

DOROTHY IANNONE



AIR DE PARIS

DOROTHY IANNONE

Born in 1933 in Boston, United States

Died in 2022 in Berlin, Germany

«...For many years now, Dorothy Iannone has been investigating through her visual work, her books and her records, the world of love and loving-styles. In her original (re)-search, she skillfully blends imagery and text, beauty and truth. She is a freedom fighter, and a forceful and dedicated artist. Her aim is no less than human liberation.» - Robert Filiou, 1975

Dorothy Iannone started making art in the 1960s, producing vibrant paintings, drawings, prints, films, objects and books, all characterised by a markedly narrative and overtly autobiographical visual language. Her oeuvre reads like an ode to unbridled sexuality, ecstatic unity, unconditional love, and conveys a singular attachment to Eros as a philosophical concept. Her works narrate the artist's life in intimate detail, transforming somewhat the feminist discourse of the 1960's, by emphasizing personal freedom and spiritual transcendence through complete devotion to, and union with, a lover. Throughout her career, Iannone frequently faced censorship, as seen in the «Friends' Exhibition» organised by Harald Szeemann at Kunsthalle Bern in 1969, an event on which she later based her seminal book *The Story of Bern*.

Dorothy Iannone's work has been shown in numerous solo exhibitions internationally, including at M HKA, Antwerp, Belgium (2023); Kunsten Museum of Modern Art Aalborg, Aalborg, Denmark (2022); Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark (2022); Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, Germany (2022); Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (2019); MoMA PS1, New York, USA (2014); Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria (2006); and Sprengel Museum, Hanover, Germany (2005). In addition, Iannone's works were included in a number of international group exhibitions, such as *Immanence*, Paris, France (2023); Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Saint-Etienne, France (2022); Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany (2022); Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf, Germany (2021); Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich, Switzerland, (2021); as well as the Berlin Biennale (2005).

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, Germany

Centre Pompidou, Paris, France

Centre National des Arts Plastiques – CNAP, Paris, France

Castello di Rivoli, Torino, Italy

Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA

Sammlung Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zürich, Switzerland

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain

Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France

Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, Monaco

Tate Modern, London

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Love is Forever, Isn't It?

Curated by Joanna Zielinska

M HKA, Antwerp, Belgium

05.10.2023 — 21.01.2024

The exhibition *Love Is Forever, Isn't It?* presents one of the most comprehensive surveys of Dorothy Iannone's prolific body of work, to be showcased at M HKA.

Dorothy Iannone (1933–2022) was an American visual artist who lived and worked in Berlin. Her artistic practice spanned paintings, artists' books, video installations, sculptures, drawings, and sound works. In her visual and writing oeuvre, she created a unique relationship between text, image, audio, and sculptural objects, emphasising their narrative and fictional dimensions.

The primary focus of this project is the recontextualisation of Iannone's work, specifically examining its intrinsic performative nature, which has been scarcely investigated until now. The exhibition explores novelistic conventions, narrative threads, relationships between words and images, as well as autofictional and biographical elements within her creations.

Iannone examined topics related to female sexuality, which has led to her work being censored on multiple occasions. In her vibrant oeuvre, she explored feelings and emotions, creating an erotic iconography largely inspired by non-Western and Buddhist imagery. She passionately described her intimate friendships and relationships with her muses, artists, and lovers.

Though she shared personal and artistic associations with Fluxus, Dorothy Iannone never considered herself part of the movement. Undoubtedly, her transdisciplinary and multifaceted practice establishes a unique dialogue with the neo-avant-garde movements of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s.

Iannone's exhibition at M HKA takes viewers on an emancipatory journey towards unconditional love, the celebration of matriarchy, and Eros. As she eloquently stated in one of her texts: 'If in any way, I have helped people to come closer to themselves, that would mean a lot to me.'

The publication *Love Is Forever, Isn't It?* serves as an extension of the exhibition in collaboration with JRP|Editions. It features essays that delve into the concept of performativity, both in artistic terms and in the context of feminism and female sexuality. The book underscores the significance of Dorothy Iannone's contributions to contemporary art within the international avant-garde while shedding light on the numerous acts of censorship that impacted her artistic journey. The book is set to be released in late November 2023.



