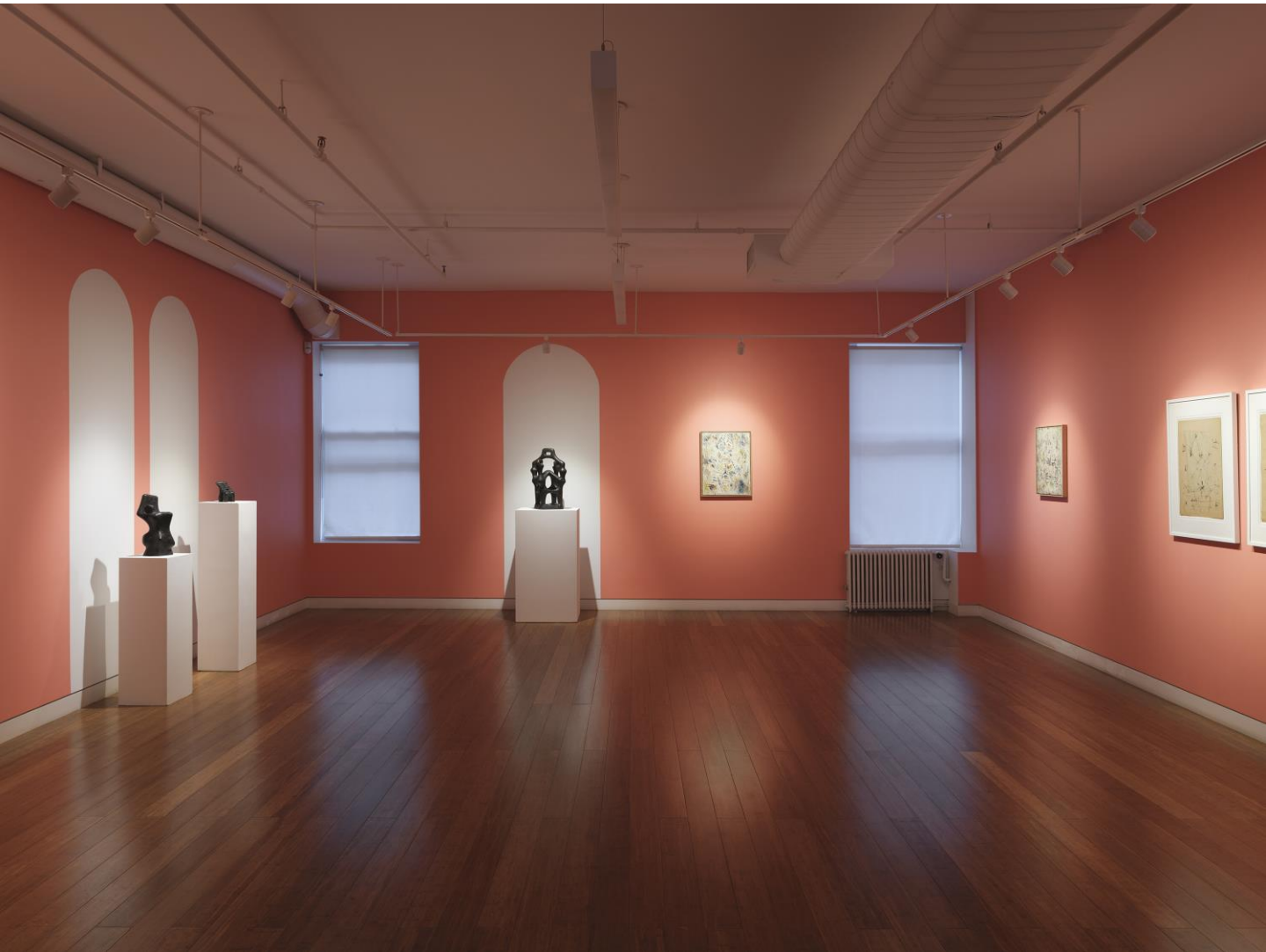


ERNEST MANCOBA | SONJA FERLOV MANCOBA

SEPTEMBER 26 – OCTOBER 31, 2020



AICON ART









Sonja Ferlov Mancoba **Ernest Mancoba**

Aicon Art Exhibition: September 26 – October 31, 2020

*Press Preview & V.I.P Reception **by appointment***: Saturday, September 26, 4pm – 8pm*
35 Great Jones St, New York NY 10012

Aicon Art is delighted to present **Sonja Ferlov Mancoba | Ernest Mancoba**, an important and timely exhibition that considers the creative impulses of two artists that were instrumental in founding the **CoBrA** avant-garde art movement. It will be the first major show in the United States of Sonia Ferlova Mancoba and the second of Ernest Mancoba (following the very successful first solo of the artist at Aicon Gallery in February, 2017). **Sonja Ferlov Mancoba | Ernest Mancoba** is the first exhibition of the two artists since their **Centre Pompidou 2019** show (June 26 to September 29, 2019).

The exhibition juxtaposes a suite of canvases and drawings with a series of inspired sculptures tracing both artists' heritage – Danish and South African respectively – and recording the profound influence they had on each other's work. Aicon Art's show is in generous partnership with Galerie Mikael Andersen, Copenhagen and the Ferlov Mancoba Estate.



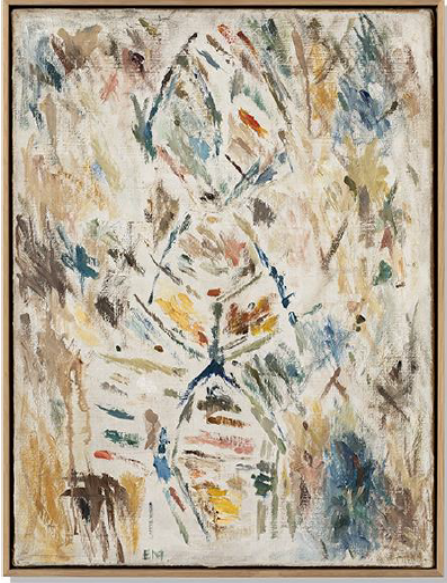
Sonja Ferlova Mancoba, *Guardians of our Inheritance*, 1973
Bronze, 12 in. height

Sonja Ferlov Mancoba holds a central position in Danish art history. She is primarily associated with the *Linien* - an artistic movement that championed an emancipated and engaged art that connected abstraction and surrealism. *Linien* set down the guidelines for spontaneous abstract creation that later played a major role in the Scandinavian art scene during and after the war.

After completing her first paintings, Ferlov Mancoba turned towards sculpture, experimenting with clay or using objects found in nature. At the crossroads between abstract and figurative forms, her sculptures and drawings were created using a large body of references, from African and Pre-Colombian art to Surrealism. Two distinct directions can be outlined in the artist's sculptural production. One is frontal and centered on the theme of the mask, underlining her inspiration from ethnographic objects – as illustrated in works like *Guardians of our Inheritance* (1973) - the other based on organic and abstract forms, as seen in the work *Growth* (1967-1968). Her work continued to evolve through the 1980s and reveals an abiding interest in architecture. Anthropomorphic, her works unveil a way of seeing the individual as a being that is perpetually evolving, refashioning the body's borders, both in terms of the material and metaphysical, formal and spiritual.

