

Docent Dates

July 9, 2020

Museum reopens, members only,
timed-ticket entry

July 15, 2020

10 am Zoom call w/ Patsy & Rachel
to discuss opening updates

September 16, 2020

Virtual Docent Council meeting 10

February 2021

Renovated galleries to reopen



Page One image submitted by Ricki Morse. “One of the gems of our modern European collection, *Cité Custré*, was a gift of Robert and Mercedes Eichholz in 2014. Painted by the renowned Portuguese/French artist, Maria Helena Vieira Da Silva in 1957, this lakeside city captures her particular meld of surrealism, abstraction and cubism known in France as *Art Informel*. Her architectural patterning floats in space or on water, inviting us to enter a private universe of the imagination. “

My dear fellow docents,

A plan is in place! Patsy’s email update of June 22nd marks the beginning of our return to docent life. Virtual council meetings won’t be the same as sitting in the auditorium together, but knowing we have a date for that first meeting offers structure to our relationship with the Museum in what has otherwise been a vast landscape of uncertainty since March when we boarded this COVID runaway train. Along with most of the world, the anxiety has been uncomfortable. But I thank Patsy and Rachel who have been hard at work since the lockdown, figuring out ways for us to stay connected. In the meantime, hard dates give us a road map to our docent future. What is true for today may not be true tomorrow, but it’s a start. I’m sure we all have questions about how this reentry will unfold, so be sure to participate in the Zoom call July 15th with Patsy and Rachel to get more information.

I am pleased to bring you this summer edition of *La Muse* in which Susan Tai shares with us two fabulous pieces from her *Friends of Asian Art* newsletter—*Devil Child*, and *Dancing Ganesha*. These “spotlight talks” offer us a fun, easy way to get acquainted with Asian works from our permanent collection that we may not be familiar with yet. Thank you, Susan and Holly!

Also in this issue Ricki gives us insight into artist Sally Hazelet Drummond and her work. *Untitled 1971* was a gift from Robert and Mercedes Eichholz, names we should all know. As philanthropists with a deep appreciation of art, their gifts helped shape our permanent collection over three decades. For those of you who are newer docents, I am republishing Part 1 of the 2008 interview I did with Mercedes. Reviewing it, I had the same sense of awe as I did the day of the interview. I hope you enjoy it.

Until we meet again, my best to each of you. Lori



Lori Mohr, Editor of *La Muse* since July 2009



Susan Tai, Curator, Asian Art

Dear Friends of Asian Art,

This week we are sending you an image of Yoshitoshi's dramatic portrayal of a strong boy fighting a giant carp, designed around 1872. As you will discover (below) the boy is known by his childhood nickname, Oniwakamaru or "Demon Child," because of his unusual strength.

Images of cultural heroes with physical strength and moral character became increasingly popular subjects during Yoshitoshi's time. By projecting a vision of strength, they may serve as a source of comfort, anticipating the anxiety of modernization as ushered in by the Meiji period (1868-1911). We hope you find similar comfort and joy in the beauty of SBMA's collections, much of which are now easily viewable [here](#) on the SBMA website thanks to the efforts of our curatorial assistants.

With warmest wishes,

Susan Tai, Elizabeth Atkins Curator of Asian Art

Holly Chen, Curatorial Assistant, Asian Art

Allyson Healey, Curatorial Support Group Coordinator



Holly Chen, Curatorial
Asst., Asian Art



Tsukioka YOSHITOSHI
Japanese, 1839-1892
*Oniwakamaru or the 'Demon
Child,'* from the series *Miscellaneous
Sketches by Yoshitoshi*
ca. 1872
Color woodblock print on paper
14 1/8 x 9 5/8 in.
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Roland A. Way
1991.147.2

Oniwakamaru 鬼若丸, literally "Demon Child," is the childhood nickname of Saitō Musashibō Benkei 西塔武蔵坊弁慶 (1155-1189), a historical Japanese monk warrior of great strength and loyalty who was active during Japan's Genpei civil war (1180–1185) that gave rise to the feudal samurai rule over Japan and reduced the power of the imperial family. The legend of Benkei's mischievous childhood and brave deeds has been the subject of Noh and Kabuki plays as well as in the arts and literature over the centuries.