Exhibition views

Love is Forever, Isn't It?

M HKA, Antwerp, Belgium

2023-2024

Photo: © We Document Art



Exhibition views

Love is Forever, Isn't It?

M HKA, Antwerp, Belgium

2023-2024

Photo: © We Document Art



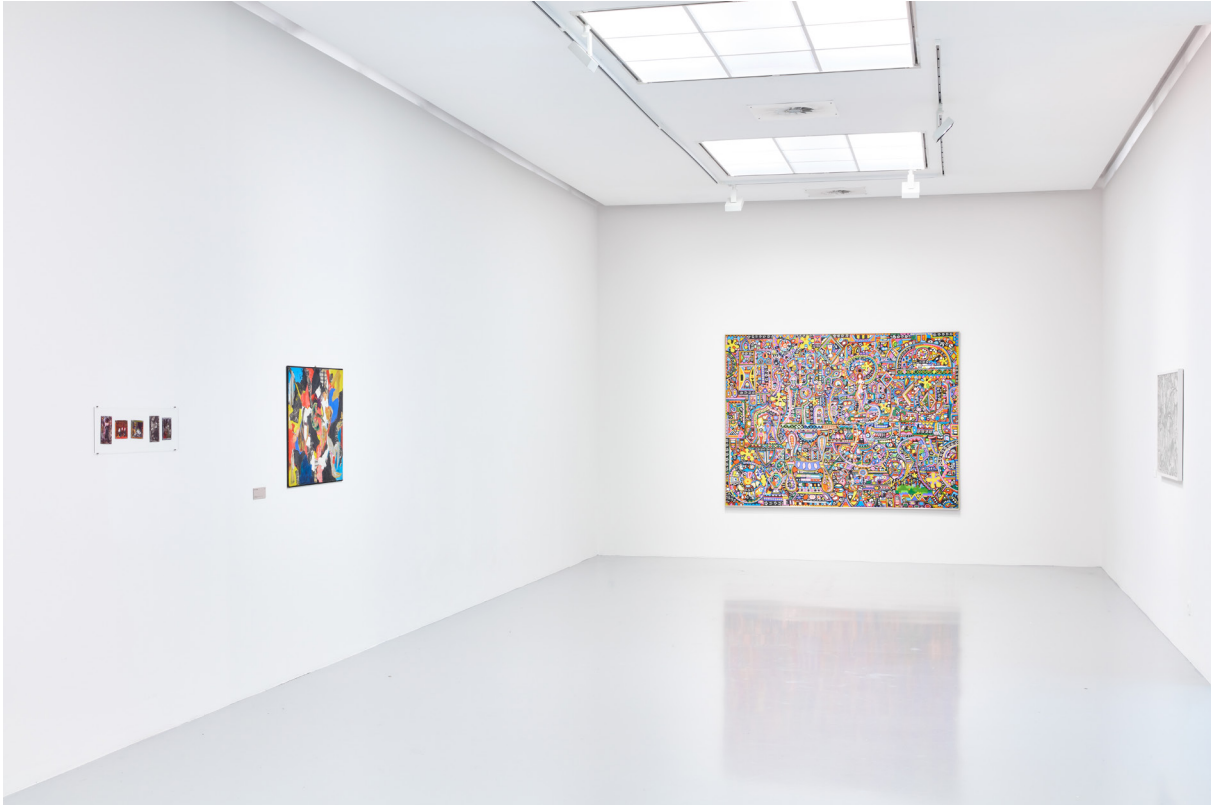
Exhibition views

Love is Forever, Isn't It?

M HKA, Antwerp, Belgium

2023-2024

Photo: © We Document Art



Exhibition views

Love is Forever, Isn't It?

M HKA, Antwerp, Belgium

2023-2024

Photo: © We Document Art



Exhibition views

Love is Forever, Isn't It?

