

## Classification of Dietrich's Extant Paintings

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Dietrich achieved a single, individual style, but expressed that style through a number of very different objects or motifs. Although, in themselves, real and recognizable objects have little significance in his creations, Dietrich used many of them. His objects included gardens, birds, fish, insects, pastoral scenes, playgrounds, childhood and playground scenes, versions of masterpieces, numerous composers, artists, and others, Martha and their dogs, painters, musicians, and renderings of literary and theatrical figures, such as Don Quixote, Orpheus and Eurydice, Papageno, Til Eulenspiegel, and Susanna and the Elders.

There is no catalog of Dietrich's paintings, no summary of critical reviews of his work, nor a contemporaneous diary or biography. There are numerous snapshots of his paintings on museum walls and residential walls, but few letters or other documents. Some of the paintings that appeared in gallery shows retain their stickers. The exact sequence of his paintings within any year remains unknown; while the year is noted adjacent to his signature, the month is generally not and must be inferred. A few paintings are unsigned and/or undated, although the date can be inferred with some confidence from the subject matter, style, dimensions, and manner of stretching canvas; lack of a signature indicates Dietrich's view that the painting is unfinished. The earliest paintings were named after the fact, often by his wife to meet a perceived customer demand; the names were either pasted on paper to the frames or scratched and inked into the frame. However, the vast majority lack names.

### Abstracts

These are four studies in dark, fluid surrealism completed between 1948-1950. The dominant colors are dark blues, violets, and reds. There are also two geometric studies completed in the 1980s with dominant colors of primary reds, blues, black, and white.

### Aubade

Dietrich called this series of 18 paintings completed between 1985 and 1995 "Aubade", a morning parallel to "serenade", the evening song. In layout and theme, these paintings are after Matisse "La musique" 1939, depicting two women with a large tropical plant in the background. The woman on the left is dressed and seated relaxed on a pillow, the musician on the right plays a guitar (mandolin? lute?), and a sheet of music lies before her.

In Dietrich's renderings, the woman without a musical instrument is nude, pink, and reclining on a flat divan or curved couch, turning her head and upper torso toward the front, similar to but less detailed and seductive than Matisse's "Pink Nude" ("Grand nu

couche/Nu rose”) 1935. The musician, most often wearing a dress or skirt in a solid primary color, holds a mandolin. Occasionally a sheet of music, a cat, a vase, or a chair also appears.

The women are depicted as either very pink or white; they contain little anatomical detail. Breasts are indicated by circles. Facial features are either missing entirely or impersonal and perfunctory. Hands and feet are also not detailed. The musician generally wears a blue dress. The backgrounds vary from intimations of a flowing drape in early paintings to intimations of windows, garden, and sky in later paintings.

The paintings experiment with the placement of the figures, both vertically and horizontally, in the quest for balance. While most retain the musician on the right, four place the musician on the left. In all of the paintings, the musician is seen fully from the front. In half of the versions, the nudes are seen reclining on the divan but from a side view; in the other and later half, the perspective is changed so that the nudes are presented frontally.

The position and proportions in the figures in the Dietrich’s “Aubades” are markedly different. Often the lower legs and/or feet of the nudes disappear behind the edge of the musician’s skirt. In addition, like the “Pink Nude,” the nude’s hips and thighs are depicted in outsized, luxurious proportions. In the 1985-6 versions, the hem of the musician’s skirt appears just above the lower edge of the painting with her feet hidden by the skirt. In the later versions, the lower legs of the musician under the skirt disappear beyond the lower edge of the painting.

As with his other topics, as the paintings emerged over time, the objects became far less complex and anatomically detailed, as Dietrich simplified the human forms and furnishing to their essence, reduced the number of colors, and enlarged the relative area of color segments.

### Birds

Wild or caged, recognizable or fantastic birds appear in many Dietrich paintings. They provided him numerous wonderful imaginative opportunities to play and experiment with form, original composition, and color. In general, these birds have no relationship to any bird in the real world, except that real birds amaze with their brilliant colors and designs. While clearly birds and seemingly determined in flight, they are deficient in required anatomical equipment but totally invested with magical color and form.