Oniwakamaru's exploits were a favorite subject of Yoshitoshi's teacher Kuniyoshi (1797-1861). In this dynamically composed print, Yoshitoshi approaches the theme differently from his teacher with refreshing vantage points and novel printmaking techniques to enhance the drama. This print illustrates the strong boy's struggle with a monster carp to avenge his mother's tragic death. Oniwakamaru clings onto the giant carp while holding a knife in his mouth as the carp dives deeper underwater, defying the frame of the print. Yoshitoshi brings out the natural wood grain of the printing block to give subtle texture to the watery void, while overlaying sweeping gradated blue lines to further suggest motion and speed. His innovative design, creative use of color, and technical precision invigorate the image of strength projected in the well-known childhood tale of this legendary hero.

We are also ending you a newly gifted sculpture, though perhaps a familiar image to some: *Ganesha, Remover of Obstacles*. He was on loan to the Museum for the *Puja and Piety* exhibition in 2016 and again for the *Out of Storage and Into the Light: Sculptures That Tell Stories* exhibition in 2019. He is one of the most beloved Hindu deities and popularly worshipped by all faiths in India. He will no doubt continue to grace our newly renovated Asian art gallery for years to come and bring goodness to all who revere him.

Ganesha's status as remover of obstacles is especially relevant right now, as we weather the storm of current events and prepare to reopen a portion of the Museum to the public sometime in the next month or so. When our doors reopen once more, this sculpture of Ganesha, along with other selected examples from our permanent collection, will greet you and hopefully continue to provide comfort and joy to our members and visitors.

This pot-bellied, elephant-headed Hindu god, Ganesha, is one of the most beloved deities in India. He is known by many popular names such as the Remover of Obstacles, Bringer of Good Fortune and Success, and the Lord of Beginnings. Offerings are made to Ganesha before any important task is begun. He usually occupies a place near the doors in temples and homes.

Ganesha means "lord (isha) of the Ganas," who are Shiva's mountain-dwelling, mischievous attendants. He is popularly known as the son of Shiva, the Destroyer and Renewer, one of the three

Dancing Ganesha, Remover of Obstacles
India, Uttar Pradesh, 11th century
Sandstone
23 × 12 1/2 × 5 in.
Gift of Deanne Violich in memory of her mother Anne Witter Gillette
2019.28



major cosmic gods of Hinduism, and his consort, Parvati. Though his elephant head may have derived from regional worship, the most popular account is that Ganesha was crafted by Parvati while Shiva was away and when Shiva returned to find a strange boy guarding the door to his wife's bath he became enraged cutting off the boy's head. Once Parvati revealed the truth, Shiva rescued Ganesha with the head of the first creature he encountered, an elephant.

Here, Ganesha mimics Shiva's dance, swaying his chubby body on one leg while holding in each of his four hands: an axe, a radish, a lotus, and a bowl of sweets. He wears two intertwined snakes, his sacred thread, above the waistline of his transparent skirt. While the axe signals Ganesha's warrior strength, the lotus signifies divinity and purity. His weakness for sweets is apparent in the bowl of sweets he holds, and one such sweet cake, modaka, even dangles off the end of his trunk. Below the axe is a radish, his favorite food. His human-like follies, fondness for sweets and food, adorable physique, and the power to bring goodness, make him one of the most popular deities worshipped by all faiths in India. ■

The myriad ways in which we turn to art for joy and comfort...

From Julie Allen



Julie Allen

I thought you might enjoy seeing a puzzle my husband and I borrowed from my niece who has a collection of Liberty Puzzles. The pieces are wood, not cardboard. , which are wood, not cardboard. More precise cuts and Liberty include many pieces in unique shapes like figures, animals things like bicycles, ships, and intricate design groups. This makes the experience challenging and fun. I remembered my book of the same name that I acquired when author Susan Vreeland spoke to the Docents years ago. So I had the dual pleasure of doing the puzzle and re-reading the story of Renoir acquiring 14 subjects for his "la vie moderne" composition.