M HKA, Antwerp, Belgium

2023-2024

Photo: © We Document Art



Exhibition views
 Dorothy Iannone
 Kunsten Museum of Modern Art Aalborg, Denmark
 2022
 Photo : © Niels Fabæk



Exhibition views

Dorothy Iannone

Kunsten Museum of Modern Art Aalborg, Denmark

2022

Photo : © Niels Fabæk



Exhibition views
 Dorothy Iannone
 Louisiana Museum, Humlebæk, Denmark
 2022
 Photo : © Louisiana Museum



Exhibition views
 Dorothy Iannone
 Louisiana Museum, Humlebæk, Denmark
 2022
 Photo : © Louisiana Museum

Dorothy Iannone : Extase and The Roulette Table

Air de Paris, Romainville, France

19.09 — 31.10.2020

Dear Dorothy!

I suppose Air de Paris will have this letter translated and print it in French. It's meant to be read by the visitors to your show, by people with an interest in your work and you. They most likely do not know who I am. (Or perhaps think I'm my Paris namesake.) For those I want to make sure that a translation to French of this letter does not obscure the fact that I, a German, am writing it not in German but in the English language.

Do you remember – or, I don't know if you ever knew this: 50-some years ago, when you had newly arrived in Germany, your then boyfriend and my professor, the unforgettable Dieter Roth, shortly after introducing us, said to me “maybe you can teach her some German”.

To my knowledge the subject of you learning German, or someone teaching you German never came up again, though teaching and learning back then in Düsseldorf were important words. They figured prominently in the title of Robert Filliou's book from 1970 which had you as a collaborator: “Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts”. The engagement was not with a particular subdivision (I mean with the one or other language), but with the total, with that language of all languages, the engagement was with art.

Some strong poets were around in those Düsseldorf days. And you were one of them, heroic in your defence of freedom, as you still are today.

It's helpful to have the possibility to think back. It makes the present less bleak.

Sinking into some deeper thought I see your life's poetic performance, unafraid and with bright colours, happening on a stage. The stage is not there to separate the actors from the audience. The stage is there for all who are with you to be a bit higher. Your artwork is a celebration on an elevated platform. The beauty of the paintings (or stage props) is that they happen as a natural consequence in that higher sphere or as a kind of byproduct of your special kind of intensity.

Before I get carried away, tell me one day what you think of this.

No proper letter without the sender reporting to the addressee how he is doing in his world. Just briefly, a terrible shit is going on here, they are breaking our Boekie Woekie bones. I have told you about it. It's getting worse.

Dear Dorothy, for the show the best of luck,

Jan Voss



Exhibition views

Dorothy Iannone : Extase and The Roulette Table

Air de Paris, Romainville, France

2020

Photo : © Marc Damage



Exhibition views

Dorothy Iannone : Extase and The Roulette Table

Air de Paris, Romainville, France

2020

Photo : © Marc Damage

Dorothy Iannone, ever daring!