He produced 37 paintings of birds as the dominant object from 1968 to 1997. The birds are placed in different settings. He began with his most naturalistic birds in 1968, when he placed eight of his little birds in a cage. In another, completed in 1976, a tall exotic standing bird, accompanied by five smaller birds, is seen behind a lattice of glass. In two others done in 1968 and 1988, a heron-like bird is standing at a pond with a very large frog.

From 1969-1975, Dietrich produced four large and stunning paintings of birds, one pulling a fish from the water and three “thunderbirds” in fully-winged flight, displayed frontally and flying high above land or water. The fisher is a brilliantly composed creation of curves, edges, stripes, and dots, all in bright and surprising colors. The “thunderbirds” are similarly dynamic, in powerful flight, done in dominant blues, greens, and reds, with equally surprising shapes and curves. In 1970, he also produced a pair of smaller and more muted “thunderbirds,” about to take wing from their branches.

From 1982 to 1997, he painted stylized 28 birds, experimenting in acrylics with forms that Matisse had initiated with his cutouts. This series started in 1982 with a stunning, complex bird with several striped body parts, flying in a gray sky. The following paintings are of birds on the wing, flying either to the left or right, but considerably streamlined and simple. Compared to the preceding birds, these flying birds became more abstract, capturing the essence of combined flight and color but losing what distinct anatomical detail (e.g., legs, eyes, feathers, beaks) they had earlier retained.

This last form mutated once again into maximal simplicity and abstraction, continuing to display brilliant colors but fewer of them and in larger block curved geometric segments, reminiscent of Matisse’s “L’escargot.” Complexity shifted almost entirely into form rather than color. The birds became even more streamlined into one fluid body/head and two geometric wings, capturing the essence of “bird flying.” One set of canvases his wife laughingly called Dietrich’s Concorde series. Advances in this form end in 1992 with a colorful and complex flying bird, but comprised entirely of straight lines in triangles, reminiscent of Picasso’s “Bird on a branch” 1928.

From 1992-7, Dietrich also produced a small number of paintings that include birds with other objects – fish, frogs, gardens. Finally, he also produced scores of charming ink line drawings of birds, mostly as an exercise in draftsmanship and variety, and forming a collection of their own. These birds stand around in amusing little groups.

### *Insects*

Insects provided Dietrich the opportunity to experiment with colors and forms within generally recognizable natural images, such as dragonflies, bees, and snails. He began where Matisse left off, in one of his very final works, “L’escargot” 1953, bright slabs of gouache on paper pasted onto white paper. Elderfield describes this Matisse as “how the most complex as well as most direct emotion may be produced by the simplest of means.”

Dietrich produced 19 insect paintings between 1986 and 1996, 13 alone between 1986-7. He began with the snail, capturing the creature with blocks of solid color curving in a crawl from right to left on a solid structure. He moved on to paintings of a black-and-yellow striped bee, flying vertically, one toward a red cup-like flower, but all abstracted into curved blocks of different primary colors. He continued to paint other striped flying

insects, changing the brilliant colors of body, wing, and antennae. Some he placed together with snails and flowers in complex compositions of colored curving blocks. Finally, he added a dragonfly-like creature that he included, variously, with frogs, bodies of water, and fish. The colors were wildly brilliant – orange-gold fish, deep blue fish, yellow dragonflies with red wings, and green-yellow flowers with red hearts.

### Characters

Dietrich produced twelve paintings of literary/theatrical characters between 1950 and 1988. These include four Don Quixotes, three Papagenos, two Til Eulenspiegels, one Eve, one Orpheus and Eurydice, and one Buster Keaton.

