

# The New York Times

---

NEW YORK, FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 2002  
WEEKEND FINE ARTS/ LEISURE E36

---

## ART IN REVIEW

### **Jay DeFeo**

*'Ingredients of Alchemy, Before and After "The Rose"'*

Michael Rosenfeld  
24 West 57th Street  
Manhattan  
Through May 4

Like Meret Oppenheim, creator of the Surrealist icon commonly called the "Fur-Lined Teacup," Jay DeFeo is famous for one singular work. DeFeo belonged to a circle of San Francisco beatniks that included Bruce Connor, Wallace Berman and Joan Brown, and her eccentric masterpiece was "The Rose," a massive, radiating mandala painting that weighs one ton and took eight years to make. It is in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

This selection of works that came before and after the period from 1958 to 1966 when she concentrated on "The Rose" gives no indication that DeFeo ever produced anything else so powerfully original. By contrast to that monument of obsessive-compulsive mysticism, the show presents an artist who moved from style to style like a perennial student until her death in 1989 at age 60.

From the 1950's there are small, playful Abstract Expressionist compositions and a dark square of short, buttery strokes that glows in the middle and calls to mind Philip Guston's Abstract Impressionism. Biomorphic abstractions from the 70's are reminiscent of the work of Lee Bontecou, and drawings and paintings of mechanical fragments (a camera tripod, swimming goggles) suggest a not fully resolved effort to merge Precisionism and emotive gesturalism. In the late 80's, DeFeo moved toward simplified, iconic forms. The last piece, a kind of numinous keyhole drawn in charcoal in 1989, has something of the Symbolist mystery that was most fully achieved in "The Rose."

KEN JOHNSON

---

**MICHAEL ROSENFELD GALLERY**  
**24 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019**  
**Ph 212.247.0082 Fx 212.247.0402**