Curated by Frédéric Paul

Centre Pompidou, Paris, France

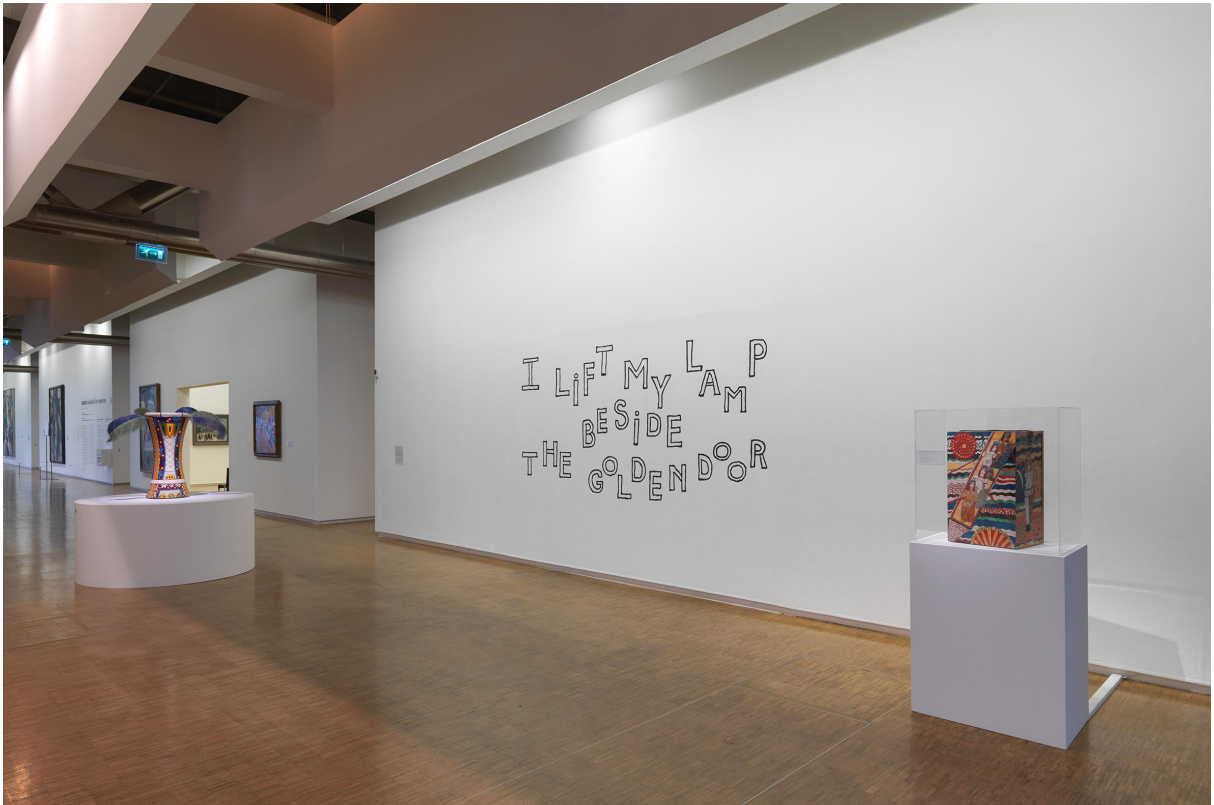
25.09.2019 — 06.01.2020

Influenced by abstract impressionism, her early forays into art revealed a great talent for visual art but it was when she moved away from abstraction that she found her true path, discarding pictorial matter in favour of storytelling and its graphic expression. Exuberant words, figures and ornaments jockey for position, to the point of saturation.

Dorothy Iannone began to paint after first studying law, then literature. She first made headlines in 1961 when she brought a case against the American government which still banned Henry Miller's *Tropique du Cancer*, published in France in 1934. Influenced by abstract expressionism, her early artistic works demonstrate great artistic mastery, but she discovered her own personal path when she broke away from abstraction, abandoning pictorial material in favour of narrative and its graphical expression. Texts, figures and exuberant ornamentation jockey for position to the point of saturation, as with many unique art figures.

Having co-founded and organised a New York gallery in the early 1960s, Iannone also established contact with collage artists in the Beat movement, like George Herms, and discovered the Fluxus spirit with poet Emmett Williams. Dorothy Iannone's drawing quickly developed the illustrative form which she would never abandon. One remarkable characteristic dates from 1966: regardless of whether her characters were presented naked or dressed, the artist deliberately revealed their genital organs, adopting a quasi-identical code for the two sexes: with or without a penis. This eccentricity took on an irreverent aspect when, in the series of figures entitled *People*, she sketched portraits of President Johnson and Robert and Jackie Kennedy, in the middle of the Vietnam war. Her own clashes with censorship began in 1967 at a solo exhibition in Stuttgart, which was completely confiscated by the police, who convened a tribunal of critics and art historians. They finally refuted the pornographic character attributed to the works, citing various extra-European artistic examples, references that were corroborated by Iannone's many travels at the time, particularly to India.