The Don Quixotes are emblematic of the progression of his style from 1950 to 1988. In 1950, the Don, an angular, complex, dark figure against a dark sky is charging the windmill while astride a Rocinante directly out of Picasso's "Guernica;" Sancho is sitting on his ass, Dapple, bemused and staring at the viewer, in the left lower corner. In 1954, the Don is a stylized standing figure, apparently striking a cowering Sancho with a stick; the colors are brighter but still in dark primary tones, with sweeping curves binding the hills, the Don's beard, and the sweep of his coat. In 1967, the Don, waving a lance over his head, is sitting proudly on a proud Rocinante, while Sancho is back on Dapple, staring out; reds, yellows, golds, and white dominate this still-dark image. In 1988, the Don appears alone with Rocinante, only the upper half of the Don visible above the lower edge of the painting and partially hidden behind a large round blue shield. Only the neck and head of Rocinante are visible. The number of shapes is considerable reduced, with fewer blocks of much lighter and more brilliant colors.

The Papagenos also reflect this same progression. The first Papageno, 1964, is a complex composition combining small birds in a cage, a cartoon-like child Papageno with his flute, and a busy green jungle background. The white in the background and the gold of the cage and Papageno's cap lighten an otherwise dark green and blue painting. The second Papageno, in 1968, compounds the complexity by adding Papagena, the three witches, flowers, bells, and a noose. It retains both the dark and light elements of the earlier painting. While both paintings are charming, little progress appears. Then, in 1983, Dietrich created a most stunning and far simpler version. Papageno is again alone with the birdcage, caparisoned in a brilliant robe and bright feathered headpiece. While painted against a dark blue background and an abstract green forest, totally without white, all the other elements are in brilliant primary colors, giving the painting the quality of gem-like panels of back-lighted stained glass.

### Childhood

Childhood was a significant factor in Dietrich's work, both in painting and illustrated storytelling. Between 1954 and 1982, he painted 47 childhood scenes. In these paintings, he takes Matisse's dictum "Looking at life with the eyes of a child" fairly

literally, as he recalls specific scenes from his own childhood. His multi-decade progression from dark to light, from complex to simple, and from mixed colors to primary solids is clearly portrayed in these works. Unlike his birds, insects, and fish, however, he uses less abstraction in this progression, staying somewhat closer to real objects. Kites, boats, bicycles, children, birds, and other elements are explicitly portrayed. It may be that childhood, as a topic, is already seeing through different eyes and pursuing more abstraction would require an intellectualization of an already existing simple way of seeing.

His childhood paintings of the 1960-1975 depicts children's rooms, children at play, children's toys, nannies with perambulators, and children in playgrounds at topic. One is a montage of his childhood in Berlin, based on an early photo of him as young child, postcards of a cathedral, images of toys, stuffed animals, and musical instruments. While, clearly, he had happy memories of his nurturing, spoiled, privileged childhood and childhood surroundings, he once noted that this painting revealed his malicious pleasure at escaping and surviving a Berlin that mistreated him and itself ended up in ashes.

These works are broken down into four discrete subjects – *nursery scenes*, *playrooms*, *playgrounds*, and *boats*.

Nursery – Thirteen of these paintings portray a nanny with a child in a pram. In the lower foreground is, often, a body of water such as a pond or river. The scene appears more European than American, given the ornate design of the pram, the unique costume of the nanny, particularly a huge billowing cap like the convent nuns of long ago, and a Victorian lamppost and bridge. These may be true memories or scenes from photographs. However, these are unusual in that, rather than portraying the world as seen through his eyes, he depicts himself as the infant/toddler in the pram. In general, these are very pale images, faint colors on yellowing white, and highly stylized; others contain more primary colors. Compared to his more dynamic compositions in brilliant colors, some of these works seem somewhat anemic. However, seen alone under studio lights or daylight, they have great charm.

Playrooms – Six paintings are of playrooms, cluttered abstractions with recognizable children's toys and toy-box, musical instruments, dogs, other pets, dolls, watering cans, and tricycles. They are probably based on memories. However, the children in the rooms are usually little girls, depicting themselves in line drawings on chalkboards. Over time, these paintings become increasingly abstract, stylized, and colorful. They retain some darkness and depth, reflecting the shadows that appear in children's rooms, even when lighted by blue skies in the background windows. While these images become increasingly simple, they never quite lose the wonderful clutter of childhood objects the way a child leaves them.

