

“The Women are Coming! (and Some are Already Here!)” by Susan Platt

Opening at the Seattle Art Museum in early October, a landmark exhibition of work by women artists from the collection of the Pompidou Center in Paris is already stimulating new perspectives.

The exhibition “Elles: Women Artists from the Centre Pompidou, Paris” (October 11, 2012 – January 13, 2013) includes the work of many of the most famous artists of the twentieth century and demonstrates, unequivocally, the centrality of women in the history of twentieth century avant-garde art. It set off a storm of controversy in Paris. Hopefully it will do the same in Seattle.

The 125 works at the Seattle Art Museum are divided into 5 parts, roughly chronological as well as thematic. First there is the early 20th century, that includes Surrealism and the Bauhaus artists, then there is mid century abstraction with, for example, Louise Bourgeois (who of course lived on into the early 21st century to much acclaim). Next are the consciously feminist artists of the second half of the century who challenged all the clichés about women and beauty in performance art, installation art, photographs, and videos. Finally there is “Narrations” which includes the well known photographer Nan Goldin and the Palestinian installation artist Mona Hatoum among others.

In addition to these artists, there will be a reinstallation of the permanent collections at SAM foregrounding women, with exciting revelations about the collection such as an installation by Yayoi Kusama, outrageous and pioneering Japanese performance artist active since the 1970s.

At the Olympic Sculpture Park, an installation by Brazilian artist Sandra Cinto, already on display since March called “Encontro des Águas (Encounter of Waters)” includes a stunning wall drawing partly inspired by Gericault’s *Raft of the Medusa* and the relationship of shipwrecks and political incompetence. There are at least two videos to see about this work online, one showing its creation in a time lapse drawing as the artist and her assistants, two Brazilians, and many local volunteers, work in silver pen on black walls, the other with the artist explaining the work’s meaning.

Coming back on view at the Seattle Asian Art Museum will be Shirin Neshat’s provocative two screen video “Tooba” freely interpreting the incredible book *Tooba and the Meaning of Night* by the famous Iranian novelist by Shahrnush Parsipur.

Already on display is “Where Have they Been? Two Overlooked Chinese Female Artists” . They are Chang Ch’ung-ho Frankel (born 1914) and Lu Wujiu (born 1918) (until December 30). Creating a dramatic contrast, Ch’ung-ho Frankel is a classical calligrapher and Lu Wujiu is an abstract artist trained in the US in the late 1950s.

