

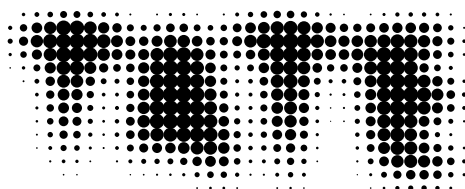
DOROTHEA TANNING

27 February 2019 – 9 June 2019

LARGE PRINT GUIDE



Please return to the holder



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ROOM 1

INTRODUCTION

BIRTHDAY

INTRODUCTION

'I wanted to lead the eye into spaces that hid, revealed, transformed all at once and where there could be some never-before-seen-image.'

This exhibition surveys the seventy-year career of Dorothea Tanning (1910–2012), whose work always asks us to look beyond the obvious. As a young artist in 1930s New York she discovered surrealism and what she described as the 'limitless expanse of POSSIBILITY' it offered. The movement, which had emerged in Paris in the 1920s, explored the hidden workings of the mind as a source of art and writing. Working in the United States and France, Tanning took its ideas and imagery in new, distinctive directions. This exhibition focuses on key themes and developments in Tanning's practice across her long and extraordinary career.

Clockwise from wall text

Self-Portrait

1936

Graphite on paper

The Destina Foundation, New York

X71483

Self-Portrait

1947

Graphite on paper

The Destina Foundation, New York

X69115

Deirdre

1940

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection

X69116

The Magic Flower Game

1941

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection, South Dakota

X69162

A Very Happy Picture

1947

Oil paint on canvas

Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne /
Centre de création industrielle. Purchased by the state, 1968
X72684

L'Auberge

The Inn

1949

Graphite and collage on paper

Des Moines Art Center's Louise Noun Collection
of Art by Women through Bequest, 2003.353
X69151

BIRTHDAY

'Every one of my paintings is a step on the same road. I see no break or detour, even temporary. The same preoccupations have obsessed me since the beginning...'

Tanning was born in the small town of Galesburg, Illinois, where, she said, 'nothing happened but the wallpaper'. She escaped to other worlds through Gothic novels and poetry. In the 1930s she travelled to Chicago and then New York to pursue a career as an artist. Her first encounter with surrealism was the exhibition **Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism** at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1936. She identified in the movement an 'effort to plumb our deepest subconscious to find out about ourselves' and embraced this approach in her own art.

In 1939 she sailed to Paris, hoping to meet surrealists there. The outbreak of the Second World War forced her to return to New York, where she supported herself by working as a freelance commercial artist. The war brought many European surrealist writers and artists to the city. The German painter Max Ernst was among these cultural refugees. He was introduced to Tanning in 1942 and they married in 1946. This room shows Tanning's early engagement with surrealist imagery and symbolism. Her self-portrait **Birthday**

1942 marks her 'birth' as a surrealist. The game of chess represents intellectual and artistic interplay with members of the surrealist circle, as well as her romantic link with Ernst.

Clockwise from wall text

Birthday

1942

Oil paint on canvas

In this self-portrait, Tanning depicts herself on the threshold of 'a dream of countless doors', wearing a theatrical jacket open at the front. The tendrils of her skirt contain a swarming mass of tiny figures. A hybrid creature at her feet reinforces the idea of transformation. The artist Max Ernst, later Tanning's husband, suggested the title to mark her 'birth' as a surrealist artist. He saw this painting on their first meeting, newly-finished on Tanning's easel in her apartment.

Philadelphia Museum of Art. 125th Anniversary Acquisition.
Purchased with funds contributed by C. K. Williams, II, 1999
1999-50-1
X69132

Bâteau bleu (The Grotto)

Blue Boat (The Grotto)

1950

Lithograph

Tanning and her husband Max Ernst lived between the United States and France in the early 1950s. Around this time, she started using French in her artwork titles. Sometimes, as here, she combined French and English. Shifting fluidly between languages, her titles reveal an interest in puns and wordplay. The titles used in this exhibition are Tanning's originals, with English translations beneath where relevant.

The Destina Foundation, New York

X69146

Max in a Blue Boat

1947

Oil paint on canvas

Max Ernst Museum Brühl des LVR, Kreissparkasse Köln

X69133

A Mrs. Radcliffe Called Today

1944

Oil paint on canvas

Tanning recalled, 'In the forties I was in a kind of gothic mood. The mood of longing for a displacement, of another time, another place. I had read gothic novels at that time. They were permeated with this mist of mysterious and unpredictable atmospheres of places that I didn't know about....' The title of this work refers to Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823), an English author of Gothic fiction.