Playgrounds – Five paintings are of playgrounds, little girls playing with bright balloons, balls, and hoops, skipping rope, flying kites, and on a slide. These round-faced figures, with outsized heads, are similar to the children in Peanuts but precede this long-popular

cartoon strip. While the figures are very simply done, the composition becomes increasingly sophisticated and simple, with fewer objects and elements. They never become brilliantly or darkly tinted, but retain soft images of lawn and sky, as if childhood existed in an Impressionistic world.

Boats – There are three charming images of boats bobbing like bottles in dark waters as children often draw them. These are replete with bright colors, port holes, billowing smokestacks, and shorebirds atop piers and buoys.

### Family

From 1952 to 1976, Dietrich produced 9 family portraits, more complex images than his usual work. They form a kind of history of the little Dietrich family, documenting the apartments and homes they occupied, the favorite clothes they wore, and whatever pet (cat or Dalmatian) completed their triadic household at the time. Unlike his later paintings, Dietrich includes the basic anatomical features of his cats. They depict his wife as she appears in solo portraits of these times, in various domestic roles – taking care of flowers, walking the dog, being a companion, asleep with the dog on the bed, even reclining nude on a couch in the back ground while Dietrich reads in the foreground.

However, in none of these versions is there any sense of intimacy or attachment. The figures look at the viewer rather than each other. They (including the pets) appear as if they are traveling through a time and place in proximity to one another, but not really together.

Many of his earlier paintings, which decorated the walls of their home, re-appear as background in these family portraits. They provided clues resulting in successful searches to find these paintings in other collections.

The early paintings of 1952 were complex, even cluttered with detail, such as lamp, book, wine bottle, brushes, and palette knife. For example, in two of the early paintings, Dietrich appears in his “painting hat”, a close red and white cap his wife bought for him in China. Two of these three paintings portray him as a painter painting. The compositions are more awkward, angular, and confusing than later paintings. As with his other early works, these mixed oils have a somewhat muted texture and produce subtle and unsettling combinations.

The later paintings, 1973-1976 are far more simple, organized, stylized, and dynamic in color. Three of these five paintings depict him as a painter at work. Oddly, while they depict his wife and Dalmatian as essentially real but stylized, he paints himself as an outsider, as a cartoon figure with a cartoon head similar to his newspaper work. Four of these paintings include a seated white-faced Dalmatian (their first dog, a stray named “Lotte”) staring out at the viewer from the lower edge of the painting, thus appearing only from the chest up. These polka-dot Dalmatians offer a wonderful counter-point to

his large block colors. In these paintings, Martha and Dietrich's lower legs also disappear beyond the lower edge.

His final family portrait is consistent with what was becoming his newly-dominant style, a balance of color and form, graceful curving lines, clear edges, and bright primary colors in large blocks. It is both cool and warm, reflecting the different personalities portrayed.

### *Fish*

Like his birds, fish gave Dietrich a chance to be totally free with his forms and colors. His 17 fish paintings span 1947 to 1996. His earliest seems inspired by Matisse's unsigned "Les poissons rouge" Summer 1912, goldfish in a bowl; however, DIETRICH's version is darker and, oddly, both more naturalistic and surrealistic.

As with his birds, he took great liberties with the anatomy, colors, and proportions of his fish. He seemed to capture the placid bloated essence of flounder, the open-mouthed progress of hungry barracuda, and a stylized bone structure to hold them together. Of course, they were all invented; their tails were wrong and some had strange little appendages. From 1968-1970, his fish became quite spectacular, large blimp-like creatures comfortably floating near the surface of the water, artfully constructed with intense blues, greens, and yellows and outlandish designs throughout their bodies, different from but as stunning as his birds from the same period.

Later, like the frogs and birds, the fish became far more stylized, with few but very bright colors (blues, reds, golds), and little anatomical detail. Goldfish and other aquarium fish seemed most dominant, and were mingled with other creatures – insects, frogs, and birds.

