

The Pacific Northwest Meets Paris in Claire Falkenstein's Tangled Coastal Art

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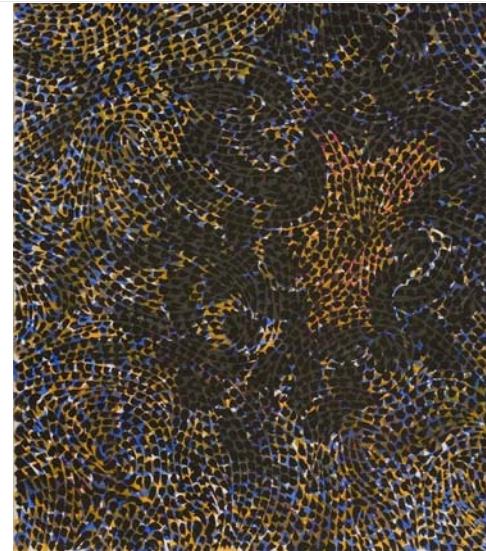


Claire Falkenstein
Untitled, ca. 1959
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

Claire Falkenstein (1908–1997) was born in Coos Bay, Oregon, a lumber town near where the Coos River flows into a bay on the Pacific Ocean. Some kids grow up with grassy backyards or city pavement at their doorstep; Falkenstein had beach, forest, shells, pebbles, seaweed, and driftwood. Perhaps it's no wonder, then, that she felt inspired to start sculpting at a young age and that her artistic impulses leaned toward organic forms.

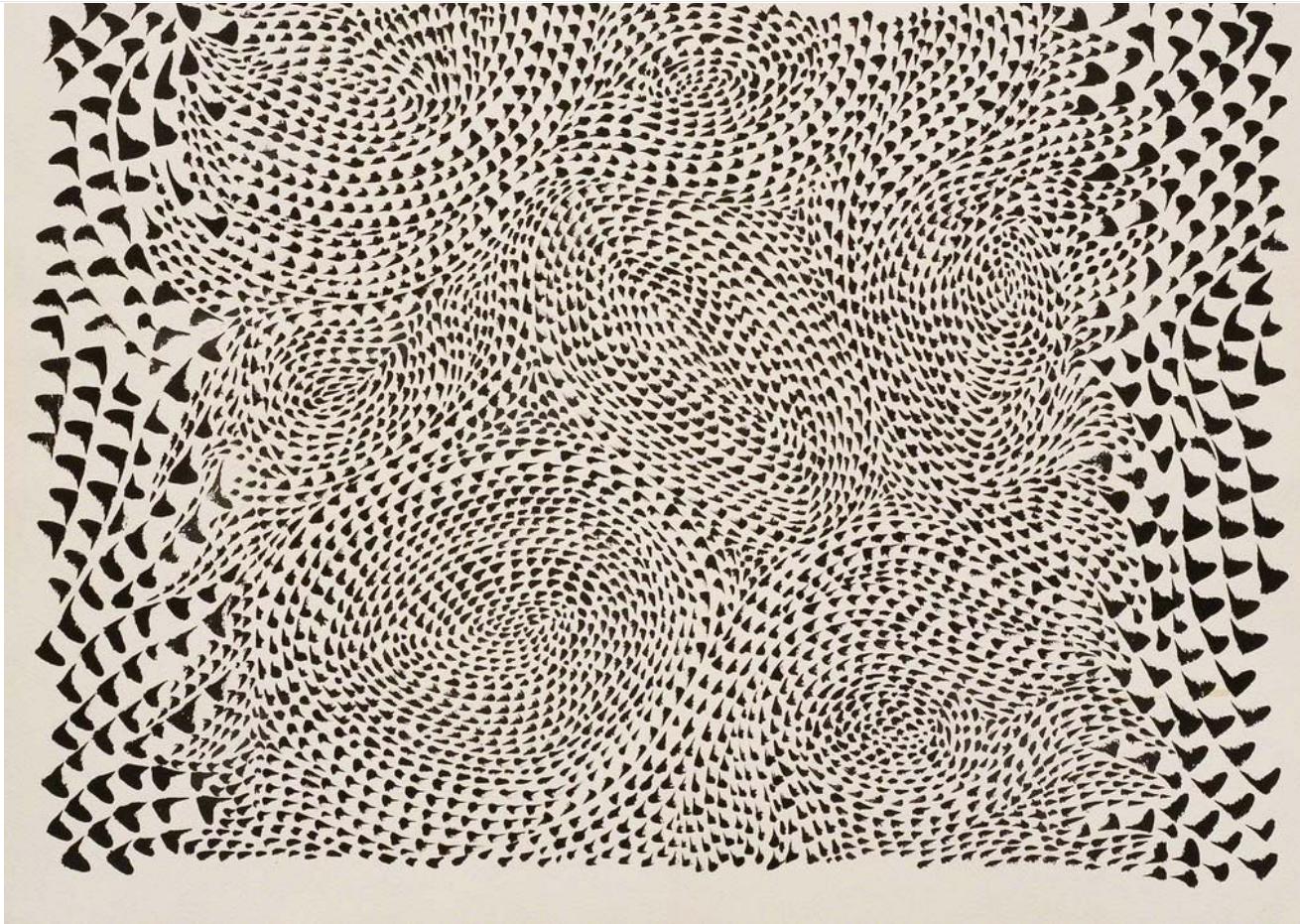


Claire Falkenstein
Untitled, ca. 1965
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery



Claire Falkenstein
Mulholland, 1966
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

A new show at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery in New York highlights work from the middle of Falkenstein's career, by which point she'd moved from wood to copper and glass, the materials for which she's most commonly known. In one of her dark and gorgeously tangled sculptures, there's something reminiscent of driftwood, seaweed, and beautiful refuse that washes ashore. *Mulholland* (1966) also calls to mind sand and sea, the natural patterns formed by wind, water, and tiny shells on the beach.



Claire Falkenstein
Untitled, 1975
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

Her native Oregon wasn't the only place Falkenstein found inspiration. She lived in Europe for a decade, moving to Paris in 1950. And while she never fully subscribed to any particular movement or trend, she later said that those years helped refine her style. "The French allowed a kind of individual action. They have the quality of centuries...of culture and of art," Falkenstein said. "You feel it within yourself when you're there. I felt it so strongly that right away my so-called 'looking within' really worked. That's when I developed my own vocabulary." Celebrated in Europe and in Southern California when she returned to the States, that structural vocabulary became her hallmark.



Claire Falkenstein
Fused Contrasts, 1959-1973
Michael Rosenfeld Gallery

Coastal Oregon, Paris, and California: These places, so important to Falkenstein's life and career, all come together in a work like *Fused Contrasts* (1959–1973), a bold but delicate sculpture made of copper and Venetian glass. Earthy and luxurious, reminiscent of forest and beach, it's a shining example of Falkenstein's practice and a testament to the importance of place in the life of any artist.

—Bridget Gleeson

"Claire Falkenstein: A Selection of Works from 1955-1975" is on view at Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, New York, Jan. 23–Mar. 19, 2016.

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