Private collection

X69154

Lettre d'Amour (Love Letter)

1948

Oil paint and printed paper on canvas

Collection Kent Belenius, Stockholm

X69143

Max Ernst 1891–1976

Chess set

1944

Maple and walnut wood

Mimi Johnson, New York

X71509

Endgame

1944

Oil paint on canvas

Endgame shows the final stage of a game of chess. The queen (depicted as a white satin shoe) is triumphing over a bishop (a mitre) and four rooks, her path indicated by dotted lines across the board. Many surrealists used the game in a symbolic way. **Endgame** was exhibited in **The Imagery of Chess** at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York, an important venue for surrealist artists. Tanning said of chess: 'It's more than a game. It's a way of thinking. You have to be clever in a warlike way. You are a good chess player if you have a mean streak in you.'

Harold (†) and Gertrud Parker Collection

X69281

Vitrines in the centre of the room

Vitrine closer to entrance, left to right

In the late 1930s to early 1940s Tanning worked as a freelance illustrator, producing designs for Macy's department store and other clients. Many of her designs play with texture and touch. They often present the possibility of liberating or recreating oneself through the advertised product.

Tales of the American Woods

Advertisement for Macy's in The New York Times,
8 September 1940

The Destina Foundation, New York
X71551

Float in the aura of Forget-me-not

Advertisement for Macy's in The New York Times,
24 July 1941

The Destina Foundation, New York
X71550

Untitled

1942

Engraving, unique proof

Mimi Johnson, New York
X75915

Second vitrine, top row left to right

Tanning became an active participant in the surrealist circle in New York in the 1940s. Her first solo exhibition was at the Julien Levy Gallery, an important venue for surrealist artists. She contributed both artworks and writing to magazines such as **VVV**, published in the United States by European artists displaced by the Second World War, and **Zero**, published in France, Morocco and Mexico. She counted many artists among her friends, notably keen chess-players Marcel and Alexina 'Teeny' Duchamp. Tanning married Max Ernst in a joint ceremony with photographer Man Ray and dancer Juliet Man Ray in 1946.

Blind Date

VVV, nos. 2–3, March 1943

The Destina Foundation, New York

X71556

Abyss

Zero: A Quarterly Review of Literature and Art,
nos. 3–4, Autumn 1949 – Winter 1950, pp.138–50
1949

The Destina Foundation, New York
X71558

Rêvez-le ou ne le lisez pas

Les Quatre Vents, no.8, 1947, pp.84–93

The Destina Foundation, New York
X71557

Bottom row left to right

Man Ray 1890–1976

Juliet Man Ray 1911–1991

Patrick Waldberg 1913–1985

Postcard to Dorothea Tanning and Max Ernst

1952

Postcard

The Destina Foundation, New York

Z73860

Marcel Duchamp 1887–1968

Teeny Duchamp 1906–1995

Postcard to Dorothea Tanning and Max Ernst

Date unknown

Postcard

The Destina Foundation, New York

Z73859

Invitation for **Dorothea Tanning**, a solo exhibition at the
Julien Levy Gallery, New York
1944

The Destina Foundation, New York
X71544

**Chess Tournament at the Julien Levy Gallery,
6 January 1945**
1945

Three photographs by Julien Levy on paper

The Destina Foundation, New York
X71547

Brochure for **Dorothea Tanning**, a solo exhibition at the
Julien Levy Gallery, New York
1944

The Destina Foundation, New York
X71572

ROOM 2

BEHIND THE DOOR

BEHIND THE DOOR

'I think I could live anywhere if allowed to create freely...
My personal space is so richly furnished that there
is absolutely no room in it for any feeling of exile...
Also, behind the invisible door (doors), another door.'

Works from across Tanning's career show doors left ajar or leading to other doors. The door becomes a surrealist symbol, a portal to the unconscious. While the open door represents choice and possibility, doors may also be used to lock up our most secret fears and desires. In the mid-1940s, Tanning and Ernst moved to Sedona, Arizona, where they built a house and spent much of the next decade. Tanning responded to the overwhelming heat and drama of the desert landscape by creating an alternative reality of indoor spaces. She explained: 'the decibels of nature can crush an artist's brain... So I lock the door and paint interiors... A white and dark picture would muffle the red world outside.' Tanning found creative freedom in the desert, but her works from this period depict unsettling, claustrophobic scenes. A young figure on the threshold between childhood and adulthood appears in several paintings. Tanning often pictured her near a doorway as an active figure who disrupts the familiar and domestic.

