

LOUISE NEVELSON

SELECTED WORKS
OCTOBER 12TH - NOVEMBER 25TH 2017

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Louise Nevelson
(1899 – 1988)

Art is everywhere, except it has to pass through a creative mind –
Louise Nevelson

Louise Nevelson emerged as one of the most innovative artists of the twentieth century amidst the dominance of the Abstract Expressionist movement. She redefined modern sculpture with her monumental installations, in which she utilized wooden objects that she gathered from modern debris. Nevelson reorganized the “ready-mades”, in order to historicize them in a new narrative context. Her works tell her story – as a Jewish child relocated to America from Russia, as an artist training in New York City and Germany, and as a hard-working, successful woman. Her avant-garde sculptures and success within a male-dominated New York gallery environment greatly inspired many artists, especially those taking part in the Feminist art movements.



Robert Mapplethorpe, *Louise Nevelson*, 1986.

Prominent Themes



Louise Nevelson

Sky Cathedral

1958

Painted wood

136 ½ x 120 ¼ x 18 in. (344 x 305 x 46 cm)

Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Mildoff

Although Nevelson's subject matter was highly concerned with her personal emotions and her complex childhood, growing up in clashing cultures, the **general feminine narrative** is the dominating question of her work.

For Nevelson, the wooden objects have an evocative potential which call to mind the forms of the city, nature and celestial bodies. When assembled in boxy frames, these individual small scale object's are given a new **monumental** view.

The final coat of **black paint** obscures her found materials' useful origins, while creating beautiful tonal contrasts as light and shadow play over the monochromatic three-dimensional surfaces. Like a virtuoso marble carving, Nevelson's sculptures captivate with their subtle and stark shifts in tone and texture.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Nevelson turned to new industrial materials such as Plexiglas, aluminum and steel, which enabled her to expand the scale complexity of her installations, whilst also displacing them **out of the galleries and museums and into public space**.

The sculptor's work had an **extraordinary impact on the Feminist art movements of the 1970s** and they broke the taboos and the preconception that only men's artwork could be of large-scale. Her work set up an era in which the narrative of womanhood became convened as subject matter for monumental artistic representation.

Awards

- 1959** Grand Sculpture Prize for her work in *Art U.S.A.*
- 1960** Logan Prize in sculpture, the Art Institute of Chicago
- 1962** Grand Prize in the First Sculpture International, Torcuato di Tella Institute, Buenos Aires
- 1969** MacDowell Colony Medal
- 1979** Women's Caucus for Art Award
- 1983** Gold Medal for Sculpture, the American Academy of Arts and Letters
- 1985** National Medal of Arts
- 1986** Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum's Great Artist series award

Honorary Degrees

- 1966** Honorary doctorate in fine arts, Western College for Women, Oxford, Ohio
- 1972** Honorary degree, doctor of fine arts, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey
- 1973** Honorary degree, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts
- 1977** Honorary degree, Columbia University, New York
- 1978** Honorary degree, Boston University
- 1986** Honorary doctor of fine arts, Pratt Institute, New York



Louise Nevelson

Royal Tide I

1960

Painted wood

86 x 40 x 8 in. (218.4 x 101.6 x 20.3 cm)

Collection of Beverly and Peter Lipman

Early Years (1930s – 1962)



Louise Nevelson

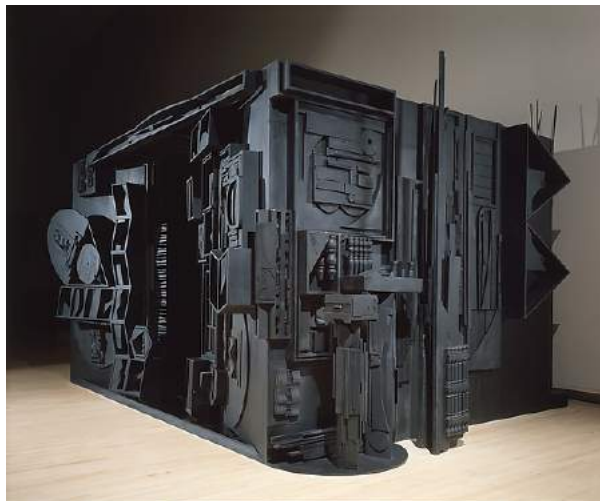
Mrs. N's Palace

1964-1977

Painted wood and mirror

140 x 239 x 180 in. (355.6 x 607.1 x 457.2 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of the Artist, 1985



