eliminating the reproduction process. Like Warhol and Lichtenstein, Drexler confounded the concept of what made a work original.

Drexler’s early paintings also presented social narratives at a time when narrative, banished by the Abstract Expressionists, had been relegated to speech bubbles in Lichtenstein paintings. Behind a tabloid façade, her art dealt with social problems in the vernacular of American film noir and French Nouvelle Vague. Finally, her paintings treated formal issues that did not become artistic currency until the 1980s. Her use of magazine imagery anticipated the work of Richard Prince, even as it differed in process and intention. Her paintings explored the resonances between life and its mythologized counterpart in American film, much like Cindy Sherman’s movie stills.



*The Winner*, 1964

Since the 1960s, only two of the paintings included in this presentation have been exhibited publicly. Frieze Masters will mark the first time that Drexler’s work has been exhibited in the United Kingdom.

Born in 1926 in Bronx, New York, Rosalyn Drexler first began exhibiting her work during the late 1950s. Since then, she has had 20 solo exhibitions, including at Reuben Gallery (1960, New York), Kornblee Gallery (1964, 1965, 1966, New York), and Pace Gallery (2007, New York). In 1986, a retrospective of her work—*Rosalyn Drexler: Intimate Emotions*—opened at the Grey Art Gallery, New York University. Another survey exhibition, *Rosalyn Drexler and the Ends of Man*, took place in 2006 at Rutgers University’s Paul Robeson Gallery (Newark, New Jersey). Her most recent retrospective exhibition, *Rosalyn Drexler: Who Does She Think She Is?*, took place at the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University (2016, Waltham, Massachusetts); it traveled to the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in October 2016 and the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum in February 2017.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Drexler’s paintings were featured in many important museum exhibitions, such as *Pop Art USA* (1963, Oakland Art Museum, California), *The Painter and the Photograph* (1964, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University), *American Pop Art* (1974, Whitney Museum of American Art), and *Another Aspect of Pop Art*, (1978, P.S. 1, Institute for Art and Urban Resources, New York). In 2010, her work figured prominently in Sid Sachs’ landmark exhibition *Seductive Subversion: Women Pop Artists, 1958–1968* (2010, University of the Arts, Philadelphia), as well as *Power Up: Female Pop Art* at the Kunsthalle Wien. More recently, Drexler’s paintings were included in *Pop to Popism* at Australia’s Art Gallery of New South Wales (2014–2015, Sydney);

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*International Pop* (2015–2016, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis); *Human Interest: Portraits from the Whitney's Collection* (2016–2017, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York); and *Inventing Downtown: Artist-Run Galleries in New York City, 1952–1965* (Grey Art Gallery, New York University).

Drexler's paintings are in the collections of many museums, including the Albright-Knox Art Gallery; the Allen Memorial Art Gallery, Oberlin College; the Colby College Museum of Art; the Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Rollins College; the Grey Art Gallery, New York University; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution; the Museum of Modern Art; the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University; the Wadsworth Athenaeum; the Walker Art Center; and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

In addition to her work as a visual artist, Drexler is also an accomplished novelist and playwright. She published her first play in 1963 and her first novel in 1965. She is the recipient of three Obie Awards, as well as an Emmy Award for her work on Lily Tomlin's television special *Lily* (co-written with Richard Pryor).

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to represent Rosalyn Drexler.