Julie Allen



Left: Luncheon of the Boating Party, Pierre-Auguste Renoir , 1880



Above: Luncheon of the Boating Party, Julie Allen, Pandemic era

ZOOM July 15

VIRTUAL DOCENT MEETING September 16

Iconoclastic Fervor: Sally Hazelet Drummond's Road to Abstraction

By Ricki Morse



Sally Hazelet Drummond, 1959

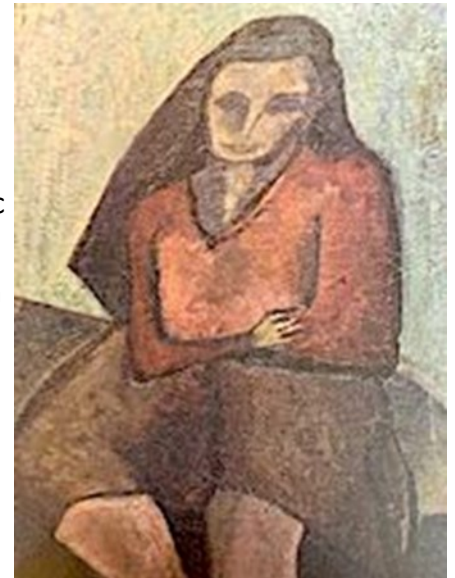
This article was inspired by an email from Rachel Heindenry (aka the new Rachel) listing the many works given to our museum by Robert and Mercedes Eichholz. She noted that the Drummond, which we have never seen, was a favorite of curator James Glisson and would probably appear in his upcoming Abstract Expressionism show. As the Eichholz gifts are noted for their artistic power and vision, I began to study Drummond and became enthralled with her unique canvases. Our Drummond is an Untitled 1971 oil painting with the glowing center but the image doesn't reproduce well, so we will have to wait until it's hung to see it.

Sally Hazelet Drummond's search for an artistic vocabulary to express her vision is one she shares with many modern artists. Characterized by an individualistic temperament, rigorous training in the arts and boundless creative energy, Drummond began her studies at Rollins College in Florida and as a junior transferred to Columbia University in New York City where she received her B.A. in 1948, beginning her lifelong love of the city. She often attended openings in the East Village, at the 10th Street galleries. Abstract expressionism was flourishing, relieving the artist of representation, and requiring a personal interior vision to give life and meaning to the painted surface.

After a year at the Institute of Design in Chicago, she joined her family in Louisville and received her master's degree in art at the Hite Art Institute of the University of Louisville in 1952, where she was the first woman graduate. The following year she accepted a

Fulbright grant to study in Venice. It was in Louisville that she met her future husband, Wick Drummond. Upon returning to New York, she found an apartment on East 10th Street and was invited to join the Tanager Gallery, an artist-run cooperative. Though her work was becoming less representational, often cubistic, sometimes linear, she was seeing groundbreaking work all around her, particularly that of Willem de Kooning, whom she knew and admired. She told an interviewer that she always wanted to be good. To others, queried the interviewer? No, for myself, she answered.

Drummond was clear that she had not yet found a way to reflect on the canvas the experiential mo-



Drummond, *Girl Sitting*, 1940 oil on Masonite



Drummond, *Magician*, 1951, Lacquer on gessoed Masonite

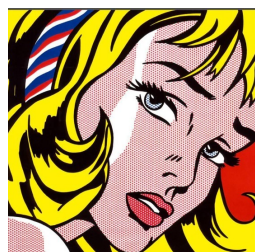


Paul Signac (1863-1935), *Harbor of Marseilles*, 1906, oil on canvas. Hermitage Museum

ment she wanted to embody. She found herself painting out the image of a vase of flowers she had begun, leaving finally a heavily overpainted white surface. Something about the imageless surface felt right. She began to explore French pointillism, the neo-impressionist application of paint in small dabs, most famously employed by Paul Seurat, who was given a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in 1958. Drummond spent days soaking up the sketches, prints and paintings.

In 1962 Wick and Sally's son Craig was born and the family left New York City, settling in Germantown, NY, about 100 miles up the Hudson River from the city. Drummond received a Guggenheim to study in France in 1967-68 where she spent time with many pointillist artists, particularly Seurat and his colleague and fellow

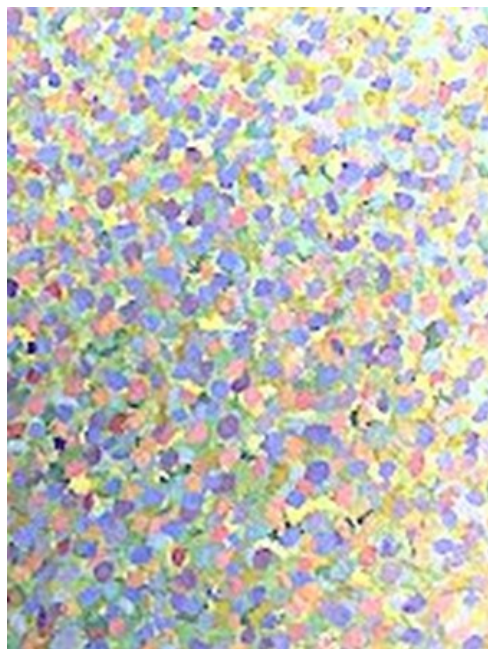
pointillist, Paul Signac. Though usually referred to as dots, the application of paint seems to me much more



complexly varied, while dots describe what Roy Lichtenstein painted in his pop/comic image canvases (Left: *Girl with Hair Ribbon*). Drummond describes the process of choosing the colors of the dabs as dictated by the painting process itself, as each dab dictates the color and placement of the

next, the spacing and brightness or darkness determined by her internal image of the whole.