In 1936 she moved to Paris, where in 1942 she married the South African painter Ernest Mancoba. Returning to Denmark in 1947, they were part of Høststudstillingen's CoBrA years, 1948 and 1949. The CoBrA doctrine was comprised in part by a stress on the absolute freedom of form and color with a focus on spontaneity and experiment,

a reaction against the prevailing tenets of Surrealism, and inspiration drawn from children's drawings. The group disbanded in 1951. Discouraged by the break-up of the movement, the couple moved back to Paris in 1961. Ferlov Mancoba's sculptures from 1935 to 1984 are artistic expressions of her view of humanity: "They are human expressions more than art," as she put it. She believed in letting the material speak to her and proceeded without prior plans or finished compositions in mind, and in her strong bronze sculptures you see inspiration that fluctuates between spontaneous art movements and concrete constructivism as well as traditional African art. Statens Museum for Kunst, The National Gallery of Denmark, mounted a large retrospective exhibition of her work of in 2019.



Ernest Mancoba, *Untitled 2*, c.1965
Oil on canvas, 25.5 x 19.5 in.

Ernest Mancoba's work holds its own amongst the 20th century's preeminent practitioners and proponents of avant-garde Modern art, whether globally or in the West. His eclectic influences spanned the traditional arts of Africa and Oceania, Scandinavian folk art and the free expression of children's artwork. Writing in 2010 the artist and critic Rasheed Araeen summarised Mancoba's contribution:

Mancoba's importance lies not only in what he himself did in 1939 and 1940, and subsequently, but what seems to be his precognition of what emerged later as CoBrA, Tachisme and Abstract Expressionism. What is extraordinary about Mancoba's achievement is that he is very likely the first artist from the whole colonised world – Africa, Asia, the Americas, Australasia and the Pacific – to enter the central core of modernism at the time when this world, particularly his own country of South Africa, was still struggling under colonialism, and to challenge modernism's historical paradigm on its own terms.

As his practice reached maturity in the late fifties and early sixties, a primary focus of his work emerged in delicate linear compositions on paper and canvas of version after version of a central totem-like abstracted figure composed with a minimal use of controlled but vibrant lines and subtle splashes of diffused color. As Mancoba himself stated about this focus in his art,

"In my painting it is difficult to say whether the central form is abstract or not. What I am concerned with, is whether the form can bring to life and transmit, with the strongest effect and by the lightest means possible, the being which has been in me..."

The artist maintained the importance of spontaneity and the use of one's intuition in the construction of images and in works like, *Untitled 2* (c.1965), the bold color, energetic gesture and commanding line, are evidence of this. In an important suite of the artist's talismanic calligraphic drawings, figuration succumbs entirely to expressionistic groupings of line and color resembling a series of mystical alphabets suffused with life and movement yet rendered with an astounding economy of means.

Mancoba consistently challenged and defied what was expected from him as a Black artist by his European artistic counterparts and scholars, and developed his own uniquely subjective practice that cannot be classified or pigeon-holed as African or "primitive" Modernism. Such a categorization is ill-informed and bears no place in present art historical discourse. After a lifetime of marginalization and mis-categorization, Mancoba's work is finally garnering the critical reevaluation it deserves – offering a global counterpoint to the Eurocentric understanding of Modern art. At the end of apartheid, Mancoba was honored with large retrospectives at the National Gallery in Cape Town and the Museum of Modern Art in Johannesburg. His work has been in major institutional exhibitions at the Tate Britain, Haus der Kunst, Munich, MOMA PS1 in New York and will Documenta 14, Universe in Universe in Kassel and Athens.

Please contact Aicon Art (newyork@aicongallery.com) for more information.

The New York Times

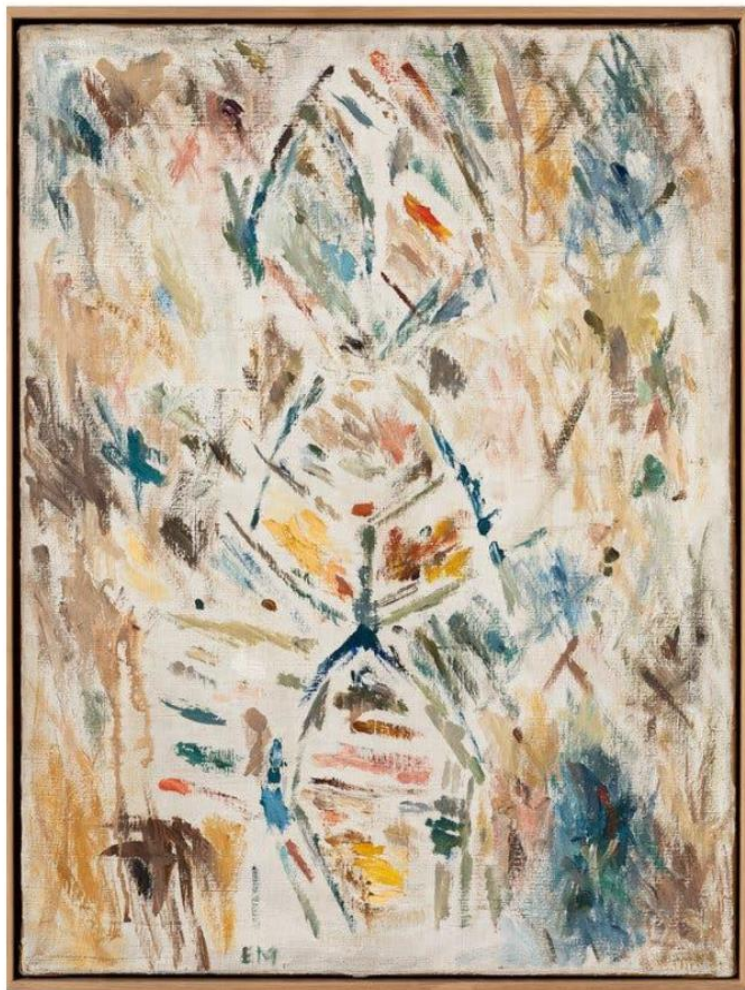
3 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now

Henni Alftan's distinctive artistic vision; Sonja Ferlov Mancoba and Ernest Mancoba's pairings; and Matthew Porter's pandemic-tinged photographs.

Published Sept. 30, 2020 Updated Oct. 1, 2020

Sonja Ferlov Mancoba and Ernest Mancoba

Through Oct. 31. Aicon Gallery, 35 Great Jones Street, Manhattan; 212-725-6092, aicongallery.com.



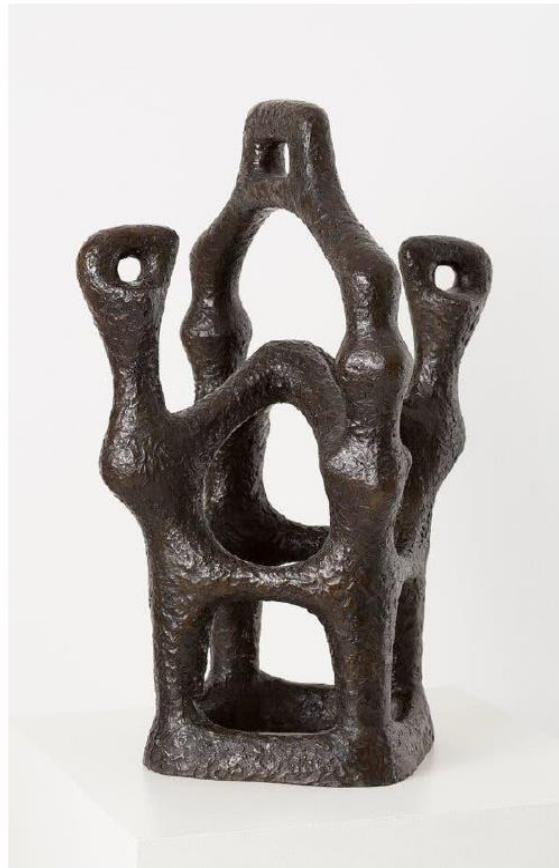
Ernest Mancoba's "Untitled 2," circa 1965, at Aicon Gallery. Ernest Mancoba and Aicon Gallery

If museums are serious about globalizing their collections, it won't do just to pick out a few Africans or Asians or Latin Americans whose art superficially resembles what the West already approbates. Art history has to be reconceived as a perpetual migration of artists, images and ideas — across oceans, across decades. A sterling case study awaits in the upstairs space of Aicon Gallery, displaying the lean, precise, calligraphic abstractions of Ernest Mancoba (1904-2002), a South African painter who spent

his career in Denmark and France. Defying past and present received ideas of nationality and identity, these delicate abstract compositions resound as the work of an artist committed to his full liberty.