In 1984 Tanning incorporated a real door into her painting

Door 84, dividing the composition in two. The loosely painted figures on either side appear to be pushing against the door to hold it in position at right-angles to the canvas.

Clockwise from wall text

Door 84

1984

Oil paint on canvas with found door

The Destina Foundation, New York

X69114

Eine Kleine Nachtmusik

1943

Oil paint on canvas

Tanning described this scene as 'a confrontation between the forces of grown-up logic and the bottomless psyche of a child'. An oversized sunflower on the hotel landing is strangely animated. The high hairline of the girl in the doorway makes her face appear mask-like. The painting's play with scale, uncanny figures and sense of supernatural forces recall the Gothic novels Tanning loved. Its title, 'A Little Night Music', is borrowed from one of Mozart's most light-hearted works and appears to be used ironically.

Tate. Purchased with assistance from the Art Fund and the American Fund for the Tate Gallery 1997

T07346

Children's Games

1942

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection

X69155

Self-Portrait

1944

Oil paint on canvas

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Purchase, by exchange, through a fractional gift of Shirley Ross Davis

X69131

Anti-clockwise from wall text

Lumière du foyer (Home Light)

1952

Oil paint on canvas

The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

The Vera and Arturo Schwarz Collection of Dada and
Surrealist Art in the Israel Museum

X70667

Study for **Ouvre-toi (Open Sesame)**

1970

Graphite and pastel on paper

The Byrd Collection, USA

X70668

The Guest Room

1950–2

Oil paint on canvas

The drapery above suggests that this scene might ordinarily be hidden. Tanning admired how Gothic fiction 'showed what was actually happening under the tedium of daily life.' Drawing on these sources, Tanning presents the girl as a figure whose ability to enter the world of the imagination reveals the unknown within the familiar. This uncanny quality was prized by surrealists. Some have seen the girl's nudity as symbolising sexual awakening. Tanning herself dismissed such specific interpretations of her work. For her, it was 'about leaving the door open to the imagination.'

Private Collection. Courtesy Malingue S.A., Paris

X69157

Walk towards the exit of the room

ROOM 3

THE FAMILY TABLE

THE FAMILY TABLE

[On growing up in Galesburg, Illinois]:

'There was a long dining room table that on Sunday, especially when the pastor came to dinner, got covered with, first a pad and then the great gleaming white tablecloth. They shook it out and laid it down, smoothing out the folds that made a gentle grid from end to end. The grid surely proved that order prevailed in this house.'

In the 1950s, Tanning and Ernst spent periods in Sedona, Paris and the French countryside, moving permanently to France in 1957. Her paintings from this period present images of the family, interiors and the dining table.

Subverting the traditional picture of ordered and idyllic domestic life, here the home becomes a surreal space. In **La Truite au bleu (Poached Trout)** and **Some Roses and Their Phantoms**, both painted in 1952, Tanning transforms the dining table with its pristine linen tablecloth into a bizarre landscape. A huge yet ghostly presence of the father figure presides over the table in **Portrait de famille (Family Portrait)** 1954. Tanning described this painting as 'generally a comment on the hierarchy within the sacrosanct family'.

Clockwise from wall text

The Philosophers

1952

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection

X69194

Notes for an Apocalypse

1978

Oil paint on canvas

Domestic order, symbolised by the 'great gleaming white tablecloth', is disrupted by the strange, entangled figures emerging from under the table. The neat grid of folds on the cloth was an image Tanning retained from her childhood in Galesburg, Illinois. She wrote that in this painting it 'may still be trying to prove something, to reassure, to bring order out of turmoil and to anchor the turbulent images'.

The Destina Foundation, New York

X69200

Musical Chairs

1951

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection of James J. Apostolakis

X69223

Daughters

1983

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection

X69197

La Truite au bleu (Poached Trout)

1952

Oil paint on canvas

In this restaurant scene, the fish on the plate is mirrored by a stream of swimming trout beneath the table. The title is French for 'blue trout'. Tanning explained: 'Once we were in a mountain village inn and I was served a 'truite au bleu' which consists of fishing the trout out of a rushing torrent that runs by the hotel and plunging it into boiling water live ... at this point it turns bright blue and arches its back in a kind of ecstasy of death I like to think.'

