

ALEXANDRE HOGUE THE MODERN WORK



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Alexandre Hogue was a passionate observer of life, and the act of painting directly from nature and experience informed his work throughout his long career, which spanned from the early 1920s until his death in 1994. Nature, to Hogue, was the entire sensorial realm of experience, whether he worked from landscape or from the figure, from memory or imagination. Accordingly, he aimed to comprehend and express the tension and harmony he perceived between the self and the spiritual world, between the intellect and nature as he understood them. The Southwest—Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma—provided settings that allowed Hogue to immerse himself in the wonder of the earth and the mystical essence of nature. That impulse to record and draw inspiration from the natural world reverberates in every part of his entire corpus of work.

His well-known “Dust Bowl” and “Erosion” paintings labeled him as a regionalist, but Hogue never accepted that identity. For the duration of his life, Hogue remained outside the so-called mainstream of American art. He didn’t subscribe to movements or schools, but charted and maintained an independent course with relatively little regard for contemporary developments. Most attempts at categorization—be it labeling Hogue’s work Taos, Salvador Dali-inspired Surrealism, *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity), American Scene, Precisionism, Geometric Abstraction, Hyperrealism, Pop or Hard Edge—were parried by Hogue himself with a professorial annoyance and fencer’s agility. His restless intellect never allowed him to settle into anything resembling a signature style.

If Hogue refused to cling for too long to any category or fixed time-slot, his right to hold a more sustained position in American art is long overdue. The fact that Hogue’s paintings were equivalently abstract and representational, geometric and organic, formal propositions and emotional evocations, invited a range of interpretations. Overall, they followed a singular, changeable journey that



▲ *Flower Lover*, 1944, lithograph, edition 44/75, 13" x 14"
Front cover: *Like Banners Blowing*, 1961, oil on canvas, 24" x 56"



▲ *Bombardment*, 1952, lithograph, edition 34/55, 9" x 13"



merged painterly issues with autobiographical concerns so completely that Hogue and his work appear to have led several different lives.

Hogue's thinking and knowledge were layered, inclusive, relational. He was interested less in isolated instances than in the correspondences between things of different natures. His strengths were obvious: intense individualism, an awareness of the range of 20th century Modernism—but with a steely determination to create art developed on his own terms, with clarity and precision of conception and execution, as well as a remarkable sense of pictorial organization and complete absorption in his extraordinary vision. Although Hogue had scant connection with the concerns of the larger art world, he was by no means isolated from it. In terms of ideas, however, his career doesn't fit the standard learning curve of developmental progress. If anything, it was a process of doing, then undoing, rethinking and revisiting. Over the span of his career, the work didn't get "better" as much as it became different. Above all, he was a restless and inventive maker who was compelled by formal options—that included printmaking, theater set design, political cartooning, furniture making and farming. Hogue viewed all of his forays into different styles as part of a single, golden continuum.

Nonetheless, an entire generation of artists, curators, collectors and viewers is unfamiliar with the work produced in mid-career. Kirk Hopper Fine Art is honored to present the Non-objective works—the crisply rendered "Alphabetical" and "Calligraphic One Liner" paintings—the "USA" series, in addition to a group of experimental lithographs that allude to life at its most primal, as well as the forces of atomic energy. Spanning the late 1940s to the

◀ *Irrigation #1*, 1960, oil on canvas, 32" x 46"

▶ *Pic-Pic-Picabo*, 1972, oil on canvas, 42" x 30"





early 1970s, *Alexandre Hogue: The Modern Work* is the first time this significant body of work has been brought together for a gallery exhibition. The power of the paintings and prints will come as a revelation to those who are encountering his art again or those seeing it for the first time. By and large, these works are as symmetrical as Rorschach blots and as unearthly and as mysterious as mirages.

Near the end of WWII, and while Hogue was living in Dallas, he accepted the position of art department head at the University of Tulsa. When he assumed his duties in 1945, Hogue entered into a period of demanding administrative and teaching obligations. The fact that Hogue produced fewer paintings during the first years in Tulsa does not mean he experienced a fallow period. Rather, Hogue absorbed his immediate environment, recognizing the postwar changes that had occurred in the landscape and in the university system. Significantly, these same shifts led to distinct transitions within Hogue's work, toward a more expansive, abstract language. He began to take his work in new directions, heralding two decades of experimentation.

