

MASKS & MORE...

Anne Stanner, Artists Statement
CCNY Cohen Library Archives Exhibit 2025

In the late 1970s, shortly after I learned to weld, I became intrigued with metal found objects ("objets trouves") and the process of recycling materials. This emanated from seeing so much detritus in the streets of NY and the excitement of the treasure hunt for free materials. A whole series of semi-abstract figurative pieces resulted from this passion for assemblage and creative reuse from disparate, discarded "junk".



The actual fabrication of the sculptures is very much related to play and chance: I juxtapose various pieces of metal with each other in a trial-and-error fashion and see what ideas emerge. Sometimes one object triggers or suggests an entire piece and then the hunt is on to find other objects that will complete the ideas, which often turn out to be whimsical. They are then completed by welding or brazing with an oxy-acetylene torch. Several of the found objects used derive from what was traditionally associated with women's work, such as stove top grills, sewing machines, and scissors. I derive special satisfaction from using these female oriented items and transforming them through a process, i.e., welding, that, in the recent past and even sometimes today, is associated with men's work.

Many of my pieces take the form of masks and are influenced by the image-making of indigenous and folk traditions expressed by the people of the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Oceania. I have been fascinated by masks and their expressive and symbolic meanings and their ability to both conceal and reveal their wearers' identities and emotions and to take on other identities. Included in this exhibition is a group of 20 masks that were worn by dancers in a production about the 20 days of the Aztec calendar. They were first sculpted in clay, then cast with plaster bandage and finished with white acrylic paint. This was a collaborative effort with members of the theater group.

In addition to masks, this exhibition includes freestanding pieces made with found objects and wall reliefs representing other areas I have passionately pursued in my long artistic practice, especially the human figure, rendered in terracotta and cast plaster.

In light of the planet's ecological crisis, it is now, more than ever, urgent to reclaim tossed away objects and transform them into expressive, possibly beautiful items to be seen and thought about. I hope they provoke discussion about how we all can conserve the earth's resources.

Anne Stanner received her MFA from CCNY in 1979. She is the Treasurer of the Art Alumni Group as well as a member and past president of the New York Society of Women Artists (NYSWA, a 100-year-old organization) and the Sculptors Alliance (SA). Anne was an Instructor of Metal Sculpture at the Art Students League for 20 years. She is a life-long resident of New York City and maintains a studio in the Hudson Valley.

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