Invited by artist Dieter Roth to take part in a group exhibition at the Kunsthalle in Berne in 1969, she was again confronted with the same problems, this time because of the other participants and the organiser, Harald Szeemann, who asked her to cover the omnipresent sexual organs, the sight of which disturbed them. Dorothy Iannone's work is autobiographical. Her meeting with Roth, her muse, mentor and lover, constitutes a decisive milestone in her personal life and a tirelessly refashioned motif in her work, which implicitly advocates equality of the sexes and explicitly advocates the virtues of sexual activity, a blend of lived experience and mystical celebration.



Exhibition views

Dorothy Iannone, ever daring!
Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
2019-2020

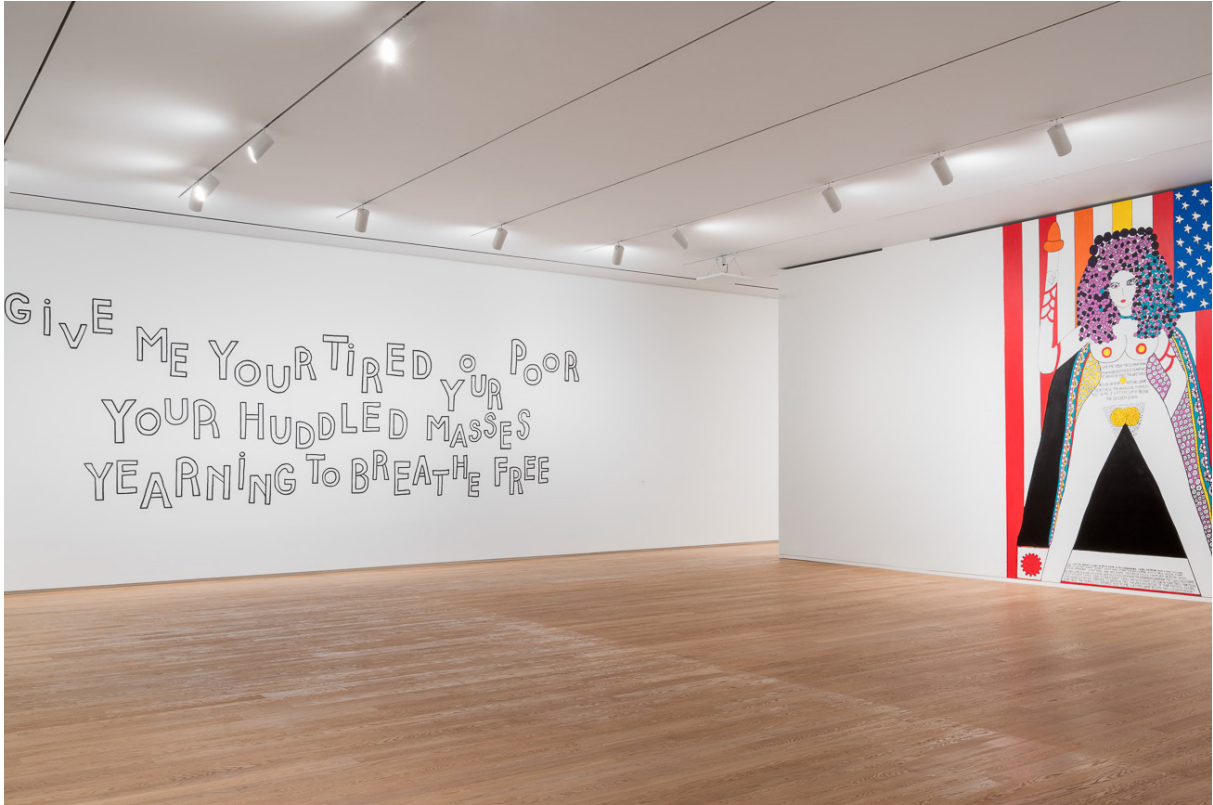


Exhibition views

Dorothy Iannone, ever daring!
Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
2019-2020



Exhibition views
Dorothy Iannone, ever daring!
Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
2019-2020