### *Frogs*

Dietrich included frogs prominently in his personal collection of creatures. He painted eleven frogs from 1957 to 1990; his early frogs, 1957-66, seem modeled on Picasso's "Le Crapaud" 1949. He began with a tiny, anxious dark-green figure at the edge of a cluster of reeds, then moved to gigantic but soft-edged dark-green creatures with only a hint of background surroundings. As with his other paintings in this period, the oil colors were dark and muted and there were significant anatomical details; eyes, mouth, angular and proportional legs made more natural through shading. Because of the depth of the green, which devours light, these paintings require strong light to be seen well.

His frogs from 1968-1990 reflect the style changes across these years. The earliest (1968) is a lighter frog, appearing with a large heron, amidst tree, sky, and ground. It is similar to his first Papagenos.

However, his frogs of 1987-90 are devoid of detail, a dark green circle for a body surmounted by a lighter green circle for a head (bisected horizontally with a green line

for a mouth) and sitting on a green base, suggesting feet and toes. Some see these frogs as smiling, but that may be a viewer's projection, since the frogs are, objectively, without expression.

The frogs, rapidly losing physical detail while retaining critical form, are joined in later paintings by creatures of comparable size – herons, fish, dragonflies. The forms are increasingly stylized, edged, and simplified, and appear as brilliant patches against large blocks of primary colors and white. They evolved into, essentially, abstract studies in form and color while retaining and distantly recalling their natural source.

### Gardens

Gardens were a part of the Dietrich family life from their first home onward. Dietrich painted his 18 versions of gardens from 1952 to 1996. As with his other works, these images also have changed over time, from complex to simple, from more realistic to completely stylized.

While very early paintings were dark, later versions became light, vivid, intense, sprightly, and highly imaginative images of flowers, cherries, insects, frogs, birds, fish, cats, dogs, a brilliant sun, and women as gardener and painter, all on white backgrounds. In his earliest six garden works, 1952-1987, he rendered various versions of reality, each in the dominant style that he used for these periods. In 1990, however, he returned to a dark oil painting he had completed in 1957 that contained most of the elements of his future gardens – fantastic complex flowers and flying multi-legged creatures with detailed body parts, all muted colors against a deep blue background. This painting required the viewer to come close to see the details.

From 1990 on, Dietrich painted twelve gardens, with simpler, far less detailed creatures and flowers, all against white backgrounds. Each is significantly different from the others, but all pursue the same goal of balance in form and color. These generate the most positive emotional responses from viewers. Given the amount of light and distinctness of colors and forms, they can be seen well from significant distances. In these, he appears to have solved major issues of the vibration of adjacent colors.

### Groups

From 1967 to 1989, Dietrich completed thirteen paintings containing more than two persons. The subjects and layouts were derived from motifs of Picasso and Matisse.

In 1967-8, he completed three very different versions of the circus family after Picasso's "The Family of the Saltimbanques" (1905; also known as "Les bateleurs" 1905). The original painting is somber, muted, and contemplative, the subjects seemingly unaware that they are being captured. By comparison, he took great and humorous license with his versions, turning the original into a happy, posed, colorful portrait of a cartoon family.



In 1984-5, Dietrich completed three group versions of well-dressed women (musicians, painters) after Matisse, "Woman in Blue" ("La grande robe bleue et mimosas") 1937. These are graceful, colorful, stylized versions of woman-as muse. In one, he incorporated a faun with pipes after Matisse "Music" 1909-10 and Picasso's many lithographs of mythologic fauns in the 1940s, such as "Le faune musicien" 1946.

From 1986-88, Dietrich followed in a grand tradition by painting his own three versions of a picnic scene with two nude women and two male musicians (mandolin and pipes). These were clearly in a line of "afters", from Giorgione "Concert Champetre", followed by Manet "Le Dejeuner sur l'Herbe" 1863, followed by Matisse, "Le Bonheur de Vivre" 1905-6, in turn followed by Picasso "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" 1907 and "Le Dejeuner" 1962 and numerous other versions. These three dynamic paintings, in addition to other similar works, reveal an increasing intensity of color and complexity of form from 1984-1989.