Mancoba was born in Johannesburg in 1902 and studied art at an Anglican school; his early figurative sculptures, not in this show, are arguably the first “modern” artworks by a Black South African. The sensitive all-over abstractions on view here were made in European exile (he left before apartheid was instituted in 1948), and feature thickets of lines orchestrated into discrete zones of color. Often scaled like portraits, they almost always incorporate a few strokes that hint at a stick figure amid soft, syncopated slashes of ocher, mauve, teal or gray; the use of untreated canvas, too, give the compositions the melancholy delicacy of a muted trumpet solo.

Drawings and paintings on paper are sparer still, and reveal outlines of bodies whose angled stylization put me in mind of Central African reliquary statues. The later works on paper here, some from his tenth decade of life, appear like sentences of black asemic glyphs over colored slashes and Xs.



Sonja Ferlova Mancoba's "Guardians of Our Inheritance," from 1973. Sonja Ferlova Mancoba and Aicon Gallery

This show at Aicon includes 18 paintings and works on paper by Mancoba, handsomely installed against peach-colored walls, and paired with bronze sculptures by his wife, the Danish artist Sonja Ferlov Mancoba. Her bronzes of roughly finished metal, which can recall masks or totems, show the enduring influence of African sculpture on European modernism — and reaffirms that both husband and wife were working in a postwar Paris where a clean division of “African” and “European” aesthetics could not be made. The real urgency here, though, remains Ernest Mancoba’s abstractions. They ought to be in every serious modern art museum: not as a token of “African” modernism, but an exemplar of forms in motion. *JASON FARAGO*