In 1972 the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. mounted a retrospective of Drummond's work, which had previously been shown in galleries in the East Village, particularly at the now-defunct Tanager. The New York Times reviewer, Hilton Kramer, wrote, "The direction chosen by Mrs. Drummond seemed particularly radical, not only in its rejection of all expressionist facture in painting, but also in its



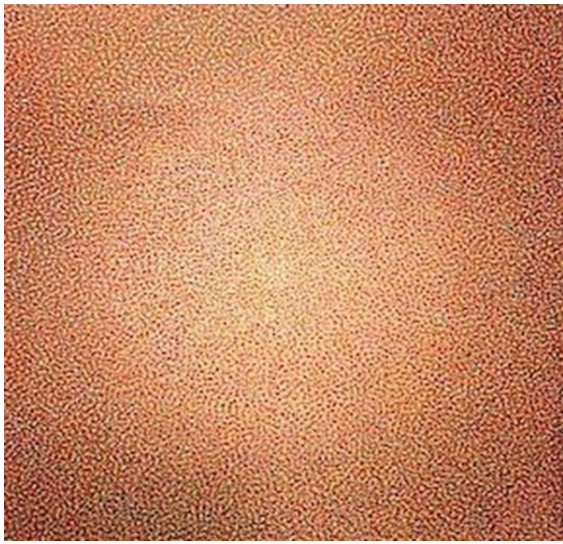
Drummond, *Unified Field*, 1980 (detail). Oil on canvas.

revival of a delicate pointillist technique for the purpose of a very abstract imagery. This imagery consisted of a finely worked painted surface composed of myriad dots or touches of color, in which an abstract field of light—very subtly conceived but very rigorously controlled—formed a single, over-all pictorial structure. The application of the paint was remarkably even, remarkably cerebral—or so, at the time, it seemed—yet the effect was lyrical, even joyous."

At about this time Drummond shifted the overall visual center of her work to light, emanating subtly from the center of the



Drummond, *Heart of Iron*, 1960, Oil on canvas



canvas, as opposed to the dark center of the above painting. This shift seems to express a glowing presence which many associate with Drummond's interest in Buddhism, but I have been unable to find any statements from Drummond on Buddhism. Certainly these later canvases, which she has continued to paint, feel contemplative, meditative, quieting—not a little awesome!

Drummond's work was included in a group show at P.S. 1, the Museum of Modern Art's Long Island City gallery, entitled "Underknown: Twelve Artists Re-Seen in 1984." New York Times reviewer Michael Brensen remarked, "In each of Drummond's dotted fields of color, a light at the center has just begun to glimmer."

Sally Drummond is also a skilled writer, and I find her descriptions of her philosophy and her artistic vision compelling. Her most recent exhibition was hung at the Hite Art Institute in Louisville in 2015. She

Drummond, *Untitled*, (gold leaf), 2010, oil on canvas.

and her son Craig participated in the planning of the show, and she gave interviews and wrote essays for the catalogue, the title of which I used as the title of this article.

Sally Hazelet Drummond's statements for the *Iconoclastic Fervor* catalogue:

On philosophy

I believe that all great art is an attempt on the part of the artist to express his faith in the unseen, but intuitively felt, structured but infinite beauty lying inherent in the visible world. This faith and concern, I believe, is what binds together all the highest forms of artistic expression of man down through the ages.

On the challenge of modern art

For me, the challenge and significance of 20th Century art, from the time of Cezanne has been the attempt to simplify and to reduce the complexities of the visual world to essential and meaningful forms. This search for essences has been a thread which to me distinguishes art of this century from most Western art since the Italian Renaissance.

On her own painting

For me, color is the basic ingredient of painting, and it is with color that I try to express my feelings. The outer form of my painting is the shape of the canvas. The inner form is striven for through the depth and richness of the color. Cezanne said, "When the color is at its richest, the form is at its plenitude." My ultimate goal is to create a single radiant field of contemplation where form and content have become one. ■



The Hite Institute of Art exhibition, "Iconoclastic Fervor: Sally Hazelet Drummond's Road to Abstraction," 2015.

