

The **Exhibition Quick Guides** provide general information about the current exhibitions (descriptions, checklists with images) as well as highlight key themes and offer discussion prompts.

Much of the summarizing text is drawn from the label copy that you will encounter in the galleries.

These guides were prepared by the Education Team and Interns to support both educators and the volunteers and staff who engage public audiences.

Questions? Suggestions?
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Now's the Time

Miles Davis bends the notes. He doesn't play them, he bends them. I bend the paint.
- Willem de Kooning

This exhibition presents works by artists affiliated with the New York School—an interdisciplinary movement of painters, sculptors, poets, writers, composers, musicians, dancers, and others in creative fields who gathered in Lower Manhattan from the 1940s through the 1960s. Some of the movement's adherents, known as “abstract expressionists,” were committed to creating visual art that was abstract, highly expressive, relevant to the changing world, and authentically American. They, along with the critics and patrons who supported them, helped shift the art world's focus from Europe to New York City.

New York presented a fertile environment for innovation following World War II. The convergence of postwar anxiety and optimism fueled the search for new, modern, and distinctively American artistic expression. Rent in New York City was cheap; European modernists who had left their war-torn homelands settled in the city; new museums devoted to modern art were established; and collegial support among artists who shared avant-garde or outsider status built strong social and professional networks.

Now's the Time riffs on bebop musician Charlie Parker's 1945 tune of the same title to underscore the interdisciplinary nature of the New York School. “Time” references a common denominator across the cultural production of this period when gestural mark-making emphasized the movement of painters' bodies; accelerated tempos and ostentatious virtuosity in bebop challenged creative restrictions of traditional jazz; deconstructions of ballet's traditional hierarchy and symmetry expanded conceptions of space, time, and movement in dance; and free, unstructured compositions and chaotic language enabled beat poets to convey the immediacy of experience.

Supporting Information

- **Abstract Expressionism:** An art movement that flourished in New York after WWII. These artists, often referred to as members of the “unofficial” New York School, moved away from European tastes to make something distinctively American. Many Abstract Expressionist artists worked in unconventional ways (e.g., painting a canvas on the floor instead of on an easel or using non-traditional materials such as found objects or house paint).
- Most of the abstract expressionists were influenced by **surrealism**, which countered the constraints of rationality and tradition by exploring the unconscious mind. While abstract expressionist art resists stylistic categorization, it can be clustered around two basic tendencies: one with an emphasis on dynamic, energetic gesture, and another with a reflective, cerebral focus on more open fields of color.

- Attempting to escape the political, economic, and social instability in Europe between the great World Wars, many surrealist and cubist style painters emigrated to New York. Their presence had a powerful influence on the Abstract Expressionists.
- In 1930 artist and teacher Hans Hofmann emigrated from Germany to New York, bringing his knowledge and ideas regarding avant-garde, cubist, expressionist, and surrealist art styles. Hofmann was an essential influential figure for many members of the New York School, as he was a teacher, mentor, and friend to many of them including Lee Krasner, Helen Frankenthaler, and Jackson Pollock.
- From crimes against humanity and the leveling of European cities to postwar economic prosperity and the baby boom in America to the global reach of Cold War politics, the Second World War (1939–1945) disrupted the cultural and physical landscape of society. In response, artists channeled their postwar anxiety, vulnerability, questioning, and optimism into new modes of expression and meaning-making.
- Cheap rent and a “salon” culture not unlike that of late nineteenth-century Paris along with émigré European modernists and established institutions of modern art such as MoMA and the Museum of Non-Objective Art positioned New York City as a burgeoning cultural capital, attracting visual artists as well as dancers, poets, and musicians.
- The success of abstract expressionism owes much credit to the contemporary patrons and critics who helped interpret the work for the art-viewing public. Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg—two such critics with contrasting views—championed abstract expressionism as “American-type painting” and “action painting,” respectively. Greenberg argued that the role of a painter was to purify painting of anything external to it (i.e., eliminate subject matter). Rosenberg saw the canvas as a surface on which the artist recorded an event, an action, an expressive encounter.
- The diverse artists who associated with the New York School shared a collective desire to challenge tradition and create something bold, fresh, and uniquely American. As a result, one finds similar qualities across the arts during the 1940s and 1950s, such as improvisation, spontaneity, abstraction, and expressive gesture:
 - The politics of style performed by bebop pioneers Charlie Parker and Miles Davis were by no means mere formal innovations. Unlike popular jazz dance music, bebop demanded intentional listening, to the music, to the artist, to the socio-political call of equality and authenticity.
 - Choreographers Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham manipulated human movement for an expressive end. Graham’s oeuvre emphasized psychological introspection, whereas Cunningham relied on chance and discordance.
 - Beat writers Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg rebelled against social norms and challenged conventions of language to reinvigorate literary culture.

Themes

- Abstraction: action painting, color field painting
- Psychology: psychoanalysis, the unconscious, the subconscious
- Technique: gestural mark-making, loose brushwork, color blending, dripping or thinning of paint
- Motion / movement
- Scale of art in relation to viewer
- Expressiveness: mood, emotion, energy
- Principles of Design: (Asymmetrical) balance, emphasis, rhythm, unity
- Relationships between artistic media: dance, literature, music, visual art

Discussion Prompts

- Why might an artist choose to paint in an abstract style or a more representational style, that is, depicting recognizable figures, objects, or scenes?
- Art has the power to evoke an emotional response or feeling. As you look around this exhibition, can you describe techniques and strategies artists may use to convey emotion?
- Large blocks of color on rectangular canvases is a signature of the artist Mark Rothko. Spend 30 seconds quietly looking at this painting. Describe what you are thinking or feeling.
- Select two works in close proximity. Talk about formal differences and similarities such as quality of brushstroke or paint application, color palette, quality of line, variety of shapes, etc.
- Select a work of art. Use your body to mimic the gestures you think the artist made. Pay close attention to the lines and brushwork.
- Artist David Smith believed that the distinction between painting and sculpture was not so hard and fast. Imagine – sculpture can be painting and painting can be sculpture! As you look closely at his **Superstructure on 4**, describe how he combined qualities of painting and sculpture.
- How do the three-dimensional works in this exhibition convey the same expressiveness that you can see in the two-dimensional works? Do you perceive differences?

Helpful Links

- The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, "Abstract Expressionism"
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/abex/hd_abex.htm
- MoMA, Abstract Expressionism
https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/abstract-expressionism
- MoMA Education, "What is Abstract Expressionism?"
https://education.moma.org/moma/learningresources/cms_page/view/366531
- Tate, "Action Painters"
<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/action-painters>

- Tate, “Colour Field Painting”
<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/c/colour-field-painting>
- Tate, “New York School”
<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/n/new-york-school>
- Khan Academy, “Abstract Expressionism, an introduction”
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-1010/abstract-exp-nyschool/abstract-expressionism/a/abstract-expressionism-an-introduction>

Exhibition Checklist

Baziotes, William

Untitled, Date Unknown

Oil on Canvas

16 x 19 inches (40.46 x 48.26 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln,

Gift of Carl and Jane Rohman through the University of Nebraska Foundation



- William Baziotes was influenced by the surrealists and their use of automatic drawing, a method of allowing one’s hand to move randomly across a page in order to draw out unconscious thoughts. The surrealist interest in plumbing the unconscious appealed to New York school artists who were searching for new modes of creative expression to articulate their anxieties during a time of postwar uncertainty.
- Baziotes also studied poetry written by the late nineteenth-century symbolists who often included references to dreams and visions in their writings.
- Although abstraction became a major part of Baziotes’s artistic vocabulary, it never completely replaced his use of representational elements. Here, a still life is visible beneath layered washes of black and white paint.
- Baziotes’s work shares many formal and thematic qualities with Adolph Gottlieb’s *Black, Unblack*, also on view in this exhibition. Both paintings adhere to a dark and monochromatic palette, contain layered elements that render visual interpretation difficult, and present mysterious spaces that may allude to a spiritual realm.
- In 1948, Baziotes cofounded the Subjects of the Artist School with David Hare, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, and Mark Rothko. The school supported public lectures promoting avant-garde art and stressed the notion that even abstract art contained specific subject matter.

And almost every night, soon as I slept, my poor brother would rise—dry mouth and bulging eyes (the way he dreamt himself!)—and haul me into the room, howling his stupid dream.

Truly convinced, I'd vowed to take him back to his primal state—child of the sun—and so we wandered, fed on wine from the caves and gypsy bread, me bound to find the place itself and the code.

—Symbolist poet Arthur Rimbaud, from “Vagabonds,” first published 1886

Bourgeois, Louise

Observer, circa 1947 - 1949; cast 1987

Painted Bronze

76 1/4 x 29 x 10 1/8 inches (193.675 x 73.66 x 25.718 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Olga N. Sheldon Acquisition Trust



- As an artist, Louise Bourgeois did not conform to a specific style or movement; she remained an outsider to the art world during the period abstract expressionism flourished. Although she rejected association with the surrealists, her work contains elements of their ideology, including the visual exploration of memories and other psychological forces. One of the defining characteristics of her work is its deeply emotional subject matter, often autobiographical, that references familial relationships and the search for belonging.
- Throughout her career, Bourgeois created sculptures from a variety of materials, including stone, bronze, plaster, and rubber. *Observer* exists in a material duality; it was first carved in wood and subsequently cast in bronze, retaining the appearance of the earlier version.
- Although *Observer* stands in this gallery as a lone figure, it is part of a series of similar, life-size sculptures called *Personages* that Bourgeois created between 1945 and 1955. Symbolizing individuals from the artist's past, their thin verticality evokes the fragility of the human condition, a common theme in the arts of the postwar period.
- When installed together, the *Personages* form clusters reminiscent of family groups, as seen in this photograph by Aaron Siskind of Bourgeois's 1950 exhibition at the Peridot Gallery in New York.



Louise Bourgeois's solo exhibition at Peridot Gallery, New York, 1950

Brooks, James

U-1951, 1951

Oil on Canvas

37 7/8 x 25 7/8 inches (96.203 x 65.723 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Thomas C. Woods Acquisition Fund



- While employed by the art projects under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930s, James Brooks befriended several significant players in the abstract expressionist movement, including Philip Guston, Bradley Walker Tomlin, and Jackson Pollock. After serving as an art correspondent for the US Army during World War II, Brooks returned to New York and renewed his friendship with Pollock and Lee Krasner, an artist married to Pollock, eventually moving into their former studio on Eighth Street.
- In his foray into the abstract expressionist style, Brooks explored pouring and dripping techniques practiced by Pollock. He was also influenced by surrealist automatism, a method that promoted the expression of the unconscious mind during the creation of a work of art. The surrealist interest in plumbing the unconscious appealed to New York school artists who were searching for new modes of creative expression to articulate their anxieties during a time of postwar uncertainty.
- Brooks's artistic experiments eventually led to a breakthrough in the summer of 1948; after this point, he began diluting pigment to stain the surface of his paintings. Works like *U-1951* demonstrate another of the artist's practices: applying paint to the front and back of his canvases, a technique that produced multilayered compositions of overlapping translucent and opaque forms that are reminiscent of some of Pollock's well-known works.

My painting starts with a complication on the canvas surface, done with as much spontaneity and as little memory as possible.

–James Brooks, 1968

Bultman, Fritz

Mask of Acteon, 1945

Oil on Celotex

50 1/2 x 40 inches (128.27 x 101.6 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Gift of the artist



- Particularly during the early years of the movement, abstract expressionist artists sought timeless, powerful subject matter in ancient myth and primitive and archaic sculptural forms. Fritz Bultman was especially inspired by the myth of Acteon, the story of a young hunter who happens to come across the virgin goddess Diana bathing in the woods. Angered that Acteon saw her naked, Diana transforms him into a stag that is then chased and torn to pieces by Acteon's own hunting dogs. Reflections found in Bultman's journals suggest that the curiosity and destruction of Acteon mirrored the artist's own struggles with identity and family.
- Bultman combined his interest in myth with modes of image making that he acquired from his mentor and teacher Hans Hofmann as well as from brief study at Chicago's New Bauhaus, founded by László Moholy-Nagy.
- Bultman was one of the eighteen artists who signed an open letter in 1950 to the Metropolitan Museum of Art criticizing the institution's "biased" presentation of modern American art. Unfortunately, Bultman was working abroad and unable to attend a Life magazine photo shoot of these artists, who came to be known as "The Irascibles."

The strongest symbols are those that have evolved over long periods of time . . . these are cabalistic, protean and universal—Painting, to become universal, must release more and more of these magic signs to the spectator.

—Fritz Bultman, circa 1945

Carone, Nicolas

Untitled (Rome 1950), 1950

Oil on Canvas

31 1/4 x 39 1/4 inches (79.375 x 99.695 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Gift of Harold Diamond



- Nicolas Carone was strongly influenced by Arshile Gorky, an artist whose mature work is considered a bridge between surrealism and abstract expressionism. In this painting, one can see Gorky-inspired biomorphic forms emerging and disappearing among Carone's loose, expressive brushwork, calling attention to the practice of painting itself more than conveying an overtly legible subject.
- After serving in the US Army for three and a half years, Carone spent the four years from 1947 to 1951 on a Fulbright Fellowship in Italy, where he produced this painting. Look closely and you will see references to the classical sculpture he no doubt encountered while in Rome.
- Carone, like many of his peers in New York, studied under Hans Hofmann at his eponymous Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts. Artists in this exhibition who also studied with Hofmann include Fritz Bultman, Perle Fine, Judith Godwin, Helen Frankenthaler, and Louise Nevelson.



Nicolas Carone in his studio, Rome, Italy, 1950

Croner, Ted

Central Park South, 1947 - 1948

Gelatin Silver Print

16 x 20 inches (40.64 x 50.8 cm)



Croner, Ted
Taxi, New York, 1947 - 1948
Gelatin Silver Print
16 x 20 inches (40.64 x 50.8 cm)



RECENT ACQUISITIONS

- Many postwar-era photographers, including Ted Croner and William Klein, were not concerned with the representation of actual subjects or scenes. Rather, like abstract expressionist painters, they were interested in capturing the essence of discrete moments. Their images feel both deeply personal and universal, containing a sense of dynamic urgency that echoes the energy of the time and place they were photographing.
- Ted Croner moved to New York after World War II and set up a studio on West 57th Street. Croner pursued commercial photography, but also took classes at the New School for Social Research with photographer and graphic designer Alexey Brodovitch, who encouraged his students to immerse themselves in the contemporary art scene and the fast-paced environment of the city. Croner put this into practice by going out at night and taking images of the city's subways, cafeterias, and streets.
- Both Croner and Klein used the camera to achieve compositional effects that mimic painting of this period. For example, the blurred windows in Croner's *Central Park South* resemble the thick, pictographic symbols seen in paintings by Bradley Walker Tomlin, Adolph Gottlieb, and William Kienbusch.

One night I borrowed a twin lens reflex and went out and photographed people in cafeterias. I developed the films as soon as I came back. What I saw pleased me more than anything I had done before. They weren't pictures of people. They were pictures of the way I felt.

—Ted Croner, 1949

De Kooning, Willem
Woman, 1954
Charcoal and Oil on Paper
25 3/4 x 19 5/8 inches (65.405 x 49.848 cm)
Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R.
and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



- Willem de Kooning began his *Woman* series in earnest in 1950, although he had consistently painted the female figure prior to this time. Using gestural brushstrokes and reworking each image with many layers of pigment, de Kooning created grotesque bodies with exaggerated facial features.
- Although de Kooning is usually associated with the abstract expressionists, he never regarded abstraction and representation as separate categories; for him they could operate simultaneously.

Woman demonstrates this tension between a clearly recognizable female figure and the energetic mark making of action painting.

- When the first of his *Woman* paintings were exhibited in 1953, they garnered mixed reviews. Some found the works horrifying and repellent, others praised de Kooning for his unrelenting attempt to push painting in a new direction. The artist himself referred to his female figures as “idols” and “goddesses,” perhaps having been influenced by an image of a Cycladic figure from around 2000 BCE, which was featured as the frontispiece of a much-read book from 1937 entitled *System and Dialectics of Art*.



Cycladic female figure, from Syros, c. 2000 BCE. Marble, 18 inches high. National Archaeological Museum, Athens, Greece

Fine, Perle

Spinning Figure, 1949

Oil on Canvas

42 x 14 inches (106.68 x 35.56 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Olga N.

Sheldon Acquisition Trust



RECENT ACQUISITION

- The paintings Perle Fine made during the 1940s were heavily influenced by her time spent at the Hans Hofmann School, where she embraced Hofmann’s ideas about the use of color and shape to evoke both harmony and tension. In *Spinning Figure*, the meditative interplay of geometry and biomorphic forms also demonstrates the influence of earlier paintings by Paul Klee and Joan Miró.
- During the 1940s and 1950s, there was little intellectual writing about contemporary art, so artists frequented galleries and gathered socially to engage with the ideas of their peers. One of these groups was the Eighth Street Artists Club, often simply called “The Club,” which served as a central hub for abstract expressionist discourse by hosting speakers and panel discussions. The same year Fine painted *Spinning Figure*, Willem de Kooning invited her to join The Club, of which she remained one of its few female members.
- Although abstract expressionism began to gain mainstream attention in the 1950s, Fine and other women artists found themselves relegated to the periphery. The contemporary success of the movement was framed in masculine terms; as critics mythologized the bravado of its male

participants, many important women artists were excluded from critical discourse and exhibitions of the New York school.