Available Works



ERNEST MANCOBA

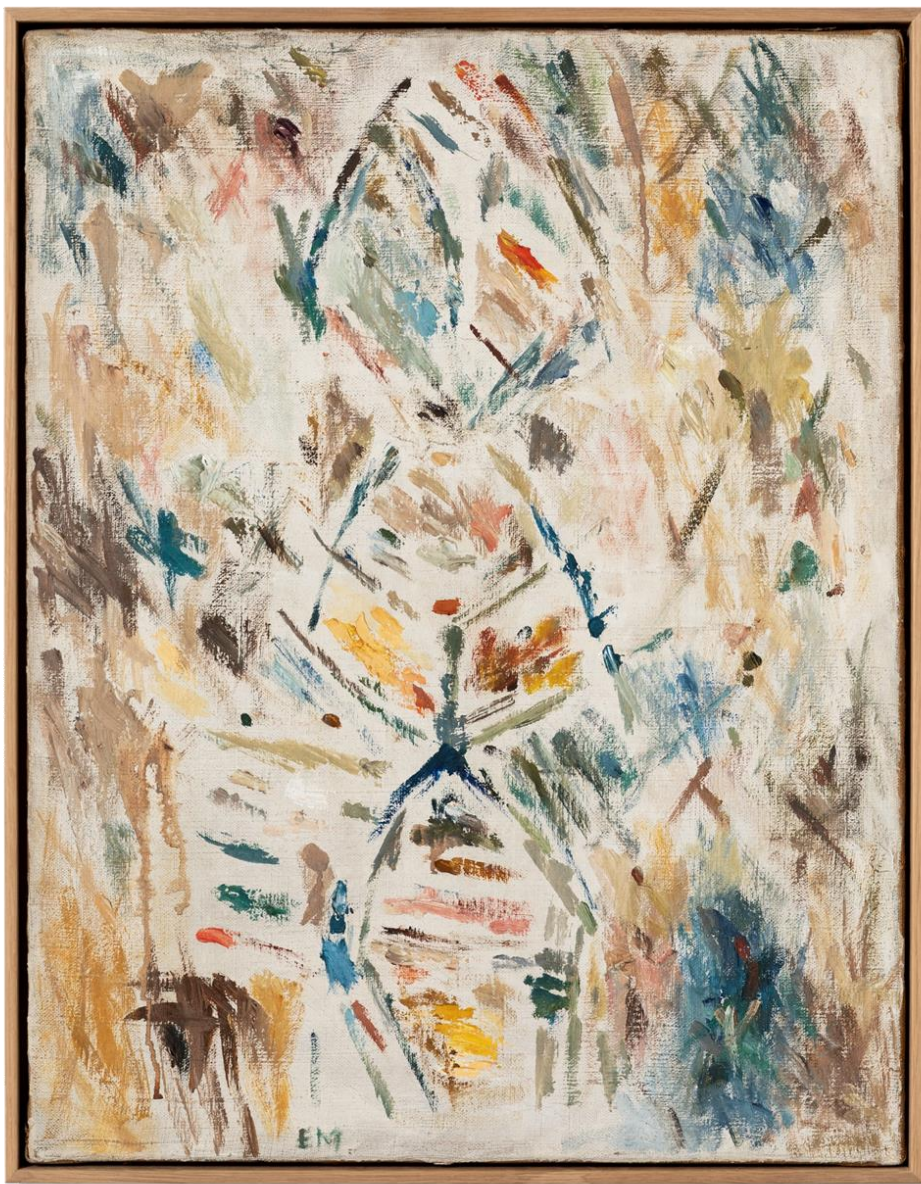
Untitled 1

N/d

Oil on canvas

16.5 x 13 inches

41 x 33 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

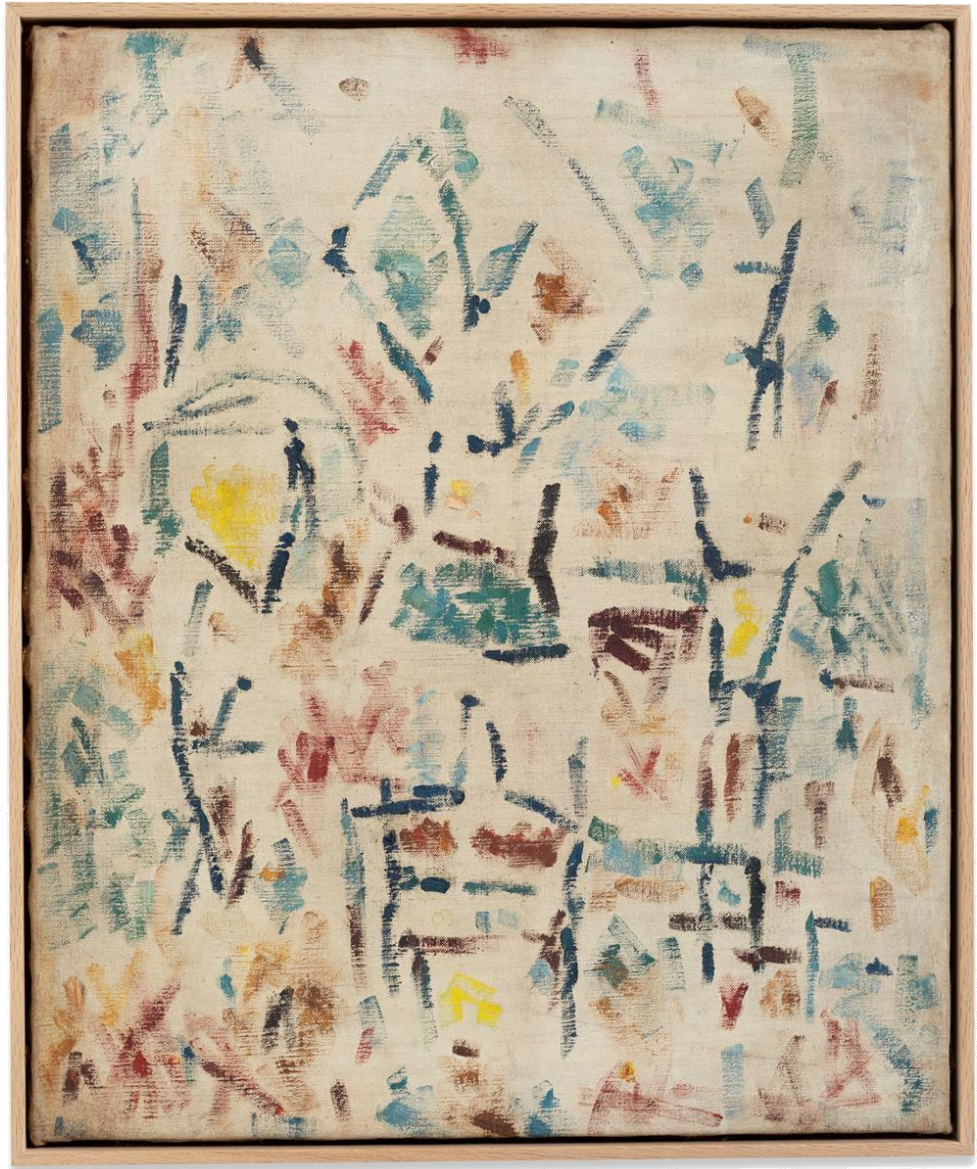
Untitled 2

ca.1965

Oil on canvas

25.5 x 19.5 inches

65 x 50 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

Untitled 3

N/d

Oil on canvas

22 x 18 inches

56 x 46 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

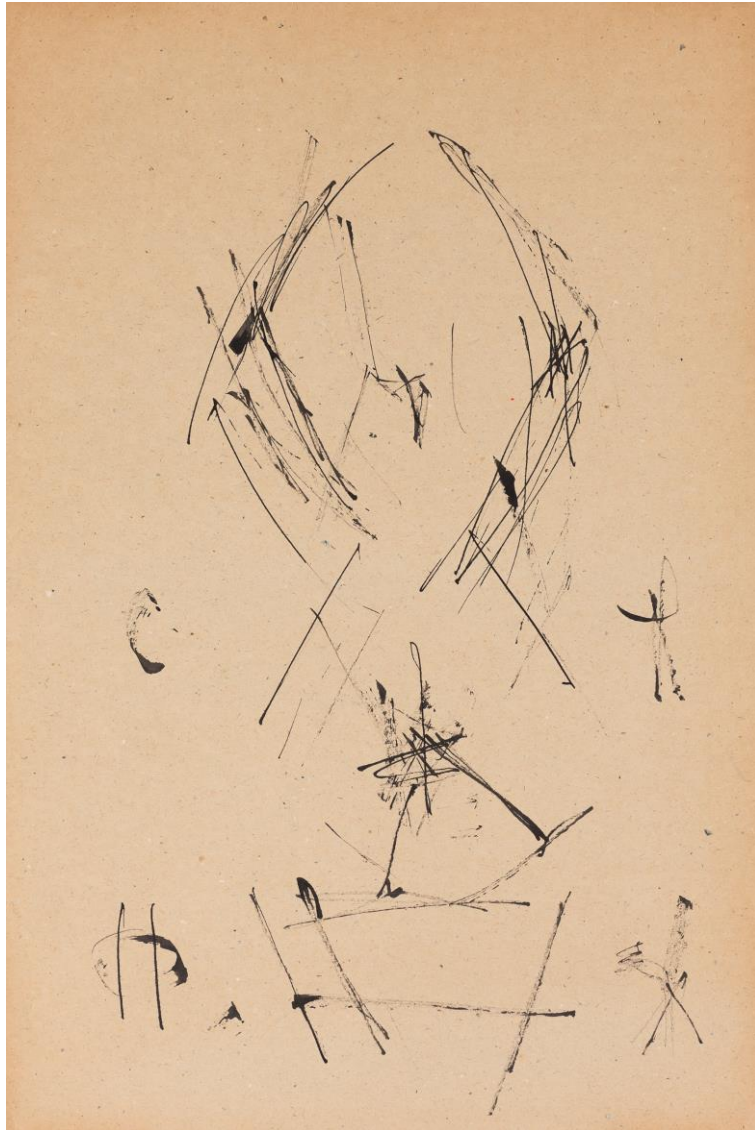
Untitled 4

N/d

Oil on canvas

22 x 18 inches

56 x 46 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

