

Announcing representation of Hedda Sterne



Hedda Sterne, c1964, by Théodore Brauner
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Victoria Miro is delighted to announce representation of Hedda Sterne (1910–2011) in partnership with The Hedda Sterne Foundation. Works by the artist will feature in a solo exhibition at Victoria Miro Venice this autumn (5 November–10 December 2022). The Foundation will continue to be represented by Van Doren Waxter in New York.

An active member of the New York School, Hedda Sterne, who was born in Bucharest, Romania in 1910 and fled to the US in 1941, created an extensive body of work that intersected with some of the most important movements and figures of the twentieth century. A bridge between European Modernism, in particular Surrealism, and American Abstract Expressionism, Sterne's work stands as a testament to her independence of thought, moving freely between figuration and abstraction throughout her long career. Sterne stated, 'I believe... that isms and other classifications are misleading and diminishing. What entrances me in art is what cannot be entrapped in words.' Sterne's work has enjoyed increased critical visibility in recent years, featuring in major group exhibitions and museum displays, such as *The Form of Freedom: International Abstraction after 1945* at Museum Barberini, Potsdam (4 June–25 September 2022); *Midcentury Abstraction: A Closer Look* at the Yale University Art Gallery (2022); *Elles font l'abstraction* at Centre Pompidou, Paris (2021); *Labyrinth of Forms: Women and Abstraction, 1930–1950* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY (2021–22); *Affinities for Abstraction: Women Artists on Eastern Long Island, 1950–2020*, at Parrish Art Museum, NY (2021); *Epic Abstraction: Pollock to Herrera* at The Met Fifth Avenue, NY (2018–20); *Hedda Sterne: Printed Variations* at Amon Carter Museum of American Art, TX (2018-19); *Making Space: Women Artists and Postwar Abstraction* at MoMA, NY (2017). A solo exhibition was held at Victoria Miro in London in 2020.

Early international recognition came when collages included in a Paris exhibition in 1938 were singled out for praise by Jean Arp. Through him, Sterne was recommended to Peggy Guggenheim, and was later included in five exhibitions at Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery in New York. Embraced by fellow Surrealist exiles in the city, Sterne was also included in the exhibition *First Papers of Surrealism* in 1942, organised by André Breton and Marcel Duchamp. While her first works completed in the US retain the influence of Surrealism, Sterne quickly absorbed the spirit of the metropolis, drawing inspiration from its architecture, its scale and dynamism. Industrial forms such as farm machinery start to appear in her work of the 1940s following a visit to Vermont with her second husband, fellow artist and Romanian émigré Saul Steinberg, whom she married in 1944.

By the 1950s, Sterne was increasingly concerned with motion and light, combining formal innovation with material experimentation in her use of commercial aerosol spray paint in her attempt to interpret the increasing speed of the world around her. Looser and increasingly atmospheric, works from this period are characterised by a sense of mergence – of manmade and organic forms becoming as one. Sterne is widely remembered for her appearance at this time in a now iconic photograph for *Life* magazine, published in 1951, of the 'Inascibles' – a group of artists who protested against the Metropolitan Museum of Art's failure to reflect contemporary abstraction in its exhibitions of American art. Notably, she is the only woman in the image. Sterne would later comment that 'I am known more for that darn photo than for eighty years of work.'

The 1960s were an especially productive decade for Sterne, her work becoming increasingly abstract, minimal and experimental as the decade progressed, while also drawing clear inspiration from natural phenomena and elements of landscape. During this period Sterne began meditating daily, a practice that would have a profound effect on her life and work. In 1961, she spent time at Yaddo as an artist in residence, and in 1963, she travelled to Venice, where she would live and work as a Fulbright fellow until the summer of 1964. Shortly after her return to the US, she purchased a property in the East Hampton Springs community, which became her summer home and studio for several decades, and where she was able to work on ever larger canvases, and experiment in profoundly new ways.

Sterne's final artist's statement, composed in 2004, articulates what she felt to be a primary achievement of her life in art: 'With time, I have learned to lose my identity while drawing and to act simply like a conduit, permitting visions that want to take shape to do so.' She died in New York in 2011 at the age of 100.

Victoria Miro said, 'Hedda Sterne described her work as a process of ongoing exploration and discovery and it is her openness to experimentation, as well as her independence of spirit, that single her out as one of the great artists of the twentieth century. It was a huge pleasure to present the first solo exhibition of Sterne's work in the UK in 2020, when we showed her sublime *Vertical Horizontals*. We are honoured to begin working with The Hedda Sterne Foundation and look forward to bringing more of Sterne's great work, and her philosophy of art, to new audiences.'

Shaina Larrivee, Executive Director of The Hedda Sterne Foundation said, 'The Foundation is committed to sharing Hedda Sterne's vital contributions to the discourse and diversity of twentieth century art. We are delighted to continue our collaboration with Victoria Miro, whose exhibition of Sterne's powerful paintings in London in 2020 helped to invigorate curiosity about the artist's life and work. We look forward to working together to shed new light on Sterne's long and diverse practice with audiences around the world.'

For further press information please contact:

Victoria Miro Kathy Stephenson | Director of Communications | kathy@victoria-miro.com | +44 (0) 20 7549 0422

Rees & Co Rosanna Hawkins | rosanna@reesandco.com | +44 (0)7910 092 634