

STORM KING ART CENTER

ARCHIVES

DOROTHY DEHNER

“LIFE ON THE FARM” PAINTINGS

Collection 2017-002
Storm King Art Center
New Windsor, NY

Storm King Art Center Archives

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Support for Storm King Art Center's Archives Program is made possible by generous lead support from the Henry Luce Foundation. Support is also provided by the Pine Tree Foundation.

Collection 2017-002**Storm King Art Center****New Windsor, NY****Dorothy Dehner, "Life on the Farm" Paintings**

Date(s) of record-keeping activity: 1940-1945

Extent: 18 paintings, egg tempera on gesso board in this repository (series of 24 paintings in full)

Abstract: Series of small paintings made by artist Dorothy Dehner depicting the rural life she shared with sculptor David Smith in Bolton Landing, NY.

Administrative/Biographical History:

After meeting in New York City and studying together at the Art Students League, Dorothy Dehner and David Smith married in 1927 and bought an 86-acre farm in Bolton Landing in 1929. Settling there full-time in 1940, they built a cinder-block studio and then house on the property. Dehner left the marriage and Bolton Landing in 1950 and continued her artistic career. They divorced in 1952. Smith lived and worked at Bolton Landing until his death in 1965.

Scope and Content:

Painted from 1940-1945 and arranged in order of accession, the works depict the rural life of Dorothy Dehner and David Smith on their farm in Bolton Landing, NY during the early 1940's. Vividly drawn in a folk-art style, they record Dehner and Smith facing the daily challenges of farm life with a pioneering spirit, an appreciation for the natural world and its seasons, and a sense of being part of a larger social and artistic community. Rich in detail, the series includes landscapes, figurative scenes, and still lifes with elements of surrealism. Accompanied by copies of Dehner's notes, often in her hand.

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Languages and Scripts of the Material:

English

Immediate Source of Acquisition:

Dorothy Dehner, artist

Related Archival Materials:

Dorothy Dehner, Photographs of Bolton Landing and David Smith (Collection 2017-001, Storm King Art Center)

Notes:

LIFE ON THE FARM

Dorothy Dehner, 33 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003

I painted these small works in the early forties to record my life on the farm in Bolton Landing, on Lake George, N.Y.

David Smith and I had bought the farm in 1929, the second year of our marriage, and lived there intermittently until 1940 when we made it our permanent home.

There was much beauty in our lives in the unspoiled countryside, both in our way of life and the natural setting around it. Our common ordinary chores went on apace with David's great outpouring of his abstract sculpture and my own involvement with painting.

The daily life included the usual cooking, cleaning, planting, harvesting and preserving, for we raised most of our food and kept it for future use by canning, drying, smoking (both pork and fish) and salting down gallons of corn. It was a busy life, new and exciting to us as city people, and we rather quickly became country people. Survival depended partly on information supplied by Department of Agriculture pamphlets, of which we had a great store. One, most useful, gave instructions for making a man's overcoat. Sewing and knitting went on constantly, wool provided by neighboring sheep, was sent away to be carded, washed and spun.

The seasons of the year and their special activities were recorded, depicting visiting friends, such as Marian Willard and David planting trees, and Ralph and Constantine Bettelheim sitting cozily in our kitchen, as David walks down the lane to his shop. Our nearby neighbors sometimes helped with the slaughtering of the pigs, lumbering, sawing wood, (for that was our heat source) and other chores. One picture shows a visit to friends in our immediate area.

Two scenes in which we do not appear show Jamie Dodge who stayed with me when his father and David went to New York for a few days. The winter still-life with tropical shells and coral was a memento of our year in the Virgin Islands.

The idea to paint the days and seasons of our lives came to me from the French 15th C. Book of the Hours, Les Tres Riches Heures du Duc De Berry, which David had given me at that time.

The temptation to record the beauty of that life in the country, was not to be put aside, but to be celebrated by rendering that life and those times in these small paintings.

Dorothy Dehner, 1976

PAINTINGS

1978.5

David Reading About Himself

1941

Gouache on paper

7 3/8 x 5 3/8 in. (18.7 x 13.7 cm)

Gift of Margaret Hovenden Ogden, 1978

1978.6

Frosty Morning

1944

Egg tempera on masonite panel

9 x 12 in. (22.9 x 30.5 cm)

Gift of Margaret Hovenden Ogden, 1978

1978.7

Garden of Eden

1942

Egg tempera on masonite panel

7 x 9 1/4 in. (17.8 x 23.5 cm)

Gift of Margaret Hovenden Ogden, 1978

1978.8

Jamie's Visit

1944

Egg tempera on masonite panel

8 1/2 x 6 1/4 in. (21.6 x 15.9 cm)

Gift of Margaret Hovenden Ogden, 1978

1978.9

Memory of St. Thomas

1942

Egg tempera on masonite panel

5 3/8 x 8 1/4 in. (13.7 x 21 cm)

Gift of Margaret Hovenden Ogden, 1978

1978.10

Memory of St. Thomas II

1944

Egg tempera on masonite panel

6 1/4 x 9 3/8 in. (15.9 x 23.8 cm)

Gift of Margaret Hovenden Ogden, 1978

1978.11

My Life on the Farm

1942

Egg tempera on masonite panel

12 3/8 x 9 1/4 in. (31.4 x 23.5 cm)

Gift of Margaret Hovenden Ogden, 1978

1978.12

October

1942

Gouache on paper

7 1/8 x 7 in. (18.1 x 17.8 cm)

Gift of Margaret Hovenden Ogden, 1978

1978.13

Pastorale

1944

Egg tempera on masonite panel

6 1/4 x 11 in. (15.9 x 27.9 cm)

Gift of Margaret Hovenden Ogden, 1978

1978.14

Poor Rosebud

1942

Egg tempera on masonite panel

6 1/4 x 9 1/4 in. (15.9 x 23.5 cm)

Gift of Margaret Hovenden Ogden, 1978

1978.15

Saratoga Burying Ground

1943

Egg tempera on masonite panel

7 x 9 in. (17.8 x 22.9 cm)

Gift of Margaret Hovenden Ogden, 1978

1978.16

Vacation at Marian's

1944

Egg tempera on masonite panel

7 3/8 x 6 1/4 in. (18.7 x 15.9 cm)

Gift of Margaret Hovenden Ogden, 1978

1978.17

Winterset with Small Figures

1943

Egg tempera on masonite panel

6 x 8 1/4 in. (15.2 x 21 cm)

Gift of Margaret Hovenden Ogden, 1978

1979.10

Boulton Burying Ground

1944

Egg tempera on masonite panel

8 3/4 x 6 3/4 in. (22.2 x 17.1 cm)

Gift of Dorothy and Paul Grotz, 1979

1982.5

Alex's Restaurant

1943

Egg tempera on masonite panel

7 x 9 1/4 in. (17.8 x 23.5 cm)

Gift of the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation, 1982

1982.6

Square Dance

1942

Gouache on paper

13 1/4 x 11 in. (33.7 x 27.9 cm)

Gift of the Ralph E. Ogden Foundation and Purchase Fund, 1982

1984.1

Along the Lake

1944

Egg tempera on masonite panel

8 3/4 x 11 3/4 in. (22.2 x 29.8 cm)

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James Fitch, 1984

1985.1

Schenectady

1944

Egg tempera on masonite panel

6 x 8 in. (15.2 x 20.3 cm)

Gift of William Baker and Peter Giarrantano in memory of John Bateman, 1985