Perle Fine in her studio, Provincetown, Massachusetts, 1952

Frankenthaler, Helen

Red Frame, 1964

Acrylic on Canvas

98 3/16 x 82 inches (249.396 x 208.28 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Nelle Cochrane

Woods Memorial



- Helen Frankenthaler was one of the first and most influential color field painters. She considered her compositions to be “abstract climates,” in which the interplay between raw, untreated canvas and color creates the impression of emotion or energy.
- In *Red Frame*, the central colors are confined within a red border, calling attention to the painting as a formal, defined object on the wall. This emphasis on the inherent flatness of the picture plane was an idea promoted by art critic Clement Greenberg, Frankenthaler’s lover during the early 1950s. Greenberg argued that the logical trajectory of modern art was toward pure abstraction, and therefore championed the abstract expressionist movement and its reduction of various media to their essential qualities.
- Like some of her fellow abstract expressionists, Frankenthaler created paintings on the floor, engaging her whole body as she walked and worked across the large canvases. Gesture and movement were an integral part of her process; the act of painting was akin to a performance that relied on spontaneity and chance, much like the dance choreography of contemporary Merce Cunningham.
- Frankenthaler exemplified the innovative spirit of the New York school, whose adherents sought new modes of expression. She pioneered a painting technique that involved thinning her paint with turpentine or water and then using buckets, brushes, and sponges to pour and move the paint across unprimed canvas. This process enabled the paint to stain and flood the canvas rather than building upon it as a raised layer.



Helen Frankenthaler, New York, 1969

Godwin, Judith

Male Study, 1954

Oil on Masonite

67 1/2 x 48 inches (171.45 x 121.92 cm)

On loan from Berry Campbell Gallery, New York



RECENT ACQUISITION

- Judith Godwin was one of several abstract expressionists whose early careers were influenced by cubism, an artistic style that explored the fragmentation of form. She cited the movement captured in Marcel Duchamp's seminal painting from 1912, *Nude Descending a Staircase*, as particularly influential to her artistic development.
- The stark contrast between light and dark tones in *Male Study* creates the illusion of fractured space, indicative of the concept of "push and pull" championed by painter Hans Hofmann, with whom Godwin studied in the early 1950s. Hofmann believed that depth and movement could be conveyed through purely abstract means, namely the interaction between shape and color. Here, the dynamism of the depicted forms is further accentuated through Godwin's application of paint in long drips, some of which appear to defy gravity as they run in multiple directions.
- After moving from Virginia to New York in 1953, Godwin began a lifelong friendship with Martha Graham, one of the leading modern dancers and choreographers of the twentieth century. Graham's innovative poses and the distinctive interaction of her costumes with her body deeply inspired Godwin, who stated, "I can see her gestures in everything I do."



Martha Graham performing "Lamentation," Bennington College, Vermont, circa 1939

Gottlieb, Adolph

Black, Unblack, 1954

Oil on Canvas

36 x 48 inches (91.44 x 121.92 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



- Despite painting representational canvases in his early years, Adolph Gottlieb's search for an "emotional truth" eventually led him to work in an abstract style free from visual references to the physical world.
- Gottlieb and many other abstract expressionists were influenced by the psychology of Carl Jung, who theorized that all humans possess a collective unconscious stemming from a shared evolutionary past. In order to tap into this universal unconscious, Gottlieb and others often included symbols in their paintings. Sometimes the symbols were recognizable, such as a head, eye, or plant, although in *Black, Unblack*, Gottlieb offers symbols that are not meant to be directly translated.
- Hollywood's genre of film noir reached an apex in the late 1940s. With a shadowy palette and indiscernible symbolic composition, *Black, Unblack* shares cinema's interest in themes of mystery, intrigue, and darkness.
- The University of Nebraska acquired this painting in 1955 after it was featured in the Nebraska Art Association's 65th annual exhibition. Such exhibitions, which still occur today, offered an opportunity to acquire recently produced contemporary art by emerging and well-known artists.

We favor the simple expression of the complex thought.

—Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko, 1943

Philip Guston

Untitled

Ink on paper, 1967

University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust, H-2881.1988



- Philip Guston moved to New York City in 1935 and became a core member of the abstract expressionist movement. Guston's canvases from this time were characterized by his gestural style, tactile paint application, and a palette that consisted primarily of grays, reds, and pinks.
- Although having achieved success within the abstract expressionist movement, Guston became disillusioned with the New York art scene and left the city in 1967 to settle permanently in Woodstock, New York. During this tumultuous period, Guston stopped painting for a time and instead created hundreds of charcoal and pen and ink works on paper, which he hung on the walls of his studio.
- At first glance, the dark, gestural marks in this untitled drawing recall the method of automatic drawing that was often practiced by Guston's abstract expressionist contemporaries. Yet upon closer examination, representational elements become visible, perhaps previewing the autobiographical figuration that Guston would subsequently employ.

I think a painter has two choices: he paints the world or himself. And I think the best painting that's done here is when he paints himself and by himself, I mean himself in this environment, in this total situation.

–Philip Guston, 1960

Hare, David

Catch, 1947

Bronze

9 13/16 x 14 3/4 x 9 inches (24.924 x 37.465 x 22.86 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Olga N.

Sheldon Acquisition Trust



- David Hare's exposure to art began at a young age. His mother, Elizabeth Sage Goodwin, was an art collector who befriended several prominent early twentieth-century artists, including Constantin Brancusi, Walt Kuhn, and Marcel Duchamp.
- In 1942, the same year Hare began making sculpture, he was invited by leading surrealist writer André Breton to edit a newly founded magazine called *VVV*, with Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst serving as editorial advisors. Only four issues were published, but the magazine functioned as an important collaborative apparatus for the dissemination of ideas between European and American surrealists.
- Surrealist ideology informed much of Hare's sculpture, which involved the abstraction and hybridization of mechanical and biological forms. Their resulting shapes sometimes suggest erotic connotations or human potential for violence.
- The relationship between object and viewer was an important component of Hare's artistic philosophy, which he shared with many New York school artists who no longer considered viewing art a passive experience. By breaking apart and recombining reality, he aimed to create works of ambiguous meaning that elicited responses from the viewer based on their own personal associations and experience.



David Hare, Provincetown, Massachusetts, 1953

Hofmann, Hans

The City, 1958

Oil on Canvas

60 1/4 x 52 1/4 inches (153.035 x 132.715 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Thomas C.

Woods Memorial



- Hans Hofmann received formal artistic training from various artists in Munich and during significant time spent working in Paris. He opened the Schule für Bildende Kunst (School of Fine Arts) in Munich in 1915, holding classes there and in other international locations for the next decade.
- In the years between World Wars I and II, many artists emigrated from Europe to the United States and continued their careers, thus contributing to American artists' familiarity with modernist idioms. In 1934, Hofmann moved to the United States and founded the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts. Bridging European modernism and American abstract expressionism, Hofmann established himself as one of the most important teachers in New York City, taking on students including Lee Krasner, Louise Nevelson, and Fritz Bultman.
- *The City* takes cues from European movements such as cubism and fauvism. The expressive use of color and a reduction of subject matter to geometric forms demonstrate the influence of modernist styles on Hofmann's aesthetic sensibilities.
- Hofmann developed the concept of "push and pull," which he used to describe the simultaneous flatness and depth achieved in an abstract painting such as *The City*.



Class at the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts, Provincetown, Massachusetts, circa 1945

Kienbusch, William Austin

Knossos, 1959

Casein on Paper, Mounted on Wallboard

26 3/4 x 37 3/8 inches (67.945 x 94.933 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



- William Kienbusch developed his expressive style studying the work of early American modernists such as John Marin, Marsden Hartley, and Arthur Dove— artists who drew on nature and the landscape for inspiration. Exemplary works by these artists may be viewed for comparison in Sheldon's permanent collection galleries.
- In the late 1940s, Kienbusch rented a studio apartment in lower Manhattan and often went to the Cedar Tavern where he met informally with other New York school artists who were exploring a new mode of expressionism in American art, be it through references to the primitive and myth, gestural mark making, contemplative fields of layered color, or other formal strategies.
- Kienbusch executed this painting while traveling in Greece on a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship. The title, **Knossos**, references the ancient Minoan capital on the island of Crete, a place associated with the mythic Minotaur and labyrinth. While the painting is not a direct depiction of the palatial ruins at Knossos or the brilliant blue sky and sea surrounding them, it demonstrates Kienbusch's response to the Grecian environment with vigorous, bold brushstrokes.
- Much like his abstract expressionist peers Robert Motherwell and Theodoros Stamos, Kienbusch often infused his compositions with geometrically shaped areas that occupied large spaces on the canvas.



William Kienbusch sketching on a beach, Guam, circa 1945

Klein, William

Atom Bomb Sky (Manhattan), 1955

Gelatin Silver Print

11 13/16 x 15 3/4 inches (30 x 40.01 cm)



Klein, William

Wings of the Hawk, 42nd Street, New York, 1955

Gelatin Silver Print

11 13/16 x 15 3/4 inches (30 x 40.01 cm)



Klein, William

Selwyn 42nd Street, New York, 1955

Gelatin Silver Print

11 13/16 x 15 3/4 inches (30 x 40.01 cm)



RECENT ACQUISITIONS

- Many postwar-era photographers, including Ted Croner and William Klein, were not concerned with the representation of actual subjects or scenes. Rather, like abstract expressionist painters, they were interested in capturing the essence of discrete moments. Their images feel both deeply personal and universal, containing a sense of dynamic urgency that echoes the energy of the time and place they were photographing.
- In 1948, after a stint in the US Army, William Klein moved to Paris where he took painting classes with French artist Fernand Léger. Léger's teachings prompted Klein to consider art through the lens of contemporary urban life, a practice that Klein soon realized could be best achieved through photography. During a visit to New York in 1954, Klein began a "photographic diary," employing a bold visual style of blurred, grainy images taken from unusual angles that many claim capture the psychological mood of the city during the postwar era.
- The dramatic compositional techniques, subject matter, and psychological emphasis of photography from this time period also corresponded to the cinematic genre of film noir, which reached its apex in the late 1940s.



Dust jacket for William Klein's *Life is Good & Good for You in New York: Trance Witness Revels*, 1956

Kline, Franz

Study for Shenandoah Wall, 1960

Ink on Three Sheets of Paper Mounted on Cardboard

10 5/8 x 24 13/16 inches (26.988 x 63.024 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Olga N. Sheldon Acquisition Trust



- Franz Kline's paintings appear to embody the same spirit of spontaneity and improvisation as the work of many of his abstract expressionist peers, yet his compositions were premeditated and carefully crafted. He often made preparatory ink studies, like this one, which he would refer to when making his final large iterations on canvas.
- The thick, bold lines that characterize Kline's paintings evoke the strength and energy of the mechanical forms that dominated the industrial landscape of his childhood. The title of this study, *Shenandoah Wall*, references an area of Pennsylvania known for its coal production, near where Kline was raised.
- At the height of his career, Kline worked primarily in black and white, thus reducing one of the most fundamental components of painting, color, to its simplest form. Resonant with others, his work inspired one of the artistic movements that grew out of the New York school period—minimalism.
- In the same year of this study, Kline collaborated with poet and curator Frank O'Hara on a contribution to the artist book publication *21 Etchings and Poems*. Kline's action painting style paired perfectly with O'Hara's "now's the time" approach.



Franz Kline, New York, 1954

Krasner, Lee

Invocation, 1969 – 1971

Oil on Canvas

85 5/8 x 55 7/8 inches (217.488 x 141.923 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Olga N. Sheldon Acquisition Trust and Sheldon Art Association



- Lee Krasner joined the mural division of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the Great Depression. During this time, she learned to work on a massive scale, which translated later to canvases such as *Invocation*.
- After Krasner married Jackson Pollock she became his de facto publicist, leaving little time for the artistic career she tried to pursue for herself throughout their relationship. It was not until after Pollock's death in 1956 that she gained significant recognition in the art world, receiving her first retrospective at London's Whitechapel Gallery in 1965.
- Even though Krasner painted with much of the same vocabulary as her male counterparts, she and her female colleagues were frequently omitted from exhibitions and interpretation by critics and historians. This "heroic" and action-oriented style of making work was firmly situated as intrinsically masculine. Conservative politics and societal expectations in the 1950s meant that women were largely expected to fill traditional positions such as homemakers, teachers, or secretaries. It was not until the 1960s and 1970s that such narrow gender roles were challenged and began to include new notions of women's roles in society.
- *Invocation* is a study in the balance of opposites—vertical and horizontal, restful and energetic, controlled and gestural. Although references to natural elements can be seen in the formal composition, Krasner's work also references more abstract aspects of the natural world such as growth, energy, and movement.



Lee Krasner and *Invocation* in her studio, outside of Springs, New York, 1972

Norman Lewis

New York, NY 1909–New York, NY 1979

Untitled

Oil on canvas, circa 1958

University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Olga N. Sheldon Acquisition Trust and gift from Billy E. Hodges, U-5742.2012



- Born and raised in New York City, Norman Lewis's artistic output during the 1930s was figurative and addressed conditions of African American life. During this time, he engaged himself in debates about the visual language best suited for African American artists and themes.
- While Lewis maintained a socially conscious outlook over the course of his life, in the 1940s he started to question representational art's ability to produce change and so turned his focus to abstraction. In 1949, Lewis began exhibiting at the Willard Gallery along with other prominent abstract expressionists, and in 1950 participated in the Artists' Sessions at Studio 35, an historically significant series of meetings in which artists discussed the state of the contemporary art scene and the abstract expressionist movement.

- This untitled canvas is a prime example of Lewis’s signature vibrant palette and layered paint application. Although known for his abstractions, Lewis often employed representational elements in his works. In this painting—possibly created after the artist’s visit to Spain in the late 1950s—the viewer can make out the form of a bull and thin, figural forms in the lower half of the composition.



Artists' session at Studio 35, April 1950. From left to right: Seymour Lipton, Norman Lewis, Jimmy Ernst, Peter Grippe, Adolph Gottlieb, Hans Hofmann, Alfred H. Barr Jr., Robert Motherwell, Richard Lippold, Willem de Kooning, Ibram Lassaw, James Brooks, Ad Reinhardt, and Richard Pousette-Dart

Lipton, Seymour
Glowworm, 1957

Nickel Silver on Monel

32 x 22 x 22 1/2 inches (81.28 x 55.88 x 57.15 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



- Seymour Lipton’s sculpture often featured sharp edges and angular forms, influenced by both the archetypal imagery of surrealism and the imprecise geometry of cubism. Profound violence inflicted and experienced during World War II also informed the visceral and aggressive forms of Lipton’s work.
- *Glowworm* speaks to the theme of metamorphosis: a larvae-like cylinder thrusts upward through irregularly shaped planes that seem to split apart with its force. As the shell of this sculpture radiates away from the core, the negative space becomes just as energized as the solid armature of the sculpture.
- As abstract expressionist paintings often included pictorial symbols to reference a universal unconscious, Lipton’s works often take the form of three-dimensional symbols alluding to ideas such as creation, destruction, or evolution that would resonate across cultures.
- Using a direct-metal technique of torch-brazing bronze and nickel silver rods onto shaped sheet metal, Lipton was able to achieve a variety of subtleties in his sculptures. Brazing allowed him great control in determining surface color and texture, while the flexibility of sheet metal enabled him to easily mold his sculptures into the forms he desired.

Basically “man” concerns me in all the various things I make. I find “inner spaces” of man in things outside himself; in the sea, under the earth, in animals, machines etc. . . . Whether or not I use the gesture of man, of forms other than man, all the works in a fundamental way concern human life.

–Seymour Lipton

Marca-Relli, Conrad

20 November 1959, 1959

Oil and Canvas on Canvas

72 x 72 inches (182.88 x 182.88 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Thomas C. Woods Memorial



- In 1951, Conrad Marca-Relli assisted art dealer Leo Castelli in organizing the groundbreaking Ninth Street Show. This exhibition was a pivotal event in the New York art world, as it marked the first time critics, art dealers, and the public gave serious attention to the abstract expressionist movement.
- Marca-Relli began his artistic career as a painter but started experimenting with collage techniques during a trip to Mexico in 1953. His goal was to translate the gesture, spontaneity, and scale of abstract expressionist painting into collage, a medium that was revived in the modern era by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in Europe during the height of the cubist period in the 1910s.
- Marca-Relli created his compositions by rapidly cutting shapes from sheets of canvas or linen, using speed and intuition to guide his hand before his conscious mind could interfere and stifle his creativity. He then layered these shapes to create a sense of texture and depth, and applied paint and stitchery to further accentuate the interplay of the resulting forms and their edges.

Collage forces you to think and clarify your ideas, with regard to both space and volumes. This discipline obliges me to think in terms of forms, outlines, real and imagined spaces, so as not to fall into the temptation of thinking that nature is a reality.

—Conrad Marca-Relli

Motherwell, Robert

Hotel Flora, 1950

Oil on Masonite

36 x 48 inches (91.44 x 121.92 cm)

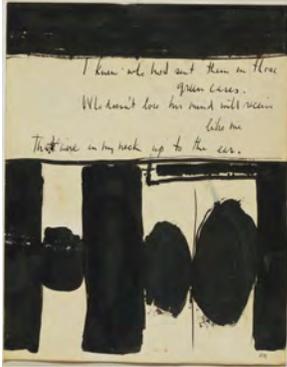
Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



- Rare among abstract expressionists, Robert Motherwell received an elite education, attending Stanford, Harvard, and Columbia Universities. Studying philosophy and aesthetics had a profound influence on his artistic production as he investigated the evolution of European modernism and the essential human condition through his paintings.
- At Columbia, Motherwell studied under art historian Meyer Schapiro, who introduced him to surrealists living in New York at that time including Roberto Matta and Max Ernst. Motherwell adopted their use of automatism, or automatic drawing, as he began introducing abstraction into his artwork.
- **Hotel Flora** combines real architectural elements—doorframes, a doorknob, small windows above the lintels—with more elusive markings, such as the mysterious figure eight superimposed over a door.