This is Hogue in a new key and with a much wider lens—still deliberating on the canvas, in paint, still masterfully expressing conditions of mutability, flux and metamorphosis. The noteworthy feature of Hogue's relationship to abstraction during this period is that formal

◀ *This I Have Done*, 1961, oil on canvas, 42" x 35"



▲ *Melting Window Frost*, 1960, oil on canvas, 32" x 54"



and compositional elements blend seamlessly with those referring to broader issues of content, thereby achieving an unparalleled balance and force. It's astonishing how bold, graphically punchy and sensuous his painting could be, with large centralized forms, modulated volumes and illusionistic depth of space. We experience the work whole and fast, as we do a strong scent or sensation of touch.

Aiming for an intensely personal language, Hogue employed abstraction as a form of representation, fragmentation, layering and seeing one image through another—all strategies, of course, which take advantage of different elements of Modernism and make use of the means available. An underlying attitude of exploration, seeking new and different means to express ideas about color, form and movement, and their relationship to nature, is seen in Hogue's work of this period. His painting is about more than just the exercise of technique. As the work changed, it refracted optical experience through a touch of exquisite responsiveness and a sensibility as poetic as it is visual.

Paintings from the early 1960s, such as *Melting Window Frost* (1960), refer to nature's cycles as well as to a spiritual recycling of artistic impulse. The spiky emblematic forms provide an ever-changing organic abstraction grounded in nature and keen observation. The frost shapes conjoin as strange biomorphs in layered, planar grids. They seemingly swirl and spin as fluid, gliding elements or mutate as sharp, staccato bursts.

In *This I Have Done* (1961), Hogue carefully layers, juxtaposes and interweaves geometries and abstract images, much like physical thoughts. They are rivulets, waves, ripples, bubbles splashing from the flow of work.

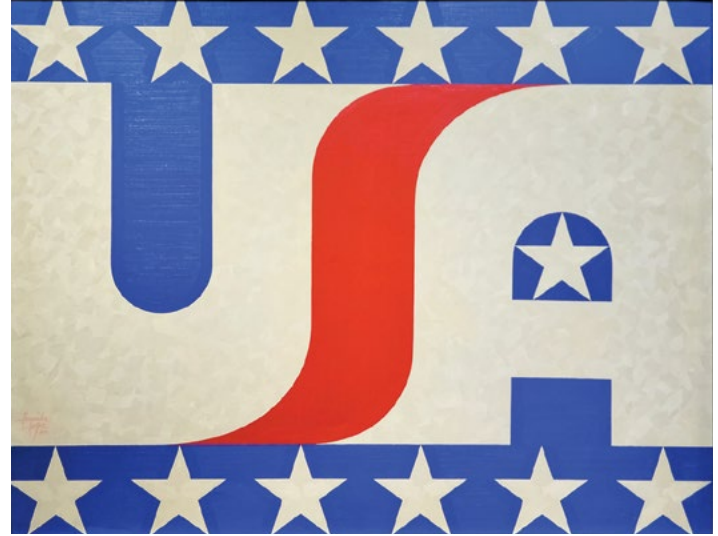
◀ *Sev-Seven-Ven*, 1960, oil on canvas, 41" x 32"



▲ *USA Tilted*, 1972, oil on canvas, 32" x 41"

Teal blue and white wedges swell, intersect and twist like a waterfall. Geometric, biomorphic and hieroglyphic shapes in cobalt blue, teal, orange and red guide our eyes up across vertical columns and between abstract elements like a labyrinth.

Similarly, *Like Banners Blowing* (1961) is non-referential, but the deft interweaving of Hogue's taut, lyrical stroke suggests nautical flags, Morse code, or the art of Native Americans. Crisply curved and buoyant strokes of light blue, green, black, red and orange both cushion and define other strokes, or become masses in themselves. The thinly painted figure-ground



▲ *USA Thirteen*, 1972, oil on canvas, 32" x 41"

relationships and syncopated rhythm of these shapes across the horizontal canvas form a kind of inverted language.

