

To the Dance

Eight works by Nancy Spero 1926–2009

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Press Release

‘I hope that my art is a continuum and that it moves through the years like a melody’

Nancy Spero placed the lived female experience at the heart of her work as both an artist and activist. This special display of eight works marks the centenary of her birth with pieces that exemplify the range, themes and ambition of her practice.

From her first solo exhibition at Galerie Breteau, Paris in 1962, Spero evolved a highly personal and expressive practice which explicitly addressed the vulnerability, resistance and power of the feminine across histories and cultures. Abandoning painting for collage and hand-printing, first in works appropriating the words of the poet Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), she developed her signature style of motifs printed onto hand-made paper scrolls in horizontal and vertical formats. Starting in 1975 Spero’s alphabet of hieroglyphs on etched zinc and polymer plates expanded over the next four decades to over five hundred individual images. These figures, appropriated from literary, documentary, mythological and other sources, created a feminist visual language which she printed and collaged onto paper as well as interior and exterior surfaces. Rhythm, movement, colour and space are the structuring elements in her narratives that flow from the depths of despair to joyful transcendence and freedom from restraint.

The presentation of eight works features a selection of the artist’s works on paper and includes rarely seen pieces from a private London collection.

Nancy Spero (b.1926, Cleveland, Ohio, d. 2009 New York City). Her work has been the subject of major exhibitions across the world including: Tate Modern, London (2022), Lillehammer Art Museum, Norway (2020), Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark (2020), Museum of Modern Art PS1, New York (2019), Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City (2018), Serpentine Gallery, London (2011), Musée National d'art Moderne Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2010), Museo d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (2008), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (2008), and Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Seville (2008). Spero’s work is included in the permanent collections of major international museums including: Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada; Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California; Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minnesota; Musée National d'art Moderne Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate, London, England; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Canada; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia; Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.