By merging reality and imagination, Motherwell elevates an otherwise mundane scene to one of speculative fantasy.

- The thick vertical bars in this painting reflect the structure of Motherwell's most well-known series, *Elegy to the Spanish Republic*, which he began in 1948 and continued to paint until his death. Unlike the *Elegies*, where the heavy stripes evoke rebellion and chaos, *Hotel Flora* uses similar formal elements to create a stage-like, quiet domestic scene.



Robert Motherwell, *Elegy to the Spanish Republic No. 1*, 1948. Ink on paper, 10 3/4 x 8 1/2 inches. The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Nevelson, Louise

Black Table Game, 1959

Wood

TBD

On loan from Donna Woods, Lincoln, NE



- Like many artists working during the 1930s and 1940s, Louise Nevelson was interested in creating art that expressed timeless values common across cultures, a practice evidenced by the archaic shapes and simple materials she employed in her works. Nevelson also maintained a lifelong interest in modern dance, an art form whose development in the 1930s and 1940s helped shape the belief that the arts could tap primal energies.
- Nevelson's sculptures were greatly influenced by the time and environment during which they were created. In 1942, the artist began using wood found in the streets of New York, a practice largely influenced by the unavailability of metal during World War II. Regarding her predominant use of the color black in her sculptures, Nevelson once remarked that it was a subconscious expression of the despair she felt for her son who served with the Merchant Marine during the war.
- Although this particular work is relatively small, Nevelson often worked on a much larger scale, creating massive sculptural environments that blurred the boundary between viewer and object, between life and art.



Louise Nevelson's studio, circa 1965

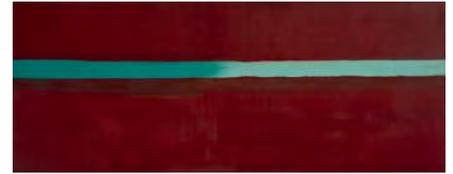
Newman, Barnett

Horizon Light, 1949

Oil on Canvas

29 x 72 3/16 x 2 1/16 inches (73.66 x 183.356 x 5.239 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Sills



- In 1948, Barnett Newman painted *Onement I* and developed what would become his trademark style: vertical bands of contrasting hues that run the full length of otherwise monochromatic surfaces. As the first of what he would later call his “zips,” this canvas marked Newman’s new approach to space in painting: space not articulated through the convention of figures populating a ground, but rather encountered as an immediate, total, “single experience.”
- Newman wrote an essay titled “The Sublime is Now” for the December 1948 edition of *The Tiger’s Eye*, a magazine that published writings by surrealist and abstract expressionist practitioners. In it Newman declared that art could achieve transcendence—or what he termed “the sublime”—only by removing figuration, narrative detail, and a quest for beauty from the act of painting.
- *Horizon Light*, painted one year after Newman’s artistic breakthrough with *Onement I*, is one of only four works in which Newman experimented with horizontal bands. In 1950, the then-untitled painting debuted at the Betty Parsons Gallery in New York with a vertical orientation (a decision made by painter Mark Rothko, who directed the installation). In the ensuing years, Newman titled the work *Horizon Light* and signed the canvas along the horizontal green band to ensure the painting’s proper hanging.



Barnett Newman with *Horizon Light* (at left) at the Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, 1950

Pollock, Jackson

Untitled (Composition with Ritual Scene), 1938 – 1941

Oil on Canvas, Mounted on Masonite

18 x 47 1/4 inches (45.72 x 120.015 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association Collection, through the gifts of Mrs. Henry C. Woods, Sr., Mr. and Mrs. Frank Woods, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas C Woods, and Mr. and Mrs. Frank Woods, Jr. by exchange: Woods Charitable Fund in memory of Thomas C. (Chip) Woods, III, and other generous donors



- Jackson Pollock's early work reveals the stylistic influence of his first mentor, Thomas Hart Benton, as well as Mexican muralists such as José Clemente Orozco. In the 1930s, Pollock traveled to New Hampshire and California to view Orozco's murals, finding rich imagery to mine for his own work. In *Untitled (Composition with Ritual Scene)*, elongated figures and sweeping compositional lines evoke Benton's regionalist paintings, while themes of sacrifice and spirituality evoke the work of Orozco.
- With additional influences ranging from the work of the surrealists to Jungian psychotherapy, Pollock sought to explore the unconscious through his art. He often refused to "explain" his work, insisting that its creation was both impulsive and necessary and that dissecting a painting's meaning would destroy it.
- The broad brushstrokes seen in this painting foreshadow the explosion of movement and gesture of Pollock's well-known "drip" paintings. By spreading an unprimed, unstretched canvas across the floor, Pollock could access the entirety of the composition by walking across it and flinging, spraying, and pouring paint from all angles.
- Pollock's drip paintings were championed by critic Clement Greenberg, whose position in the art world highly influenced the success and prestige of artists in New York. Greenberg's claim that Pollock was the "greatest artist of his generation" helped propel Pollock to his mythic status as the figurehead of abstract expressionism.



Jackson Pollock in his studio, outside of Springs, New York, 1950

Reinhardt, Ad

No. 2, 1949

Watercolor on Paper

22 3/8 x 30 11/16 inches (56.83 x 77.95 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



- Drawn to East Asian calligraphy and aesthetics, Hindu and Buddhist philosophies, and the practice of Zen, Ad Reinhardt studied Japanese and Chinese art at New York University and taught courses in the subjects at Brooklyn College. In **No. 2**, delicate lines dance across the page, evoking loose calligraphy. Reinhardt's use of watercolor closely mimics the traditional calligraphic medium of ink on paper.
- Unlike many of his contemporaries, Reinhardt never worked in figuration. His strict adherence to abstraction was marked by his devotion to “non-objective, non-representational, non-figurative, non-imagist, non-expressionist, non-subjective” art.
- Shortly after **No. 2** was made, Reinhardt began reducing the palette and content of his paintings, eventually arriving in 1955 at the creation of his “black paintings,” for which he is best known.
- The author James Joyce had profound influence on Reinhardt and many other abstract expressionists; they viewed his stream-of-consciousness style as a written manifestation of the automatic drawing they practiced on their canvases. Reinhardt's venture into the “black paintings” also may have been reinforced by Joyce: the character Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* theorizes that beauty requires “wholeness, harmony, and radiance.”



Ad Reinhardt, Abstract Painting, 1963. Oil on canvas, 60 x 60 inches. The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Rothko, Mark

Yellow Band, 1956

Oil on Canvas

86 x 79 1/2 x 1 inches (218.44 x 201.93 x 2.54 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Thomas C. Woods Memorial



- Along with Barnett Newman and Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko was one of the leading artists working in the branch of abstract expressionism referred to as “color field.” In contrast with the gestural action paintings produced by artists like Jackson Pollock, Rothko and others took a more contemplative approach, creating immense canvases covered with large areas of color that were meant to evoke an emotional, almost spiritual response within the viewer.
- In 1943, Rothko, Newman, and Adolph Gottlieb wrote a letter to the New York Times declaring: “[O]nly that subject matter is valid which is tragic and timeless. That is why we profess a spiritual kinship with primitive and archaic art.” Rothko’s paintings from the mid-1940s demonstrate this interest in primitive imagery, which he often combined with the visual language of surrealism, a European movement that was a key influence on abstract expressionism.
- By 1950, Rothko had reached his signature format of tiered, luminous or translucent rectangles arranged in varying color combinations. Relying on the tension and balance between the distinct colors of the rectangles and that of the space surrounding them, the artist achieved a style that he felt was the purest way to convey the struggles and ecstasies of the human condition.

A painting is not a picture of an experience; it is an experience.
 –Mark Rothko, 1959

Smith, David Rowland

Superstructure on 4, 1960

Stainless Steel

139 3/4 x 79 3/4 x 22 inches (354.965 x 202.565 x 55.88 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Bequests of Frances Sheldon and Adams Bromley Sheldon



- David Smith worked as a welder at the Studebaker automobile plant in South Bend, Indiana, during the summer of 1925. The skills he gained on the job would become essential in the creation of his massive welded metal sculptures and would help him gain recognition as a leading American sculptor of his generation.
- Guggenheim Fellowships in the early 1950s provided Smith the means to begin making large-scale iron and steel works, many of which contain totem-like forms that demonstrate the artist’s own interest in Neolithic art and the larger concerns of the abstract expressionists in “primitive” art.
- Despite appearing to have been made spontaneously, Smith’s balanced, geometric sculptures were carefully designed to be seen from all angles, changing their surroundings as the viewer changes perspective.
- Smith’s love for painting influenced how he constructed his sculptures: he often introduced paint to his constructions in an effort to combine the two mediums. Smith thought of his work as “calligraphy in space.”



David Smith painting *Tanktotem IX*, in his workshop, Bolton Landing, New York, circa 1960

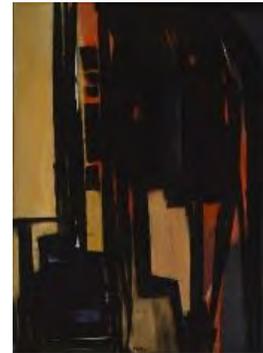
Stamos, Theodoros

A Walk in the Poppies, 1952

Oil on Canvas

55 x 40 inches (139.7 x 101.6 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



- Born in New York City in 1922, Theodoros Stamos began studying art at age thirteen. Growing up in the city, Stamos frequented local galleries and museums, witnessing the burgeoning modern art movement. In 1943 at age twenty-one, Stamos's first solo exhibition was organized by soon-to-be influential art dealer Betty Parsons and held at the Wakefield Gallery. Subsequently, Stamos became an active participant in the abstract expressionist movement.
- Stamos's interest in nature and primitive imagery helped him form a connection with other abstract expressionist artists including Adolph Gottlieb and Barnett Newman. Throughout his career, Stamos's frequent trips to locations such as New Mexico, Jerusalem, and Greece influenced his palette and exploration of myth through archaic forms.
- In 1950, Stamos taught at North Carolina's Black Mountain College, a progressive institution that promoted interdisciplinary education and taught a number of individuals who would impact the arts in the latter half of the twentieth century. The thick bands of black paint that dominate the canvas in *A Walk in the Poppies* recall the techniques of Stamos's contemporaries and fellow Black Mountain teachers Robert Motherwell and Franz Kline.



Theodoros Stamos at Petroglyph National Monument Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1947

Sterne, Hedda

New York, #5, 1955

Oil on Canvas

41 1/2 x 31 1/2 inches (105.41 x 80.01 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



- Hedda Sterne was one of many of artists who found inspiration in America after leaving Europe in the years leading up to World War II. In response to the skyscrapers and elevated railways of New York City and the farming equipment she saw in rural Vermont, Sterne made work that fused elements of surrealism and abstract expressionism.
- In 1954, Sterne began experimenting with spray paint to express the speed and energetic movement of New York's urban environment. This technique allowed her to become more gestural in her mark making, giving her paintings a graffiti-like aesthetic.
- In 1950, a group of eighteen artists submitted a letter to the New York Times protesting the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibition American Painting Today and its "bias" against contemporary painting. The following year, Life magazine published a now-iconic photo of fifteen of these artists and dubbed them "The Irascibles." Sterne was the only woman in the group.



"The Irascibles," from left, back row: Willem de Kooning, Adolph Gottlieb, Ad Reinhardt, Hedda Sterne
Next row: Richard Pousette-Dart, William Baziotes, Jimmy Ernst (with bow tie), Jackson Pollock, James Brooks, Clyfford Still (leaning on knee), Robert Motherwell, Bradley Walker Tomlin
In foreground: Theodoros Stamos (on bench), Barnett Newman (on stool), and Mark Rothko

Still, Clyfford

PH-794, 1945

Oil on Canvas

58 1/4 x 33 5/8 inches (147.955 x 85.408 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Olga N. Sheldon Acquisition Trust



- Clyfford Still was one of the earliest abstract expressionists to shift from representational art to complete abstraction, a transition he began in 1938.
- While Still's visual language was undeniably influenced by the rural landscapes of his childhood in Spokane, Washington, and Alberta, Canada, the forms depicted in his paintings were not made as literal representations of nature. Instead, they express broader ideas about the forces that impact the human experience. In *PH-794*, the thin, peaked forms, whose height is accentuated by the verticality of the canvas, suggest power and growth.
- Still was a gifted colorist and worked predominantly in earth tones, which he applied with a palette knife. This tool could produce a variety of surface effects, from a rough, highly textured field of color to a thin, uniform line.
- Still was somewhat of an outsider from the circle of abstract expressionists, both geographically and emotionally. After moving from the West Coast to New York City in the early 1950s, his sense of alienation became more pronounced. Consequently, he severed ties with the prominent Betty Parsons Gallery, a decision that prevented much of his work from entering the art market. Increasingly critical of the New York art establishment, he moved to Maryland in 1961, where he lived until his death in 1980.



Clyfford Still, 1973

Tomlin, Bradley Walker

Number 7, 1951, 1951

Oil on Canvas

54 x 42 inches (137.16 x 106.68 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



- Bradley Walker Tomlin was a frequent visitor to the Museum of Modern Art's 1936 exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*. His work from the mid to late 1930s and early 1940s demonstrates the use of surrealist imagery, which he often combined with the grids of analytic cubism.
- In late 1945, Tomlin met Adolph Gottlieb and became involved in the New York circle of abstract expressionists. Tomlin was particularly close with Philip Guston and Robert Motherwell, artists with whom he shared a studio, and with Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner. His immersion in this art scene led Tomlin to explore surrealist automatism and the gestural mode of action painting.

- In 1950, one year before painting *Number 7*, Tomlin left the Frank Rehn Gallery to sign with the Betty Parsons Gallery. Parsons was a significant promoter of abstract expressionism: Jackson Pollock first exhibited his drip paintings at her gallery in 1948, and she represented other key figures like Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko.
- Between 1948 and his untimely death in 1953, Tomlin combined the spontaneity of abstract expressionism with the structure of cubism in many works including this painting. Composed of deliberately positioned, calligraphic brushstrokes that appear both carefully calculated and freely applied, *Number 7* features Tomlin's unique visual language that appears to reference primitive or archaic symbols without corresponding to a known system.



Mark Rothko, Robert Motherwell, and Bradley Walker Tomlin at the Rockefeller Guest House, New York, 1949

Permanent Collection: Great Hall Sculpture

In the words of Philip Johnson, esteemed architect of the Sheldon Museum of Art:

The symbolic function of the Sheldon Gallery is fulfilled, I feel, not only by the “classical” exterior of travertine but mainly by the great hall which orients the visitor, as well as elevat[es] his spirits. People enjoy pictures more after they have been “elevated” by big foyers. The home-for-pictures functions occur in separated areas grouped around the great hall. I was determined that there would be no museum fatigue.

Sheldon’s Great Hall spans the width of the building. Entrances at each end (east / west) punctuate the two-story glazed wall, letting in beautiful natural light and connecting the building interior with the exterior landscape. Inside, the Great Hall walls are faced with travertine marble, and the ceiling is accented with large circular panels covered in gold leaf.

During Fall 2017, the three sculptures installed in the Great Hall are:

1. Elie Nadelman’s *Man in the Open Air* (c. 1915) is a witty transformation of a classical posture of repose into a modern gesture of nonchalance. Influences range from ancient Greek sculpture (e.g., Praxitiles, Phidias) to the modern bowler hat and stylized or abstracted forms (e.g., the tree support, the tubular, curvilinear body). Modernist art historian Albert Elsen described this work as “a bowler-hatted, bow-tied modern Apollo, a paragon of poise.”
2. Joseph Havel’s *Silk Drape* (2000) is an elongated white sculpture that looks like a piece of fabric, defying gravity and draping down the floor. Upon closer inspection, the viewer will realize that it is actually made of bronze. This hyperrealism or appearance of one material to be another can be classified as *trompe l’oeil* (a French term meaning “fool the eye”). The juxtaposition of the materials, in the artist’s words, balances “hollow and transparency on the one hand and density and opacity on the other hand.” Emphasizing the transition of materials, Havel alludes to the flux of humans’ lives and identities.
3. Smith’s *Superstructure on 4* (1960) is anthropomorphic – that is, it stands upright like a primitive totem or personage – with its boxy stainless steel torso and planar appendages supported by four stilt-like legs. While the composition appears to have been spontaneously constructed, it was in fact planned out in advance in a spray drawing. Like most of Smith’s large scale stainless steel sculptures, *Superstructure on 4* was meant to be situated within the landscape, out-of-doors, so that sunlight would reflect off the animated, swirling patterns on its burnished surfaces and dematerialize its masses.