Michael Wilkinson, New Orleans, LA

X69196

Portrait de famille (Family Portrait)

1954

Oil paint on canvas

Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne /
Centre de création industrielle. Purchased by the state, 1974
X69195

Les 7 périls spectraux

The 7 Spectral Perils

1950

Lithographs on paper

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid
X69165

The Mirror

1950

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection

X69163

Some Roses and Their Phantoms

1952

Oil paint on canvas

This work rejects the conventions of still life painting. Roses, a napkin and an insect-like creature perform a supernatural table-top drama. Tanning wrote: 'Here some roses from a very different garden sit?, lie?, stand?, gasp?, dream?, die? – on white linen. They may serve you tea or coffee. As I saw them take shape on the canvas I was amazed by their solemn colours and their quiet mystery that called for – seemed to demand – some sort of phantoms.' Behind the table something is pushing through the thin wall, suggesting unknown forces at work in our daily world.

Tate. Presented by the Tate Collectors Forum 2003

T07987

ROOM 4

TWO WORLDS

TWO WORLDS

'In the first years, I was painting on our side of the mirror – the mirror for me is a door – but I think I have gone over, to a place where one no longer faces identities at all.'

In the mid-1950s Tanning moved towards a more abstracted 'prismatic' style of painting, and her brushwork and compositions became much looser. Where her earlier work used precise realism to present fantastical scenes, in these paintings it is colour and light that bring imaginary worlds into being. The possibilities of her medium became more important to her: 'in looking at how many ways paint can flow onto canvas, I began to long for letting it have more freedom.' But Tanning never fully abandoned the figure in her work. Body parts appear to morph into the canvas or merge into other bodies. She remarked: 'I wanted to make a picture that you didn't see all at once. All of my pictures of this period I felt you should discover slowly and that they would almost be kaleidoscopes that would shimmer and that you would discover something new every time you looked at it.'

Clockwise from wall text

Pour Gustave l'adoré

For Gustave the Beloved

1974

Oil paint on canvas

The title of this painting is a play on the name Paul-Gustave Doré, a nineteenth-century French engraver and illustrator. Doré is best-known for fantastical illustrations of fairy tales, which Tanning deeply admired. In this painting, with its mermaid's tail emerging from the murky depths, Tanning pays homage to Doré's painting **Les Océanides** (Naiades de la Mer) c.1878, which pictures the sea nymphs of Greek mythology.

The Destina Foundation, New York

X73987

Deux Mots (Two Words)

1963

Oil paint on canvas

Mimi Johnson, New York

X72066

Anti-clockwise from wall text

Insomnies (Insomnias)

1957

Oil paint on canvas

Tanning intended our experience of this painting to unfold gradually. In it, the figure of a child – identifiable by a face at the centre – is depicted as disjointed body parts which seem to disappear and reappear amongst folds of cloth. Tanning explained her process: 'It was like a game: hiding and revealing my familiar images, floating them in mist or storms. I felt like a magician, just to bring these forms out of nothing with my brush and paint.' The title of the work suggests the anxiety of night-time wakefulness.

Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Purchase 2006 funded by The Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation (The Second Museum of Our Wishes)

X71370

Mêlées Nocturnes

Nocturnal Melees

1958

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection

X69174

A Mi-Voix

Whispers

1958

Oil paint on canvas

Tate. Presented by William N. Copley 1959

T00298

Assez causé (Enuf Said)

1962

Oil paint on canvas

Collection Kent Belenius, Stockholm

X71515

Bonimenteurs

Smooth Talkers

1966

Oil paint on canvas

Collection Kent Belenius, Stockholm

X71516

Touristes de Prague III

(Tourists of Prague III)

1961

Oil paint on canvas

The Menil Collection, Houston

X69224

ROOM 5

TANGO LIVES

TANGO LIVES

‘From my earliest beginnings, every decision, every choice, had been sparked by a sense of challenge.’

Tanning first met the choreographer George Balanchine in 1945 and described their encounter as ‘momentous’. She went on to produce costume and set designs for four ballets with him between 1946 and 1953. There are many similarities between her paintings and the designs she created. With **Night Shadow** 1946, the ornate animal and boat headdresses for a masquerade ball and uncanny architectural backdrops reflect her interest in creating other worlds. Her costumes for **Bayou** 1952 aimed to capture ‘**joie de vivre**, elegant gestures, lots of superstition and (I hope) some savagery’.

Like her paintings, Tanning’s stage designs conjure mysterious places inspired by Gothic novels and fairy tales. They reveal her interest in theatrical staging, the expressive potential of ‘supple, sly, always moving’ fabric and the movement of bodies, all of which fed into her later work. Paintings such as **Même les jeunes filles (Even the Young Girls)** 1966 and **Tango Lives** 1977 show figures in dynamic, dance-like poses, echoed in the soft-sculpture **Étreinte [Embrace]** 1969.