Numbers represent divine order, the cryptic keys to cosmic harmony. Like pauses in music, Hogue's images and layers of numbers convey rhythm, movement, a staccato, or calm. Certainly, the works and numbers stem from Hogue's training as a hand-lettering specialist in New York City during the early 1920s, in addition to his lifelong interest in mathematics. In the "Alphabetical" series, we see Hogue as an artist so in touch with the sources of his pictorial pleasure that all the optical shifts click into place and begin



to hum. Here, he is concerned with the ambiguity between and coupling of colors, horizontal and vertical divisions, inside and out, and parts to the whole. In some works, geometric shapes and numerals are multiplied, halved, flipped and compiled into more complex units.

In *Six-Ix-Ix* (1961), conjoined and individual masses alternately read as the letter “b” and the number six. A white ovoid seemingly hovers on an electric blue ground. Two white triangular areas entering the color field from top and bottom are stretched and tapered into stiletto points that nearly touch. The entire composition is anchored by a horizontal band of Hogue Red at the bottom.

For the mated “Alphabetical” paintings, the numbers are spliced or pinched into muscular, bulging commas and whip-like curls. In *Five and Three Mated* (1964), large, colored sections of pink and orange belly out into voluptuous arcs and curves. The perceptual flips are hypnotic; the longer we look at the paintings the more they slow down and rivet our attention.

Hogue had developed a long-standing interest in Persian calligraphy from time spent in the New York Public Library during the early 1920s. It wasn’t until the mid-1950s, however, that he began a deliberate application of it in his drawings and paintings. As our eyes follow Hogue’s continuous stroke in the “Calligraphic One Liner” works, we are aware of peering into, between, across, through, under and over. *Pic-Pic-Picabo* (1972) features a viridian green, angular, curving form on a pink ground, which in turn is contained by an oblong band on a mustard-gold field. The viridian green element rises and careens across the ground with wild sweeps and pointed dynamics. It bumps up against the perimeter in hair-trigger turns and sharp angles.

◀ *Zim-Zimri-Zim*, 1972, oil on canvas, 41" x 30"



◀ *In the Beginning*,
1964, lithograph,
edition 2/20,
16" x 21.5"

At the same time Hogue was producing paintings for the “Calligraphic One Liner” series, he was also creating a sequence of works based on the American flag. Although the sketches were done in the early 1960s, the “USA” paintings were not completed until 1972. Here, the material facts of the flag are transformed by Hogue into an expanding and contracting bellows of shifting illusion. Masses and brushstrokes stream equally across the painting field from edge to edge, top to bottom. *USA Waving* is composed of fat, tire-like blue letters with broad hatching strokes that shimmer on a field of red and white wavy stripes. In *USA Tilted*, white letters are serpentine forms that flow together and collide with the framing edges. The positive-negative interplay between letters and ground produces red and blue globular and teardrop shapes. The strokes twist into one another, the contours assured and confident.

Although Hogue conceived the “USA” paintings during the same period that our country was embroiled in protests over Vietnam, his intent was more likely focused on the upcoming bicentennial. Still, the series is powerful because it draws out deep connotations that have ongoing cultural and political resonance. We examine these flags with radically shifting associations. Given the state of recent national events, what does “USA” mean? Certainly, we are living in troubling times when the survival of democracy itself is deeply threatened. What was once a unifying symbol—a star for each state—is now alienating to some, its stripes now fault lines between people.

Throughout *Alexandre Hogue: The Modern Work*, the experience is alive, alert and open—a play of perception and reason that sustains our engagement. Seducing us with craft, warmth and poetics, the mid-career range of paintings and prints in the KHFA exhibition recharge aesthetic issues of perception and illusion by shifting toward life. It’s the lack of artifice, the feeling we are watching Hogue as he paints that makes all of the works



▲ *Fission*, 1951, lithograph, edition 50/55, 9.5" x 13"

so modern. These paintings display a kind of meditative outspokenness, an artist conversing with himself about the vanguard, then making that conversation his further subject and style. Moreover, they reveal Hogue in the process of discovering his own personal vision of the world and suitable means for its expression. Within Hogue’s forms, we witness a new consciousness being made manifest.