Supporting Information

- **Elie Nadelman** (Warsaw, Poland 1882 – Riverdale, NY 1946): Polish-born sculptor whose mannered curvilinear human figures greatly influenced early 20th-century American sculpture. He was influenced by folk art, classical forms, and the avant-garde circles in early 20th century Paris with whom he mingled, including Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Gertrude Stein. He moved to America with the outbreak of WWI. He once said: “I employ no other line but the curve, which has freshness and force. I compose these curves so as to bring them in accord or in opposition to one another. In that way, I obtain the life of the form, i.e., harmony.” <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Elie-Nadelman>
- **Joseph Havel** (Minneapolis, MN 1954 –): American artist who is interested in drawing attention to the ordinary and the mundane. He often instills a *trompe l’oeil* – art technique that deceives the eye – sensibility in his works. Trained in ceramics as well as painting and drawing, and more recently shifting towards bronze sculpture, the artist resists specializing in a single medium. Havel describes his artistic process as uncovering “the activity of still objects.” <http://www.laumeiersculpturepark.org/joseph-havel/>
- **David Smith** (Decatur, IN 1906 – Albany, NY 1965): An American sculptor, painter, draftsman, and photographer best known for creating large steel abstract geometric sculptures. He studied under Czech Cubist Jan Matulka at the Art Student’s League in New York, where he also familiarized himself with the artistic vanguard and European modernists, Alberto Giacometti, Wassily Kandinsky, Pablo Picasso, and Julio Gonzalez. During the 1930s, he worked for the WPA, and over time expanded his skills in welding to large scale sculpture. http://www.phillipscollection.org/research/american_art/bios/smith-bio.htm

Themes

- Abstraction (abstract art)
- Modern art
- Sculpture / 3-dimensional artwork
- Formal qualities: harmony, balance, line, form, color, texture
- Size and scale
- Materials and process

Discussion Prompts

- Look at these sculptures from different angles and distances. What do you notice about the works as you see it from other perspectives?
- Look at these sculptures. What words would you use to describe them? Can you make comparisons or find distinctions between all three of them?
- **Man in the Open Air** and **Superstructure on 4** are said to resemble or represent the human form. How has each artist approached this subject?
- Study David Smith’s **Superstructure on 4**. Describe the shapes, forms, and lines you see. How did the artist connect the different pieces? Why do you think he titled this work **Superstructure on 4**?
- Be a living sculpture! Act out one of the Great Hall sculptures!

- Take some time to walk around the ***Silk Drape***. How does it make you feel? Use a piece of paper to make a smaller version of the ***Silk Drape***.
- Imagine what ***Man in the Open Air*** might look like if it was painted? Describe!
- If you could rearrange the Great Hall sculptures, how would you rearrange them, why?

Helpful Links

- Historic Buildings UNL, City Campus, Sheldon Museum of Art (includes building images): <http://historicbuildings.unl.edu/building.php?b=99>
- Sheldon Museum of Art – search for more sculpture in the collection online: <http://sheldonartmuseum.org/collection> and then search for ***sculpture***
- Catalog entries for each of these sculptures can be found in: ***Sculpture from the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery*** (Edited by K.O. Janovy; 2005) and in the Docent Information Hub.
- ***Key Questions to Ask When Looking at Sculpture*** (Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College): <http://www.oberlin.edu/amam/asia/sculpture/documents/sculpture-questions.pdf>

Exhibition Checklist

Nadelman, Elie

Man in the Open Air, circa 1915

bronze

53 x 22 ½ x 11 ¼ inches (134.62 x 57.15 x 28.575 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln,
Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust, H-323.1952



Havel, Joseph

Silk Drape, 2000

bronze with patina

100 x 24 x 11 inches (254 x 60.96 x 27.94 cm)

University of Nebraska, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Goldberg by
exchange, U-5085



Smith, David

Superstructure on 4, 1960

Stainless steel

139 ¾ x 79 ¾ x 22 inches (354.965 x 202.565 x 55.88 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln,
Bequests of Frances Sheldon and Adams Bromley Sheldon, U-
656.1969



Permanent Collection: Outdoor Sculpture

More than thirty original sculptures from Sheldon Museum of Art's permanent collection are displayed year-round across the University of Nebraska–Lincoln's City and East Campuses, with major works by international artists from the early twentieth century to today.

Supporting Information

- The bequests of Mary Frances Sheldon and Adams Bromley Sheldon to the University not only provided the funds to build our current museum, but also included the purchase of five major works that formed the core of the outdoor sculpture collection:
 - Gaston Lachaise, *Floating Figure*, (acquired 1969)
 - David Smith, *Superstructure on Four*, (acquired 1969)
 - Tony Smith, *Willy*, (acquired 1969)
 - Reuben Nakian, *Birth of Venus*, (acquired 1970)
 - Jacques Lipchitz, *Bather*, (acquired in 1963 and originally exhibited in the Great Hall)

- The Sculpture Garden includes the areas adjacent to the Sheldon on the south and west including the sunken garden; it also extends into the Donaldson and Cather gardens (part of the campus botanical gardens) to the north and east of the museum.

- Designed by Caudill, Rowlett & Schott (Houston, TX and NYC) with Lee Enright as landscape architect, the garden was designed with different elevations to provide multiple vantage points as well as to define and enhance the spaces connecting the museum to the surrounding campus and beyond. The Sculpture Garden was dedicated in 1970.

Themes

- Scale in relation to viewer and viewer interaction
- Multiple vantage points / sculpture in the round
- How variance in surrounding environment affects outdoor sculpture
- Use of industrial materials
- Different representations of the human figure
- Considerations of artist when making “public art”
- Abstract v. representational
- Use of positive and negative space
- Design v. art and functionality of art
- Additive v. subtractive sculpture

Discussion Prompts

- Look at the sculpture from different angles. What do you notice about it from different perspectives?
- Artists use **formal elements of art** – line, shape, color, and texture – and the **principles of design** – balance, emphasis, movement, pattern, repetition, proportion, rhythm, variety, and unity – in different ways. Look closely at the sculptures and identify and describe these elements and principles.
- **Negative space** is the open space between and around physical elements of sculpture. How does the artist use negative space to enhance or affect the composition?
- Consider the immediate environment around the sculpture – are there trees, bushes, open space, sidewalks, buildings? Why do you think the sculpture was placed in this specific spot? How do the things around it make a difference in how you view the sculpture?
- Choose one of the highly abstract sculptures on campus (Mark Di Suvero's **Old Glory**, Charles Ginnever's **Shift**, Juan Hamilton's **Fragment X-O**, Michael Heizer's **Prismatic Flake Geometric**). What do you think about this sculpture? What does it remind you of? Why do artists make sculptures that do not look like anything in real life? What might be their purpose? (Discuss the artist's intentions for the works.) Does knowing why the artists made these works change the way you think about them?
- How is the human figure represented differently in Saul Baizerman's **Serenity**, Jun Kaneko's **Untitled**, Gaston Lachaise's **Floating Figure**, and William Dickey King's **Story**?
- If you could pick one sculpture and put it in your classroom or school, which one would you choose? Where would you put it? Why?

Helpful Links

- Public Art in Lincoln – <http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/art/>
- Americans for the Arts: Public Art – <http://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/public-art>
- How It's Made: Bronze Sculpture – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8GmKJXoTO8>
- Norman A. Geske, "American Sculpture," *Nebraska Art Association*, 1970 - <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=sheldonpubs>
- Download a map of Sheldon's sculpture on campus - http://www.sheldonartmuseum.org/pdf/16_Sculpture_map_D.pdf
- Sheldon Museum of Art – search for your favorite artist online: <http://sheldonartmuseum.org/collection>

Outdoor Sculpture Checklist (City Campus)

Baizerman, Saul

Serenity, 1932 -1939

hammered copper

39 x 27 x 15 inches (99.06 x 68.58 x 38.1 cm)



See also:

- <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/artists/21394/saul-baizerman-american-born-russia-1889-1957/>

Benton, Fletcher

Balanced/Unbalanced Wheels #2, 1990

painted steel

426 x 220 7/8 x 89 inches (1082.04 x 561.023 x 226.06 cm)



See also:

- <http://www.fletcherbenton.com/>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hf_D91pH5pc

Burton, Scott

Two-Part Table, 1989

polished New Imperial Red granite

20 x 60 x 40 inches (50.8 x 152.4 x 101.6 cm)



See also:

- <http://www.walkerart.org/collections/artists/scott-burton>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/01/01/obituaries/scott-burton-sculptor-whose-art-verged-on-furniture-is-dead-at-50.html>

Di Suvero, Mark

Old Glory, 1986

painted steel

420 x 360 x 144 inches (1066.8 x 914.4 x 365.76 cm)



See also:

- <http://www.spacetimecc.com/>
- http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag05/june_05/disuvero/disuvero.shtml

Ferguson, Catherine A.

Arietta II, 1998

painted steel

144 x 72 x 36 inches (365.76 x 182.88 x 91.44 cm)



See also:

- <http://www.catherineferguson.com/index.html>

Ginnever, Charles

Shift, 1985

Cor-Ten steel

114 x 272 1/4 x 33 inches (289.56 x 691.515 x 83.82 cm)



See also:

- <http://www.chuckginnever.com/>
- <https://hyperallergic.com/63428/the-world-according-to-charles-ginnever/>
- <http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag04/jf04/ginnever/ginnever.shtml>

Hamilton, Juan

Fragment X-O, 1991

cast bronze with natural patina

79 1/2 x 113 x 46 1/2 inches (201.93 x 287.02 x 118.11 cm)



See also:

- <http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artist/?id=6276>

Heizer, Michael

Prismatic Flake Geometric, 1991

modified concrete, steel, and granite

67 x 420 1/2 x 18 inches (170.18 x 1068.07 x 45.72 cm)



See also:

- <http://doublenegative.tarasen.net/>
- <http://www.theartstory.org/artist-heizer-michael.htm>

Huntington, Jim
Without Echo, 1989
granite and copper
49 x 28 x 14 inches (124.46 x 71.12 x 35.56 cm)



See also:

- http://www.askart.com/artist_bio/Jim_Huntington/100957/Jim_Huntington.aspx

Kaneko, Jun
Untitled, 2009
ceramic and galvanized steel



See also:

- <http://www.junkaneko.com/>
- http://www.sonoma-county-museum.org/media/13569/Kaneko_Educator_Guide.pdf

King, William Dickey
Story, 1970
aluminum
144 x 122 x 45 1/4 inches (365.76 x 309.88 x 114.935 cm)



See also:

- https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/27/arts/design/william-king-sculptor-who-used-wit-dies-at-90.html?_r=0

Kipp, Lyman
Ulysses, 1972
painted aluminum
132 x 36 x 24 inches (335.28 x 91.44 x 60.96 cm)



See also:

- <http://www.lymankipp.com/>

Lachaise, Gaston
Floating Figure, 1927; cast after 1935
bronze
50 1/2 x 90 3/4 x 25 inches (128.27 x 230.505 x 63.5 cm)



See also:

- <http://www.lachaisefoundation.org/biography/>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/30/nyregion/face-and-figure-the-sculpture-of-gaston-lachaise-at-the-bruce-museum-in-greenwich-conn.html>

Lipchitz, Jacques

Bather (Baigneuse), 1923 - 1925

bronze

79 x 32 x 27 inches (200.66 x 81.28 x 68.58 cm)



See also:

- <http://www.theartstory.org/artist-lipchitz-jacques.htm>
- <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/18/arts/review-art-the-reach-and-grasp-of-jacques-lipchitz-s-sculpture.html?pagewanted=all>

Lucchesi, Bruno

Pieta, 1970

bronze

51 x 72 x 47 inches (129.54 x 182.88 x 119.38 cm)



See also:

- <https://www.brunolucchesi.com/>
- http://www.cavaliergalleries.com/artist/Bruno_Lucchesi/biography/

Miller, Richard McDermott

SANDY: in Defined Space, 1967

bronze

75 1/8 x 37 1/2 x 37 1/2 inches (190.818 x 95.25 x 95.25 cm)



See also:

- http://journalstar.com/news/local/joanne-young-sandy-outside-the-box/article_bde78938-8302-11df-ac44-001cc4c002e0.html
- <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/richard-mcdermott-miller-papers-11088>

Moroles, Jesus

Granite Hi-Chair, 1993

Oklahoma granite

162 x 54 x 35 inches (411.5 x 137.2 x 88.9 cm)



See also:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Mp8UGk4-ks>
- <http://arthuroroergallery.com/artists/jesus-moroles/>

Murray, Robert Gray

Nanticoke, 1980

painted aluminum

60 x 85 1/4 x 30 inches (152.4 x 216.535 x 76.2 cm)



See also:

- <http://www.becontemporary.com/art-murray.php>

Nakian, Reuben

Birth of Venus, 1963 - 1966; cast 1969

bronze

96 x 131 x 72 inches (243.84 x 332.74 x 182.88 cm)



See also:

- <http://www.nakian.org/>
- http://www.cavaliergalleries.com/artist/Reuben_Nakian/biography/

Oldenburg, Claes and Coosje van Bruggen

Torn Notebook, 1992; fabricated 1996

stainless steel, steel, and aluminum; painted with polyurethane enamel

262 x 276 x 313 inches (665.48 x 701.04 x 795.02 cm)



See also:

- <http://oldenburgvanbruggen.com/largescaleprojects/tornnotebook.htm>
- <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/claes-oldenburg>

Otterness, Tom

Fallen Dreamer, 1995

bronze

32 x 42 x 44 inches (81.28 x 106.68 x 111.76 cm)



See also:

- <http://www.tomostudio.com/>

Paine, Roxy

Breach, 2004

stainless steel

480 x 360 x 360 inches (1219.2 x 914.4 x 914.4 cm)



See also:

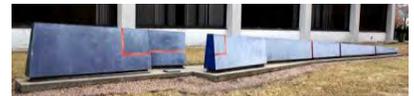
- <http://roxypaine.com/>
- <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazine/roxy-paine/>

Richardson, Sam

Variable Wedge, circa 1982 - 1983

Cor-Ten steel and enamel

39 x 564 x 65 1/2 inches (99.06 x 1432.56 x 166.37 cm)



See also:

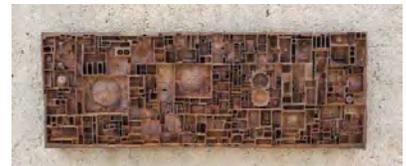
- <http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=20881>

Schmidt, Julius

Untitled Relief, 1961

cast iron

27 3/4 x 75 x 3 inches (70.485 x 190.5 x 7.62 cm)



See also:

- <http://www.dennosmuseum.org/education/docent/Forms/Julius%20Schmidt.pdf>

Serra, Richard

Greenpoint, 1988

Cor-Ten steel

189 1/4 x 205 3/4 x 150 1/2 inches (480.695 x 522.605 x 382.27 cm)



See also:

- <http://www.gagosian.com/artists/richard-serra>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2005/jun/22/art>

Shonibare, Yinka

Wind Sculpture III, 2013

steel armature with hand painted fiberglass resin cast
240 1/8 x 126 7/16 x 43 1/4 inches (609.92 x 321.15 x 109.85 cm)



See also:

- <http://yinkashonibare.com/>
- <http://visualarts.britishcouncil.org/exhibitions/exhibition/yinka-shonibare-wind-sculpture-vi-2016>

Smith, Tony

Willy, 1962

welded steel
92 x 216 x 144 inches (233.68 x 548.64 x 365.76 cm)



See also:

- <http://www.matthewmarks.com/new-york/artists/tony-smith/>
- <http://www.artnews.com/2015/03/11/i-find-the-art-world-very-oppressive-tony-smiths-1971-qa-with-lucy-r-lippard/>

Todd, Michael

Monet's Table (from the Lilypad Series), date unknown

steel
18 x 60 3/8 x 67 1/2 inches (45.72 x 153.353 x 171.45 cm)



Todd, Michael

Daimaru XV (Great Circle), 1981

steel
137 1/2 x 131 1/4 x 40 inches (349.25 x 333.375 x 101.6 cm)



See also:

- <http://michaeltoddsulpture.com/index.html>

Tucker, William

Ouranos, 1985

bronze
78 x 83 x 55 inches (198.12 x 210.82 x 139.7 cm)



See also:

- <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/artist/william-tucker-ra>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVOe28tkB2A>

Sheldon Treasures

Sheldon Museum of Art is home to two collections of art. In addition to objects acquired by the University of Nebraska, the museum stewards a collection assembled by the Sheldon Art Association, an organization founded in 1888 as the Haydon Art Club to promote the fine arts in Nebraska. Together, the collections comprise holdings of nearly 13,000 original works of art in various media.

Each collection includes unparalleled treasures. Some are unique masterworks by renowned artists; others are beloved favorites of museum visitors. Many have traveled great distances to be seen in national and international exhibitions. This gallery presents a selection of such objects, a testament to the wisdom and foresight of Sheldon's leaders and advocates who have assembled these works for the benefit of future generations.

Supporting Information

- **American Modernism** – Artists working in the United States from 1900 to 1945 adapted many of the European avant-garde movements—impressionism, post-impressionism, fauvism, cubism, futurism—for uniquely American contexts. Whether exploring the conceptual aspects of abstraction, depicting the American scene, or seeking the spiritual, the artists' rejection of long-standing pictorial conventions and subjects embodied modernist concerns—the questioning of tradition and reality. The new modern art they created invited the viewer into active engagement with the work. Interpretation was no longer the sole domain of the artist. (examples: Marsden Hartley, Jacob Lawrence, Edward Hopper, Georgia O'Keeffe, Joseph Stella, Grant Wood)
- **Impressionism** – A style of art characterized by sketch-like appearances and what early critics saw as an unfinished quality given the unblended colors, broken brush strokes, and unclear forms. These works give “impressions” of a scene, without creating a realistic depiction. Impressionism has its roots in France in the 1870s, when artists rejected from the French Salon began organizing their own exhibitions. Many American artists traveling through Europe were influenced by Impressionism and integrated the style into their own work beginning in the early 1900s. (examples: William Glackens)
- **American Regionalism** – a style of painting that emerged in the late 1920s, and was used to depict uniquely American scenes. Many regionalist artists sought out rural environments to depict in their work, highlighting the distinct nature of America's reliance on and dedication to agriculture. (examples: Grant Wood, Norman Rockwell)
- **Nonrepresentational sculpture** does not attempt to represent the real world. Interest in sculpting nonrepresentational forms began in the late 19th century, as artists used abstraction to communicate their personal experiences or ideas in a creative way. (Examples: Barbara Hepworth, Constantin Brancusi)

Themes

- Abstraction v. realism
- Everyday life and familiar environments as subject matter
- What makes a “treasure?”