Anti-clockwise from wall text

Même les jeunes filles (Even the Young Girls)

1966

Oil paint on canvas

Dynamic, dancer-like figures seem to circle around the canvas, creating a sense of movement. Describing the inspiration for this work, Tanning said: 'I had been finding real pleasure in the tumultuous movement of bodies combined with more assertive juxtapositions of color, hotter color. I think it was late springtime ... Outside, people were doffing their coats and mufflers, the boulevards were lazy with strollers and even the young girls were like wildflowers, all bursting out in color and explosive spirits. Painting them, I felt like a choreographer.'

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

X69206

Inutile (Useless)

1969

Oil paint on canvas

The Destina Foundation, New York

X71517

Far From

1964

Oil paint on canvas

The Destina Foundation, New York

X69209

Tango Lives

1977

Oil paint on canvas

Moderna Museet, Stockholm

X69204

Stanza

1978

Oil paint on canvas

Tanning titled this painting **Stanza**, a group of lines within a poem, and described the central figure as 'the agonized writer'. An endless sheet of paper streams from their typewriter. Tanning became an accomplished poet in her later years, publishing two collections of poetry as well as a novel and two memoirs. Following her husband's death, she returned to the United States in the late 1970s and 'gave full rein to her long-felt compulsion to write.' She wrote of this transition: 'Max Ernst died on April 1, 1976 and Dorothea faced a solitary future. "Go home," said the paint tubes, the canvases, the brushes.'

The Byrd Collection, USA

X70669

Tango

1989

Charcoal and pastel on paper

Private collection

X69205

Set design for **The Witch**, a ballet by John Cranko

1950

Oil paint on canvas

The Byrd Collection, USA

X69208

Vitrine

From left to right

Dorothea Tanning 1910–2012

Max Ernst 1891–1976

William N. Copley 1919–1996

Toy Theater

1948

Mixed media

Private collection

X71508

Masked ball guests, **Night Shadow**,

Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo

1946

Facsimile

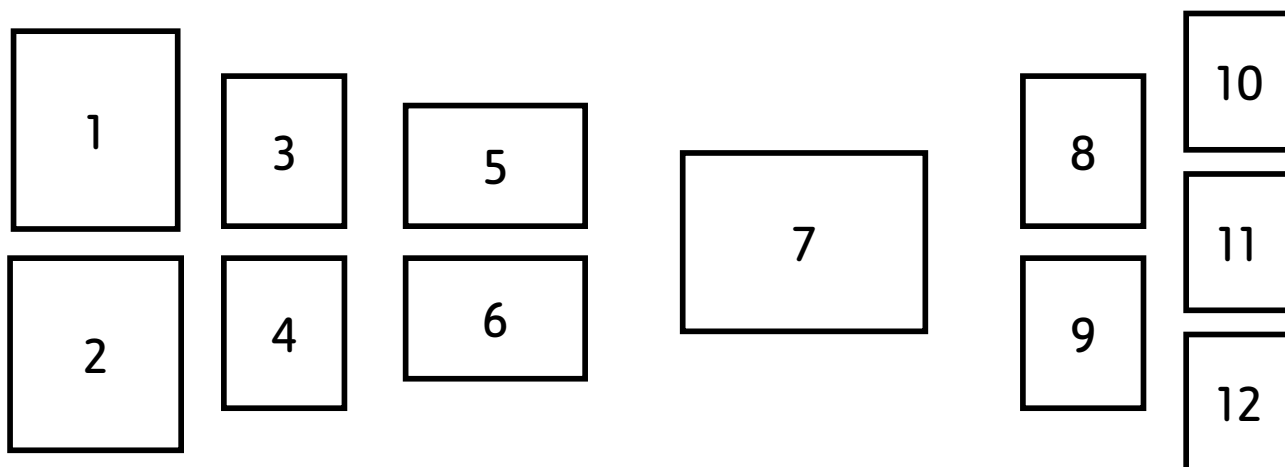
The New York Public Library

Melissa Hayden rehearses the lead role in **The Witch**,
Royal Opera House, London
1950