After participating in group exhibitions during the 1930s, Nevelson's first solo exhibition was held in September 1941 at Nierendorf Gallery, New York. It received praise in the *New York World-Telegram* and *New York Herald Tribune*.

In 1946, Nevelson participated in Whitney Museum of American Art's *Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Sculpture, Watercolors and Drawings* for the first time. Nevelson was included in the annual exhibition thirteen times over a period of twenty-seven years.

The prominent art critic Hilton Kramer praised the emerging artist in "The Sculpture of Louise Nevelson" in *Arts Magazine* (1958), marking a real turn in her career.

MoMA acquired a large *Sky Cathedral* from the critically acclaimed 1958 exhibition *Moon Garden + One* at Grand Central Modern, leading up to her participation in the museum's epoch-making *Sixteen Americans*, 1959; a group show together with Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Rauschenberg and Frank Stella and others, where she exhibited *Dawn's Wedding Feast*.

Furthermore, in 1962, Nevelson was elected first vice-president of the Federation of Modern Painters and Sculptors. The same year she joined the Sculptors Guild and was elected president of the National Artists' Enquiry, being the first woman to hold the position.

Confirming Her Position



Louise Nevelson, Alberto Giacometti and MoMA curator Dorothy Miller in front of *Voyage* at the American Pavilion of the Venice Biennale, 1962.

In 1962, Nevelson became the first woman and first American sculptor to be represented by Sidney Janis Gallery. From 1964 and onwards, Nevelson was represented by Pace Gallery, under the direction of her long-term dealer, friend and supporter Arnold B. Glimcher.

Nevelson represented the United States at the **Venice Biennale** for the first time in 1962. In 1964 and 1968, she was included in **documenta** Kassel.

The Whitney Museum mounted the first retrospective of Nevelson's works in 1967. That year marked another shift in Nevelson's career as she was now recognized by her peers, and more specifically, amongst the great male artists of her time. She was one of the few women included in major group shows such as: *American Sculpture of the 1960's* at the Los Angeles County Museum, *Guggenheim International* in New York, *Sculpture in Environment* in the City of New York Arts Festival and *Sculpture: A Generation of Innovation* at the Art Institute of Chicago; which all took place in 1967.

The Rise to International Fame



Louise Nevelson, The New York Times Cover, January 24th 1971

Entering the new decade of the 1970s, Nevelson had firmly asserted her position as one of the most important American artists of her time. During the decade and onwards, she received several public and civic commissions. Princeton University was the first to commission a monumental outdoor sculpture from Nevelson, resulting in *Atmosphere and Environment X*, installed in 1971. Another notable public commission from the decade was *Shadows and Flags*, installed in 1978 at former Legion Memorial Square, downtown Manhattan; the following year the square was renamed Louise Nevelson Plaza.

In January 1971, Nevelson makes the cover of *The New York Times Magazine*, with *Dawn's Wedding Chapel II* (1959, in the collection of Whitney Museum).

Her solo exhibition at Studio Marconi in Milan travelled to the **Moderna Museet Stockholm in 1973**. The same year, Walker Art Center in Minneapolis presents a survey exhibition of Nevelson's wood sculpture accompanied by a major catalogue. The exhibition travelled to five other museums.

In 1976, Nevelson made her way back to Venice, exhibiting pieces from *Moon Garden + One* during the Biennale.

In honor of Louise Nevelson's 80th birthday, Whitney Museum presented *Louise Nevelson: Atmospheres and Environments* (1980) exhibiting the artist's major black, white and gold sculptural installations from 1955-61 together with *Mrs. N's Palace*.