Discussion Prompts

- Which of the works in the gallery are realistic? Which ones are impressionistic? What makes the impressionistic paintings different from the realistic paintings?
- Compare Norman Rockwell’s *The County Agricultural Agent* to Edward Hopper’s *Room in New York*. How are these works similar? What makes them different?
- Some art works are nonrepresentational. Look at Barbara Hepworth’s *Small Form Resting*. Does it remind you of anything? How does the shape impact your interpretation of the piece?
- Look closely at Albert Bierstadt’s *River Landscape* and William Glackens’ *Mahone Bay*. These artists used the same medium, oil paint, to depict their scenes, but did it in different styles. Which one is impressionistic? How do you know? Why wouldn’t we call Bierstadt’s work impressionistic?
- Look around the gallery. Which works use vibrant colors? Why did the artists decide to use bright colors instead of a more muted color palette? How do the colors make you feel? Do they impact the way you understand the painting?
- Look at Georgia O’Keeffe’s work *New York, Night*. This work shows the view of the city from her studio, which was located on an upper floor of a skyscraper. How would her view be different if her studio was at street level? What might we see in the painting instead?
- What is happening in Jacob Lawrence’s *Paper Boats*? What do you think the people are thinking about? Why might they be playing with paper boats on the side of a street?
- Find Joseph Stella’s *Battle of Lights, Coney Island* and take a close look. What do you think this painting is depicting? Point to specific parts of it to justify your answer. What is the mood of this scene? Would you like to go here? Why or why not?

Helpful Links

- TedTalk by Thomas P. Campbell, former director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (February 2012)
https://www.ted.com/talks/thomas_p_campbell_weaving_narratives_in_museum_galleries?language=en
- Smithsonian Institution, “Art Museums and the Public” (October 2001)
<https://www.si.edu/Content/opanda/docs/Rpts2001/01.10.ArtPublic.Final.pdf>

Exhibition Checklist

Bierstadt, Albert

River Landscape, 1867

oil on canvas mounted on panel

30 1/4 x 50 inches (76.835 x 127 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Abraham M. Adler



Albert Bierstadt immigrated to America with his family at a young age but returned to his native Germany in the 1850s to study art at the Düsseldorf Academy, known for its detailed, romantic style of landscape painting. Over the course of his lifetime Bierstadt made several excursions to the American West, during which he produced hundreds of drawings and studies that he later translated into finished canvases in his studio. In the 1860s, Bierstadt created a number of paintings featuring dramatic sunrises and sunsets set against towering trees and awe-inspiring geological formations. While the location of the scene in *River Landscape* is unknown, it has been variously identified as Mount Starr King in California's Yosemite Valley or possibly the area around Lake Tahoe.

DID YOU KNOW? If you look closely at the shoreline near the bottom of the canvas, you will see evidence of a compositional change by the artist—the faint outline of a stag that has been painted over.

Brancusi, Constantin

Princesse X, circa 1909 - 1916

marble with Caen limestone base

22 x 11 x 9 inches (55.88 x 27.94 x 22.86 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Gift of Mrs. Olga N. Sheldon in memory of Adams Bromley Sheldon



One of the foremost sculptors of the twentieth century, Constantin Brancusi redefined the medium through his progressive experiments in the simplification of form. A product of the artist's mature style, *Princesse X* has its origins in an earlier sculpture depicting the notoriously vain Princess Marie Murat Bonaparte of France (1882–1962), who allegedly carried a mirror with her at all times. Enchanted by the graceful way she studied her reflection, Brancusi initially made a marble portrait of her gazing downward. As he reworked his depiction of the narcissistic princess over a seven-year period, Brancusi dramatically reduced her anatomical structure; the featureless face, elongated neck, and rounded breasts of Sheldon's sculpture have an almost industrial, streamlined precision, even though the piece was carved by hand.

DID YOU KNOW? Sheldon benefactress Olga Sheldon gifted *Princesse X* to the museum in 1963 in honor of her late husband, Adams Bromley Sheldon. Former director Norman Geske once referred to *Princesse X* as the “presiding deity” of the Sheldon “temple.”

Glackens, William

Mahone Bay, 1910

oil on canvas

26 1/8 x 31 7/8 inches (66.358 x 80.963 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



Although usually associated with early twentieth-century artists of the Ashcan school and their realistic

portrayals of urban subjects, William Glackens more often depicted leisure scenes in cafés, parks, restaurants, and at the beach. He painted this canvas during the summer of 1910 when he and his family vacationed on Nova Scotia's Mahone Bay, a popular destination for American tourists. Also around this time, Glackens abandoned the darker palette of his earlier paintings and adopted the high-keyed colors of French impressionist Pierre-Auguste Renoir, who would remain a singular influence through the remainder of Glackens's career.

DID YOU KNOW? Albert C. Barnes, a prominent American collector of European and American modern art, once owned *Mahone Bay*. In the early decades of the twentieth century, Glackens helped Barnes build his renowned collection in Pennsylvania—now known as the Barnes Foundation—by traveling to Europe and purchasing works for him.

Hartley, Marsden

Popocatépetl, One Morning, 1932

oil on Masonite

22 3/4 x 27 3/4 x 1/2 inches (57.785 x 70.485 x 1.27 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Howard S. Wilson Memorial



Recognized as one of the foremost American modernists, Marsden Hartley created a highly individualized body of work influenced by his frequent experimentation with abstraction and figuration, a search for spirituality in art and nature, and a nomadic lifestyle. Spending the early part of 1932 in Mexico, Hartley described it as “the one place I always shall think of as wrong for me.” Despite his difficulty acclimating to the country, it is during this period that the artist embarked on an extensive study of Aztec history and culture. This painting is one of four from this time that depicts Popocatépetl, one of Mexico's highest active volcanoes. Meaning “smoking mountain” in the indigenous Nahuatl language, Popocatépetl was named for a warrior who took his own life after the death of his betrothed and was later transformed into the mountain.

DID YOU KNOW? Sheldon owns nineteen works—twelve of which are paintings—made by Marsden Hartley over the course of his career.

Hepworth, Barbara

Small Form Resting, 1945

Seravezza marble

9 x 12 1/4 x 10 1/2 inches (22.86 x 31.115 x 26.67 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Thomas C. Woods Memorial



Barbara Hepworth was one of the leading British sculptors of the second half of the twentieth century. Her early output from the 1920s was figurative in composition and strongly influenced by fellow sculptor Henry Moore's figure-based works. By the mid-1930s, however, Hepworth's sculptures had become completely nonrepresentational. Her interest in abstraction was not merely a formal one; she considered it a direct outgrowth of lived experience and noted that her work was strongly influenced by her awareness of the natural world and of recollections of childhood trips to the northern coasts of England. Renewing these significant connections to nature, Hepworth moved in 1939 to St. Ives in Cornwall, England, where she would reside for the rest of her life. *Small Form Resting* employs the ovoid forms that were a hallmark of the sculptor's work and evokes the mysterious, ancient rock formations she encountered in the Cornish landscape.

DID YOU KNOW? In 1955, before this museum was built, the University of Nebraska Art Galleries (then located in Morrill Hall) hosted *Barbara Hepworth: Carvings and Drawings*, the first major

exhibition of the artist's work in the United States.

Hopper, Edward

Room in New York, 1932

oil on canvas

29 x 36 5/8 x 1 1/4 inches (73.66 x 93.028 x 3.175 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



Edward Hopper depicted the everyday lives of city dwellers in much of his work, often capturing the anonymity and isolation of modern urban living. In many important canvases painted between 1926 and 1932, Hopper frequently made use of single figures or couples fixed in compositions that remain unexplained, invoking a hermetically sealed world of emotion. Some of Hopper's most compelling pictures are of subjects seen through a window, seemingly unaware of being watched. In 1935, the artist remarked that the idea for *Room in New York* "had been in my mind a long time before I painted it. It was suggested by glimpses of lighted interiors seen as I walked along the city streets at night ... it is no particular street or house, but is rather a synthesis of many impressions."

DID YOU KNOW? A master of horror and supernatural fiction, author Stephen King wrote a short story, "The Music Room," prompted by the scene in *Room in New York*. The piece was published in 2016 in a volume of Hopper-inspired prose titled *In Sunlight or in Shadow*.

Lawrence, Jacob

Paper Boats, 1948

tempera on board; egg tempera on hardboard

17 15/16 x 23 13/16 inches (45.561 x 60.484 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



Coming of age in New York's Harlem in the 1930s, Jacob Lawrence absorbed the energy and spirit of the Harlem Renaissance, a particular period of creative and intellectual production within the broader New Negro movement that had emerged earlier in the century. Throughout his life, Lawrence remained committed to speaking out about injustices experienced by African Americans. He often worked in series; among his most celebrated is *The Migration of the Negro* (1940–1941) that chronicles a period of the Great Migration's northward movement of African Americans that spanned 1916 through 1970. Though perhaps most famous for such depictions of historical subject matter, Lawrence also painted his immediate surroundings in works like *Paper Boats*. Here, the artist communicates a simple narrative through his signature visual vocabulary incorporating flat patterns and colors of both African and modern art.

DID YOU KNOW? In 1941, Jacob Lawrence became the first African American artist whose work was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Sheldon purchased *Paper Boats* for its permanent collection just eight years later, in 1949.

O'Keeffe, Georgia

New York, Night, 1928 – 1929

oil on canvas

40 1/8 x 19 3/16 inches (101.918 x 48.736 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Thomas C. Woods Memorial



Considered one of the most stylistically recognizable and important artists of the twentieth century,

Georgia O’Keeffe is best known for her paintings of flowers and the landscape of New Mexico, where she lived and worked for most of her life. Prior to relocating to the American Southwest, O’Keeffe and her husband, the photographer and gallerist Alfred Stieglitz, took up residence in New York City in the three-year-old Shelton Hotel in 1925, then the tallest residential tower ever constructed. Her work space there—the world’s first skyscraper-studio—inspired a series of paintings including this one. *New York, Night* presents the studio’s northern view, which revealed Emery Roth’s 1927 Beverly Hotel and Lexington Avenue. Cropped buildings at the composition’s edges suggest the city’s infinite scope, yet the viewer’s vantage point remains, in O’Keeffe’s words, “where he can behold the city as a unit before his eyes.”

DID YOU KNOW? In 1958, the Nebraska Art Association acquired *New York, Night* from its annual invitational exhibition, making it part of Sheldon’s permanent collection.

Rockwell, Norman

The County Agricultural Agent, circa 1948

oil on canvas

36 x 70 inches (91.44 x 177.8 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Gift of Nathan Gold



Norman Rockwell’s idealized paintings of everyday, communal activities have become synonymous with unpretentious, small-town American life, resonating with audiences for their homespun values and nostalgic allusions. While Rockwell’s subjects seem far removed from consumerism and mass media, his success is intrinsically linked with both: he designed advertisements for an array of popular products and, between 1916 and 1963, illustrated more than three hundred covers for the *Saturday Evening Post*, which during its heyday reigned supreme among mass-market magazines with greater than twenty million readers. Sheldon’s painting appeared in the July 24, 1948, issue of the *Post*, illustrating an article on Herald K. Rippey, an agricultural agent in Jay County, Indiana. The accompanying article underscores the extensive civic network necessary to support the efforts of the county agent, shown here examining a calf at the farm of a local family.

DID YOU KNOW? The painting’s former owner, Nathan Gold, purchased this work in 1951 and displayed it for many years in the cafeteria of Gold’s department store in downtown Lincoln.

Steichen, Edward

Shrouded Figure in Moonlight, 1905

oil on canvas

24 x 25 1/8 inches (60.96 x 63.818 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



Edward Steichen held significant influence in the world of photography during most of the twentieth century, not only as an innovative photographer but also as a prolific curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He immigrated to the US from Luxembourg with his family in 1881, spending formative years in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he learned to paint, apprenticed as a lithographer, and bought his first camera at the age of sixteen. This painting was made when Steichen was in his midtwenties, the same year he and Alfred Stieglitz founded the Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession in New York, a commercial enterprise established to promote the practice of photography as a fine art. Like his early experimental color photographs, *Shrouded Figure in Moonlight* demonstrates Steichen’s pursuit of pictorial compositions that were less depictive and more suggestive of mood

and atmosphere. In 1923, Steichen performed a sudden and drastic act: he destroyed all the paintings that remained in his studio, burning them as a ceremonial gesture to establish his total commitment to the medium of photography for the remainder of his career.

DID YOU KNOW? Edward Steichen was also an accomplished horticulturist who created hybridized varieties of delphinium flowers. In 1936, the Museum of Modern Art presented its first and only dedicated flower show, *Edward Steichen's Delphiniums*, featuring plants the artist had raised himself.

Stella, Joseph

Battle of Lights, Coney Island, 1913 – 1914

oil on canvas

39 7/16 x 29 5/16 inches (100.171 x 74.454 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



After immigrating to New York from Italy at the end of the nineteenth century, Joseph Stella began studying with urban realist artists at the Art Students League and the New York School of Art. In 1911, Stella traveled to Paris, where he encountered the work of Italian futurists, who attempted to convey the mechanization and speed of modern life through color and fractured forms. After returning to New York two years later, the artist embarked on a series of works devoted to Coney Island. Sheldon's canvas is one of these, demonstrating Stella's ability to capture the dynamism and spectacle of the popular leisure destination through faceted planes and brilliantly colored dots that suggest the park's hanging lights. Sometime after this painting was completed, the artist reflected that he "was instantly struck by the dazzling array of lights. It seemed as if they were in conflict."

DID YOU KNOW? Paintings by Stella depicting the theme of Coney Island are in a number of other major museum collections in the US, including Yale University Art Gallery and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Wood, Grant

Arnold Comes of Age (Portrait of Arnold Pyle), 1930

oil on pressed board

26 3/4 x 23 inches (67.945 x 58.42 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association Collection



Iowa artist Grant Wood was virtually unknown in 1930, the year in which he painted his now-famous work *American Gothic* and this portrait of his assistant, Arnold Pyle. These works marked a critical turning point for the artist, one that signaled his abandonment of impressionism for the realism that characterized his mature work. Wood credited this change to having experienced an epiphany in 1928. Traveling that year to Munich, Germany, he was struck by the fifteenth-century Flemish paintings he encountered at the Alte Pinakothek. Following his return to the US, Wood was determined to apply northern Renaissance practices to eastern Iowa subjects. The stately pose and allegorical structure of this portrait, which was painted on the occasion of Pyle's twenty-first birthday, reveal Wood's debts to the Flemish masters.

DID YOU KNOW? In 2018, *Arnold Comes of Age* will travel to a retrospective of the artist's work at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

Family Style

What does a family look like?

Artists have long depicted the nuances of familial relations, whether those of blood relatives or chosen families. Some represent the people they call “family,” while others assemble fictional clans that mimic families found in real life.

Made over a period spanning more than five centuries, the objects on display in this gallery offer diverse perspectives on marriage, parenthood, and ancestry. In some cases, the relationships become clear only through the titles of the artworks. The images portray newlyweds, siblings, comic book heroes, and extended, blended, and holy families, suggesting myriad ways we live together for mutual support, for raising children, and for creating nurturing homes.

Themes

- Portrait / portraiture
- Social and cultural concepts of family
- Forms and functions of family
- Relationships / marriage / children / parenthood / kinship
- Importance of setting / environment
- Iconography

Discussion Prompts

- What defines a family? Does a family have to be made up of flesh and blood relatives? Could your family include your friends and allies? What other social groups might you consider “family” (e.g., school, church, teams, job, city, state, national, etc.) Look around the gallery. Discuss what works do or do not fit your idea of family and why.
- “Iconography is the science of identification, description, classification, and interpretation of symbols, themes, and subject matter in the visual arts. The term can also refer to an artist’s use of this imagery in a particular work.” (Encyclopedia Britannica) Scenes of mother and child are prominent Christian iconography, and Antonio de Saliba’s *Madonna and Child with the Infant St. John* is a good example. Compare this Italian Renaissance depiction with the 20th century version by Jean Charlot. What makes Charlot’s work different from de Saliba’s? Do they have anything in common other than the similar subject matter?
- Sheldon Moldoff’s *Marvel Family* depicts a group of people who are either super heroes or characters with special abilities. These characters appear in a comic book series called *The Marvel Family*, however not all of them are related to one another in the story. Do you think a family can only include those who are related to you? Who do you consider to be part of your family?

