

# VAN DOREN WAXTER

VAN DOREN WAXTER PRESENTS:



Hedda Sterne, *Machine Motor Light Blue*, 1951, Oil on linen, 39 x 31 3/4 inches (99.1 x 80.6 cm)

## ***Hedda Sterne: Machines 1947 - 1951***

Exhibition Dates: March 10 - April 29, 2016

"You see, before I came here, I was doing a combination of accident and Surrealist collage. And then, when I came to the United States, I was struck that this country was more Surrealistic than anything anybody imagined. Already in '41, I'd seen in California, buildings in the shape of ice cream cones and oranges that you could walk into. That kind of freedom, that romanticism about the future, was utterly delightful to me. So I became a passive observer, for a while.... All of those things struck me as tremendously poetical and symbolic. If you look at my work from the beginning, it is an absolute diary."

"In our time, artists are inclined to believe that art is like honey, the product of their *own* subconsciouses, their *own* minds, and I do not. I see myself as a well-working lens, a perceiver of something that exists independently of me: don't look at me, look at what I've found."

*Oral history interview with Hedda Sterne, interviewed by Phyllis Tuchman, December 17, 1981, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution*

Van Doren Waxter is pleased to present *Hedda Sterne: Machines 1947 – 1951*, an exhibition of mid-century paintings and works on paper by this preeminent figure of the American post war period.

Hedda Sterne began her "Machines" series in 1947 after encountering farming machinery on a trip to Vermont. The result: Anthropographs, abstracted machines with a humanlike nature. Sterne, a recent emigre from Romania, was deeply affected by the cultural and aesthetic shift she discovered in the United States.

Sterne was fascinated by the notion that people subconsciously designed machines as self-portraits in an attempt to capture their deep seeded need for consumption. *Machines* distills this fascination into a series of almost futurist forms, rendering inanimate machinery with alternately humorous, aggressive, and menacing physical attributes, evoking America's subconscious preoccupation with post-war infrastructure.

Based on her examination of her new American landscape, specifically New York City, which she viewed as far more phantasmagorical than any of the Surrealism that she had actually encountered, she was able to create imagistic work that refused to adhere to stringent classification.

A Romanian immigrant and only female included in the historic "Irascibles" photo published in *Life*, Hedda Sterne (1910-2011) exhibited steadily throughout her career. Fiercely independent, Sterne defied classification working in multiple mediums moving fluidly between abstraction, figuration and object based work. Sterne's 1955 canvas titled "New York, NY," was a highlight of the Whitney's downtown opening exhibition "America is Hard to See."

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