### Martha

Unlike Matisse, Dietrich did not turn to live models for his work. Instead, he produced 35 portraits of his wife Martha from 1946 to 1989, not including a small number of nudes. Between 1946 and 1973, he painted eleven portraits of Martha, ten including head and shoulders only. Each reflected some experimentation in style.

Martha was his most common subject between 1975 and 1981, resulting in twenty-four studies in form, color, and light. These document a clear break with the past, as realism and detail retreated in the face of idealism and more pure forms and colors.

These paintings depicted Martha standing in her blue dog-walking coat, Martha sitting in one of the three styles of chair in their living and dining areas, Martha on the living room couch, Martha with the marble coffee table, Martha with an alert Dalmatian nearby, and Martha sitting before a shuttered window through which sunlight is streaming. In some images, Martha is depicted just to the left or right of the center of the painting, balanced by colors or objects on the opposite side. In others, Martha is the center of the painting, balanced by the colors and curves of the chair or other background forms and colors. Most of these depict Martha from her calves up, the feet and ankles extending beyond the bottom edge of the painting.

Some contain a primitive form of perspective, in that there is acknowledgment of shadow and light being created by the presence of doors and windows, parts of objects being hidden behind other objects, different relative proportions among objects, suggesting something like foreground and background. However, these still retain a flat rendering of reality.

Many of these portraits were very like Matisse in spirit, such as "Lorette sur fond noir, robe verte" 1916, studies of women in armchairs. Martha did not sit for these studies, but

she, the chairs in which she sat, and other aspects of their real home settings are clearly recognizable through the many styles Dietrich experimented with over these years.

### Musicians

There are more than 30 images of a woman with guitar and sheet of music from 1947-1994, based loosely on Picasso's "Femme a la guitare" 1913-4 and "Femme a la mandoline" 1925. Some incorporate Picasso's faun or Pan with pipes from the 1930s and 1940s; some of Dietrich's fauns, with guitars, are serenading women. These images become very dominant topics from 1982 on.

These images were, initially, a reworking of the Picassos. In 1982, Dietrich produced eight very different versions of the "Woman with Mandolin (or Lute)", each experimenting with line and color. After 1984, these became more ornate, graceful, colorful, and playful, by incorporating a faun with pipes. They became increasingly stylized with wildly improbable but wonderful colors, some of his best work.

### Nana

From 1990-1997, Dietrich produced ten versions of Nana at Her Mirror, after Matisse "La Coiffure" (1901). In six paintings, a voluptuously pink, partially clothed woman is arranging her hair before a big blue oval mirror; in two, she is joined by a bird in a figurative cage. In two paintings in 1996-7, the woman is a dark blue woman before a lighter blue mirror, joined by a cherry-like plant. These are all graceful studies, carefully balanced in form and color. The backgrounds contain large white areas, making the images appear very bright, much like his later gardens.

### Nudes

Dietrich completed 29 nudes from 1946 to 1994. Some he derived from popular paintings such as Manet's "Olympia" 1863, Duchamps' "Nude Descending a Staircase" 1912, Botticelli's "The Birth of Venus" c.1435, and Matisse's nudes, such as "The Dream" 1935, and his later blue and pink nudes. Others are derived from stories such as Eve (1951 and 1992) and Susanna and the Elders. Early works tend to be dark and somewhat surreal, but, over time, they mutate into large and stylized pink or blue nudes. Most tend to be vertical rather than horizontal or reclining images. From 1985 on, these nudes contain no facial features, breasts are indicated only by a single line circle, and the proportions vary widely, usually with extravagant hips and legs.

### Painters

Between 1983-98, Dietrich produced thirty-three paintings of painters at work. These paintings incorporate most of the subjects and figures depicted in other works – women with mandolins, women in gardens, women painting, fauns painting, nude women, and, of course, Matisse. Nine of these paintings contain images of Matisse in his wheelchair either painting or with his scissors. The painters are often versions of musicians from other scenes. Many of these paintings contain versions of the painting being painted.