- Diane Arbus is known for photographing subjects she found to be intriguing or unusual. Her photographs often blur the line between appearance and reality. What do you think is the relationship between the two people in this photograph?
- Look at Jonathan Torgovnik’s photograph *Bernadette with her Son Faustin*. This photo was taken years after the Rwandan genocide, when children born out of violence had reached adolescence. Bernadette believed the emotional and physical trauma she experienced during the genocide negatively affected her ability to support her son. How does this photo capture the tension between the mother and her child?
- Compare George Wesley Bellows’ print *Married for Money* to Alec Soth’s photograph *The Flechs*. What do these works have in common? Can you see any differences? How would you characterize the subjects’ emotions?
- Alec Soth’s *The Flechs* is a family portrait. Describe the mood and emotions depicted in the photograph? For instance, does this family look comfortable? Can you relate to having a family portrait made? How is sitting for a family portrait different from taking a selfie?
- James VanDerZee’s *Wedding Day, Harlem* is a unique photograph because it is a double exposure; the artist opened the camera shutter twice to expose the film multiple times. In the lower left corner, there is a transparent girl on the floor. What do you think this represents? Is she a representation of the bride’s transformation from girl to woman? Or is she the couple’s future child? Could she be a reference to something else?
- Describe all the familial relations you see in Carmen Lomas Garza’s *Una Tarde / One Afternoon Summer*.
- When you think about the topic “family,” what kinds of spaces, rituals, or traditions come to mind? Are your thoughts reflected in any of these works of art – if so, which ones / discuss.

Exhibition Checklist

Arbus, Diane

Man and Boy on a Bench, Central Park, 1962; printed 1970’s
gelatin silver print

University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Olga N. Sheldon Acquisition Trust,
U-6668.2017



For more about Diane Arbus:

- <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/06/06/diane-arbus-portrait-of-a-photographer>
- <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/a-fresh-look-at-diane-arbus-99861134/>

Bellows, George Wesley

Married for Money, date unknown

lithograph

12 1/4 x 9 1/2 inches (31.115 x 24.13 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Nelle Cochrane Woods Memorial



For more about George Bellows:

- <http://www.georgebellows.com/>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/mar/17/george-bellows-modern-american-life>

Charlot, Jean

Mother and Child, 1934

color lithograph

26 9/16 x 17 5/8 inches (67.47 x 44.77 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Charitable Trust



For more about Jean Charlot:

- http://library.manoa.hawaii.edu/departments/charlotcoll/J_Charlot/charlotthompson.php
- http://www.phillipscollection.org/research/american_art/bios/charlot-bio.htm

Cox, Renee

Mother of Us All, 2004

digital inkjet print on watercolor paper

36 1/2 x 45 inches (92.71 x 114.3 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Sheldon Art Association, Purchased with funds from the Sheldon Forum



For more about Renee Cox:

- <http://www.reneecox.org/>
- <http://aperture.org/blog/renee-cox-taste-power/>

de Saliba, Antonio

Madonna and Child with the Infant St. John, circa 1485 – 1490

oil on panel

32 x 23 3/4 inches (81.28 x 60.325 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Gift of the Kress Foundation



For more about Antonio de Saliba:

- <https://books.google.com/books?id=OGghIMXTypsC&pg=PA3&lpg=PA3&dq=antonio+de+saliba&source=bl&ots=fNv-ReZRbD&sig=KxPQUhAXDw4UinR2yT9DGjIA0JY&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj8uuushfDUAhXBxYMKHQGiBDI4ChDoAQhDMAo#v=onepage&q=antonio%20de%20saliba&f=false>

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonio_de_Saliba

Garza, Carmen Lomas

Una Tarde / One Summer Afternoon, 1993

alkyd on canvas

23 3/8 x 31 1/2 inches (59.373 x 80.01 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Robert E. Schweser and Fern Beardsley Schweser Acquisition Fund, through the University of Nebraska Foundation



For more about Carmen Lomas Garza:

- <http://carmenlomasgarza.com/>
- https://americanart.si.edu/education/corazon/artistas_01.cfm

Moldoff, Sheldon

Marvel Family, 1995

mixed media on illustration board

10 7/8 x 14 inches (27.62 x 35.56 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Gift of Dan F. and Barbara J. Howard through the University of Nebraska Foundation



For more about Sheldon Moldoff:

- <http://comicsalliance.com/tribute-sheldon-moldoff/>
- <http://www.sheldon-moldoff.com/>

Neel, Alice Hartley

John and Joey Priestly, 1968

oil on canvas

36 x 24 inches (91.44 x 60.96 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Nelle Cochrane Woods Memorial



For more about Alice Neel:

- <http://www.aliceneel.com/home/>
- <http://www.theartstory.org/artist-neel-alice.htm>

Paolozzi, Eduardo Luigi

Hermaphroditic Children from Transvestite Parents (from the General Dynamic F.U.N. portfolio), 1970

lithographs and screenprints

15 x 10 inches (38.1 x 25.4 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Gift of the Martin S. Ackerman Foundation



For more about Eduardo Luigi Paolozzi:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2005/apr/22/obituaries>
- <http://www.theartstory.org/artist-paolozzi-eduardo.htm>

Soth, Alec

The Flechs, 2005

chromogenic color print

40 x 50 inches (101.6 x 127 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Purchased with donations from the Sheldon Forum



For more about Alec Soth:

- <http://alecsoth.com/photography/>
- <http://www.skny.com/artists/alec-soth>

Torgovnik, Jonathan

Bernadette with her son, Faustin (from the Intended Consequences series), 2006

chromogenic color print

30 x 29 1/2 inches (76.2 x 74.93 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Robert E. Schweser and Fern Beardsley Schweser Acquisition Fund through the University of Nebraska Foundation



For more about Jonathan Torgovnik:

- <https://www.torgovnik.com/>
- <https://www.lensculture.com/articles/jonathan-torgovnik-intended-consequences-rwandan-children-born-of-rape>
- <http://www.history.com/topics/rwandan-genocide>

VanDerZee, James

Wedding Day, Harlem (from the James VanDerZee, Eighteen Photographs Portfolio), 1962; published 1974

gelatin silver print

9 1/2 x 6 7/8 inches (24.13 x 17.46 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Purchased with the aid of funds from the National Endowment for the Arts



For more about James VanDerZee:

- <http://www.howardgreenberg.com/artists/james-van-der-zee>
- <https://www.biography.com/people/james-van-der-zee-9515411>

Selections from 1905-1945

The works in this and the adjacent gallery present a snapshot of early American modernism and a prologue to the post-World War II abstraction on view in the exhibition *Now's the Time*.

Artists working in the United States from 1900 to 1945 adapted many of the European avant-garde movements—impressionism, post-impressionism, fauvism, cubism, futurism—for uniquely American contexts. Whether exploring the conceptual aspects of abstraction, depicting the American scene, or seeking the spiritual, the artists' rejection of long-standing pictorial conventions and subjects embodied modernist concerns—the questioning of tradition and reality. The new modern art they created invited the viewer into active engagement with the work. Interpretation was no longer the sole domain of the artist.

Paintings by Edward Hopper, Georgia O'Keeffe, Joseph Stella, and Grant Wood, on view in the first-floor gallery of Sheldon Treasures, also provide insight to American modernism.

Supporting Information

- “Modernism refers to the broad movement in Western arts and literature that gathered pace from around 1850, and is characterized by a deliberate rejection of the styles of the past; emphasizing instead innovation and experimentation in forms, materials and techniques in order to create artworks that better reflected modern society.” (Tate, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/m/modernism>)
- American artists working in the early 20th century were influenced by modern European art, including:
 - **Cubism** rejected “the inherited concept that art should copy nature, or that they should adopt the traditional techniques of perspective, modeling, and foreshortening. They wanted instead to emphasize the two-dimensionality of the canvas. So they reduced and fractured objects into geometric forms, and then realigned these within a shallow, relief-like space. They also used multiple or contrasting vantage points.” http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/cube/hd_cube.htm
 - **Fauvism** used intense color as a vehicle for describing light and space. The Fauves (“wild beasts”) saw pure color and form as means of communicating the artist's emotional state.
 - **Impressionism** introduced loose brushwork and lightened palettes to include pure, intense colors. Impressionists “abandoned traditional linear perspective and avoided the clarity of form that had previously served to distinguish the more important elements of a picture from the lesser ones. For this reason, many critics faulted Impressionist paintings for their unfinished appearance and seemingly amateurish quality.” <http://www.theartstory.org/movement-impressionism.htm>

- An important event that helped introduce Americans to avant-garde European art was the International Exhibition of Modern Art – which became known as the Armory Show because of its location – held in New York City in 1913. While American artists were included in the Armory Show, it was the European art – by Van Gogh, Gauguin, Cezanne, Picasso, Matisse, Duchamp – that drew attention.
- American modernist painting of the early 20th century took many forms and expanded the subject matter American artists painted. Some of the more prominent movements, styles, or artist groups (formally or informally organized) within this broad label of “American Modernism” include:
 - **Precisionism** – Adapted realist styles to the geometric forms of the machine age; often focused on the industrialized landscape of the early 20th century
 - **Regionalism** – Scenes of rural and small-town America, primarily in the Midwest and South, in a realist style that contrasted with the abstraction of European influenced modern art; prominent in the 1930s
 - **Synchromism** – Compared color and sound (music); explored more scientific approaches to color, form, and perception; influenced by the broken planes of cubism; ranged from pure abstraction to some representational imagery
 - **The Stieglitz Circle** – Photographer, dealer, and influential art supporter, Alfred Stieglitz cultivated a close group of artist-friends who were all committed to modern American art. The “circle” included artists Georgia O’Keeffe, Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, and Charles Demuth, as well as photographers and writers.

Themes

- Abstraction v. realism
- Expressive color
- Simplified form
- Avant-garde
- Exploration in art: formal explorations like color and form, choice of subject matter
- Identity – what does it mean to be American? To be modern?

Discussion Prompts

- Look at Lyonel Feininger’s *City Moon* and then compare it to Charles Sheeler’s *Barn Reds*. What do these works have in common? What makes them different?
- Take some time to look closely at Marsden Hartley’s *Painting Number One, 1913*. Describe the shapes you see. How many colors can you identify? What do you think the artist was trying to depict?
- Study George Ault’s *The Pianist*, and then study Morgan Russell’s *Synchromy No. 2, To Light (from Synchromy in Blue-Violet Quartet)*. Both paintings reference music in their titles. What kind of music do you hear when you look at these paintings? Explain.
- Find all the paintings that depict a landscape in one or both of the galleries. Describe the different ways individual artists chose to represent natural scenery – consider color,

viewpoint, form, space, focal point, style (realistic or abstract or a combination). Which one is your favorite and why?

- The time of day (night) is depicted in paintings by both Marguerite Thompson Zorach and Max Weber. Describe how each artist goes about this. Do you think one is more successful than the other? Explain your opinion.
- What words describe Thomas Hart Benton's *Lonesome Road*? After spending some time looking at this painting and describing what you see, create a story that explains what you're seeing. Who is this man? Where is he going? From where is traveling? Use your imagination!
- Compare and contrast the three still life paintings in these two galleries: Milton Avery's *Black Compote*, Henry Fitch Taylor's *Cubist Still Life*, and Yasuo Kuniyoshi's *Fruit on Table*. Consider how each artist has approached form and composition. Which is the most representational? Which one is the most abstract?

Helpful Links

- Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, The Met, "Precisionism"
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/prec/hd_prec.htm
- Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, The Met, "Cubism"
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/cube/hd_cube.htm
- Tate, "Modernism"
<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/m/modernism>
- WNYC / Fishko Files, "Culture Shock 1913" (audio essays)
<http://www.wnyc.org/story/255303-culture-shock-1913/>
- Archives of American Art, "1913 Armory Show: The Story in Primary Sources" (letters, photographs, gallery layouts, memorabilia, and other objects related to the 1913 exhibition)
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/collection-features/1913-armory-show>
- Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, The Met, "Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) and His Circle"
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/stgl/hd_stgl.htm
- Encyclopedia Britannica, "Modernism (Art)"
<https://www.britannica.com/art/Modernism-art>

Exhibition Checklist

Ault, George

The Pianist, 1923

oil on panel

12 x 16 inches (30.48 x 40.64 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Nelle
Cochrane Woods Memorial



George Ault created a sizable body of stylistically diverse work from the 1920s until his death in 1948. Working with industrial and urban subjects early on, the artist soon abandoned those scenes to focus on farms, small towns, and the countryside. Although some critics often associated his crisp, linear style with the precisionism popularized by such artists as Charles Sheeler, others declared that they saw touches of surrealism or fantasy in his work, likening the dark tension in his paintings to that of Edward Hopper. These various influences can be seen in *The Pianist*, an early painting inspired by a concert Ault had attended at New York's Century Theatre. Here, Ault took a rather commonplace subject and infused it with a dark moodiness, crafting a minimal yet powerful composition that sets him apart from his precisionist colleagues.

Avery, Milton

Black Compote, circa 1935

oil on canvasboard

23 1/4 x 17 1/4 inches (59.055 x 43.815 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Bequest
of Bertha Schaefer



One of the most prolific American painters of the twentieth century, Milton Avery pursued an artistic vision that emphasized the complex relationship between form and color. The artist's skillful use of pulsating hues in many of his later works led more than one art critic to label him as America's foremost colorist. During the 1940s and 1950s, Avery adopted an almost minimalist approach, gravitating toward landscapes and other scenes composed solely of distinct, interlocking colors. *Black Compote* precedes this shift in Avery's style; here, the artist employs a more muted palette, retaining some sense of three-dimensionality while also incorporating the flattened space that would emerge in his mature work.

Benton, Thomas Hart

Lonesome Road, 1927

tempera on Masonite

25 1/8 x 34 1/8 inches (63.818 x 86.678 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association Collection



Thomas Hart Benton initially sketched this scene from a train window at an Arkansas railroad crossing in 1926. That quick record inspired a finished painting, which he completed the following year. At the time, Benton had abandoned his early, Parisian-inspired abstraction and was starting to embrace realism, contemporary subjects, and historical American themes. Seeking the remnants of a disappearing culture, he focused his attention on rural places and characters. Benton's desire to evoke a vanishing America was shared by his contemporaries Grant Wood and John Steuart Curry, who were the three most prominent faces of regionalism, an art movement that portrayed rural life (usually in the Midwest or the South) in a representational, often nostalgic manner.

Blume, Peter

The White Factory, 1928

oil on canvas

20 1/8 x 30 1/8 inches (51.118 x 76.518 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Nelle
Cochrane Woods Memorial



Although Peter Blume is best known for later works that apply surrealism to modern social allegories of industrialism and other themes of the working class, early paintings like *The White Factory* demonstrate the crisply delineated edges and simplified compositions that sometimes connected the artist to the precisionists. Painted while at an artists' colony in Woodstock, New York, Blume composed the scene from a view in nearby Kingston, a once-prosperous port where dilapidated warehouses overlooked a small tributary of the Hudson River. By adding a contemporary factory, Blume contrasted new industry with old while also offering a counterpoint to the bucolic setting of the Catskill Mountains. According to the artist, the scene was entirely imaginary despite having been inspired by a real place; he said it "just grew as a number of interlocking forms" without any preliminary drawings.

Bruce, Patrick Henry

Forms, circa 1918

oil and graphite on canvas

23 5/8 x 28 3/4 inches (60.008 x 73.025 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Howard
S. Wilson Memorial



Like many other American artists working at the start of the twentieth century, Patrick Henry Bruce visited Paris. While there, he absorbed the city's artistic and cultural milieu through his teacher, Henri Matisse, and the salons of prominent avant-garde art collectors Gertrude and Leo Stein. In 1917, Bruce began a series of works that extended his interest in still life and continued an investigation of color and the principles of cubism. Here, in one of the earliest canvases from this series, Bruce applies vivid color in flat areas unaffected by light or shadow, employing the overlapping planes and skewed perspective of cubism to depict a personalized tableau of objects found in his own apartment.

Crawford, Ralston

Ventilator with Porthole, 1935

oil on canvas

39 3/4 x 33 3/4 inches (100.965 x 85.725 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R.
and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



Ralston Crawford is most often associated with the precisionists, a group of artists working during the 1920s and 1930s known for portraying the American landscape and industry through hard-edged, simplified forms and meticulously painted surfaces. After being exposed to the work of precisionist artist Charles Sheeler, Crawford began to depict agricultural and industrial subjects in the same style. Crawford was the son of a ship captain and spent time working as a sailor in his early life, and as a result, he often incorporated maritime imagery into his artwork. In this painting, the artist crafts an abstracted representation of an air vent on a ship through flat, geometric shapes and minimal detail.

Dasburg, Andrew

Trees and Roads, Taos, 1924

oil on canvas

26 1/8 x 20 1/4 inches (66.385 x 51.435 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Gift of the Peter Kiewit Foundation



In 1909, Andrew Dasburg traveled to France and encountered the paintings of Paul Cézanne, whose inspiration was to shape much of his creative life. Dasburg returned to New York the following year and in 1913 befriended Mabel Dodge, a wealthy patron who had started an art colony in the village of Taos in northern New Mexico. In 1918, at Dodge's invitation, Dasburg made his first trip to Taos, which became for him what Aix-en-Provence in France was for Cézanne: a place where the mountainous landscape, atmosphere, and light provided a perfect setting for experimenting with modern visual modes while remaining firmly rooted in nature. This painting, created five years before Dasburg made Taos his permanent residence, is one of many examples of the artist's exploration of the land.