Recognition



Louise Nevelson received the **National Medal of Arts** from President Ronald Reagan and First Lady Nancy Reagan at the White House, 1985; and in 2000 **commemorative stamps** was issued by the U.S. Postal Service.



A Selection of Public and Civic Commissions



Atmosphere and Environment X, commissioned by Princeton University 1969-1970, making it Nevelson's first monumental outdoor sculpture.



In 1970, Temple Beth-El in Great Neck, New York, commissioned Nevelson to create *The White Flame of the Six Million*, a 55 foot wall sculpture in memory of those who died in the Holocaust.

...Black is the most aristocratic color of all... You can be quiet and it contains the whole thing. There is no color that will give you the feeling of totality. Of peace. Of greatness. Of quietness. Of excitement. I have seen things that were transformed into black, that took on just greatness. I don't know a lesser word.

Louise Nevelson



Living with Louise Nevelson



Arnold Scaasi's New York duplex. *Architectural Digest*. January / February, 1977



New York, collector's home. *Architectural Digest*, "Nestled in the New York Sky". April 30, 2007.



In a collector's home in NYC. *Architectural Digest*. December 2014.



Holly Hunt's home, Chicago. *Architectural Digest*.



Library, beach house in South Hampton. *Architectural Digest*.



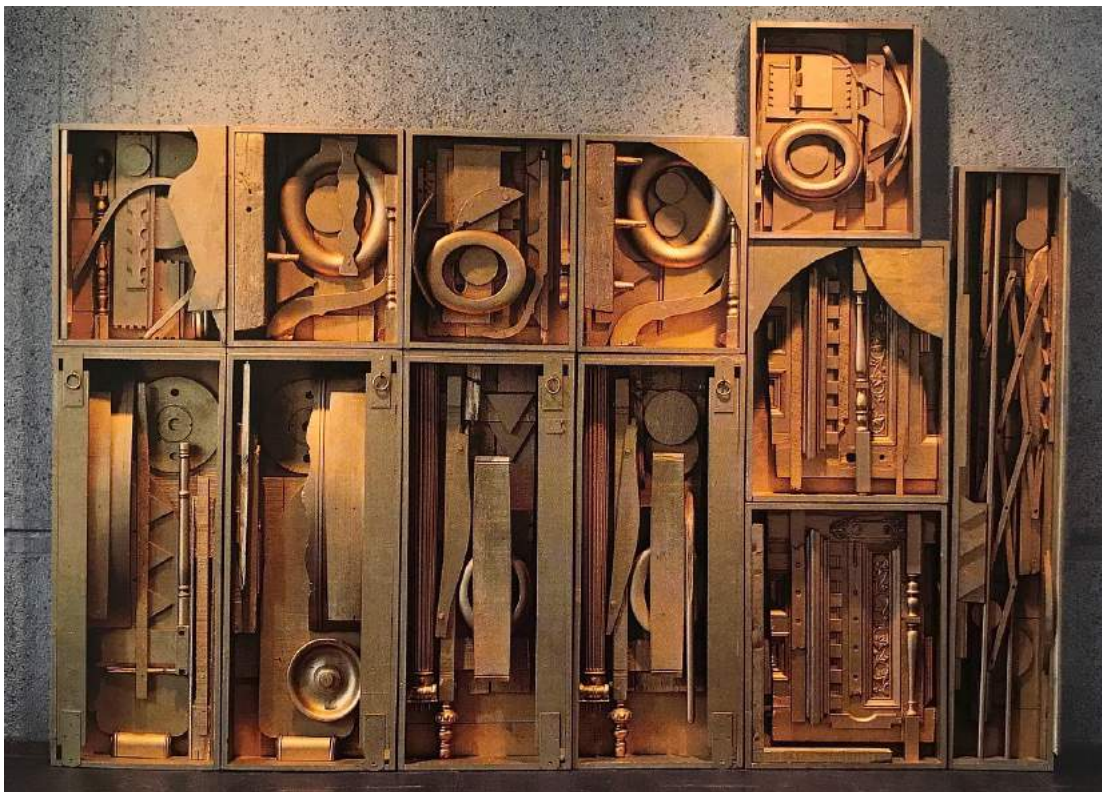
Storm King Art Center, Louise Nevelson, *City on the High Mountain* (1983), painted steel, 246 × 276 × 162 in. (625 x 701 x 412 cm)