Untitled 5

N/d

Ink on paper

23 x 16.5 inches

58.5 x 42 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

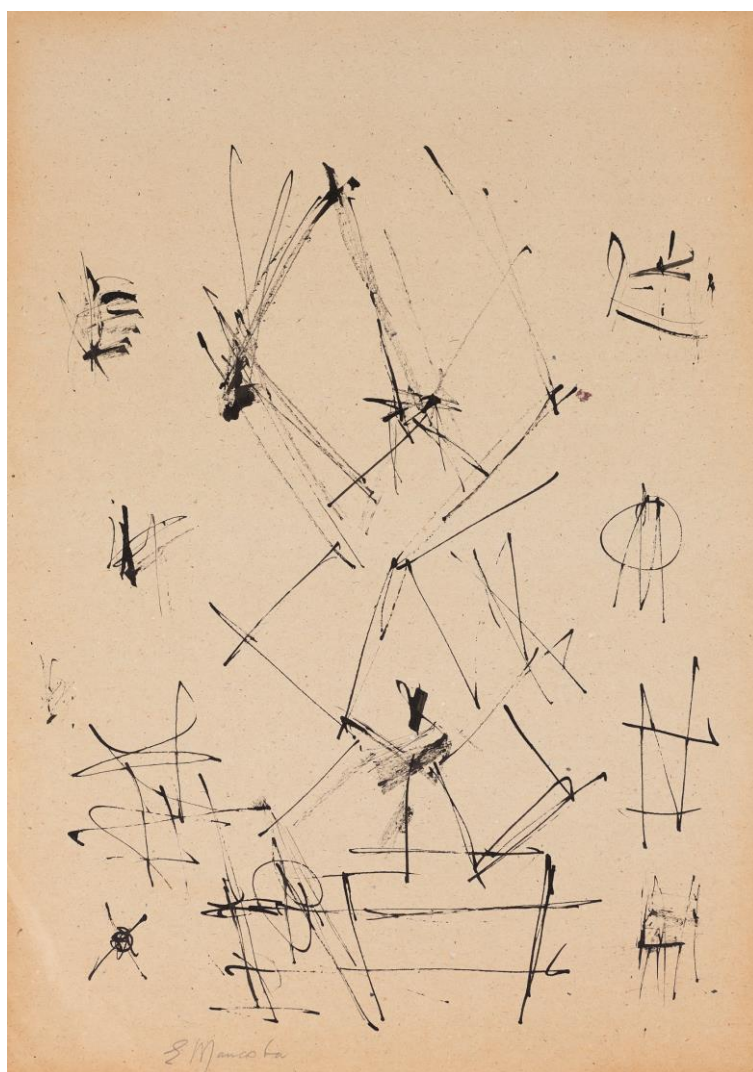
Untitled 6

N/d

Ink and oil pastel on paper

23 x 16.5 inches

58.5 x 42 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

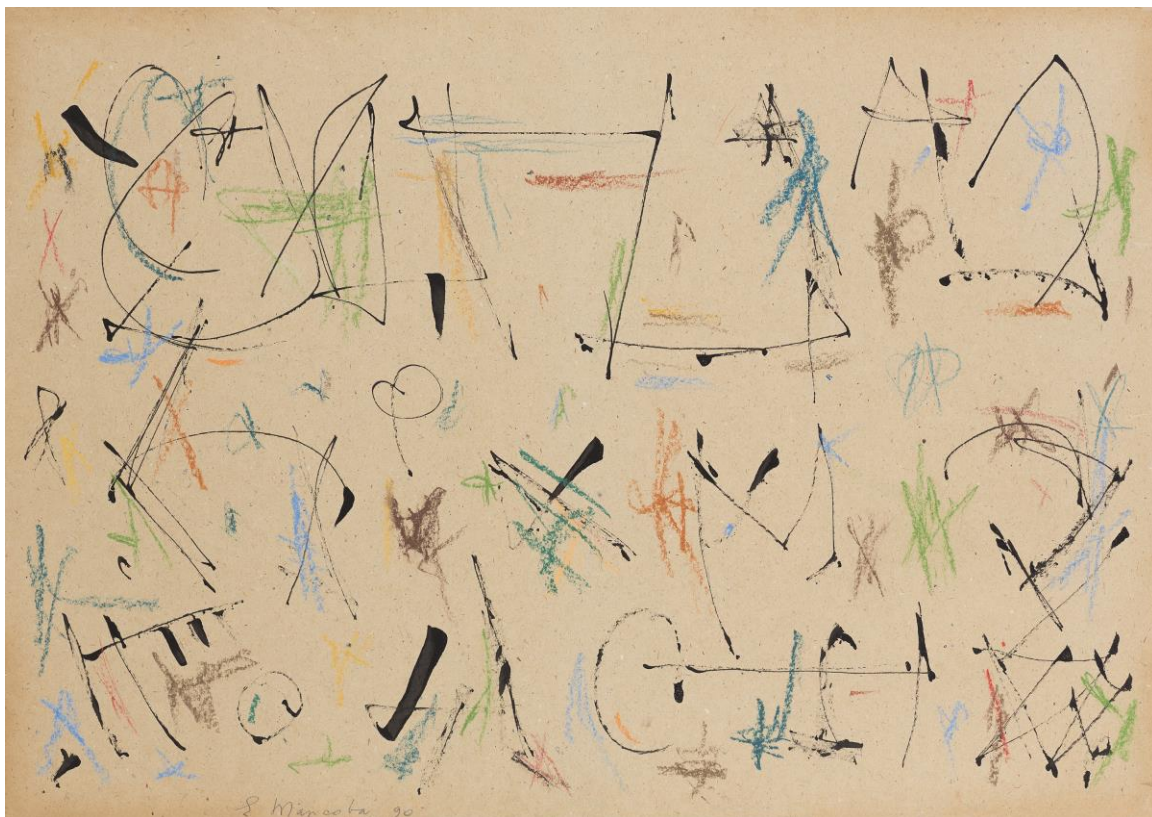
Untitled 7

N/d

Ink on paper

23 x 16.5 inches

58.5 x 42 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

Untitled 8

1990

Ink and oil pastel on paper

16.5 x 23 inches

42 x 58.5 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

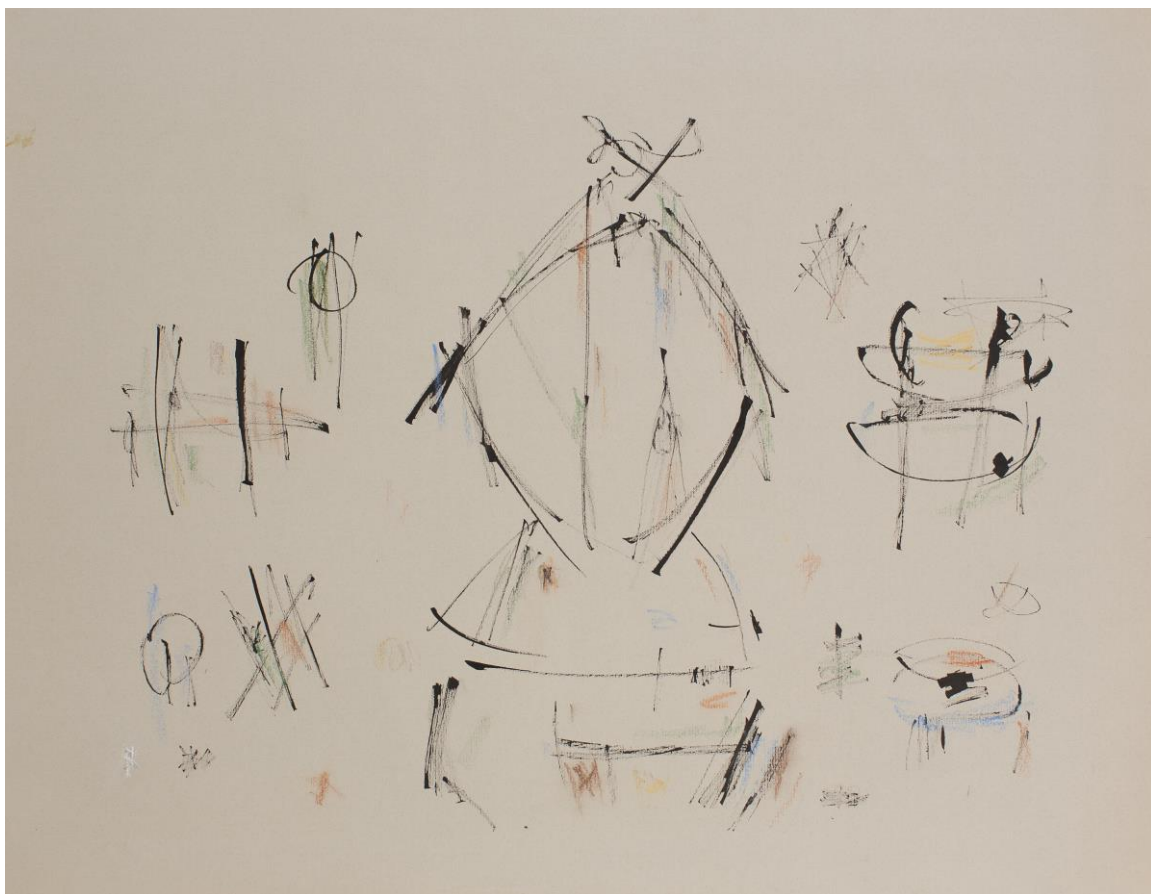