Two 1988 paintings depict a painter in collared dress, likely after Picasso “Portrait of a Painter after El Greco” 1950. Because this series was started after Dietrich had found and mastered his style and could devote extensive time to them, most of these paintings are stunningly complex, original, completely conceived and rendered, and, thus, wonderful experiments in color and layout.

### Pastorale

Dietrich produced 5 pastorales between 1959 and 1973. Each portrays a shepherd/piper and a ram. While the subject does not change, each is based on a different layout of shapes, relative sizes, and color. As with other subjects depicted over time, the earlier versions are more realistic and detailed while the later versions are more idealized, lighter, and brighter. In my opinion, these pastorales are sadly far too few, because they are extraordinarily well-balanced, serene, and placid.

### Portraits

Dietrich had an early love of portraiture; he produced 29 portraits between 1948-1983, not including the numerous studies of Martha. His early portraits were experimental in style, as he painted real people while looking for his voice. The subjects were personal friends and acquaintances, as well as noted painters and musicians.

Pre-1962 paintings are technically sound and fairly realistically rendered. Most contain significant detail in the human faces and figures, as well as the often complex backgrounds. A gardener in the foreground is provided a garden in the background, while a physician in the foreground is backed by medical materials in the background. Sufficient perspective and shadowing is provided to ensure that these portraits did not become cartoons.

No portraits were done between 1962 and 1977. Resuming portraiture in 1977, Dietrich relied on an entirely different style. While the subjects are still recognizable, the faces have been reduced to the essential lines comprising a recognizable, benign Matisse, a gaunt Van Gogh, a masterful Stravinsky, or a muscular Picasso, for examples (as well as four unusual self-portraits). It is interesting to note that Dietrich’s depictions of Matisse have him seated in a chair or wheelchair and working with scissors or a palette; none show the younger Matisse outlining his larger works with a chalkstick. This suggests that

the Matisse most important to Dietrich was the Matisse who made the marvelous breakthroughs in color and form his final efflorescence of creativity.

In his later portraits, the faces are rarely done in flesh tones, but in white, green, or blue-gray. The backgrounds tend to be reduced to bright geometric patches of color. The resulting overall effect becomes less a portrait than a study in form and color, in which the interplay between the person and the background becomes more important than the person alone.

### *Still-Lives*

Dietrich completed 11 still-lives between 1949 and 1982. They vary widely in style, mixing real and idealized images of real objects. Two done in 1949 and 1950 are somewhat realistic exterior views of houses in San Francisco's Mission District, one with relatively rare detail and perspective for Dietrich. Both are done in muted colors. Significant changes appear in 1969-70, with increased stylization of still-recognizable spaces – his studio and the house. Two interiors of his bedroom finished between 1972-74 are rendered with perspective and numerous patches of brilliant color. A stylized rendering of the view from his living room done in 1973, however, is almost totally devoid of perspective.

Two studies (1972 and 1975) of a Dalmatian at home are quite different from each other. The earlier painting depicts an idealized Dalmatian on a recognizable exterior deck and furniture drawn with perspective. The later work, in black, white, and blue, depicts a much more realistic Dalmatian (drawn from an extant photograph of Otto) but with very stylized and ideal furniture.

Finally, there are two paintings of flowers in a vase, 1970 and 1982, reflecting his increasing confidence in his use of brilliant color; both are beautiful compositions. The earlier work depicts a realistic dark and detailed vase, containing a compressed and darkly outlined bunch of fantasy flowers, against a bright but textured blue background. The design of the flowers is similar to the wonderful freedom Dietrich applied to his large birds and fishes of the same period. The later work reflects an entirely different approach. The vase is a stylized patch of bright orange resting on a darker surface, surmounted by crazyquilt of seventeen brilliant colors and graceful curves suggestive of fantastic flowers. All of this is set against a deep blue background, resulting in a stunning creation.