And I said, 'Well, who cares? I'd rather do it and see what it's all about.' I don't want the safe way. The safe way limits you. —

Louise Nevelson

Public Collections



Louise Nevelson

Royal Tide II

1961-63

Painted wood

Overall: 94 1/2 × 126 1/2 × 8 in. (240 × 321.3 × 20.3 cm)

Whitney Museum of American Art

Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, Nagoya, Aichi, Japan

Albany Mall Project, Albany, New York

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York

The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, Connecticut

Allentown Art Museum, Allentown, Pennsylvania

Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, University of Texas, Austin, Texas

The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey

The Art Museum at Florida International University, Miami, Florida

Arts Club of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

City of Binghamton, New York

Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Alabama

Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts

The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York

Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia

City Art Museum, Saint Louis, Missouri

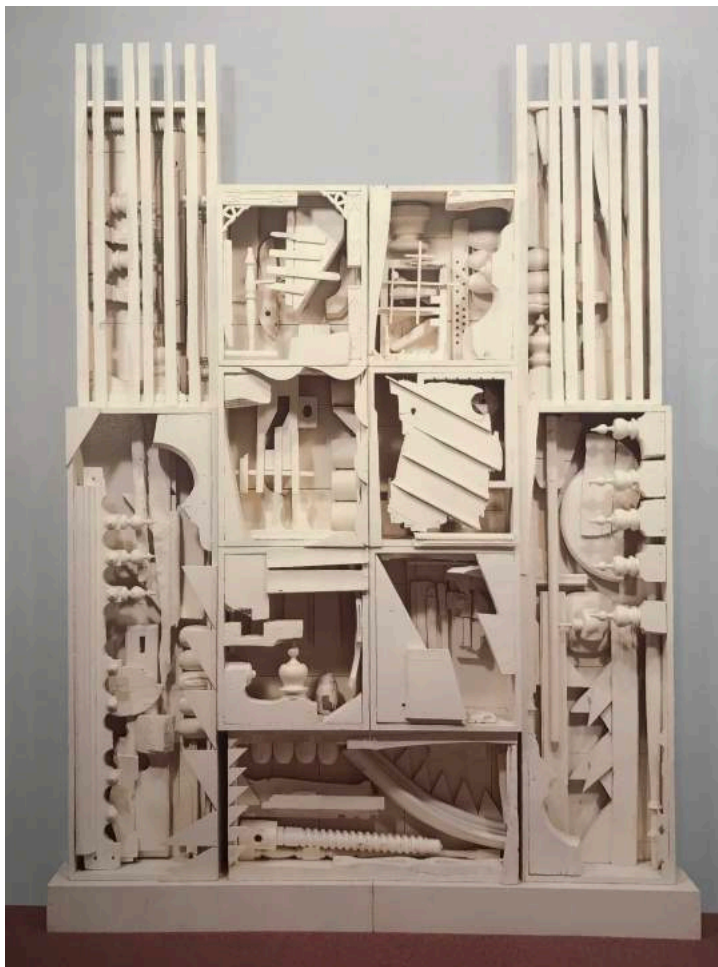
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio

The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas

Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, Delaware

Public Collections



Louise Nevelson

Dawn's Wedding Chapel II

1959

Painted wood

115 7/8 x 83 1/2 x 10 1/2 in. (294.3 x 212.1 x 26.7 cm)

Whitney Museum of American Art

The Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan

Fairmont Park, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, Maine

Fine Art Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, California

Friends of Art and Preservation in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

Fukutake Collection, Okayama, Japan

Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Torino, Torino, Italy

The Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University Art Collection,
New York, New York

Hakone Open-Air Museum, Hakone-machi, Japan

Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Japan

High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia

Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima, Japan

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution,
Washington, D.C.