Davis, Stuart

Sand Dunes: Rockport, 1916

oil on canvas

30 x 24 inches (76.2 x 60.96 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Howard S. Wilson Memorial



Stuart Davis is best known for his lively, groundbreaking abstractions that were heavily influenced by jazz, popular culture, and advertising. Early in his career, however, Davis studied with Robert Henri and worked in the urban realist style of the Ashcan school; it was not until he encountered the works of European artists at the 1913 Armory Show in New York that he made his foray into modernism. In the summer of 1915, Davis traveled to Gloucester, Massachusetts, and created this painting the following year while visiting the nearby town of Rockport. *Sand Dunes: Rockport* is one of a few paintings from this time that demonstrate Davis's early interest in the flattened space and overlapping forms of cubism, a movement that would be crucial to his artistic development in the following years.

Dickinson, Edwin

Girl on Tennis Court, 1926

oil on panel

36 x 30 inches (91.44 x 76.2 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Gift of Olga N. Sheldon



Edwin Dickinson's body of work is characterized by a deviation from accepted stylistic trends. Despite a seeming disengagement with the mainstream art world, Dickinson was nonetheless fully immersed in it: he trained with William Merritt Chase at New York's Art Students League and later with Charles Hawthorne in Provincetown, Massachusetts, the seasonal home to some of mid-twentieth-century America's most famous and respected artists. Dickinson's compositions frequently combined direct observation of nature with remembered subjects and invented elements. *Girl on Tennis Court* is an excellent example of the artist's expert fusion of the ethereal and the real. The ambiguous, shadowy location and faceless, isolated figure seen here are also common motifs in Dickinson's paintings.

Dove, Arthur

From Trees, 1937

oil and tempera on canvas

15 1/8 x 21 inches (38.418 x 53.34 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



Born in the Finger Lakes region of New York, Arthur Dove grew up with a close relationship to nature that he valued and maintained throughout his life. In fact, he spent significant time near the sea, living on a houseboat with his artist wife, Helen Torr. Dove did not just illustrate natural subjects; rather, the spiritual dimension he found in nature served as the inspiration for the visual language of line, expressive color, and simplified form he employed to construct his work. *From Trees* was made during the five-year period between 1933 and 1938 when Dove and Torr had returned to his family home in Geneva, New York. Here, the artist responded to the countryside with the irregular, curving forms that were a signature element of his painting.

Feininger, Lyonel

City Moon, 1945

oil on canvas

28 5/8 x 21 7/16 inches (72.708 x 54.451 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association Collection



Born in New York City, Lyonel Feininger was sent to Germany in 1887 to study music, but instead pursued artistic training, becoming one of Germany's best-known illustrators by the late 1890s. Although Feininger experienced a successful career as a teacher and fine artist in Germany, he was forced to leave for New York in 1937 after the public reception of modern art became increasingly hostile under Hitler's regime. For many years, Feininger had created semiabstract depictions of architecture, and he returned to this familiar subject as he reconnected with the metropolis that had unexpectedly become his home once again. In *City Moon*, the artist evokes the bright darkness and active rhythm of a night in New York, erecting a fragile web of straight lines over multiple layers of richly worked paint.

Hartley, Marsden

Painting Number One, 1913, 1913

oil on canvas

39 1/8 x 31 3/4 inches (99.378 x 80.645 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



In 1912 Marsden Hartley went to Paris and formed a friendship with important American modern art collector Gertrude Stein, who likely introduced him to the theories of expressionist painter Wassily Kandinsky. Kandinsky's influential text *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* was one of many inspirations that prompted Hartley to explore abstraction as a means of representing internal or spiritual concerns during this time. In early 1913, Hartley produced a group of canvases, including *Painting Number One*, that were fully expressionist in style and emulated Kandinsky's bold color, slashing lines, and vigorous paint handling to impart movement and feeling. Shortly after Hartley completed *Painting Number One*, Stein requested that it and other works be sent to her home to be considered for her own collection. Evidently she did not choose to keep this one, as it remained in Hartley's possession until his death, passing through many hands before coming to Sheldon in 1971.

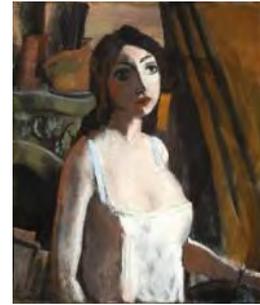
Kuhn, Walt

Girl in White Chemise, 1921

oil on canvas

30 x 25 inches (76.2 x 63.5 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Bequest of Mary Riepma Ross through the University of Nebraska Foundation



An avid promoter of early modern art in America, Walt Kuhn was a well-known painter, cartoonist, sculptor, printmaker, and teacher. Trips to Europe at the start of the twentieth century encouraged Kuhn's interest in avant-garde art, and his work throughout the 1910s and early 1920s reflects his experimentation with abstracted forms, cubist space, and fauvist color. Kuhn depicted a variety of subjects throughout his career, but is probably best known for his portraits of showgirls and circus performers. *Girl in White Chemise* demonstrates Kuhn's mature portrait style, which was characterized by solid, sculptural depictions of single figures. This painting once belonged to significant New York art patron John Quinn, whom Kuhn knew through organizing the 1913 Armory Show.

Kuniyoshi, Yasuo

Fruit on Table, 1932

oil on canvas

42 x 30 inches (106.68 x 76.2 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Waugh



Born in Okayama, Yasuo Kuniyoshi came to the United States in 1906 and, aside from one brief trip back to Japan, never returned. Despite the fact that critics always claimed to see Japanese influences in his art, Kuniyoshi noted that his art was shaped by his American experiences. The artist was, for example, an avid collector of American folk art, an interest reflected in some of the unusual items he included in his still lifes. The flattened perspective the artist employs in *Fruit on Table* demonstrates knowledge of the formal conventions of European modernisms, yet this work also incorporates elements that reference the artist's personal history: Kuniyoshi often depicted grapes in his still life paintings, as they conjured memories of his time picking the fruit during his early days in America.

Macdonald-Wright, Stanton

Dragon Forms, 1926

oil on panel

26 ¼ x 15 1/8 inches (66.675 x 38.418 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Bequest of Herbert Schmidt, Centennial Committee, the Art of Politics, and Joseph Chowning



While living in Paris during the early decades of the twentieth century, artists Stanton Macdonald-Wright and Morgan Russell began investigating color and its relationship to the senses, eventually creating the nonobjective art movement known as synchromism. For these artists, each color had a direct correlation to a note on the musical scale, and therefore visual works of art could be composed

in a way similar to the creation of a piece of music. In this pursuit of what they called “color music,” both Macdonald-Wright and Russell were influenced by theories of synaesthesia, a belief in the interchangeability of the senses that led to a state of higher consciousness, noting in 1913 that “color is just as capable as music of providing us with the highest ecstasies and delights.” *Dragon Forms* continues the artist’s exploration of color relationships, here combining it with an interest in Asian art and philosophy.

Marin, John

Deer Isle, Maine, No. 7: Boat and Sea, 1927

watercolor; watercolor

16 1/2 x 20 3/4 inches (41.91 x 52.705 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Sheldon Art Association, Gift of John and Catherine Angle in memory of Catherine and Everett Angle



John Marin was one of the earliest artists to be promoted by photographer and gallerist Alfred Stieglitz, one of the leading proponents of modern abstract art in America. Although Marin painted in a variety of media, he became best known for his dynamic, expressive watercolors that wed sharp angularity with luminous delicacy. Like many artists, Marin drew inspiration from nature, an influence he illustrated frequently in his depictions of Maine. This work comes from a series of watercolors depicting Deer Isle that the artist began in 1927; here, the central focus is a sailboat framed with quickly drawn lines and turbulent black and blue waters, a composition that captures the energy Marin so famously conveyed in his seascapes.

Prendergast, Maurice Brazil

Neponset Bay, circa 1918 – 1921

oil on canvas

24 1/4 x 32 1/4 inches (61.595 x 81.915 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



Although Maurice Prendergast exhibited with members of the Ashcan school in the early years of the twentieth century, his work did not mimic the representations of gritty urban life for which that group was known. Instead, Prendergast’s leisure scenes reflected the styles of European modernists such as Paul Cézanne and Henri Matisse and the decorative patterns and vivid colors favored by other French painters of the moment. In *Neponset Bay*, the artist thickly applied vivid pigments, using what he often referred to as his “tapestry” method to draw the viewer’s eye to the saturated surface of the canvas. This composition was the product of one of the artist’s visits to the New England coast; although named after a specific geographic location, Prendergast composed the scene from elements contained in both his sketchbooks and his imagination.

Russell, Morgan

Synchromy No. 2, To Light (from Synchromy in Blue-Violet Quartet), 1912

oil on canvas mounted on board

13 x 9 5/8 inches (33.02 x 24.448 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Gift of Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Collection and Charitable Trust, Alexander Liberman, Olga N. Sheldon, Lester A. Danielson, and Bertha Schaefer by exchange



Like many young American artists at the beginning of the twentieth century, Morgan Russell traveled to Paris, where he attended the salons of Gertrude Stein, who introduced him to Henri Matisse and

Pablo Picasso. While in France, Russell befriended Stanton Macdonald-Wright, with whom he developed the artistic theory of synchromism, which is based on the correspondence between color and musical harmonies. This painting is one of a series of four works the artist titled *Synchromy in Blue-Violet*. Although paintings like this one failed to garner Russell substantial critical attention, synchromism served as an important bridge to pure abstraction in the early years of the twentieth century and was adopted by other American artists working in Paris.

Sheeler, Charles

Barn Reds, 1938

egg tempera and graphite on board

10 3/8 x 12 7/8 inches (26.353 x 32.703 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



Charles Sheeler began experimenting with rural imagery around 1917, inspired by a farmhouse he had been renting in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Like many modernists in the first half of the twentieth century, Sheeler saw his country retreat as an opportunity to engage with the spare, rectilinear forms of local architecture and art. Because of his unsentimental approach to these subjects and his clean, precise style, he became associated with a group of post–World War I artists who celebrated the modern age and machine aesthetics (eventually known as the precisionists). To critics and curators at the time there was nothing discordant about classifying both rural and urban forms as standard symbols of American modernity. In 1924, critic and historian Lewis Mumford proclaimed “the modern factory shares with the old New England mill, the modern grain elevator with the Pennsylvania barn, the steamship with the clipper” the virtues of “precision, economy, finish, geometric perfection.”

Taylor, Henry Fitch

Cubist Still Life, 1913 – 1914

oil on canvas

29 1/8 x 36 inches (73.978 x 91.44 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Nelle Cochrane Woods Memorial



Prior to working in a cubist style, Henry Fitch Taylor was a moderately successful impressionist painter. He played an important role in securing the venue for the 1913 Armory Show in New York and was likely influenced by the works he saw in this groundbreaking exhibition. Soon after, Taylor radically shifted his artistic style toward modernism, a change that is evident in daring transitional works such as *Cubist Still Life*. This composition employs stacked geometric shapes and planes that tip backward and fold forward, producing several perceptual illusions while simultaneously foregrounding the materiality of paint.

Weber, Max

Night, 1915

oil on canvas

48 x 40 1/4 inches (121.92 x 102.235 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Nelle Cochrane Woods Memorial



Max Weber was a prolific poet, theorist, and artist often credited with introducing cubism to American artists. He was among a group of modernists who were inspired by the country's architectural and

engineering feats during the early part of the twentieth century. *Night* is one of two major canvases from 1915 that explore the disorientating power of the city after dark. Weber described the effects he was trying to achieve in these terms: "Electrically illumined contours of buildings rising height upon height against the blackness of sky now diffused, now interknotted, now pierced by occasional shafts of colored light."

Zorach, Marguerite Thompson

Provincetown, Sunrise and Moonset, 1916

oil on canvas

20 x 24 1/4 inches (50.8 x 61.595 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Nelle

Cochrane Woods Memorial



Born in California, Marguerite Zorach traveled to Paris to study art in 1908. While there, she became entrenched in the city's avant-garde circle of artists, attending salons held by influential art collector Gertrude Stein and studying and exhibiting with other European modernists. At this time she also met her future husband and fellow artist, William Zorach, and in 1912 the two returned to America and settled in New York. In 1916, the couple spent the summer in the art colony of Provincetown, Massachusetts, where she created this painting. Here, Zorach suggests the passage of time between day and night in a thoroughly modern composition, employing the vibrant colors used by the fauves and the overlapping planes and fractured compositional structure of the cubists.

Pairings

In this gallery, pairs of objects with visual similarities are installed very near each other. Notice how close proximity with another work of art has the potential to shift your perception of a painting, photograph, or drawing. In this new, maybe unexpected context, consider why these objects were made and what the artists might have intended for you to see.

Supporting Information

Artists

- **Guy Péne du Bois** (New York, NY 1884-Boston, MA 1958) studied from 1899 to 1905 with William Merritt Chase, Robert Henri, and Kenneth Hayes Miller. His earliest paintings were street scenes drawn in free brushstrokes and dark colors, reflecting Henri's influence. After 1920, most of his work focused on middle- and upper-class people in fashionable restaurants and nightclubs. The rounded, simplified figures of his subjects have been compared to mannequins or caricatures and convey Péne du Bois' critical attitude. Many of his images seem like quiet pauses in unfolding dramas, lending them an air of tension and mystery.
(<https://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/artist-info.1248.html>)
- **John Wilde** (Milwaukee, WI 1919-Cooksville, WI 2006) juxtaposes the ordinary with twists of fantasy to create landscapes strewn with both the real and the imaginary. Drawing from the visual language of surrealism, his images capture the dreamlike world of the subconscious with a sharpness of focus. (<https://toryfolliard.com/artists/john-wilde/>)
- **Walter Hatke** (b. Topeka, KS 1948) creates recognizable images from everyday life, including photorealistic paintings of buildings and interiors. He often seeks out unexpected angles, and many of his paintings merge several different perspectives. The precision and detail in his work draws on the descriptive tradition of Dutch painting. His stated intention is to let viewers bring their own experiences and perceptions to the image and come away with their own interpretations.
(<https://www.union.edu/news/stories/2015/04/hatke-drawings-and-paintings-on-view-at-mandeville-gallery.php>)
- **Billy Morrow Jackson** (Kansas City, MO 1926-Urbana, IL 2006) depicts everyday moments on a heroic scale. While his compositions seem simple, quiet, and real-to-life, they include visual complexities. Ambiguities of space and light are meant to draw viewers away from a direct reading of the scene to a study of the more abstract qualities of the painting. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Morrow_Jackson)
- **Giorgio Morandi** (Bologna, Italy 1890-Bologna, Italy 1964) was an Italian painter and printmaker who specialized in still lifes. His compositions are noted for their tonal subtlety in depicting simple subjects, which were often limited to vases, bottles, bowls,

flowers and landscapes. With carefully crafted tonal relationships and a sense of palpable light and space, his drawings extended a tradition of representational painting while creating a minimalist aesthetic that remained relevant in the face of abstraction.

<http://www.theartstory.org/artist-morandi-giorgio.htm>

- **Andy Warhol** (Pittsburgh, PA 1928-New York, NY 1987) was one of the most influential artists of the second half of the 20th century, creating some of the most recognizable images ever produced. Challenging the idealist visions and personal emotions conveyed by abstraction, Warhol embraced consumer culture and commercial processes to produce work that appealed to the general public, and was a key figure in the pop art movement. <http://www.theartstory.org/artist-warhol-andy.htm>
- **Martin Johnson Heade** (Lumberville, PA 1819-St. Augustine, FL 1904) was an ardent naturalist and traveler who painted a great variety of subjects: portraits, luminous salt-marsh scenes, seascapes, tropical landscapes, hummingbird and orchid studies, and floral still lifes, generally reflecting the romanticism of the time. His intimate, close-up meditations on artfully arranged flowers demonstrated a departure from the heroic landscapes of his friend and leading Hudson River School painter Frederic Edwin Church. <https://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/artist-info.1381.html>
- **Ron Jude** (b. Los Angeles, CA 1965) was born in Los Angeles in 1965 but was raised in rural Idaho. His imagery is often filled with tensions between the urban and rural, community and individualism, nature and human construction. Jude's photographic projects often begin as photo books, with less of a priority on how the images might look in a gallery installation. He takes a democratic approach to photography, combining his current work with found photographs, landscapes, portraits, and even pictures he took as a teenager. <http://ronjude.com/>

Contextual / Stylistic Information

- **Realism** – an art movement (1840-1880) that took up everyday subject matter such as the activities and living conditions of the working- or lower-class. Realist artists abandoned the formalized structure and acceptable subject matter of the Academy, which upheld history painting as the grandest and most estimable genre of art.
- **Surrealism** – an art movement (1924-1965) aimed at expressing dreams and visions through the exploration of the unconscious mind. Surrealist artists were interested in creating work that broke free from the constraints of rationality and tradition.
- **Romanticism** – a movement in the arts and literature (1800-1850) that emphasized imagination, emotion, and the originality of the artist.
- **Still life** – a traditional genre in art typified by works of art that depict inanimate subject matter such as food, flowers, vases, books and household objects in domestic settings.