Facsimile

The New York Public Library

Caption with wall map on the left



1

The Sleepwalker

Costume design for **Night Shadow**, a ballet by
George Balanchine
1945

Watercolour and graphite on paper

2

The Poet

Costume design for **Night Shadow**, a ballet by
George Balanchine
1945

Watercolour on paper

3

A Guest

Costume design for **Night Shadow**, a ballet by
George Balanchine

1945

Watercolour and wash on paper

4

A Guest

Costume design for **Night Shadow**, a ballet by
George Balanchine

1945

Watercolour and wash on paper

5

Untitled

Set design for an unrealised ballet
c.1950

Graphite and coloured ink on paper

6

Untitled

Set design for an unrealised ballet

c.1950

Graphite, ink and gouache on paper

7

Bayou

1953

Gouache on paper

8

The Girl

Costume design for **The Witch**, a ballet by John Cranko

1950

Gouache on paper

9

Castle Midnight

Costume design for **The Witch**, a ballet by John Cranko
1950

Gouache on paper

10

Untitled

Costume design for **Bayou**, a ballet by
George Balanchine
1951

Graphite and gouache on paper

11

Bride's Skirt

Costume design for **Bayou**, a ballet by
George Balanchine
1951

Gouache on paper

12

Bride

Costume design for **Bayou**, a ballet by
George Balanchine

1951

Gouache on paper

Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Gift of Judith Young–Mallin, 2015

X71481, X71479

The Destina Foundation, New York

X71471, X71472, X71480, X71478

The Byrd Collection, USA

X73287

The Destina Foundation, New York

X71474, X71473, X71477, X71476, X71475

Center of the room

Étreinte

Embrace

1969

Wool flannel and fake fur stuffed with wool

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

X69214

ROOM 6

MATERNITIES

MATERNITIES

'It is a fragile thing, the painted canvas. How securely it has to be fitted and fastened, nothing touching its skin, a helpless infant born of mind and gesture.'

Tanning explored the image of the mother at various stages of her career. She did not have children but spoke of the experience of maternity in a broader sense and sometimes likened artworks to creative offspring. Her depictions of mothers and children are far from idyllic, particularly the forlorn pair in **Maternity** 1946–7, set in an Arizona landscape. Later paintings and drawings feature an ambiguous mother figure, thrusting her newborn child into the air, either defending it from some hidden force or deliberately putting it in danger.

The soft sculpture **Emma** 1970 takes the shape of a round belly emerging from a froth of dirty antique lace frills. Tanning named the sculpture after the lead character in Gustave Flaubert's 1856 novel **Madame Bovary**. Emma Bovary, bored and constrained by the roles of wife and mother, escapes through literature and secret affairs.

Clockwise from wall text

Poses dans une école d'art qui n'existe pas

Poses in an art school that does not exist

1967

Ink on paper

The Destina Foundation, New York

X69207

Maternity V

1980

Oil paint on canvas

Private collection, New York

X69193

Maternity

1977

Oil pastel on paper

The Destina Foundation, New York

X71507

Mother and Child

c.1965

Watercolour on paper

The Destina Foundation, New York

X69191

Maternités

Maternities

1968

Crayon and watercolour on paper

The Destina Foundation, New York

X69192

Emma

1970

Fabric, wool and lace

The Nelson–Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri

(Purchase: acquired through the generosity of the

William T. Kemper Foundation – Commerce Bank, Trustee)

2006.27

X69212

Hotel

1988

Printed paper and watercolour on paper

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

X73171

Continue clockwise in room 6

Maternity

1946–7

Oil paint on canvas

This painting shows a mother clutching a baby in a desert landscape. A dog – based on Ernst’s pet, a Lhasa Apso named Katchina – with a child’s face sits at her feet. In the distance, behind an open door, is a mysterious structure made up of sails which echoes the shape of female reproductive organs. Tanning returned repeatedly to the theme of motherhood. The motif of the dog likewise recurred in her work; sometimes Tanning used it to represent herself.

Private collection

X69190

Mamababy

1988

Watercolour on paper

Courtesy of The Destina Foundation, New York and
Alison Jacques Gallery, London

X73990

Turn around and enter room 7 on the right

ROOM 7

HÔTEL DU PAVOT,

CHAMBRE 202

HÔTEL DU PAVOT, CHAMBRE 202

In room two hundred and two
The walls keep talkin' to you
I'll never tell you what they said
So turn out the light and come to bed.

[chorus of the song 'In Room 202' by Edgar Leslie
and Bert Kalmar]

In the mid-1960s, when Tanning was living and working in France, she put aside her brushes and turned to her sewing machine to create soft fabric sculptures. In **Hôtel du Pavot, Chambre 202** 1970–3 she brought several of these stuffed figures together into an unsettling sculptural installation. Bodies break through the wallpaper and merge into furniture. Only a half-open door numbered 202 appears to offer any escape from the claustrophobic, uncanny diorama. The room number refers to a popular song Tanning remembered from her childhood about Kitty Kane, who married a gangster and later poisoned herself in Room 202 of a Chicago hotel. 'Pavot' is French for poppy, a flower associated with dreams and hallucinations in art and literature because of its link with opium. Tanning said she wanted the work to appear as if 'the wallpaper will further tear with screams', yet for the scene to maintain 'an odd banality'.

