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Rosalyn Drexler: Happy Dance



Rosalyn Drexler, *Home Sweet Home*, 1959, Acrylic, metal, and wood, 12 x 14 x 5 1/2 inches

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to announce *Rosalyn Drexler: Happy Dance*. Opening Thursday, March 2, 2023, the exhibition features work from the earliest part of Drexler's career, from the mid-1950s to 1961. A fully illustrated catalog will accompany the exhibition.

The exhibition highlights the breadth of Drexler's artistic practice, featuring found-object sculptures and assemblages, abstract pastels, figurative ink drawings, erotic ink drawings, and acrylic and paper collages. Accompanying these early works are a wealth of archival materials illuminating Drexler's life and work in this period, including her association with leading figures of New York's post-war cultural scene such as Andy Warhol, Jim Dine, Willem and Elaine de Kooning. Two illustrated books of poems, c.1957–58, offer insight into the important relationship between Drexler's writing and visual practice.

Rosalyn Drexler began her artistic career in the early 1950s with a joint show at the Courtyard Gallery in Berkeley alongside her husband, Sherman Drexler. The show featured her sculptures and assemblages that were made of "junk from the street." In works like *Provincetown Beach* (1958–1959) and *Home Sweet Home* (1959), she uses acrylic, metal, and wood to craft seemingly abstract works that are evocative of places. In works like *Pink Winged Victory* (1961) and *Fat Lady* (1960), the plaster work is robust and tactical – the forms and titles alluding to the female form, without directly materializing it. In *Portrait of Rosalyn Drexler* (1960), Drexler envisions herself as a disembodied head attached to a

thin length of wood, her face almost in the round of a soup spoon. Many of these works were included in the artist's first solo exhibition at New York's Reuben Gallery in 1960, and some were also featured in the Guggenheim Museum's 1965 exhibition *Eleven from the Reuben Gallery*.

The exhibition also showcases a wide array of Drexler's early works on paper. Ranging from abstract pastels and ink drawings of nude figures and erotic scenes to the artist's earliest acrylic and paper collages, these works chart Drexler's progression through abstraction towards the highly stylized figuration she would become best-known for. Drexler's characteristically bold use of color and frankly sexual themes are already on view in these early works, particularly the erotically charged and at times unsettlingly frank ink drawings.

Rosalyn Drexler, born in the Bronx in 1926, is a painter and sculptor, a novelist, a journalist, an Obie Award-winning playwright, an Emmy Award-winning screenwriter, and a former professional female wrestler. Since first exhibiting her work in the early 1950s, 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.

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 Rollins Museum of Art; the Grey Art Gallery, New York University; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution; the Museum of Modern Art; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University; the St. Louis Art Museum; the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; 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.

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