Hospital Corporation of America, Chicago, Illinois

Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel

The Jewish Museum, New York, New York

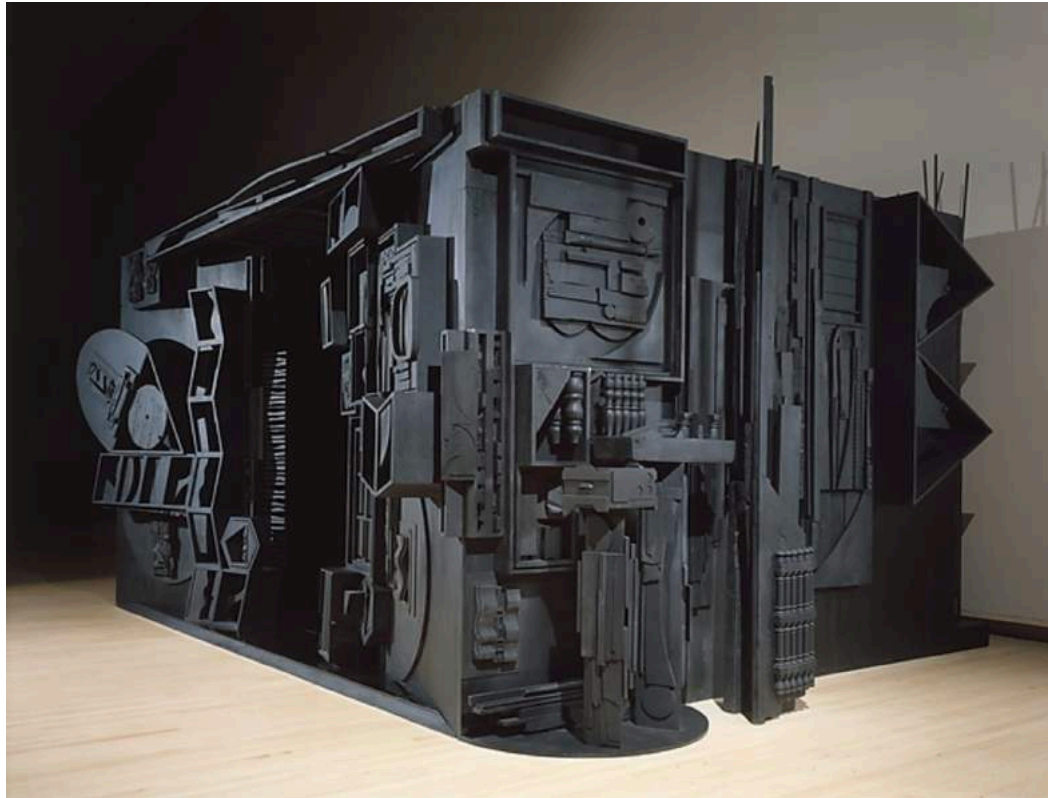
Julliard School of Music, Lincoln Center, New York, New York

Kawamura Memorial Museum, Japan

Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California

Public Collections



Louise Nevelson

Mrs. N's Palace,

1964-77

Painted wood

140 x 239 x 180 in. (355.6 x 607.1 x 457.2 cm)

Metropolitan Museum of Arts

Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark

Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida

Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park, Grand Rapids, Michigan