Hôtel du Pavot, Chambre 202

1970–3

Wood, fabric, wool, wallpaper, carpet and light bulb

Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne /

Centre de création industrielle. Purchased in 1977

X69225

ROOM 8

SOFT BODIES AND

WILD DESIRES

'I don't see why one shouldn't be absolutely fascinated with the human form... we go through life in this wonderful envelope. Why not acknowledge that and try to say something about it? So what I try to say about it is **transformation.**'

Tanning started making soft sculptures in the mid-1960s. She described them as 'living materials becoming living sculptures, their life span something like ours'. Using textiles stuffed with wool and fashioned with table tennis balls, jigsaw pieces and pins she crafted bizarre, bodily sculptures and what appear to be ritual or fetish objects. Playful, sinister and erotic, they straddle the division between object and being, inanimate and alive.

Following Ernst's death in 1976, Tanning returned to New York where she lived to the age of 101. Her paintings from this period celebrate the sensual and spontaneous aspects of human nature, exploring space, movement and flesh. Bodies and plants merge in **Poppies** 1987, **On Avalon** 1987 and **Crepuscula glacialis (var., Flos cuculi)** 1997. This is one of Tanning's last paintings and is part of a series that marks her transition from visual artist to poet in her final years. As in all of Tanning's work, they are united by their ability to present what she called 'unknown but knowable states'.

Clockwise from wall text

Chiens de Cythère (Dogs of Cythera)

1963

Oil paint on canvas

The Destina Foundation, New York

X69228

Tweedy

1973

Tweed, wool and metal

This sculpture demonstrates Tanning's sense of humour. An animal-like form made of tweed is accompanied by a tiny turd in the same material. Tanning gathered the fabric for her soft sculptures from charity shops and stuffed them with wool. She brings this creature to life by titling it with a nickname based on the name of the fabric. Tanning was very interested in the tactile potential of her materials – soft velvet, coarse tweed, unruly stuffing. This sculpture transforms a material associated with fashion and the domestic space into a vehicle for the imagination.

The Destina Foundation, New York

X69221

Portrait de famille (Family Portrait)

1977

Oil paint on canvas

The Destina Foundation, New York

X69199

Philosophie en plein air (Fresh-air philosophy)

1969

Oil paint on canvas

The Destina Foundation, New York

X71482

Xmas

1969

Fabric, metal and wool

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Purchased with funds provided by the 2010 Collectors Committee, with additional funds generously provided by Jodie Evans with Lekha Singh, The Rosenthal Family Foundation, Peg Yorkin, the Kayne Foundation, Susan Adelman in honor of the artist's 100th birthday, Irene Christopher, Viveca Paulin–Ferrell, American Art Deaccession Funds, Janice G. Gootkin, The Eileen F. and Mort H. Singer, Jr. Family fund in honor of Ilene Susan Fort, and J. Patrice Marandel

X69213

Poppies

1987

Oil paint on canvas

Kamala and Thomas Buckner

X71485

Crepuscula glacialis (var., Flos cuculi)

1997

Oil paint on canvas

This painting is one of twelve works that explore imagined plants and celebrate the power of nature. As Tanning explained, the series depicts 'flower[s] [that] grew in my mind's eye and demanded to be painted.' She invited various poets to name each of her fictional flowers.

Kamala and Thomas Buckner

X71484

Crepuscula glacialis, Latin for 'frozen dusk', was given its title by W.S. Merwin (born 1927, United States). He wrote the following poem to accompany it:

I open before you
the time of the cuckoo
the vision of the dew
the white when the day is new
the brightness it passes through
the shadow it turns into
at the hour of the echo
from behind to mountain

Sculpture behind you

Pincushion to Serve as Fetish

1979

Black velvet, wood, metal, paint and copper

Here Tanning turns a pincushion into a ritual object. Its bulbous velvet form is pierced by a copper funnel, pricked with sewing pins and overpainted with white lines. The object fuses sensual and sexual imagery with ideas of magic and sadomasochism. A fetish is an object worshipped for its supernatural powers. Many surrealists were drawn to this idea. Tanning described this work as 'not an image but bristling with images. And pins.' In the first version of this sculpture, also on display in this room, she invited viewers to stick pins into its surface themselves.

