Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Doris Sams for her thoughtful work and for assisting us with the exhibition process. The extent to which contemporary artists also play the role of curators in assembling their work is not sufficiently appreciated. The majority of the works in this exhibition are on loan from the artist; however, we are also grateful to our other lenders: Dr. Jerome and Mrs. Rhoda Dersh.

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About the Artist

Doris Sams received her Bachelor in Science in Art Education from Kutztown University. Thereafter she pursued graduate studies in studio at the Tyler School of Art at Temple University, studied art history at the Barnes Foundation and entered a program of self-study at the Sem Ghelardini Studios in Pietrasanta, Italy. This later location exposed her to the most famous and beautiful marble in the world. Her teaching experience has included elementary school, university, and over twenty-five years of private classes in her studio. She has exhibited in numerous exhibitions in Eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey, as well as New York City. Her work is included in many important private and public collections, including: Bryn Mawr College, Muhlenberg College, and the Yamaha Corporation. She has also completed a number of site specific commissions, including a work for the Arrow Corporation. Doris Sams lives and works in Pottstown, Pennsylvania and Newboro Lake, Ontario.

Where's It All Going? (also on cover)

Speckled green steatite stone, 34 x 13.5 x 7 inches, 2004

All artworks collection of the artist
DORIS SAMS
Freedman Gallery Albright College
I love the use of stone, because it is the most flexible and meaning impregnated material. The whole world is made of stone. It is our fundament. Stone is a direct link to the heart of the matter—a molecular link. When I tap it, I get an echo of that which we are. Then the whole world has resonance.

-Isamu Noguchi

Doris Sams once prefaced a talk on her work with Noguchi’s statement. For her the process of working with stone is one of exploration and discovery: deciphering the characteristics of a selected piece of material and maintaining a rhythm combining thought and emotion. This dance between intellect and intuition, preconception and impulse, creates a synchronicity that eventually resonates in the final object. So, the process and the product of that activity become one. Yet, more significantly, in the end, the result is elevated beyond a physical labor onto a plateau of resonance in our own mind’s eye. The object becomes art.

My father was a Mathematician, a Topologist—the study of surfaces. When I was a teenager he introduced me to what I perceived as almost mystical phenomenon: the Mobius Strip (a strip of paper twisted back onto itself so that it was apparently one sided) or the Klein Bottle (a container that turned into itself in a three-dimensional version of the Mobius Strip). Viewing a Doris Sams sculpture such as Turnion reminds me of my earlier attempts to comprehend these topological effects. A flowing form turns around and into itself, disappears and reappears, transmutating itself into a chimera of its former self only to reemerge and become itself again. All of this movement, then combines into a whole; and, then changes again and reassembles itself.

To understand these works, it is necessary to traverse the area around them, establishing in our memory a visual history of a multitude of angles of view. Finally, the three-dimensional picture is not unlike an imaginary hologram constructed of bits of memory. Viewing one side informs us of the other side, but we are also surprised that, although apparently simple, the whole picture is often too complex for our recollective powers to embrace. It becomes like a Gordian Knot challenging us to unravel its mysterious form.

For Doris Sams, combining a selection of a particular piece of stone with a preconceived notion of the potential design of the piece is akin to our trying to draw a recollective hologram in our minds. Somehow she gets her mind around the material and begins the removal of matter. Then, equally important, she follows the flow of the stone, respecting its grains and taking direction from its nature. So, the preconceived notion is often reassessed rather than forced. This process of questioning oneself and reorienting one’s position is indicative of her method of making art and of living her life. She embraces no steadfast conservative concept that is unalterable. This liberty, the liberation of her process, implants a remarkable vitality in the finished work.

Looking at the work of Sams, an understanding of her process, a tracing of the tracks of her physical manipulations and her decisive counterpoints combined with her expressive freedoms, brings these objects to life. Viewing a drip painting by Jackson Pollock, tracking his impulsive and controlled gestures, gives us a similar appreciation for the reconciled completeness of the object. Conceptually, this reaffirmation is almost a matter of viewing a legitimized birth as opposed to a bastardization of appropriating materials.

There is a balance in these works, a Ying and Yang of give and take. In Where’s It All Going the positive masses inform us of the negative volumes that have been removed (the hole in a stone becoming as important as the solid material that surrounds it). Just as the crook enclosed between the arm and the body in Michelangelo’s David is as significant (and beautiful) as the arm itself. At the same time these pieces are energized by a tension wrought by variations in texture, or, as in Centered View in a combination of organic natural forms competing with more geometrical manmade components.

In reference to sculpture consisting of an assortment of objects, the Russian Constructivist, Vladimir Tatlin, spoke of the culture of materials—the inherent characteristics that a material retains, echoing its history to the viewer. For Doris Sams, this history of the stone itself, its present day character combined with its miraculous past, provides a dramatic waltz, resonating through time—from a prehistoric era into a present day epoch.
**Turn About**  
Gray steatite stone, 17.5 x 19 x 12 inches, 2004

**Portals**  
Steatite stone, 24 x 15 x 14 inches, 2002

**Centered View**  
Light gray alabaster stone on black granite post and base, 19 x 11 x 8 inches, 2004
**Focus in Brown**  
Brown steatite stone, 22 x 14 x 9 inches, 2004

**Insight**  
Raspberry alabaster, 31 x 15 x 10 inches, 2004
**Turnion**

Brown steatite stone, 17 x 13 x 9.5 inches, 2004