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York

Minnesota Museum of Art, Saint Paul, Minnesota

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, Canada

Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France

Musée de Grenoble, Grenoble, France

Musée de Peinture et de Sculpture, Grenoble, France

Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands

Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany

Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Illinois

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Houston, Texas

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York

The Museum of Modern Art, Toyama, Japan

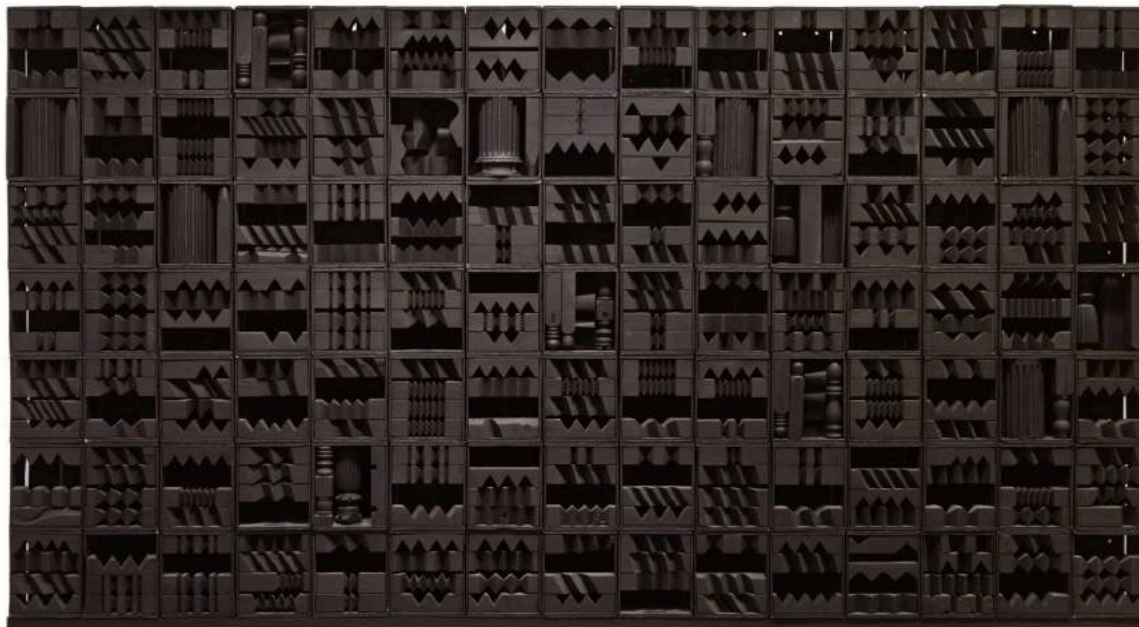
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri

New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, Louisiana

City of New York, New York

The Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey

Public Collections



Louise Nevelson

Luminous Zag: Night

1971

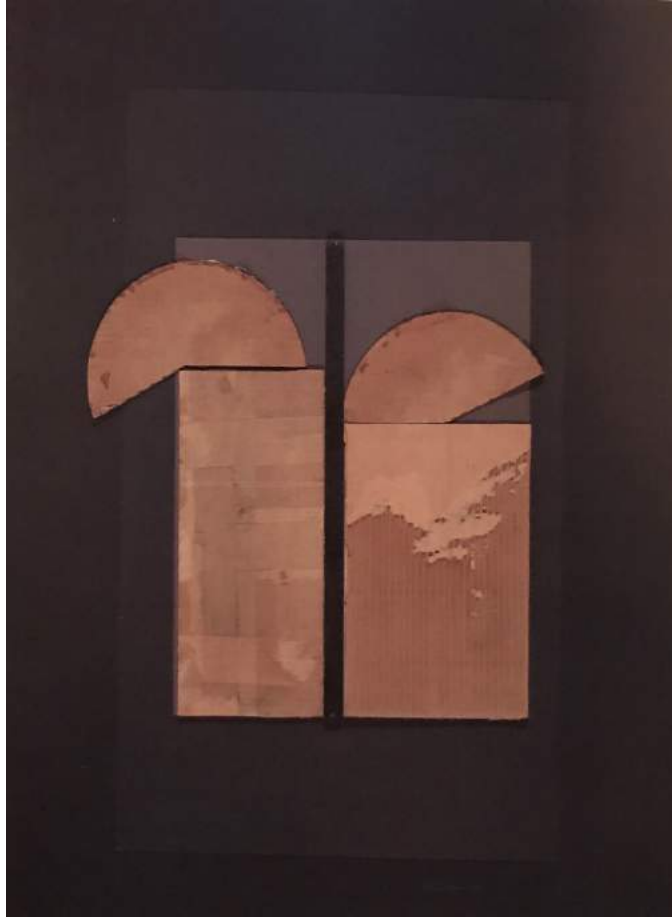
Painted wood

10" x 16" 1' x 10" ¾" in. (304.8 X 490.2 X 27.3 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Nordjyllands Kunstmuseum, Ålborg, Denmark
North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, North Carolina
Norton Simon Museum of Art, Pasadena, California
Ohara Museum of Art, Kurashiki, Okayama, Japan
Openluchtmuseum voor Beeldhouwkunst Middelheim, Antwerp, Belgium
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, Arizona
Queens College, Queens, New York
Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, The Netherlands
Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts
San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, California
Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, Scotland
City of Scottsdale, Arizona
Sezon Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan
The Sogetsu Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York
Sonje Museum of Contemporary Art, Kyungje, Korea
Storm King Art Center, Sculpture Park, Mountainville, New York
Tate Gallery, London, England
Temple Israel, Boston, Massachusetts
The Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio
University of Nebraska Art Galleries - Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln, Nebraska

Public Collections



Louise Nevelson

Untitled

1981

Wood and cardboard collage on matboard, mounted on wood

40 1/8 x 32 1/8 x 3/4 in. (101.8 x 81.4 x 1.9 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Wakayama Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, Wakayama, Japan

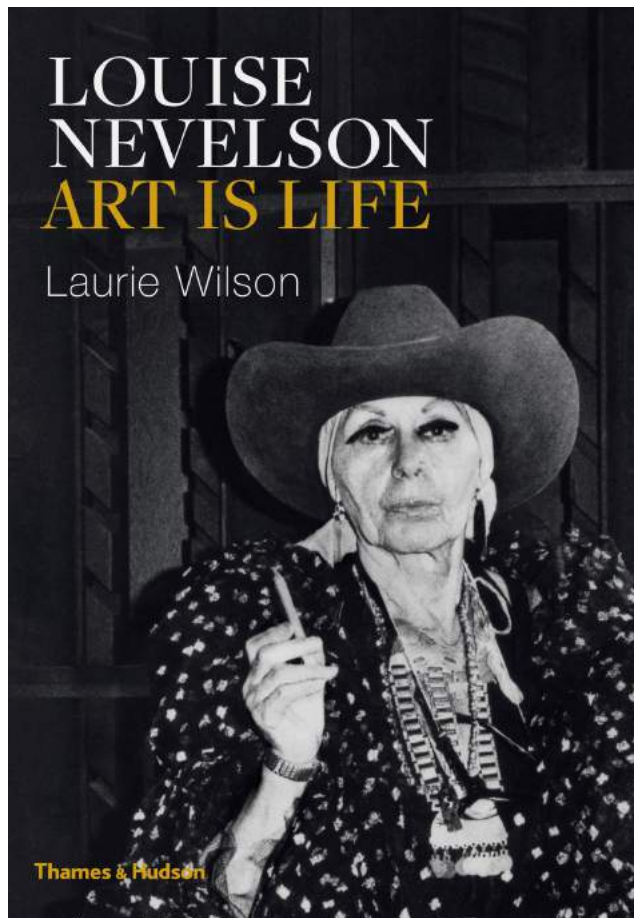
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut

Suggested Reading



Nevelson, Louise, et al. *The sculpture of Louise Nevelson: constructing a legend*. New York, Jewish Museum, 2009.

Lisle, Laurie. *Louise Nevelson: a passionate life*. New York, Summit Books, 1990.

Wilson, Laurie, and Louise Nevelson. *Louise Nevelson: Light and Shadow*. New York, NY, Thames & Hudson, 2016.

Celant, Germano. *Louise Nevelson*. Milano, Skira, 2012.

Wilson, Laurie. *Louise Nevelson: Art is Life*. London, Thames & Hudson, 2016.

Nevelson, Louise, and Germano Celant. *Nevelson*. Milano, Charta, 1994.

Nevelson, Louise, and Bruno Corà. *Louise Nevelson*. Milano, Skira, 2016.

Albee, Edward. *Louise Nevelson: Atmospheres and Environments*. New York, Clarkson N. Potter in association with the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1980.