—Essay by Susie Kalil



◀ *Six-ix-ix*, 1961, oil on canvas, 41" x 32"

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

PAINTINGS

Rio Grande

1942
Oil on canvas
6" x 8"
Courtesy of Kirk Hopper
Fine Art

Four Into Four

1960
Oil on canvas
41" x 32"

Irrigation #1

1960
Oil on canvas
32" x 46"

Melting Window Frost

1960
Oil on canvas
32" x 54"

Sev-Seven-Ven

1960
Oil on canvas
41" x 32"

Cad-Cad-Cadenza

1961
Oil and casein on canvas
41" x 32"
Courtesy of Pierson Gallery

Like Banners Blowing

1961
Oil on canvas
24" x 56"

Oh-Amba-Am

1961
Oil on canvas
41" x 32"

O-Peerio-Peer

1961
Oil on canvas
41" x 32"

Six-Ix-Ix

1961
Oil on canvas
41" x 32"

This I Have Done

1961
Oil on canvas
42" x 35"

Five and Three Mated

1964
Oil on canvas
41" x 32"

Kiss-Kuzzen-Zen

1972
Oil on canvas
42" x 30"

Pic-Pic-Picabo

1972
Oil on canvas
42" x 30"

USA Over Flag

1972
Oil on canvas
41" x 32"

USA Starred

1972
Oil on canvas
32" x 41"

USA Thirteen

1972
Oil on canvas
32" x 41"

USA Tilted

1972
Oil on canvas
32" x 41"

USA Vertical

1972
Oil on canvas
32" x 41"

USA Waving

1972
Oil on canvas
32" x 41"

USA White on White

1972
Oil on canvas
41" x 32"

Zim-Zimri-Zim

1972
Oil on canvas
41" x 30"

DRAWINGS

Circus Main Entrance

1922
Pencil on paper
5.5" x 8.5"
Courtesy of Kirk Hopper
Fine Art

Sells Floto Circus

1922
Pencil on paper
6" x 8.75"
Courtesy of Kirk Hopper
Fine Art

Colorado No 2

1963
Graphite on paper
6" x 8"
Courtesy of Kirk Hopper
Fine Art

The Window, Big Bend

1965
Charcoal on paper
16" x 23"
Courtesy of Kirk Hopper
Fine Art

White Water, Sand Creek

1976
Watercolor on paper
29" x 20.5"

Composite of Four Sketches

n.d.
Pencil on paper
11.5" x 16"

Strato-cumulus

n.d.
Pencil on paper
4.5" x 10"
Courtesy of Kirk Hopper
Fine Art

Untitled

n.d.
India ink
9.5" x 9.5"
Courtesy of Pierson Gallery

PRINTS**March Fantasy**

1927
Linoleum block print,
edition 12/40
11" x 13.5"

Flower Lover

1944
Lithograph, edition 44/75
13" x 14"

Fission

1951
Lithograph, edition 33/55
9.5" x 13"

Fission

1951
Lithograph, edition 50/55
9.5" x 13"

Holocaustal

1951
Lithograph, edition 34/55
8.5" x 13"

Bombardment

1952
Lithograph, edition 34/55
9" x 13"

Blue Gills

1956
Lithograph, edition 1/25
11" x 14"

Cryptonymous

1957
Lithograph, edition 2/16
14" x 18"

Sargasso

1958
Lithograph, edition 10/13
22" x 16"

Submarinal

1962
Lithograph, edition 28/33
22" x 17"

Vortiginous

1962
Lithograph, proof
16" x 21"

Mano-lithic

1963
Lithograph, edition 20/20
17.5" x 14"

Fall Out

1964
Lithograph, edition 1/12
16" x 21.5"

In the Beginning

1964
Lithograph, edition 2/20
16" x 21.5"

Ophthalmic

1964
Lithograph, proof #2
16" x 21.5"

Primordial

1964
Lithograph, edition 2/20
16" x 21.5"

**From Metal Emblems
to Litho**

1965
Lithograph, edition 2/26
16" x 21.5"

Little Textures

n.d.
Lithograph, edition 1/5
10" x 13.5"

