

Jean (Hans) Arp (1886–1966)

Chapeau-Forêt, 1960

Demeter, circa 1960

Feuille sur cristal, 1954

Sculpture Classique, 1960

Simplicité Sinueuse, 1960

Souvenir d'Athènes, 1955

Torse, n.d.



Artist and style:

Jean Arp, also known as Hans Arp,¹ was a French-German sculptor, poet, painter, and collagist² who participated in multiple modern art movements such as Dada, Surrealism, and Abstraction-Creation. While a student, the accepted ideas about art that were reinforced at the prominent academies disenchanted Arp. He recalled, “By the time I was 16 the everlasting copying of stuffed birds and withered flowers at the Strasbourg School of Applied Art not only poisoned drawing for me but destroyed my taste for all artistic activity. I took refuge in poetry.”³ Arp gradually developed his own artistic approach which his teachers discouraged: “I tried to be natural in other words the exact opposite of what drawing teachers call ‘faithful to nature.’ I made my first experiments with free form.”⁴ Arp sculptures can be described as biomorphic, modeling artistic design elements after shapes reminiscent of nature and living organisms. While these forms are abstract, they refer to, or evoke, living forms.

An explanation of Arp’s rejection of traditional art was published in a 1932 *Transition* magazine under the title “Notes From a Dada Diary.” Arp wrote (in lowercase letters), “art is fruit growing out of man like the fruit out of a plant like the child out of the mother. while the fruit of the plant grows independent forms and never resembles a balloon or a president in a cutaway suit the artistic fruit of man shows for the most part a ridiculous resemblance to the appearance of other things. reason tells man to stand above nature and to be the measure of all things. thus man thinks he is able to live and to create against the laws of nature and he creates abortions. through reason man became a tragic and ugly figure. i dare say he would create even his children in the form of vases with umbilical cords if he could do so. reason has cut man off from nature.”⁵

Arp Sculptures at Sunnylands:

The Annenbergs owned seven works by Jean Arp. Six of them were purchased before 1963. Below are details we know about the pieces.



Feuille Sur Cristal

Leaf on Crystal

1954

2/5

Bronze

Annenberg purchase: Dunkelman Gallery, Toronto

Sunnylands Collection 2009.1.83



Chapeau-Forêt

Forest Hat

1960

Bronze

Annenberg purchase: circa 1968

Sunnylands Collection 2009.1.73

¹ Robertson, Eric. “Creation and (De) Construction in the Work of Hans Jean Arp.” *Text Into Image: Image into Text: Proceedings of the Interdisciplinary Bicentenary Conference Held at St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth (The National University of Ireland) in September 1995*. Ed. Jeffrey Morrison and Florian Krobb. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997. 203–219. Print.

² “On my Way.” <http://www.fondationarp.org/on-my-way.html>

³ Arp, Jean. “Looking.” Soby, James Thrall. *Arp: The Museum of Modern Art*. Doubleday, New York, 1958, Print. P.12.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Soby, James Thrall. *Arp: The Museum of Modern Art*. Doubleday, New York, 1958, Print. P.27.



Sculpture Classique

Classical Sculpture

1960

1/5

Bronze

Annenberg purchase:
1963, Sidney Janis Gallery, NY

Sunnylands Collection 2009.1.79



Demeter

circa 1960

1/3

Hollow cast bronze on an artist-attributed wooden pedestal

Annenberg purchase: 1963, Sidney Janis Gallery, NY

Sunnylands Collection 2009.1.74

Demeter underwent conservation in 2014. Part of this process involves thoroughly researching the artist's artistic process and original intention. The conservator learned that it is a common misconception that Arp intended for his sculpture to be highly reflective. Arp's personal assistant from 1958–1966, Andre Munier, asserted that this is untrue: "Mr. Arp hated shiny sculptures. He hated that. Because if it's shiny, you can't appreciate the form. It creates reflections." Furthermore, Arp used the patina to camouflage casting plugs that would otherwise be visible. Despite Arp's aesthetic choices, art dealers who needed to market to buyer's interest, were known to use abrasion to remove the mottled patinas and reveal a bright, reflective surface, a popular finish. This was suspected of the Annenberg *Demeter* until early photographs were found, revealing a matte gold patina, meaning, that at some point, the sculpture was altered, resulting in a reflective surface. This brings to question the artist's original intent for other reflective Arps at Sunnylands: *Leaf on Crystal* and *Forest Hat*.