

WIDEWALLS

M HKA Presents a Retrospective Exhibition Featuring the Extensive Oeuvre of American Artist Dorothy Iannone

Kame Hame – October 18, 2023



At the heart of Dorothy Iannone's practice has always been intense love, and she never shied away from exploring it in all its forms, from erotic to spiritual and romantic. Although her career spanned six decades, it wasn't until the 2000s that international audiences fully embraced her unique style. Today, her paintings, books, video installations, sculptures, and sound works are enjoyed around the globe.

The extensive retrospective entitled *Love Is Forever, Isn't It?*, which is currently on view at M HKA - Museum of Modern Art in Antwerp offers a unique glimpse into the artist's rich body of work.

Female Sexuality

Dorothy Iannone was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1933 to a family of Italian immigrants. Soon after she finished her postgraduate studies at Brandeis University, she met her first husband, James Upham, who was from a wealthy family, which enabled them to travel extensively. While they were staying in New York in the 1950s, Iannone created works in abstract expressionist style. She found most of the inspiration for these early works in literary classics, such as Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, whose love she yearned to experience for herself.

It was on their trip to Japan where the artist discovered figuration. Later, lovers started appearing in her work in increasingly erotic poses, their genitals prominently depicted. Love and female sexuality became the focus of

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her art, which often led to censorship of her work.

Exploration Of Love

The year 1967 was a turning point in the artist's career when, on a trip to Reykjavík, she met artist Dieter Roth. Their immediate connection led to her leaving her husband and making Roth the central muse of her work. From then on, she stopped seeking inspiration from outside sources and started living a life full of love and creativity. In the series *An Icelandic Saga* (1978-86), in which she describes meeting and falling madly in love with Roth, Iannone wrote:

Art is the world I have created, which never lets me down, a world to which I can return again and again and smile and be immortal.

Instead of incorporating lines from famous poems, her works were filled with her own lines of text inspired by the words the lovers shared. Roth and she became the main subjects in her art, as she explored feelings and emotions, creating an erotic iconography largely inspired by non-Western and Buddhist imagery. Iannone moved to Berlin, where she remained until her death in 2022.



Love Is Forever, Isn't It? At M HKA

Throughout the years, Iannone art has often been subjected to censorship in the US and Germany, yet through it all, she persevered and stayed true to her unique artistic practice. Iannone said:

If, in any way, I have helped people to come closer to themselves, that would mean a lot to me.

The exhibition *Love Is Forever, Isn't It?* at M HKA in Antwerp will be on view until January 21st, 2024.