*Unless otherwise noted,
works are from the collection
of Olivia Hogue Mariño and
Amalia Mariño.*

ADDITIONAL ART FROM THE EXHIBITION



▲ *Circus Main Entrance*, 1922, pencil on paper, 5.5" x 8.5". Courtesy of Kirk Hopper Fine Art



▲ *Sells Floto Circus*, 1922, pencil on paper, 6" x 8.75". Courtesy of Kirk Hopper Fine Art



▲ *March Fantasy*, 1927, linoleum block print, edition 12/40, 11" x 13.5"



▲ *Rio Grande*, 1942, oil on canvas, 6" x 8". Courtesy of Kirk Hopper Fine Art



▲ *Holocaustal*, 1951, lithograph, edition 34/55, 8.5" x 13"



▲ *Blue Gills*, 1956, lithograph, edition 1/25, 11" x 14"



▲ *Cryptonymous*, 1957, lithograph, edition 2/16, 14" x 18"



◀ *Sargasso*
1958
Lithograph, edition 10/13
22" x 16"



◀ *Four Into Four*
1960
Oil on canvas
41" x 32"



◀ *Cad-Cad-Cadenza*
1961
Oil and casein on canvas
41" x 32"
Courtesy of Pierson Gallery



◀ *Oh-Amba-Am*
1961
Oil on canvas
41" x 32"



◀ *O-Peero-Peer*
1961
Oil on canvas
41" x 32"



◀ *Submarinal*
1962
Lithograph, edition 28/33
22" x 17"



▲ *Vortiginous*, 1962, lithograph, proof, 16" x 21"



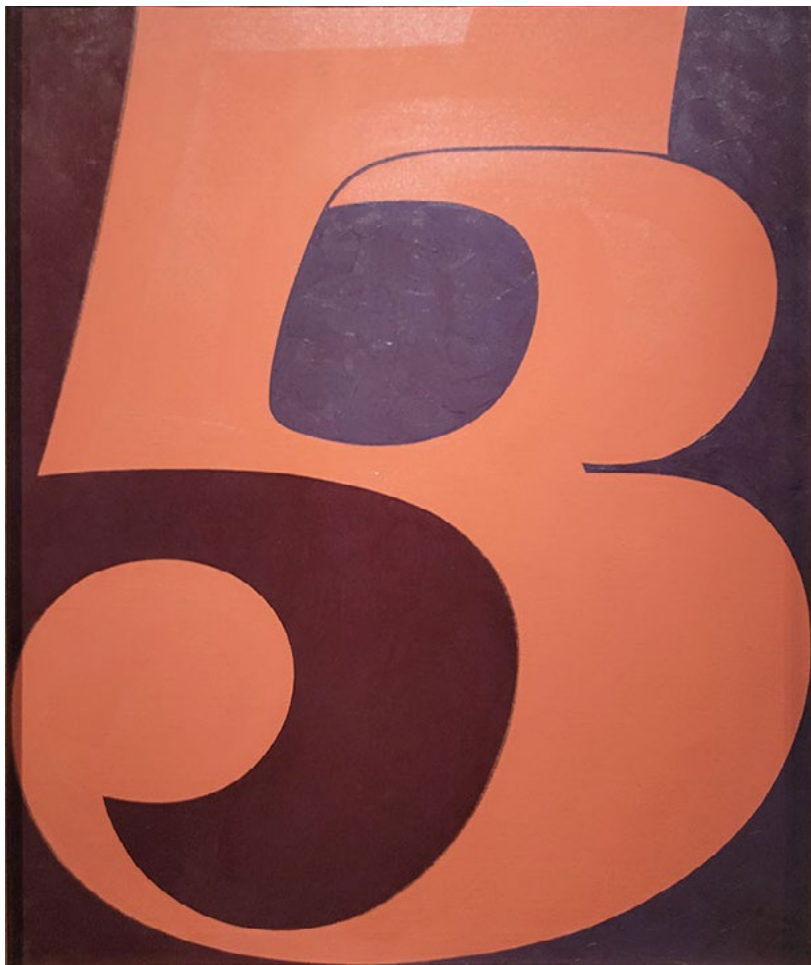
▲ *Colorado No 2*, 1963, graphite on paper, 6" x 8". Courtesy of Kirk Hopper Fine Art



