



# BOWDOIN COLLEGE

## Commencement

2016



### DOROTHEA ROCKBURNE, Doctor of Fine Arts (DFA)

Jennifer Taback, *Professor of Mathematics*

Dorothea Rockburne, internationally celebrated abstract painter, Bowdoin College honors you today as an artist and individual who embodies the spirit and meaning of the liberal arts. Throughout your career, your studies of mathematics and astronomy have profoundly influenced your artistic practice. Your paintings and drawings reflect the affinities between scientific ideas and your creative inquiry.

Born and raised in Montreal, Canada, you began your artistic studies at the Montreal Ecole des Beaux-Arts and continued them at the Montreal Museum School.

Your mentors guided you to Black Mountain College in Asheville, North Carolina, where you joined fellow students Robert Rauschenberg, John Chamberlain and others. You studied

- painting with Philip Guston, Franz Kline, Jack Tworkov,
- music with John Cage,
- dance with Merce Cunningham, and
- mathematics with Max Dehn

Your close relationship with Max Dehn altered your artistic vision. On your walks with him through nature you gained a deep understanding of mathematical concepts from algebra and topology which fundamentally influenced your subsequent work.

The beauty and metamorphic properties of topological concepts were echoed in the work you chose to exhibit at Bowdoin last spring, some of which are currently on view at the Museum on the occasion of your return visit.

You have been the recipient of many prizes from within and outside the art world. These include a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1972, a National Endowment for the Arts award in 1974, and awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1999, the National Academy of Design in 2002, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation in 2003 and 2007, and the National Academy Museum in 2009.

You have exhibited your work in both solo and group exhibitions all over the world. Your recent solo exhibitions were organized by the Parrish Art Museum in 2011, the Museum of Modern Art in 2013, and the Bowdoin College Museum of Art last spring.

While visiting Bowdoin in 2015, you showed our students of mathematics the true beauty of mathematics, inspired, but not bound by, algebra and topology. You showed our students of art that inspiration comes in many forms. You widened the horizons of all students and faculty who met you.

You have demonstrated that mathematics and astronomy continue to inspire deep and meaningful art; you serve as a role model for young female artists; your art enriches the public and will be enjoyed by generations to come.

President Rose, on behalf of the College, I am pleased to present Dorothea Rockburne for the degree of Doctor of Fine Arts, *Honoris Causa*.