A Little Mohr Conversation: Lori Interviews Merci Eichholz, 2008, Part 1 (with an addition from 2013)



Mercedes Eichholz
(Merci) 1917-2013)

In August 2013 shortly after her death at age 96, Barney Brantingham wrote about Mercedes in the Santa Barbara Independent: *"She was crusty as a slice of fresh Louisiana ranch bread, politically savvy as an in-crowd D.C. wife, model-beautiful as a young woman, and rich, and, if the cards had fallen exactly right, she just might have been married to a vice president of the United States who*

would have become president. She mingled with Washington New Deal-era movers and shakers back in the Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman days, came to Santa Barbara and spread her money around to nonprofits and the Museum of Art. If Generosity was her middle name, Feisty was her first and Spunky her last."

2008: The upcoming show, ***Merci: Gifts and Promised Gifts from the Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Collection***, represents a cross section of the late twentieth century art amassed by this couple throughout the 1960s and '70s. Though most are now dispersed to museums, Mercedes retains a stunning selection that continues to bring her particular pleasure. In late 2008, we sat in her living room surrounded by this extraordinary art as she regaled me with stories of how these pieces with their singular identities were grafted into a righteous collection.

Lori: Merci, [the name by which she was commonly known] I understand you've been collecting art for more than four decades. Tell me how you got started.

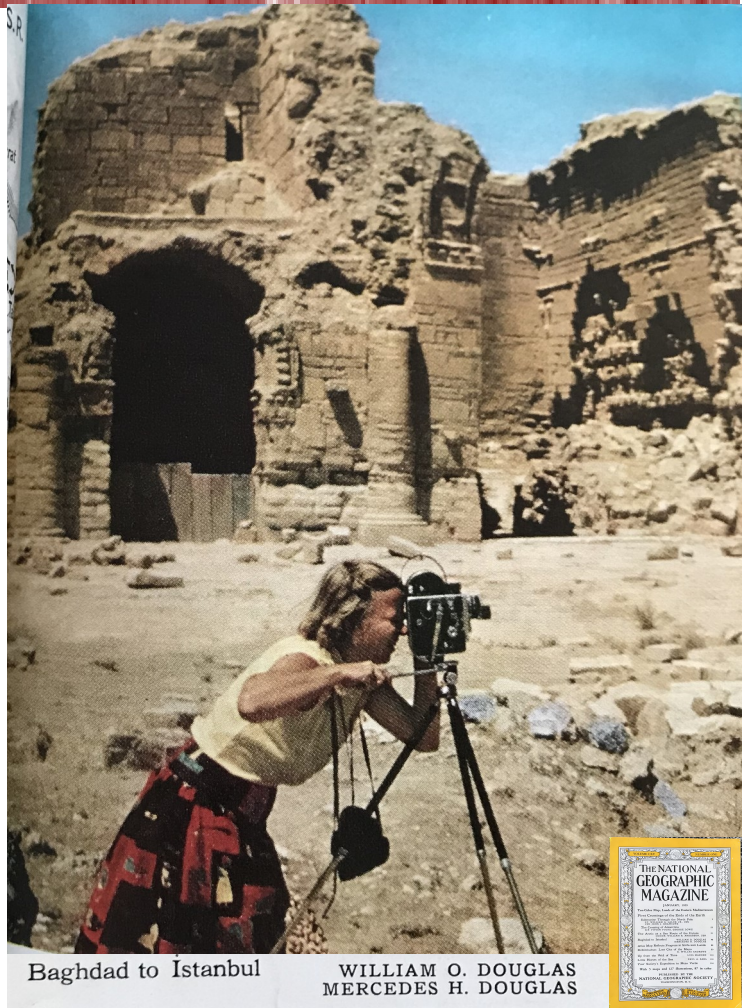
Merci: Well, I had no involvement with art up until the time I married Robert Eichholz in 1963. Until then it was mostly politics. My first husband was Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior in what we called the Roosevelt New Deal, so we were very involved in Washington. I was still very much in that picture when I married my second husband, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas. Robert Eichholz was my third husband, an attorney who wrote tax legislation under Roosevelt. He later became General Council of The Marshall Plan. Bob was retired when I married him and he had been a collector.

Lori: That's quite a marital history, I must say. What was his art background?