◀ *Mano-lithic*
1963
Lithograph, edition 20/20
17.5" x 14"



▲ *Fall Out*, 1964, lithograph, edition 1/12, 16" x 21.5"



◀ *Five and Three Mated*
1964
Oil on canvas
41" x 32"



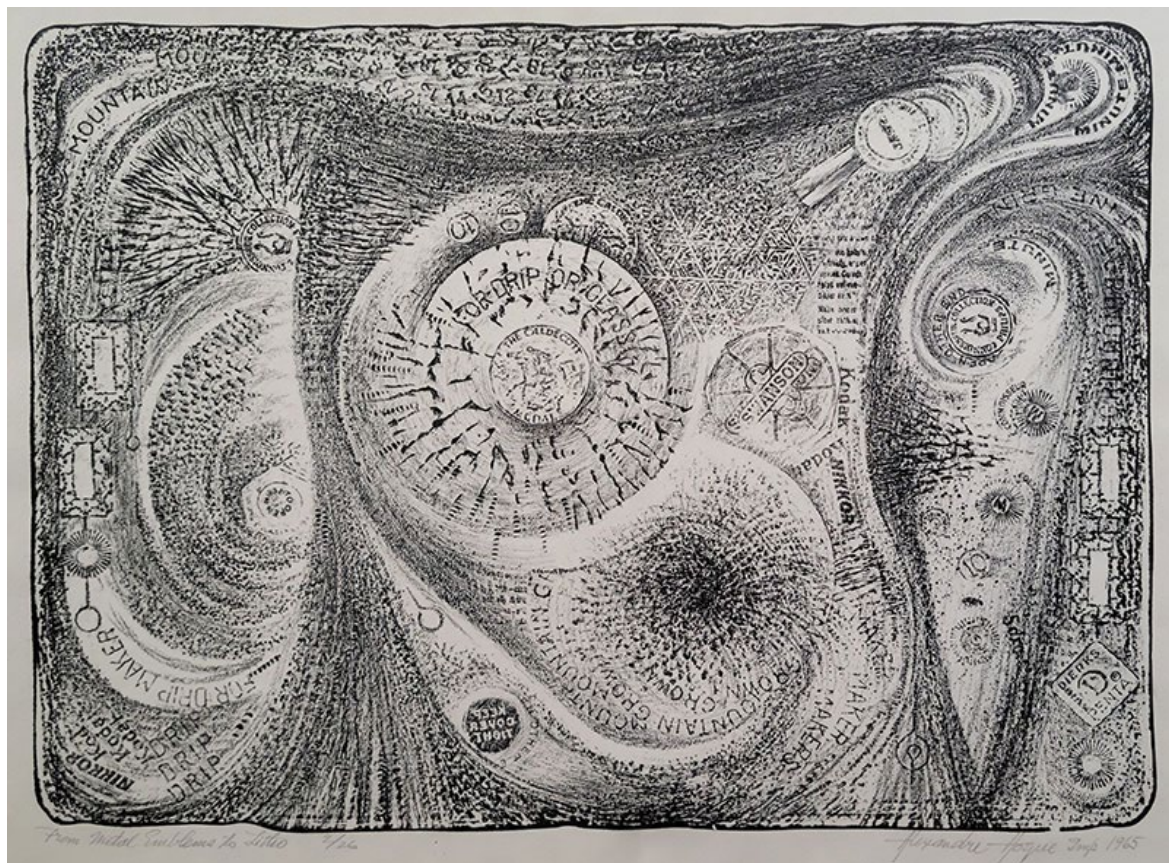
▲ *Ophthalmic*, 1964, lithograph, proof #2, 16" x 21.5"



▲ *Primordial*, 1964, lithograph, edition 2/20, 16" x 21.5"



▲ *The Window, Big Bend*, 1965, charcoal on paper, 16" x 23". Courtesy of Kirk Hopper Fine Art



▲ From Metal Emblems to Litho, 1965, lithograph, edition 2/26, 16" x 21.5"



◀ *Kiss-Kuzzen-Zen*
1972
Oil on canvas
42" x 30"