Untitled 9

N/d

Ink and oil pastel on paper

20 x 25.5 inches

51 x 65 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

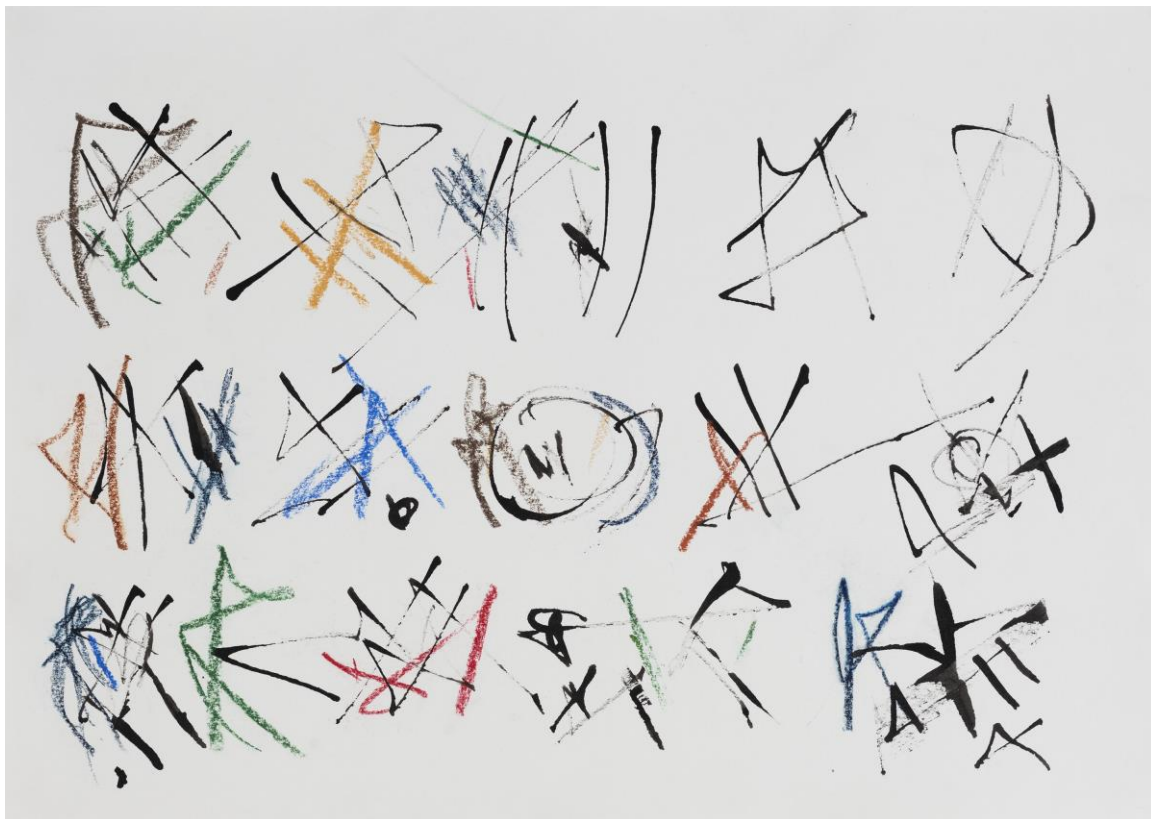
Untitled 10

N/d

Ink and oil pastel on paper

20 x 25.5 inches

51 x 65 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

Untitled 11

1993

Ink and oil pastel on paper

12 x 16.5 inches

30.5 x 42 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

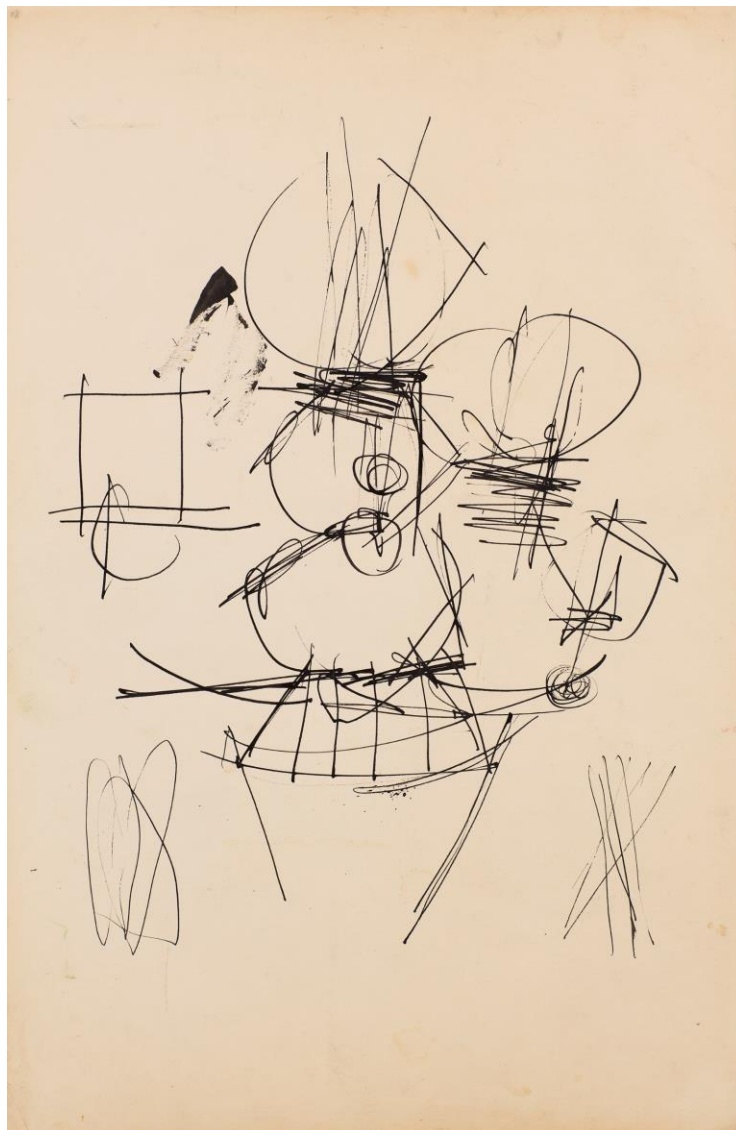
Untitled 12

N/d

Oil pastel on paper

14.5 x 20.5 inches

37 x 52 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