Merci: His mother had great aesthetics, though she collected beautiful rugs and furnishings, not art.

Lori: So he developed an eye early on. What was his first purchase and when?

Merci: Robert had been in the navy during WWII and when he returned he had some back pay, and that's what he used to buy his first painting, a Cubist Braque.



Mercedes during a 1959 road trip from Istanbul to Baghdad with her second husband, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas. Mercedes trained as a mechanic for the 7,000-mile trip. I tracked down this photo from a January 1959 article in National Geographic. I think it tells us a little about her as a young—and an old—woman. "Spunky" is right. It was with her third husband, Robert Eichholz, that she donated significant works to SBMA, also forming the Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Foundation to endow the Museum's director position, currently held by Larry Feinberg.

Lori: That's quite a starter piece! Is it fair to say your taste and eye for art resulted from exposure and experience buying with him?

Merci: Yes, it is. Bob and I used to go to openings and galleries in New York and Washington and it got to the point where I would realize the one he would pick out. From then on I had the confidence.

Lori: What was your first solo purchase?

Merci: The Hoffman [*St. Etienne's Glorious Light Eminated by it's Windows, as Remembered, 1960*].

Lori: How do you decide to buy one piece of art over another?

Merci: It hits you!

Lori: What 'hit' you about this Soulages behind you?

Merci: Well, just look at these huge, black lines, so strong, powerful. That's the first thing that hits you all the way from across the room!

Lori: Would you say this is pretty representative of his body of work?

Merci: Yes, these big, sweeping lines like this one. He uses mostly black, dark blue and reds. He's still alive, still working.

Lori: Did you buy any art directly from the artist?



Mercedes & Robert Eichholz in 1963



Pierre Soulages, *10 Mai, 1961*, 1961, oil on canvas. 63 in. x 51 in.

Merci: Pierre Soulages was a friend. He's not so well known in this country, but in Europe he's very big. We got more than one piece from him – one will be in the show.

Lori: Tell me about the piece [*10 Mai, 1961, 1961*].

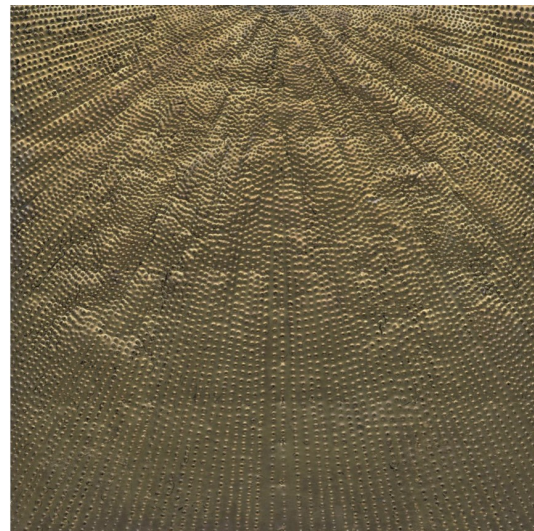
Merci: Bob and I would go to his studio. He paints with a palette [knife] instead of a brush and he'd have a whole line of different sized palette knives, all beautifully clean and ready to go. So interesting. Then this Mathias Goeritz (below) we got in Aspen. He was having a show and was there visiting Herbert Bayer. They were great friends. Then he [Goeritz] used to come see me when he'd come here to Santa Barbara. He was a tall, rugged man...very attractive.

Lori: Were there other artists you met or knew?

Merci: Yes. We met Hans Hoffman. We were up at the Kootzes in New York. Sam [Kootz] had a gallery on Madison Avenue and he had a show for Soulages, and of course we went to the opening. I remember

I was standing in the gallery with Tony Rosenthal—that's his over there, that bronze—and Hans comes in with this young woman and Tony says, 'He's been going around with Renata introducing her as his niece.' Later that night the Kootzes had this big dinner party in their penthouse, and the waiters brought around champagne. We knew something was up. [Laughs] Sure enough, Sam went into the middle of the room and announced that we were there to toast Hans and Renata! Interestingly, none of Hans' paintings before Renata had any purple in them. After they married, whenever you saw any purple you knew it was the Renata series.

Lori: Now that's what I call a great insider story!



Mathias Goeritz (German, 1915-1990, active Mexico), *Message, 1960*, wood, plaster, nails, paint, iron. Sculpture, 27 in. x 27 in. x 70 in.

(To be continued)



Your next issue of *La Muse* will be September 1, 2020. Loriwindsormohr@gmail.com