

*Dorothea Tanning: Early Designs for the Stage*  
April 23–July 23, 2010



Dorothea Tanning, Costume Design for *Night Shadow* (A Guest), 1945, Watercolor and wash on paper, 13 7/8 x 9 7/8 inches. Collection of the artist.

Drawing Room

Opening Reception: Thursday, April 22, 6:00–8:00pm

For further information and images, please contact  
Emily Gaynor *Public Relations and Marketing Officer*  
212 219 2166 x119 | [egaynor@drawingcenter.org](mailto:egaynor@drawingcenter.org)

February 22, 2010

New York, NY – The Drawing Center announces an exhibition of approximately twenty hand-drawn ballet costume designs by Dorothea Tanning (b.1910) created in collaboration with leading 20th century choreographers, including the early modernist, George Balanchine. Dating from 1945–1953, the designs will be shown together for the first time, and will be accompanied by archival photographs and ephemera related to the staged productions. This discrete body of work explores the dynamic intersections of dance, performance, visual art, and costume, while drawing important parallels to Tanning’s early discoveries in both painting and sculpture.

After meeting Balanchine at a party at Julien Levy’s gallery, a frequent gathering place for Surrealists living in New York during the 1930s–40s, Tanning began working with him on the ballet, *Night Shadow*, and three subsequent productions thereafter. Inspired by the narratives, and Balanchine’s dramatic choreography in particular, Tanning brought her ‘quirky’ sensibility to the costuming of the performances. She fashioned outlandish headdresses atop dazzling detailing and sensual drapery for the dancers’ garments. The whimsical costumes embody a sense of movement, not only through the fabrics, gauzes, and veils employed, but in their fitting—itsself contorted, bewitched, and ecstatic. Taking the form of traditional fashion plates, the blithely-rendered drawings for the staged productions, with their paths of fabric in space, suggest bodies in motion and portrayals of fanciful, storybook characters that explore the bounds of desire and embodiment, and extend to Tanning’s prolific work in painting and sculpture—highlighting a vivid imagination in the creative practice. This exhibition is curated by Assistant Curators Joanna Kleinberg and Rachel Liebowitz.

## **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Dorothea Tanning was born in 1910 in Galesburg, Illinois. After briefly attending the Art Institute of Chicago in the 1930s, Tanning left to pursue art on her own, inspired by the arrival of Surrealism in America. Tanning had her first solo exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York in 1944. Throughout her career, she has resided in New York, Sedona, Loire Valley, Provence, and Paris and has been the subject of numerous exhibitions, including retrospectives at Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Paris (1974); Malmö Konsthall, Sweden (1993); and The Philadelphia Museum of Art (2000-2001). Tanning currently lives and works in New York City.

## **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

### Saturday, May 1, 2:00pm

Exhibition curators Joanna Kleinberg and Rachel Liebowitz will lead a guided walk-through of the exhibition.

### Thursday, June 10, 6:30pm

The Drawing Center will host a panel discussion entitled, *Dorothea Tanning: A Dialogue Between Visual Art and Performance*. Moderated by Joanna Kleinberg and Rachel Liebowitz, the exhibition's co-curators, this discussion will focus on the relationship between the visual arts and performance in the twentieth century, with a particular focus on Tanning's collaboration with George Balanchine throughout the 1940s and 50s, which challenged both artists to expand their ideas about their own work, and the viewer's perception of the dynamic intersections of dance, performance, design, and visual art. Panelists will include Ann Temkin, The Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art; Robert Greskovic, freelance writer and dance critic for *The Wall Street Journal*; and Anna Finke, Wardrobe Supervisor for Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

## **PUBLICATION**

To accompany the exhibition, The Drawing Center will produce a 72-page publication with an introduction by the exhibition's curators, Joanna Kleinberg and Rachel Liebowitz, and an essay by Robert Greskovic, freelance writer and dance critic for *The Wall Street Journal*. The publication will be available for sale in April 2010.

## **HOURS & ACCESSIBILITY**

Gallery hours are Wednesday, 12pm–6pm, Thursday, 12pm–8pm, and Friday–Sunday, 12pm–6pm (closed Mondays and Tuesdays). The Drawing Center is wheelchair accessible.

**CREDITS**

This exhibition is made possible in part by members of the Drawing Room, a patron circle founded to support innovative exhibitions presented in The Drawing Center's project gallery: Devon Dikeou and Fernando Troya, Judith Levinson Oppenheimer, Elizabeth R. Miller and James G. Dinan, The Speyer Family Foundation, Inc., Louisa Stude Sarofim, Deborah F. Stiles, and Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee.

**MISSION STATEMENT**

The Drawing Center is the only not-for-profit fine arts institution in the country to focus solely on the exhibition of drawings, both historical and contemporary. It was established in 1977 to provide opportunities for emerging and under-recognized artists; to demonstrate the significance and diversity of drawings throughout history; and to stimulate public dialogue on issues of art and culture.

# *Dorothea Tanning: Early Designs for the Stage*

April 23- July 23, 2010  
Drawing Room

## *Images Available for Reproduction*

For further information and images, please contact:  
Emily Gaynor *Public Relations and Marketing Officer*  
212 219 2166 x119 | [egaynor@drawingcenter.org](mailto:egaynor@drawingcenter.org)



**DT1:** Dorothea Tanning, Costume Design for *Night Shadow* (A Guest), 1945, Watercolor and wash on paper, 13 7/8 x 9 7/8 inches. Collection of the artist.



**DT4:** Dorothea Tanning, Costume Design for *The Witch* (Monstre), 1950, Gouache on dark blue paper, 16 x 11 1/2 inches. Private Collection.



**DT5:** Dorothea Tanning, Costume Design for *The Witch* (Castle Midnight), 1950, Gouache on dark blue paper, 15 3/4 x 11 1/2 inches. Collection of the artist.



**DT6:** Dorothea Tanning, Costume Design for *Bayou*, 1951, Graphite and gouache on green paper, 12 1/2 x 9 1/2 inches. Collection of the artist.



**DT34a:** *Night Shadow*, Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo Souvenir Program for the 1945-46 season New York: General Program Corporation, 1945, 12 x 9 inches. Collection of the artist.



**DT7:** Dorothea Tanning, Costume Design for *Bayou* (Groom), 1951, Gouache on dark green paper with fabric swatches, 12 3/4 x 10 inches. Collection of the artist.