

Athenaeum Review

Modern Sculpture from Jean Arp to Melvin Edwards: A Conversation with Catherine Craft



Our guest on this podcast is Catherine Craft, curator at the Nasher Sculpture Center; she recently organized *The Nature of Arp*, which travels to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice.

In part one:

The place of “nature” in Arp’s art (1:30) — an antidote to the horrors of World War I (2:00) — not so much the appearance of nature, as its operations and principles (2:45) — sketches made while walking along Lake Zurich, seeing the waves upon the shore (3:15) — forms suggested by the liquidity of the ink: both abstract, and suggestive of the natural world (4:00) — not just the form of nature, but its dynamic energy (5:15) — A sense of humility before nature (6:00) — against the Romantic creator figure: entropy and things falling apart (6:30) — art “as natural as a bud bursting open” (7:45) —

The artistic relationship between Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Jean Arp (9:00) — joint commission for the Café de l’Aubette in Strasbourg (11:15) — the shock of Sophie’s accidental death in 1943 (13:30) — untangling questions of joint authorship (14:30) — Jean’s efforts at ‘posthumous collaboration’ after Sophie’s death (16:00) — increased late interest in spirituality (17:45) — the history of the chance-based works (19:45) —

The original and the copy in Arp’s work (23:00) — coming to New York after World War II (25:15) — the 1920s Dada reliefs, shown at Peggy

Guggenheim's Art of this Century gallery in the 1940s and seen by Gorky, Pollock, and De Kooning (25:30) — Robert Motherwell's interest in Arp's 1930s collages (26:45) — Ellsworth Kelly's interest in Arp's non-self-expressive, chance-based works (28:00) — Donald Judd's interest in the utterly smooth surfaces of Arp's sculptures (29:30)

0:00 / 31:28

DOWNLOAD

In part two:

The origins of *An Audience of Artists* (1:00) — What did “neo-Dada” originally mean? (3:45) — Artists who functioned simultaneously as critics and historians, e.g. Robert Motherwell, or Marcel Duchamp (5:45) — Is painting a ‘Dada’ medium? (7:45) — The beginnings of *Melvin Edwards: Five Decades* (11:30) — Edwards's work in *Now Dig This!* at the Hammer Museum (12:45) — Contrasting academic vs. museum work, and established vs. unfamiliar stories (15:30) — Abstraction, social relevance, or both? In the cases of Edwards, Frank Bowling and Jack Whitten (19:15) — The interest in independence and liberation movements in Africa; establishing a base in Senegal with his wife, the poet Jayne Cortez (23:00) — interest in African blacksmithing; a Fulbright to work and teach in Zimbabwe (24:15) — How a curator approaches a space: the Peggy Guggenheim Collection vs. the Nasher (28:00)

0:00 / 31:00