



Composition in green and orange

Date

1914-19

Primary Maker

Dorothy Shakespeare

Medium

Watercolor and graphite on paper

Description

Over the span of a decade, Omar S. Pound, Class of 1951, donated to the Emerson Gallery an impressive collection of watercolors and drawings by his mother, Dorothy Shakespeare, along with works by a number of her contemporaries. The Wellin's collection of her works is complemented by archival holdings related to Shakespeare and her husband, the poet Ezra Pound, Class of 1905, H1939, in the Hamilton College Special Collections at Burke Library. Shakespeare was born in London to two artistically inclined parents: Henry Hope Shakespeare, an amateur watercolorist, and Olivia Shakespeare (née Tucker), a novelist and close friend of W. B. Yeats. Dorothy Shakespeare met Pound in 1909, and they married in 1914. Although extremely proficient, Shakespeare's early watercolors were executed in a traditional

manner. In 1911, when the artist visited Italy and "experienced color for the first time," her style began to evolve. A major shift occurred the following year, in the same year Pound's poetic style also underwent a profound evolution. Shakespeare's work became abstract, with intricate shapes distilled into angular planes. This change coincided with the beginnings of a new avant-garde movement in London, led by the artist Wyndham Lewis and the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, among others, which would come to be called Vorticism. Shakespeare remained acutely interested in draftsmanship, breaking forms down into simple planes and demarcating geometric angles with contour lines in ink or graphite. Her drawings were published in the Vorticists' talking piece, *BLAST* magazine (1914–15), and in B. Cyril Windeler's *Elimus* (1923), published by William Bird's Three Mountains Press in Paris. She also created typographic designs, including the initials that complemented her husband's poetry in *A Draft of XXX Cantos*, published in Paris in 1930. She subsequently created initials for all of Pound's *Cantos*, along with tailpieces and illustrations for a project that was published by Omar Pound only in 1999, after his parents' deaths. Illustrated here and on the following spread are two early abstractions and *Hommage à GB WL TSE EP*, which celebrates the artist's close circle of creative friends: Gaudier-Brzeska, Lewis, T. S. Elliott, and Pound. The watercolor includes references to Gaudier-Brzeska's sculpture *Water Carrier* (cat. no. 58), to an abstraction by Lewis, and to a medieval prison in the Gulf of Rapallo in northwestern Italy, where Shakespeare resided at the time. Created in 1937, the work is nostalgic in outlook, as Gaudier-Brzeska had died years earlier, during World War I; Shakespeare's marriage with Pound was unhappy; and the Vorticist movement had ended long before. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, *INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS*, 2017)

Dimensions

Sheet: 4 1/2 x 8 3/16 in. (11.4 x 20.8 cm) Frame: 14 1/16 x 17 3/4 x 1 1/2 in. (35.7 x 45.1 x 3.8 cm)