Collection of Deedie and Rusty Rose and the Dallas Museum of Art through the General Acquisitions Fund

X69210

Don Juan's Breakfast

1972

Velvet, felt, wool, buttons, metal and cardboard

Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Donation 2006 from the artist
(The Second Museum of Our Wishes)

X69220

Pincushion to Serve as Fetish

1965

Velvet, plastic funnel, metal pins, sawdust and wool

Tate. Purchased 2003

T07988

On Avalon

1987

Oil paint on canvas

Tanning wrote about making this work: 'I began in 1984 to paint on a large canvas, in greens and whites, something I felt about those spirits, which may have been flowers but also novas, tears, omens, God knows what, contending or conniving with our own ancestral shape in a place I'd give anything to know. During the painting of the picture, a matter of three years, it went through a number of transformations. At times I thought it was finished, that I had done what I could ... And then it was attacked again, radically changed, its white icons whiter, its human reference clearer. Late in 1987 it was finished.'

The Destina Foundation, New York

X69231

Verbe

Verb

1969–70

Flannel, wool, tweed, cardboard, polyfill, forged steel and wooden jigsaw puzzle pieces from Johannes Vermeer's **The Artist's Studio** c.1665/6

Yale University Art Gallery, Janet and Simeon Braguin Fund
X69218

Traffic Sign

1970

Fabric, synthetic fur, wool, metal and cardboard

The Destina Foundation, New York
X69219

Murmurs

1976

Oil paint on canvas

The Destina Foundation, New York
X69230

Mean Frequency (of Auroras)

1981

Oil paint on canvas

Helen and Brian Heekin Collection
X69229

To Climb a Ladder

1987

Oil paint on canvas

The Destina Foundation, New York
X73985

Heartless

1980

Oil paint on canvas

The Destina Foundation, New York

X73983

Cousins

1970

Synthetic fur, wool and steel

The Menil Collection, Houston

X69217

Study for De quel amour (By What Love)

1969

Ink on paper

Suzanne Murphy Collection

X69216

Sculptures in the centre of the room

Nue couchée

Reclining Nude

1969–70

Cotton textile, cardboard, 7 table tennis balls, wool and thread

Tate. Purchased 2003

T07989

De quel amour (By What Love)

1970

Tweed, metal, wool, chain and plush

Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne /
Centre de création industrielle

Gift of Mme. Anne Gruner–Schulumberger in 1978

X69215

Walk towards the exit of the room and enter the FILM room on the right

ROOM 8

FILM

Peter Schamoni 1934–2011

Dorothea Tanning – Insomnia

1978

Running time: 14 min

This short documentary film brings us into the world of Tanning's paintings and soft sculptures of the mid-1970s. German film director and producer Peter Schamoni filmed in her home in Seillans, France. Tanning provides the voice-over. We see her painting in her studio surrounded by several works which are on show in this exhibition, including **Family Portrait** 1977, **Tango Lives** 1977 and **Notes for an Apocalypse** 1978. Schamoni also shows her making her fabric sculptures at her sewing machine and holding her sculpture **Emma** 1970.

Courtesy of Schamoni Film & Medien GmbH

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DOROTHEA TANNING: A PERSONAL VIEW

Thursday 28 February,

18.30–19.45

Starr Cinema

(No exhibition private view)

£12/£8 concessions

CURATOR'S TALK: DOROTHEA TANNING

Monday 11 March,

18.30–20.30

Starr Cinema and in the exhibition

£20/£18 concessions,

talk + private view

(£9/£6 concessions, talk only)

DOROTHEA TANNING: A FAMILY PORTRAIT

Saturday 16 March,

14.00–16.00

Starr Cinema

£12/£8 concessions

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Monday 1, 8, 15, 29 April

In the exhibition/Level 3 concourse

£100/£70 concessions

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Sunday 28 April,

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Sunday 12 May,

18.30–20.30

In the exhibition

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DOROTHEA TANNING

27 February – 9 June 2019

Curated by Alyce Mahon and Ann Coxon, Curator,
International Art, Tate Modern with Hannah Johnston,
Assistant Curator, Tate Modern

Organised by the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina
Sofía, Madrid in collaboration with Tate Modern

Dorothea Tanning is supported by The Destina Foundation

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This exhibition has been made possible by the provision of insurance through the Government Indemnity Scheme. Tate would like to thank HM Government for providing Government Indemnity and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England for arranging the indemnity.

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Let us know your thoughts
#DorotheaTanning

