

LOUISE NEVELSON

HOUSE OF NEVELSON

May 3 – June 14, 2024

LOCKS GALLERY



Louise Nevelson, *Untitled*, 1979, painted wood and mirror elements, 30 boxes with base, 78 x 65 x 17 inches

Locks Gallery is pleased to present *House of Nevelson*, an exhibition of sculptures and collages by the renowned Louise Nevelson (1899–1988).

Nevelson's processes of assemblage have often been understood as her endless search for home. She famously said, "My whole life is one big collage" and "the way I think is collage." A Russian immigrant who migrated from Kyiv to Maine, and later Maine to New York, Nevelson described herself and her migration on similar terms as the scavenged materials she used to build her sculptures and environments. "Most of us have to be transplanted, like a tree, before we blossom," she said in her famous conversation with her studio assistant Diana MacKown in 1976. In what was disregarded as excess or waste, Nevelson saw greater potential. She collected scrap materials and stored them in her home, sometimes for years, waiting to brew them in their appropriate concoctions. Viewing her life in this way, and as one with her art, Nevelson went about living if she were a collage, transforming the chaos of the unfamiliar into an order which she viewed as her own.

Though she is most remembered for her environments of wooden assemblages – skeletal and romantic architectures in themselves – Nevelson’s collages are where she embellished her quest to transform the detritus of life: setting the table, dressing herself, giving life to dust as she would to wood. House became home when she decorated her enclosures, imbuing them with yet further potentiality. *Untitled* (1983) can be read as a kind of self-portrait: a quilt of mismatched fabrics (like those Nevelson would wear) preserved with all its imperfections revealed, the stains and tears of its many lives exposed. The venerable quilt, loose in its bonds, is affixed to mat board with metal staples – a forceful yet tender attempt to repair what has already begun to decay. Perhaps more than her monochromatic sculptures, Nevelson’s unpainted collages give riddles and clues about their origins. Some evoke on a more intimate scale the embodied inhabitation of her wooden environments, while others reveal the insides of her found materials. *Untitled* (1976) features an unfolded cardboard carton laid flat, displaying its aged interior. In 1976, Nevelson said, “The nature of creation is that you have to go inside and dig out . . . [it] is not a performing glory on the outside, it’s a painful, difficult search within.” In her collages, perhaps even more than her monumental sculptures, we see Nevelson coming home to a place that is, though not yet fully known, deep within herself.



Louise Nevelson, *Untitled*, 1983, cotton quilt with wood, mirrors, and plexiglass on plywood, 30 1/6 x 20 inches

“Every human being wants a home. It may be a palace, or it may be a hut; it’s a home. And so it’s as close to us as our skin...” – Louise Nevelson, 1980

Louise Nevelson was born in Kyiv, Russia (present-day Ukraine) in 1899 and emigrated to the U.S. at age five. She later moved to New York and studied at The Art Students League of New York, painted with Hans Hoffman in Germany, and worked as an assistant for Diego Rivera. She was the featured artist in the United States Pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 1962 and 1976. During her lifetime she was the subject of two retrospectives at the Whitney Museum of American Art (1967; 1980) and a traveling international retrospective in 1973. In 1978, New York City created the Louise Nevelson Plaza, the first public space in the city named after an artist. Nevelson’s work is held widely in public and private collections around the world.

This exhibition will be on view in the first floor gallery and open to the public Tuesday through Saturday, 10am – 6pm.

For all press inquiries, please contact Adrianna Brusie, abusie@locksgallery.com.