Exhibition views

Liberties

Remai Modern, Saskatoon, Canada

2019

Photo : © Blaine Campbell



Exhibition views

Liberties

Remai Modern, Saskatoon, Canada

2019

Photo : © Blaine Campbell



Exhibition views
Liberties
Remai Modern, Saskatoon, Canada
2019
Photo : © Blaine Campbell

Censorship And The Irrepressible Drive Toward Love And Divinity

Curated by Heike Munder

Migros Museum, Zurich, Switzerland

30.08 — 09.11.2014

The Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst presents a retrospective selection from fifty years of Dorothy Iannone's oeuvre, a body of work that may be considered an ongoing multifaceted artistic quest into the ecstatic experience of love and its companion idea, unconditional love. Although Iannone's visualization of sexuality was congruent with the zeitgeist of social change in the 1960s and 1970s, her images conflicted with prevailing concepts of morality. With her art, Iannone eludes social, normative and artistic restrictions and any attempt at definitive attribution. Her imagery has affinities with Pop Art, Art Brut and the contemporary genre of the graphic novel. Especially striking are schematic genitals visible on stylized bodies – frequently in combination with explicit texts, as in the works *Let Me Squeeze Your Fat Cunt* (1970/71) and *I Begin To Feel Free* (1970), two in a series of large format paintings depicting some of the many variations of love play.

The starting point and backbone for the Zurich show is Iannone's book *Censorship And The Irrepressible Drive Toward Love And Divinity* (first edition: 1982), in which Iannone recounts her years of experiences with censorship. The book is being published in a new form, augmented by two essays, in conjunction with the exhibition. Iannone starts by relating a key event that occurred when airport customs officers in New York confiscated Henry Miller's books, which she was bringing back from a trip to Paris. With the renowned American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) representing her, she successfully contested that seizure in 1961, paving the way for Henry Miller's books to be legally imported into the USA. Iannone also reports on censorship of her own works at a number of exhibitions, crucially at the group exhibition *Freunde* (Friends; 1969) at Kunsthalle Bern. Swiss artists Daniel Spoerri, André Thomkins, Karl Gerstner and Dieter Roth had invited their artist friends to contribute works to the show. Iannone was one of the invited artists; however, she was urged, even by some of her colleagues, to preemptively self-censor her works. Iannone refused, and shortly before the opening her drawings were summarily removed. The next day Roth, in solidarity, removed all of the works in his section of the exhibition (works by Roth, Iannone and Emmett Williams). The whole story is told in her 1969 artist's book *The Story Of Bern*, and the entire series of original drawings for the book is being shown in this exhibition.

As the title *Censorship And The Irrepressible Drive Toward Love And Divinity* indicates, the mythical dimension of Iannone's body of work is highly significant. Iannone develops her own cosmos of images that revolves around the philosophical concept of Eros. Implicit in this concept is the idea that human beings are deeply moved by a yearning for union. Desire is therefore conceived as a supremely natural force whose wellspring is love, ecstasy and the dissolution of ego – a human striving toward physical-spiritual unity.



Exhibition views

Censorship And The Irrepressible Drive Toward Love And Divinity

Migros Museum, Zurich, Switzerland

2014

Photo : © Stefan Altenburger



Exhibition views

Censorship And The Irrepressible Drive Toward Love And Divinity

Migros Museum, Zurich, Switzerland

2014

Photo : © Stefan Altenburger



Exhibition views

The Sweetness Outside of Time
Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, Germany
2014

Photo : © Kai-Annett Becker



Exhibition views

The Sweetness Outside of Time
Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, Germany
2014

Photo : © Kai-Annett Becker



Exhibition views
Innocent and Aware
Camden Arts Center, London, United Kingdom
2013
Photo : © Andy Keate

SELECTED ARTWORKS



Roulette Table, Love Is My Inspiration

1972-2020

Acrylic and marker on wood, roulette wheel, cloth and handmade chips from Alfred Dunhill, sound, handwritten text, including 4 «Giant People», prints mounted on wooden cut-outs on wood.

