

## PEDER LUND

Jay DeFeo: A Rose Is a Flame Is a Sun Is a Star Is a Dove

5 September – 31 October 2015

Peder Lund is delighted to announce an exhibition of works by the American artist Jay DeFeo (1929-89). DeFeo is best known for her magnum opus *The Rose* (1958-66), a painting she worked on incessantly for eight years, adding and subtracting layers of oil paint on a 3,3 x 2,4 m canvas positioned in a bay window in her studio. The work weighed nearly a tonne when it was removed with a forklift in 1965. More recently, DeFeo has been recognised for the diverse and experimental range of works in drawing, photography, painting, collage and sculpture that she produced over more than four decades. The exhibition *Jay DeFeo: A Rose Is a Flame Is a Sun Is a Star Is a Dove* comprises four works from the 1950s and a considerable selection of photographs, drawings and paintings produced between 1972 and 1988, the year before DeFeo died of cancer aged 60. These works show how she revisited a number of core subjects throughout her career, approaching them with different techniques and materials. They resonate with her centrepiece *The Rose* in form and composition and include images that reveal the texture of hair and fur, the use of linear perspective, and those that offer an expression of psychological nuances in objects she observed in her immediate surroundings. The images reveal how DeFeo abstracted the objects she depicted by retaining their form, but obscuring their identity. All the works come directly from The Jay DeFeo Trust, without which the exhibition would not have been possible.

DeFeo was born in Hanover, New Hampshire, and grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area. She graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1951 and subsequently travelled through Europe and North Africa on a fellowship from the university. Upon her return, she became a central figure in the Bay Area community of artists, poets and musicians, later labelled the Beat generation. DeFeo had several solo exhibitions and was included in the seminal show *Sixteen Americans*, organised by Dorothy Miller at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1959. There, DeFeo's emotive and allusive paintings were highly distinguishable from the exhibited work of her East-Coast counterparts, who included Frank Stella, Ellsworth Kelly, Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg.

DeFeo had a number of well-received solo exhibitions in the late '50's, but declined to exhibit further as her work on *The Rose* progressed. She worked almost exclusively on the painting for six years, until she was forced to vacate her studio in the fall of 1965 and completed *The Rose* at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1966. She subsequently entered a three-year hiatus, only beginning to produce new work in 1970. She drew, painted and took photographs, demonstrating renewed energy and an expanded vocabulary of materials. Throughout the '70s, she worked extensively with photography, sometimes depicting objects that later became models for paintings; the actual picture taking was, however, always done for its own sake. She incorporated silver-gelatine prints in works on paper and photo collages in innovative ways, occasionally cutting and assembling photographs of earlier drawings into the artworks. Her interest in mechanical reproduction extended to the photocopier, which she employed as a distinctive kind of picture making, evoking sculptural images on a flat surface.

The beginning of the 1980s marked a turning point in DeFeo's career. She gained renewed gallery recognition, joined the faculty at Mills College, where she became a tenured professor, and took several major trips that influenced her work. She also returned to oil painting, after having primarily used acrylic in the '70s, with which she had not been entirely satisfied. When she passed away in 1989, she left behind not only an expansive output of innovative works, but also the legacy of her teaching, which influenced a generation of students at Mills.

Jay DeFeo's work has received widespread posthumous recognition and is included in the collections of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; The British Museum, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris; The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Modern Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. In 2012, the Whitney Museum of American Art organised the comprehensive exhibition *Jay DeFeo: A Retrospective*, which placed *The Rose* in the context of DeFeo's larger body of work. The exhibition opened at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 2012 and travelled to the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2013.

A fully illustrated catalogue with an essay written by Åsmund Thorkildsen will be published to accompany the exhibition at Peder Lund.

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