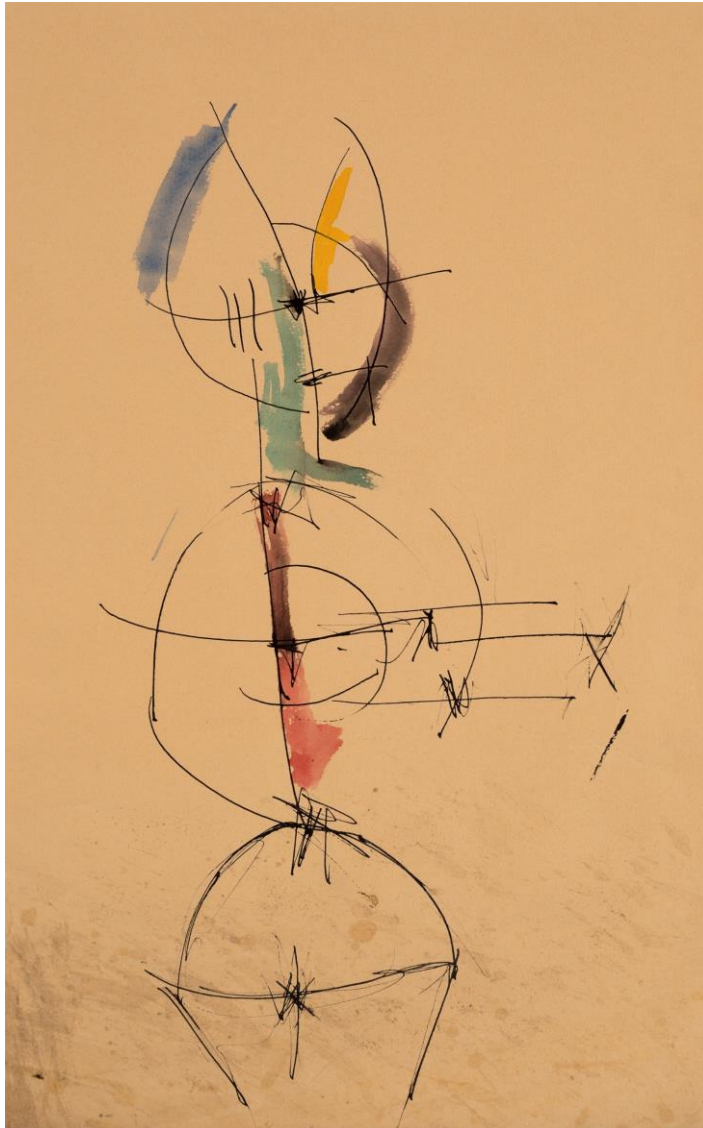
Untitled 13

N/d

Ink on paper

19.5 x 13 inches

50 x 33 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

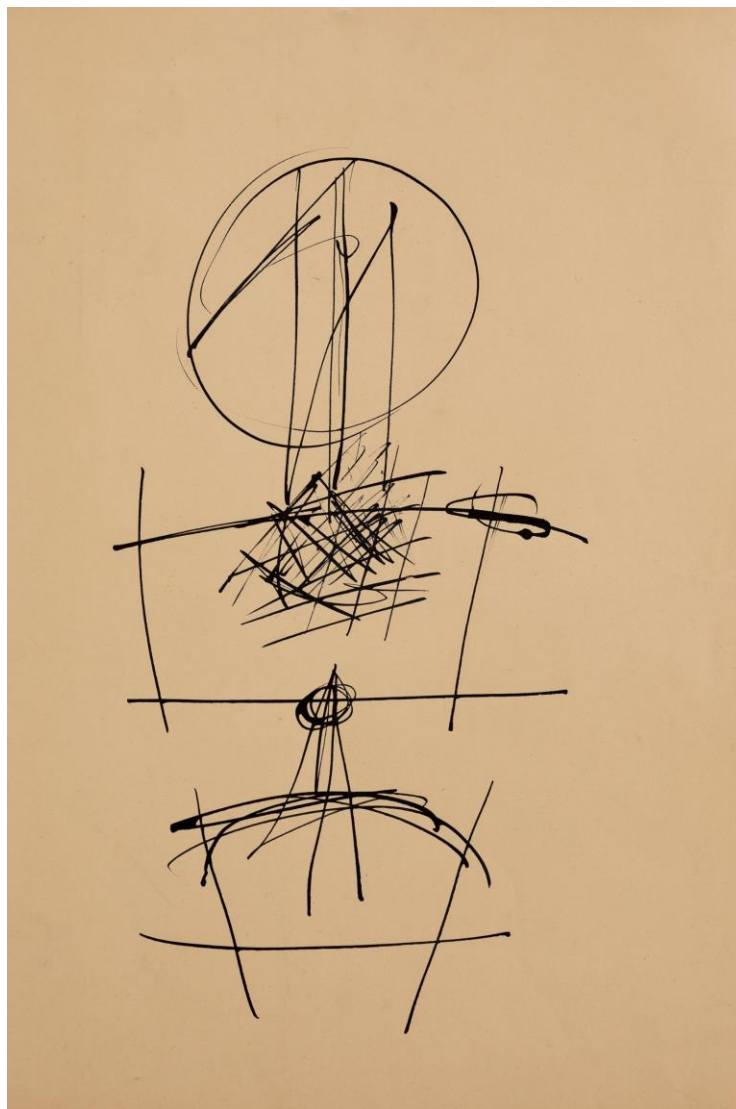
Untitled 14

N/d

Ink and watercolour on paper

18 x 11.5 inches

46 x 29 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

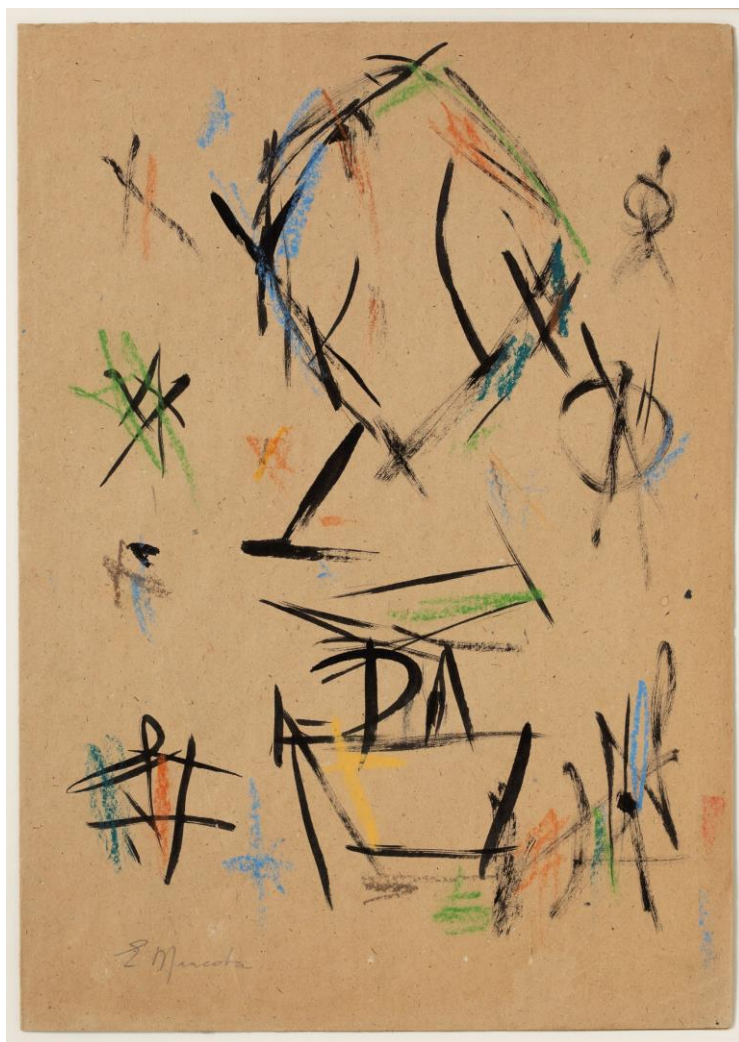
Untitled 15

N/d

Ink on paper

17.5 x 12 inches

44.5 x 30.5 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA
Untitled 16
ca. 1975
Ink and oil pastel on paper
16.5 x 11.5 inches
42 x 29 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