◀ *USA Over Flag*
1972
Oil on canvas
41" x 32"



▲ *USA Starred*, 1972, oil on canvas, 32" x 41"



▲ *USA Vertical*, 1972, oil on canvas, 32" x 41"



▲ *USA Waving*, 1972, oil on canvas, 32" x 41"



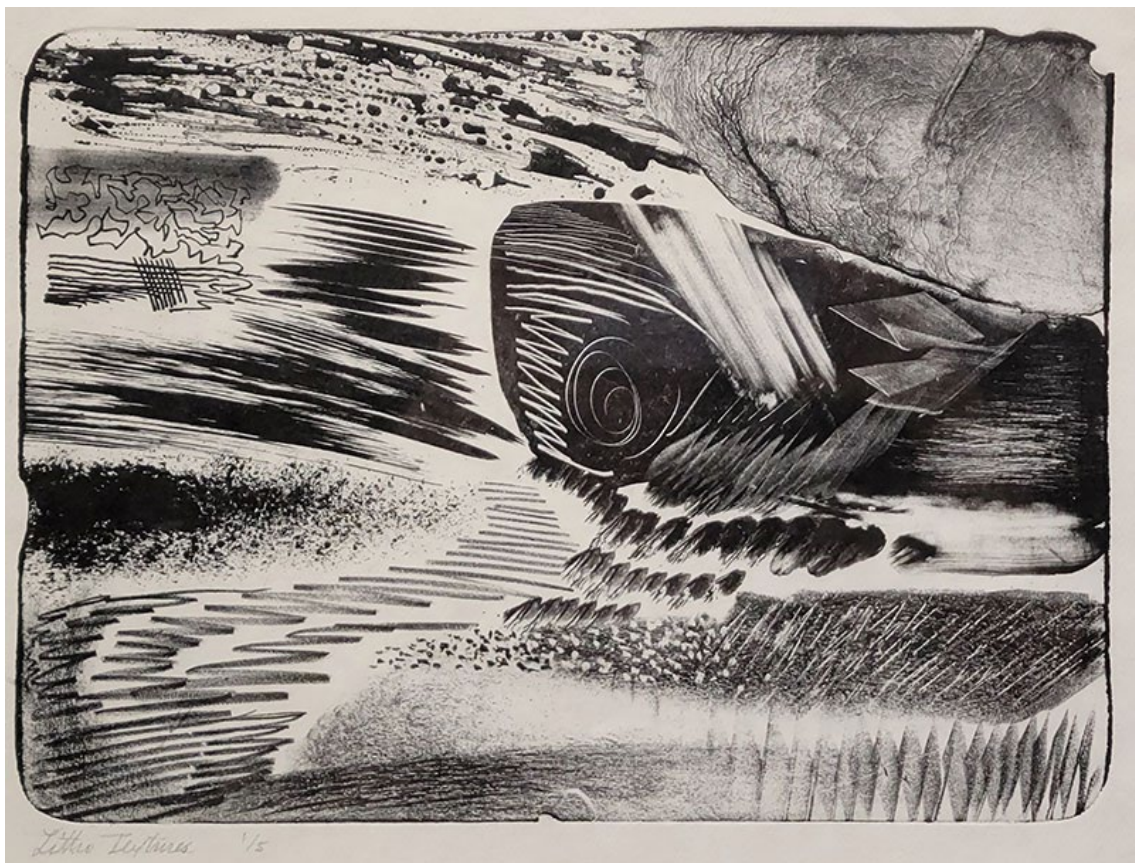
◀ *USA White on White*
1972
Oil on canvas
41" x 32"



◀ *White Water, Sand Creek*
1976
Watercolor on paper
29" x 20.5"



▲ *Composite of Four Sketches*, n.d., pencil on paper, 11.5" x 16"



▲ *Little Textures*, n.d., lithograph, edition 1/5, 10" x 13.5"



▲ *Strato-cumulus*, n.d., pencil on paper, 4.5" x 10". Courtesy of Kirk Hopper Fine Art



◀ Untitled
n.d.
India ink
9.5" x 9.5"
Courtesy of Pierson Gallery

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