92,5 x 215 x 134,5 cm

Unique



Giant People (Dorothy Iannone)
2020
Acrylic and China ink on wood
171 x 23,2 x 136 cm
Unique



All Our Strength and All Our Sweetness

2019

digital inkjet print on Hahnemühle photo rag, mounted on aluminium, framed

142 x 97 x 4,6 cm

Unique



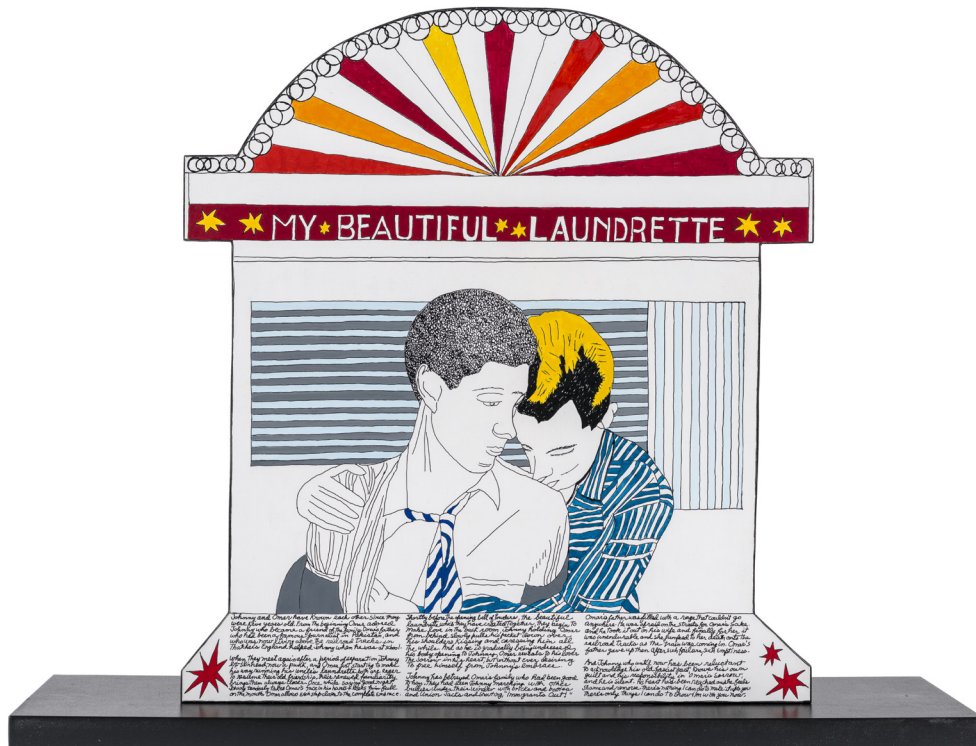
Always Alluring

1980-2019

Acrylic paint on wood

76,3 x 76,1 x 5 cm, 35,8 x 27 x 4 cm

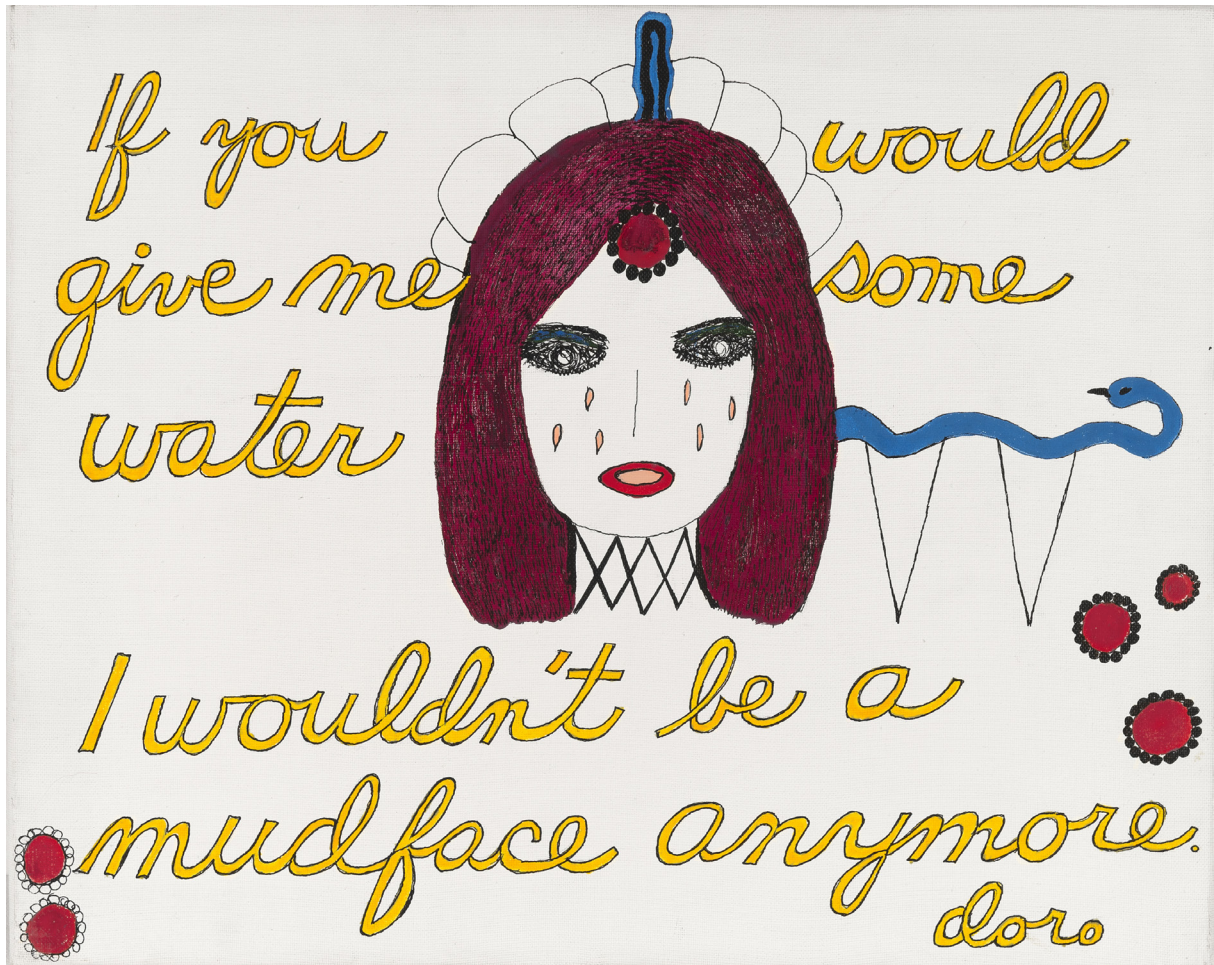
Unique



My Beautiful Laundrette
 2014
 Gouache and acrylic on paper on wood
 42,5 x 54,5 x 20 cm
 Unique



Statue of Liberty
2017
Gouache and acrylic on paper on wood
48,5 x 23,7 cm
Unique



If You Would Give Me Some Water
1976
Pencil, felt pen, acrylic on canvas
33 x 41 cm
Unique



An Icelandic Saga
 1978, 1983, 1986
 48 drawings, ink on Bristol board
 48 x (40 x 30 cm)
 Unique



Turquoise Delight
1963
Oil, paper collage, acrylic on canvas
180 x 155 cm
Unique



My Heroine And Her Mate
1962
Oil on canvas
164 x 151 cm
Unique



Secret Blossom
 1962
 Oil, paper collage, acrylic on canvas (framed)
 165 x 152,5 cm
 Unique



A Blue Love
1962

Framed collage, handmade Japanese paper and gold leaf on paper
48 x 40 cm
Unique



Untitled Flower Arrangement
 1962
 Oil crayon on paper (from artist's drawing book)
 35,5 x 24,5 cm
 Unique



Meticulous
1961
Framed felt pen on paper
99 x 125 cm
Unique