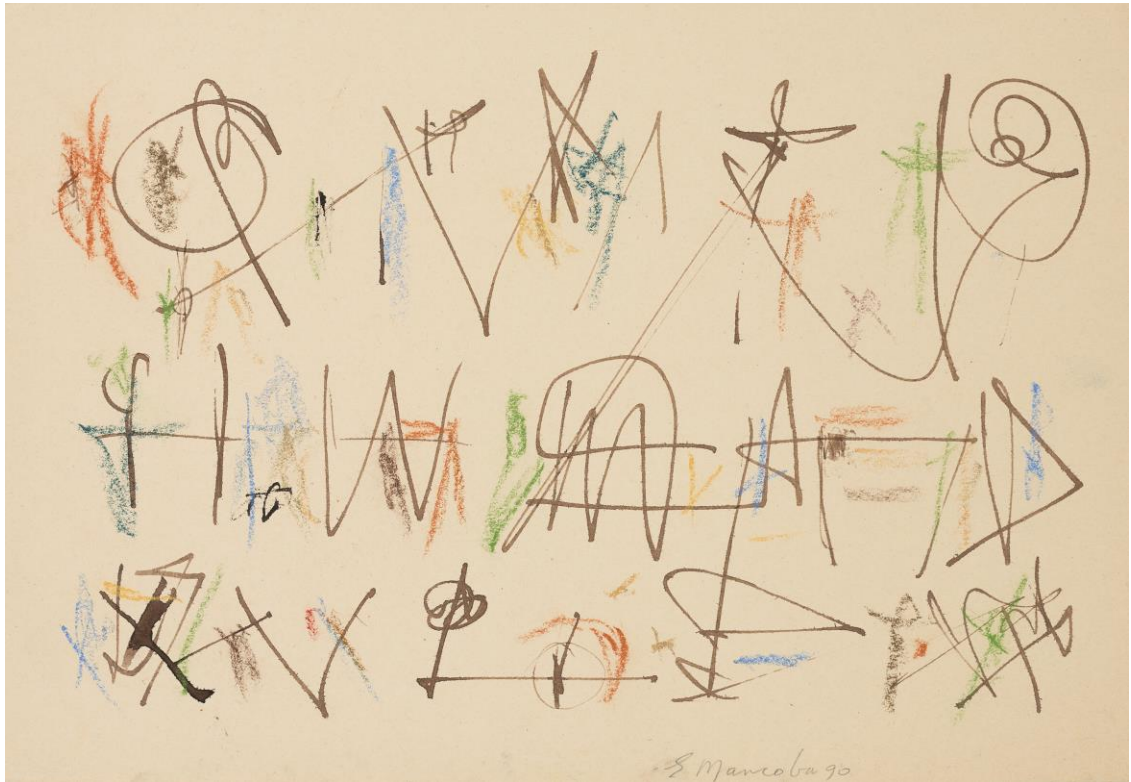
Untitled 17

1990

Ink and oil pastel on paper

10.5 x 15 inches

27 x 38 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

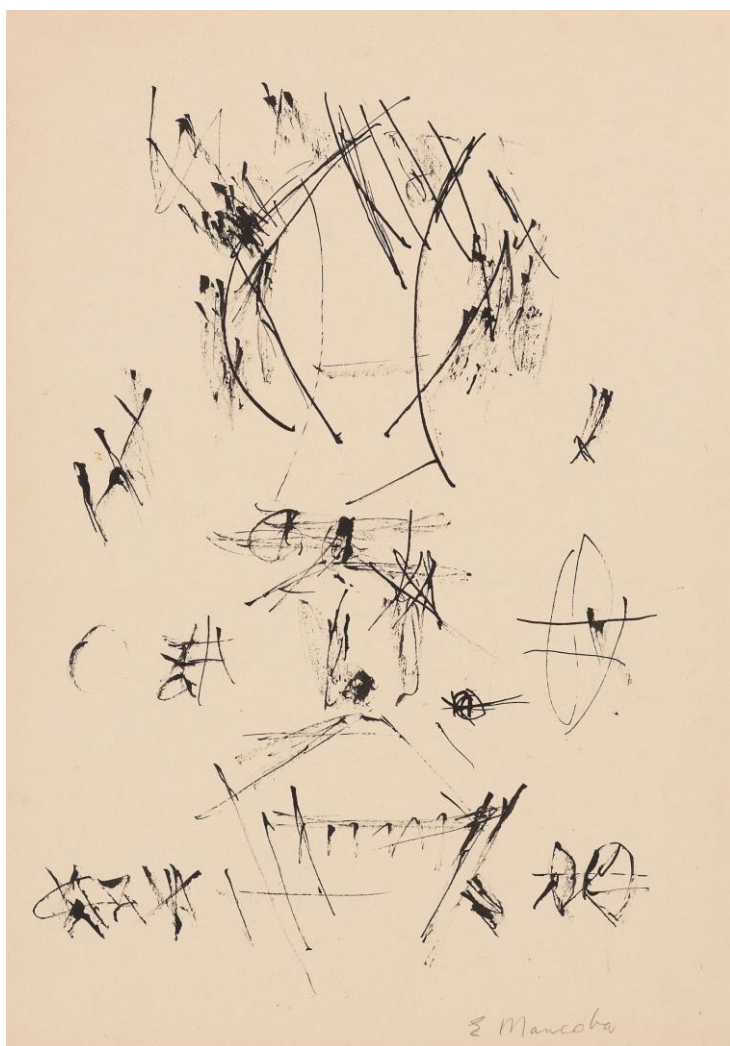
Untitled 18

1990

Ink and oil pastel on paper

10.5 x 15 inches

27 x 38 cm



ERNEST MANCOBA

Untitled 19

N/d

Ink on paper

15 x 10.5 inches

38 x 27 cm



SONJA FERLOV MANCOBA

Untitled 1

1958

Bronze

8 x 5 x 6 inches

20 x 13 x 15 cm



SONJA FERLOV MANCOBA

L'arche

ca. 1964

Bronze

23.5 x 17 x 16 inches

60 x 43 x 41 cm



SONJA FERLOV MANCOBA
Guardians of our Inheritance
1973
Bronze
12h inches
30.5 cm



SONJA FERLOV MANCOBA

Mask Totem

Started 1977

Bronze

22 x 12.5 x 5 inches

56 x 32 x 13 cm



SONJA FERLOV MANCOBA

Growth

1967-68

Bronze

15 x 9 x 6.5 inches

38 x 23 x 16.5 cm



SONJA FERLOV MANCOBA

Untitled 2

N/d

Bronze

8.5 x 7 x 10.5 inches

22 x 18 x 27 cm



SONJA FERLOV MANCOBA

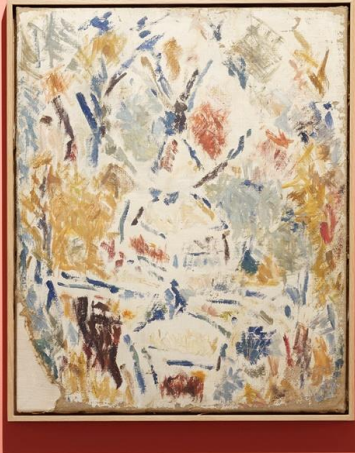
Untitled (Lille Sol 2. udgave)

N/d

Bronze

6 x 4 x 5.5 inches

15 x 10 x 14 cm



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