

PRESS RELEASE

DOROTHEA TANNING: WORLDS IN COLLISION
24 JANUARY - 21 MARCH 2020
PRIVATE VIEW: THURSDAY 23 JANUARY, 6PM - 8PM



Dorothea Tanning, *Worlds in Collision*, 1988.
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Alison Jacques Gallery is pleased to announce the solo exhibition *Dorothea Tanning: Worlds in Collision*. The exhibition features a rarely displayed body of late work dating from 1981 to 1989, which is being shown together for the first time in the United Kingdom. It includes large scale works on paper in media as varied as graphite, charcoal, crayon, watercolour, gouache, and collage, many of which focus on imagery of the bicycle which preoccupied Tanning at this time. The exhibition coincides with the publication of the monograph *Dorothea Tanning: Transformations* by Victoria Carruthers, which will be released by Lund Humphries on 31 January 2020.

The works presented were created during the decade following Tanning's return to New York in 1980 after having lived in France for some thirty years. Many encapsulate the energy of city life she enjoyed in Manhattan, propelled forward by speed and sound. One large scale painting, *Pounding Strong* (1981), embodies Tanning's reflections on her new life in a city very different from her time living there as a young artist in the 1930s and 40s. In an interview with Carlo McCormick in 1990 she describes the painting's conception: *Looking out the window at these crazy kids careening down Fifth Avenue on roller skates, wearing earphones, and carrying their powerful radios. They are like archangels. I wouldn't be too surprised if they took to the air.*¹

In 1988, the artist began working on a series of images in which the form of the bicycle is central. Many of these works were inspired by a bicycle accident Tanning had witnessed near her studio on the Lower East Side. The turbulence of the accident is conveyed in images with titles such as *Tangle* (1989), *Reckless* (1989), *Hell Bent* (1988) and *Further Chaos* (1988). They also embody another critical theme for Tanning throughout her career: the existence of alternative realities and readings that oscillate between multiple states. In the gouache *Between Lives* (1989) one figure pierces the heart of another in its embrace, while in the watercolour from which the exhibition takes its title, *Worlds in Collision* (1988), two youthful figures engulfed by bicycle wheels appear to float in the middle of the frame caught in a moment either of being fatally thrown or dancing in air. Its title also evokes the controversial book by Immanuel Velikovsky, 'Worlds in Collision' (1950), which theorised cataclysmic celestial events and their impact on the earth and human history.

While the bicycle wheel can be seen as an established symbol of modernity, Tanning developed a more personal engagement with contemporary technology in her works from this period. In 1988 for works such as *Garden with Gardeners* and *Prime Time*, she used a new Xerox machine in her studio to create photocopies of mundane objects like rubber bands, reproductions of her own hand, and sheets with tonal gradations that she then cut, tore, and further manipulated within collage compositions. These images suggest a dialogue about authorship and mass-production in relation to the creative process.

Among the works there is also a selection from Tanning's *Messages*, a series of fourteen large-scale charcoal and pastel works from 1989-90. These drawings explore the motif of the bicycle now juxtaposed with images of primates, and offer Tanning's meditations on evolution, humankind's place in the world, and the power of technology and art. As Tanning wrote in 1990: *Gorillas pose some questions about who is who on this earth...The gorilla remembers, too, back to the eye of time, when somehow he was left behind, man jumped on a bicycle and sped away and does not now remember...here I am an artist who has promised to bring them together.*²

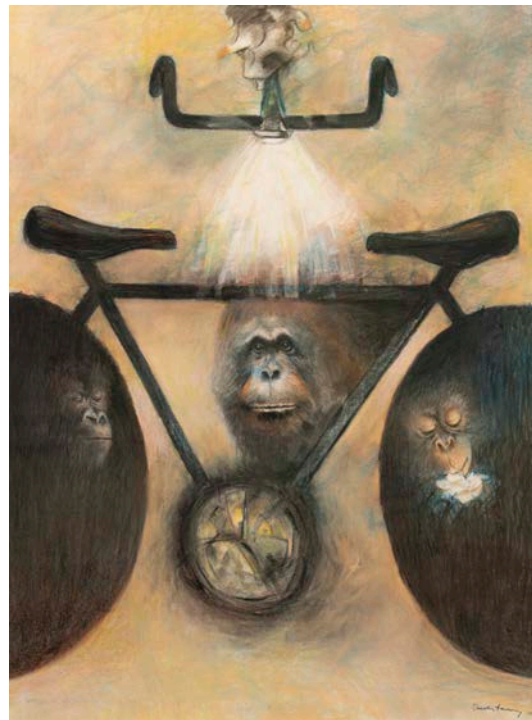
Recent solo exhibitions of Tanning's work have been mounted by Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (2018), Tate, London (2019) and The Menil Collection, Houston (2019).

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FORTHCOMING EXHIBITION: *GORDON PARKS*, 27 MARCH - 30 MAY 2020



Dorothea Tanning, *Between Lives*, 1989
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Dorothea Tanning, *Message 11*, 1989.
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¹ Carlo McCormick, 'Dorothea Tanning', BOMB 33, Autumn 1990.

² Dorothea Tanning, statement, *Messages* exhibition catalogue, New York: Nahan Contemporary, 1990.