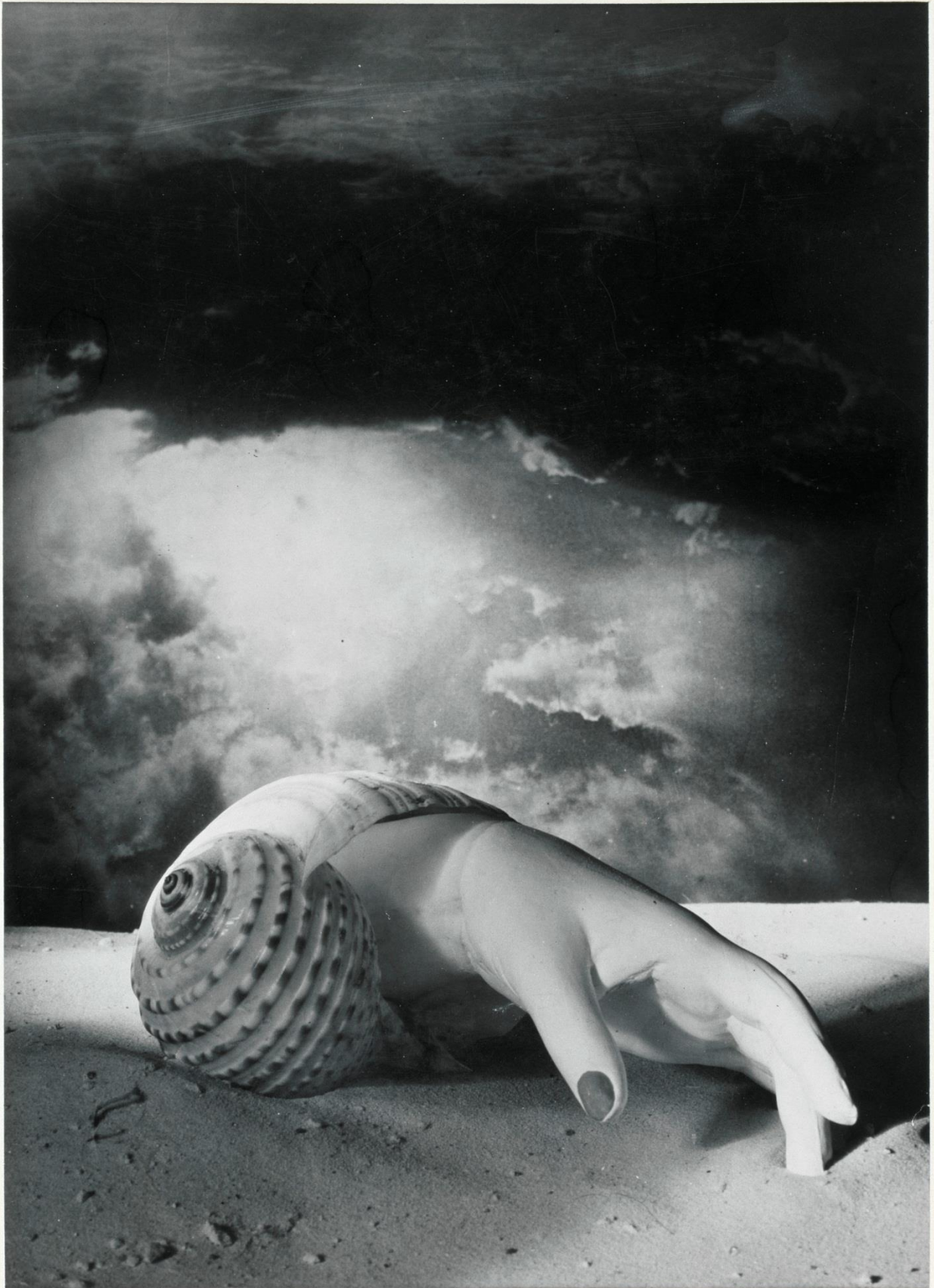
Opening on September 1 is “Women’s Paintings from the Land of Sita,” curated by Sarah Loudon: it accompanies ACT Theater’s adaptation of the epic “Ramayana”, the story of a young hero on a quest to rescue his beautiful wife, Sita. Women in this region of Northeast India have been artists for centuries, beginning to transfer their symbolic imagery from walls and floors to paper only in the 1960s, when paper became available. There will also be an exhibition of Indian Miniatures, “Many Arrows from Rama’s Bow” scenes of the epic stories of the Ramayana, starting on September 1 that comes from the San Diego Art Museum.

So there is no excuse for not visiting the Seattle Art Museum, the Olympic Sculpture Park and the Seattle Asian Art Museum this fall. It will be an opportunity for you to refresh your art history of the twentieth century and to expand your understanding of contemporary art from all over the globe. We are indeed fortunate to have such a globally focused museum!



Photo caption (sorry it's so long!)

The Frame (detail), 1938, Frida Kahlo (Mexican, 1907-1954), oil on aluminum, reverse painting on glass and painting frame 11.2 x 8.1 inches, Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris State purchase and attribution, 1939. © 2012 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



Untitled (Hand shell), 1934, Dora Maar (born Henriette Théodora Markovitch) French; b. 1907, Paris, France; d. 1997, Paris, France, Gelatin silver print, 15.8 x 11.3 inches (40.1 x 28.9 cm), Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.