



PRESS RELEASE

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Art Librarians Honor *A Dark, a Light, a Bright: The Designs of Dorothy Liebes* with 2023 George Wittenborn Memorial Book Award

WESTFORD, Massachusetts – The exhibition catalog *A Dark, a Light, a Bright: The Designs of Dorothy Liebes* has been recognized by the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA) for excellence in art publishing. Sara Sapire, the New Business and Product Development Director at Yale University Press, accepted the 45th Annual George Wittenborn Memorial Book Award at the Convocation & Awards Ceremony on Thursday, April 4, 2024 during the 52nd annual ARLIS/NA national conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Established in 1980, the Wittenborn Award honors the memory of George Wittenborn, a premier New York art book dealer and publisher who was a prominent supporter of the Society in its formative years.

A Dark, a Light, a Bright: The Designs of Dorothy Liebes is the first major publication dedicated to her life and work. Published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name, this catalog was produced by the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in association with Yale University Press and was edited by Susan Brown and Alexa Griffith Winton, with additional contributions from John Stuart Gordon, Emily M. Orr, Leigh Wishner, Monica Penick, and Erica Warren.

Called “the greatest modern weaver and the mother of the twentieth-century palette,” Dorothy Liebes is responsible for the Liebes Look, a unique combination of texture and colors that most associate with mid-century modern American design. Her reach did not end there; she not only worked with interior design, but also fashion, industrial design, transportation, film, and architecture. Her designs were used in everything from mass-produced, affordable furniture and everyday clothing to high fashion and cutting-edge architectural design, seen most notably with her close working and personal relationship with Frank Lloyd Wright and his wife, Olgivanna.

As the first extensive publication on Liebes, this catalog provides much needed scholarship about her incredible and varied career that spanned so many facets of American society. The

essays, organized around the design aspects of her work, are informative, detailed accounts of Liebes's impact and reach throughout her career. The images throughout showcase the ways in which Liebes's designs permeated society and culture by illustrating her textiles in house interiors, across magazine spreads, and on fashion models. There is also a documentary feel to many of the images in her private studio, at looms with other artisans, and of her with friends and family. With attention to design details any reader would expect from a Design Museum publication, the book also provides full-page, close-up images of fabric swatches that showcase the masterful and intricate work Liebes put into all of her designs.

This book, designed by Maricris Herrera and Andrea Volcán of Estudio Herrera in Mexico City, is a beautiful and thoughtful homage to the artist. The swiss binding with an exposed spine is not only visually stunning, but mirrors the craftsmanship of Liebes's textiles. The mustard yellow thread and chapter header pages throughout the text match the color of Liebes's designs; these threads also peak through when you reach the center of each section of collated pages. The switch to glossy pages for the detail images of Liebes's designs provides the clarity needed to truly understand the ingenuity in her woven work. This book is an exquisite love story to Liebes's work and textiles in general and is the embodiment of all the qualities of the Wittenborn Award.

The committee also selected two honorable mention catalogs. *Making Her Mark: A History of Women Artists in Europe, 1400-1800* was edited by Andaleeb Badiie Banta & Alexa Greist, with Theresa Kutasz Christensen and published by Goose Lane Editions, along with the Art Gallery of Ontario and Baltimore Museum of Art. Additionally, *Degas and the Laundress: Women, Work, and Impressionism* was written by Britany Salsbury, with contributions by Aleksandra Bursac, Michelle Foa, Gretchen Schultz, Charles Sowerwine, Richard Thomson, and Claire White, published by the Cleveland Museum of Art, and distributed by Yale University Press. Finally, we would like to acknowledge a special mention catalog, *Arctic/Amazon: Networks of Global Indigeneity* by Gerald McMaster & Nina Vincent, published by Goose Lane Editions, in partnership with Wapatah Centre for Indigenous Visual Knowledge.

The members of the 2023 ARLIS/NA George Wittenborn Memorial Book Award Sub-Committee were: Rebekah S. Boulton (chair), Craig Bunch, Lindsey Jackson, Mark Pompelia, and Jenny Stone

About the Art Libraries Society of North America

Founded in 1972, the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA) is a dynamic, international organization of close to 1,000 individuals devoted to fostering excellence in art and design librarianship and image management in the United States, Canada and Mexico.



The membership includes architecture and art librarians, visual resources professionals, artists, curators, educators, publishers, students, and other interested in visual arts information. To serve this diverse constituency, the Society provides a wide range of programs and services within an organizational structure that encourages participation at every level.

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