

VAN DOREN
WAXTER

The New York Times

Review: Beyond Irascible, the Art of Hedda Sterne

By MARTHA SCHWENDENER MARCH 24, 2016



Hedda Sterne's "Monument," a painting from around 1949-51, is at Van Doren Waxter. Credit 2016 The Hedda Sterne Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, Van Doren Waxter

When the new Whitney Museum of American Art opened last year, one painting in its inaugural exhibition, "America Is Hard to See," stood out: Hedda Sterne's "New York, N.Y., 1955." That dark-red-and-green work, made with an airbrush-and-enamel paint technique, looked particularly contemporary — like early graffiti painting or the recent work of Keltie Ferris.

Its inclusion in the show was important for another reason, though. Ms. Sterne, who died in 2011 at 100, was best known during her lifetime — and to her dismay — for being the only woman in a photograph published in *Life* magazine in 1951 that depicted "The Irascibles," a group of artists who had written a letter to the Metropolitan Museum of Art protesting "American Painting Today — 1950," an exhibition that neglected the burgeoning New York School.

But a show of Ms. Sterne's work at Van Doren Waxter, "Machines 1947-1951," may help refocus attention on her art. Her first show at the gallery, it features paintings and monotype prints that were made at the same moment: the decade after Ms. Sterne arrived in New York from Bucharest, Romania, having barely escaped the Nazis. These muted, mostly tan and blue canvases depict machines inspired by farm equipment in Vermont, and reveal her sometime alliance with the Surrealists (especially a fellow Romanian artist, Victor Brauner). Anthropomorphic and uncanny, the paintings in "Machines" also recall the work of Francis Picabia, Eduardo Paolozzi and Lee Lozano.

Van Doren Waxter, which has started representing the new Hedda Sterne Foundation, showed a few of her paintings at "The Art Show" at the Park Avenue Armory this month. It is wonderful to see Ms. Sterne finally coming out from behind the famous photograph and being seriously considered as a painter.

Hedda Sterne

'Machines 1947-1951'

Van Doren Waxter

23 East 73rd Street, Manhattan

Through April 29