Themes

- Artifice v. reality
- The sublime (elevated or lofty in thought or language, impressing the mind with a sense of grandeur or power, inspiring awe, veneration, etc.)
- Emotion and mood
- Photography v. truth / real life
- Artist's intent

Discussion Prompts

- As you look at Péné du Bois's *Timid Model* and Wilde's *A Lady Frightened By A Monster ...*, compare and contrast the ways each artist has conveyed a different emotion or mood, taking note of the composition, the body language, the presumed vantage point of the viewer, the colors, and other elements of the painting.
- Which is more real: Heade's *Oranges and Orange Blossom* or Jude's *Citrus #3*? Justify your answer. Consider what each artist may have been attempting to communicate.
- List the similarities you see between Hatke's *Rooms on Broadway* and Jackson's *Ten-O-Nine*. Now list the differences you see. How do these similar yet different depictions of interior scenes make you feel? What narrative might you offer for the two scenes?
- Both Warhol and Morandi present us with still lifes. As you study these two works, do you find that depictions of real objects translate differently through different media – here, a drawing and a photograph?
- If you were the curator of this gallery, what pairings would you create? Use works currently on display in other galleries for ideas!
- Which work(s) draws your attention the most and why? Do you think the work would be as distinct if it were displayed on its own? Why or why not?

Helpful Links

- “Five Tips for Teaching with Works of Art” from the Museum of Modern Art
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLfYVzk0sNiGHT8fv3e0CTyY9QLpT4jqFt&v=ONPYKR8jNn8>
- Thinking Routines from Harvard Project Zero
<http://www.pz.harvard.edu/resources/thinking-routines-video>
- “Starting the Conversation” from Art21
<http://www.art21.org/learn/tools-for-teaching/on-contemporary-art/starting-the-conversation>
- “Understanding Formal Analysis” from the J. Paul Getty Museum
http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/formal_analysis.html
- Museum of Modern Art Learning Tools & Tips
https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/tools_tips

Exhibition Checklist

Péne du Bois, Guy

Timid Model, date unknown

oil on canvas

31 1/16 x 23 inches (78.899 x 58.42 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association,
Gift of Beatrice Rohman, N-536.1979



Wilde, John

A Lady Frightened By A Monster It's Foolish To Think Even Exists, 1946

tempera on panel

11 3/16 x 5 1/2 inches (28.416 x 13.97 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln,
gift of Henry V. Grabowski, U-2330.1978



Hatke, Walter

Rooms on Broadway, circa 1978 – 1980

oil on canvas

45 x 89 inches (114.3 x 226.06 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, In
memory of Sarah Ladd Woods,
N-566.1980



Jackson, Billy Morrow

Ten-O-Nine, 1976

oil on Masonite

48 x 72 inches (121.92 x 182.88 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association,
Thomas C. Woods Memorial,
N-491.1978



Morandi, Giorgio
Bottles and Pitcher, 1952
graphite on paper
14 1/4 x 16 15/16 inches (36.195 x 43.021 cm)
Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln,
Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust, H-640-1960



Warhol, Andy
Still-life, date unknown
black and white print
7 x 9 3/4 inches (17.78 x 24.76 cm)
Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln,
Gift of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, U-
5499.141.2008



Heade, Martin Johnson
Oranges and Orange Blossoms, circa 1883 – 1895
oil on canvas
12 1/8 x 20 7/8 inches (30.798 x 53.023 cm)
Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln,
In loving memory of Beatrice D. Rohman by Carl H. and
Jane Rohman through the University of Nebraska
Foundation, U-4661-1996



Jude, Ron
Citrus #3, 2014
archival pigment print on fiber paper mounted to Dibond
25 x 30 5/8 inches (63.5 x 77.788 cm)
Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln,
Robert E. Schweser and Fern Beardsley Schweser
Acquisition Fund, through the University of Nebraska
Foundation, U-6567.2017



Portraits of Artists

Portraits, depictions of known people, are complex visual documents. They engage viewers in navigating not only the style and intent of the artist, but also the personal history and character of the individual being represented. The ten portraits in this gallery add further dimension to this complexity, as both the creators and subjects of these works are artists.

In this role reversal, the artist-as-subject is interpreted through another artist's style and medium. This establishes a unique duality in which the viewer's understanding of the portrait may be informed by the visual languages of both the artist making the work and the artist being depicted. Examination of the diverse motivations behind these portraits offers information about each artist and exposes intricacies of the relationship between creator and subject.

Supporting Information

- **Caricature** – a picture or imitation of a person in which certain striking characteristics are exaggerated in order to create a comic or grotesque effect
- **Realism** – an art movement arising in the mid-19th century that took up everyday subject matter such as the activities and living conditions of the working- or lower-class. Artists who worked in a realist manner tended to produce unflinching, sometimes "ugly" portrayals of life's unpleasant moments and often used dark, earthy palettes that confronted high art's ultimate ideals of beauty.
- **Expressionism** – a style of art that is identified by the distortion of reality, often through a non-naturalistic color palette and exaggerated brushstrokes, in order to express the artist's feelings or emotions, or an idea.

Themes

- Portraiture
- Facial expression and body language
- Expressionism
- Relationship between artist and subject
- Individuality
- Identity
- How artists portray non-physical traits (e.g. personality, career, class, etc.)

Discussion Prompts

- What constitutes a portrait? Do you think a portrait has to include a depiction of a person's face? What could a portrait of someone look like if you did not see their face? What are ways to describe people that don't relate to their physical features?
- Why do people have portraits made of themselves? Why might an artist be interested in making a portrait of another artist?
- Look at Peggy Bacon's drawings of Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz. What characteristics stand out to you? Why do you think the artist chose to accentuate these

particular traits? How do you think these artists felt when the images were revealed to them upon their completion?

- Robert Arneson's work, *Born to Raise Hell*, is a depiction of the artist Jackson Pollock. It was made years after the death of the artist. Arneson believed that this depiction showed Pollock's true self. What do you think the artist is trying to say about Pollock, a man he deeply admired? Do you think this piece glorifies him or criticizes him? Explain.
- How would you describe the texture of Gaston Lachaise's sculpture of John Marin? For many centuries, artists tried to depict people, objects, and places as realistically as possible in their art. About 150 years ago, artists began experimenting with new ways of representing the world around them. What parts of John Marin look realistic, and what parts look less realistic?
- Look at George Platt Lynes' portrait of Marsden Hartley. What is the mood of the scene? What might this say about Hartley's life or personality?
- Compare and contrast Alexander Brook's painting *Peggy Bacon and Metaphysics* to Robert Henri's portrait of William J. Glackens. How does each artist approach the task of painting a portrait?
- In *Peggy Bacon and Metaphysics*, the artist Alexander Brook painted a portrait of his wife holding her beloved cat. If Brook is going to paint a portrait of you and you can hold one thing in your hands, what object would you choose? Why?
- Imogen Cunningham photographed Alfred Stieglitz with a favorite painting made by Stieglitz's wife in the background. If someone took a photograph of you, what would you like the background to be? Why?
- Look at Imogen Cunningham's photograph and Peggy Bacon's caricature drawing of Alfred Stieglitz, both from the same year. Which portrait tells us more about Alfred Stieglitz? What characteristics would you decide to highlight if you made a portrait of someone?
- Karl Zerbe made an abstracted portrait of a fellow German-born Expressionist artist, Max Beckmann. Expressionist artists used the distortion of reality to express their feelings or emotions. How would you describe the color palette Zerbe used in his portrait? Why do you think he chose these particular colors?
- John Singer Sargent's *Portrait of Jean Joseph Marie Carriés* is the oldest work in the gallery. What similarities can you find between this painting and any other works in the gallery? How does this work stand out from the others?
- There are many different kinds of portraits in this gallery, including photographs, sculptures, and paintings. Some are more realistic, others are more expressionistic. If an artist is going to make a portrait of you and put it in this gallery, what medium would you want the artist to work with? Would you want the portrait to look realistic or more abstract? Explain.

Helpful Links

- Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, The Met, “Group f/64”
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/f64/hd_f64.htm
- Museum of Modern Art, “German Expressionism”
https://www.moma.org/s/ge/curated_ge/
- Tate, “Expressionism”
<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/e/expressionism>
- The Art Story, “Realism”
<http://www.theartstory.org/movement-realism.htm>
- National Gallery, “What is a Portrait?”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7exQDKFg0I>
- Getty, General Discussion Questions for Talking about, and Looking at, Portraits
http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/curricula/portraits/portraits_questions.html
- National Portrait Gallery, Reading Portraiture Guide for Educators
<http://npg.si.edu/file/3517/download?token=gPGIKHe4>

Exhibition Checklist

Arneson, Robert

Born to Raise Hell, 1987

ceramic with redwood base

73 x 39 x 27 inches (185.42 x 99.06 x 68.58 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Olga N.

Sheldon Acquisition Trust



This sculpture is part of a series of nearly one hundred works made by Robert Arneson between 1982 and 1992 that feature abstract expressionist painter Jackson Pollock as a central subject. Arneson considered Pollock as a near alter ego of himself, and used Pollock as a vehicle for self-analysis: examination of what it means to be an artist and of the tension between public image and personal identity. Pollock’s innovative action paintings created in the late 1940s through the mid-1950s captivated the art world, and yet despite his success, he struggled with mental instability. His status as a mythic figure was intensified by his tragic death in a car crash at age forty-four in 1956. *Born to Raise Hell* is the second largest work in Arneson’s Pollock series. The giant, mask-like terracotta head sits atop an inscribed redwood base, evoking the shape of a monument or tombstone. Hidden behind the head is an overturned liquor bottle, a reference to Pollock’s chronic alcoholism.

Bacon, Peggy

Georgia O'Keeffe, circa 1934

charcoal

16 5/8 x 13 inches (42.23 x 33.02 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



Bacon, Peggy

Alfred Stieglitz, circa 1934

charcoal on paper

16 3/4 x 13 3/8 inches (42.54 x 33.97 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



Peggy Bacon began incorporating humor and satire in her art while studying at the Art Students League from 1915 to 1920. By the mid-1930s, she had become a leading American caricaturist, a pursuit that culminated in her published collection of drawings depicting the personalities of the New York social scene, titled *Off With Their Heads!* Two of these drawings portray painter Georgia O'Keeffe and her husband, photographer Alfred Stieglitz, both close friends of Bacon. The goal of a caricature, Bacon stated, is "to heighten and intensify to the point of absurdity all the subject's most striking attributes," both physical and psychological. O'Keeffe, an elegant woman, is interpreted by Bacon with sharp, almost witch-like features. The arch of her brow and pull of her mouth reference O'Keeffe's notoriously strong-willed and outspoken nature, as she appears about to impart a piece of scathing criticism.

Brook, Alexander

Peggy Bacon and Metaphysics, 1935

oil on canvas

36 x 25 7/8 inches (91.44 x 65.723 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



Alexander Brook and Peggy Bacon met while studying at the Art Students League and married in 1920. Brook was a social realist painter, known for his landscapes, female nudes, and portraits created with a soft, subdued palette. While producing his own art, he served as an instructor at the Art Students League and helped promote the work of fellow artists as an assistant to the director of the Whitney Studio Club, later known as the Whitney Museum of American Art. In this portrait, Brook portrayed Bacon against a serene landscape, holding her favorite cat, Metaphysics. Cats were often a subject of Bacon's own work, a theme she explored more fully four years later in an exhibition of her pastel drawings titled *Manhattan Cats*. During their marriage, which ended in divorce in 1940, Brook was often overshadowed by Bacon's career as a printmaker and illustrator. Two of Bacon's drawings are also on view in this gallery.

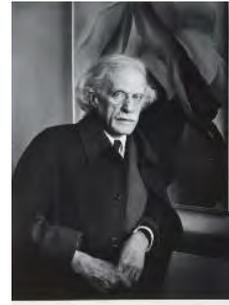
Cunningham, Imogen

Alfred Stieglitz, 1934

gelatin silver print

9 1/2 x 7 1/4 inches (24.13 x 18.41 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



While in New York on assignment for *Vanity Fair* in 1934, Imogen Cunningham visited photographer Alfred Stieglitz's gallery, *An American Place*, where she convinced him to pose for this portrait taken with his own 8x10-inch view camera. As gallery director and mentor to some of the leading artists of the early twentieth century, Stieglitz helped usher in the era of American modernism. Cunningham acknowledged this legacy by posing him against the gallery wall, his head framed by the art he loved and promoted. The image is especially poignant in its inclusion of *Flower of Life II*, a painting by Georgia O'Keeffe, Stieglitz's wife from 1924 until his death in 1946. The sharpness of the photo and its detailed focus on Stieglitz's face and hands are indicative of a stylistic shift that occurred in Cunningham's work during the decade prior to this portrait. While her early photographs are characterized by a soft, blurry focus that added a sense of dreaminess to her subjects, she later embraced the realist style, which offered an immediate, uncomplicated view of the world.

Henri, Robert

Portrait of William J. Glackens, 1904

oil on canvas

78 3/16 x 38 5/16 inches (198.596 x 97.314 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Thomas C. Woods Memorial



While teaching at the School of Design for Women in Philadelphia in the early 1890s, Robert Henri met a group of young artists, including William Glackens, who would later be known as the Ashcan school. Under Henri's leadership and influence, the group rejected the tenets of impressionism and academic subject matter in favor of scenes that depicted the reality of contemporary urban life. Henri intended this formal, full-length portrait of Glackens to be a showpiece that would cater to the conservative tastes and requirements of exhibition juries, specifically the National Academy of Design in New York. Two years later, however, after witnessing the academy reject members of his artistic circle, Henri became disillusioned with the process of juried exhibitions and called the academy "a cemetery of art." This experience inspired Henri, Glackens, and some of their fellow Ashcan artists to form a group called The Eight. They organized and advocated for open exhibitions with no juries or prizes, putting the power back into the hands of the artists and fostering a more receptive environment for public exhibition.

Lachaise, Gaston

John Marin, 1928

bronze

12 1/4 x 9 x 10 inches (31.115 x 22.86 x 25.4 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Anna R. and Frank M. Hall Charitable Trust



Gaston Lachaise's innovative depictions of the human body, primarily the female form, established his reputation as one of the leading modernist sculptors of the early twentieth century. In the late 1920s he began sculpting a series of bronze heads depicting prominent artists and public figures, including painter John Marin. These portraits signaled a stylistic departure from the idealized figures of Lachaise's early career as he became interested in portraying each subject's inner mental state, as well as their physical appearance. Marin's bold, energetic paintings and humble demeanor intrigued Lachaise, who described this sculpture as "the face of a man who had suffered, sacrificed, and triumphed without vanity." The realistic rendering of Marin's aged skin and the expressionistic treatment of his highly textured hair contribute to the sculpture's status as one of Lachaise's most celebrated portraits.

Lynes, George Platt

Marsden Hartley, 1943

gelatin silver print

9 1/2 x 7 1/2 inches (24.13 x 19.05 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Gift of Lawrence Reger



By the mid-1930s, George Platt Lynes was one of the most sought after fashion photographers in the country. Regular commissions allowed him the financial freedom to pursue more personal artistic projects, including homoerotic images of male nudes, for which he is most well known today. This photograph is from a portrait series of Marsden Hartley, one of the most innovative painters of the early twentieth century. At the time, both Hartley and Lynes were mourning the recent deaths of men they loved. Lynes evokes this sense of loss through his dramatic manipulation of light. The overall dimness of the room suggests the approach of darkness, while Hartley's shadow looms large on the wall behind him, an immense, ghost-like presence. The man facing the viewer in the background is Jonathan Tichenor, Lynes' studio assistant and lover. He wears the military uniform of his brother George who was killed in World War II, a death from which Lynes never fully recovered. The sense of grief communicated through this composition is also prescient, as it was taken only a few months before Hartley's own death.

Sargent, John Singer

Portrait of Jean Joseph Marie Carriès, circa 1880

oil on canvas

22 1/4 x 18 1/2 inches (56.515 x 46.99 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Nelle
Cochrane Woods Memorial



John Singer Sargent's portrait of French sculptor Jean Joseph Marie Carriès is one of several small, informal studies of fellow artists and friends that Sargent executed in the early 1880s. These paintings were not intended for public exhibition, but rather as artistic exercises that he then gifted to friends and colleagues. How and when Sargent and Carriès met is not known, although they both exhibited at the Paris Salons contemporaneous with this portrait. Travels to Spain and the Netherlands had inspired Sargent to experiment in the style of seventeenth-century old master paintings, evidenced here in the muted palette and use of light to produce a stark contrast between Carriès's face and the dark background. The visible brushstrokes, applied with a vigorous though controlled hand, are representative of Sargent's style throughout his career as a commissioned portrait painter for American and European high society.

Zerbe, Karl

Portrait of Max Beckmann, 1948

encaustic paint and polymer paint on Masonite

25 1/4 x 31 1/8 inches (64.135 x 79.058 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association Collection



Amid the rise of National Socialism, Karl Zerbe left his home country of Germany in 1934 and settled in Boston. He served as head of the painting department at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts for eighteen years, becoming a leading figure in an emerging artistic movement known as Boston expressionism. Painter Max Beckmann, a source of artistic inspiration for Zerbe for more than twenty years, visited the school in 1948 to present a lecture and conduct studio visits. Like Zerbe, he also had fled Germany for the United States. Beckmann's paintings, charged with allegory and political narrative, had been labeled as degenerate and confiscated by the Nazis. Zerbe's depiction of Beckmann is a collision of artist and subject, for this work is not only a portrait of a fellow painter, but also an expression of Zerbe's personal doubts during a transitional point in his career between figuration and abstraction. Beckmann sits amid the claustrophobic chaos of a cluttered room, his jacket patterned with deep, agitated wrinkles, a tension further communicated through Zerbe's use of a caustic color palette. A dark, silhouetted head looms in the background, its idealized profile similar to Beckmann's own self-portraits.

Trompe l'oeil

Trompe l'oeil, a French term meaning to “deceive the eye,” is a technique artists have employed for centuries to convince viewers they are looking at a real object rather than an artistic representation. Today, artists continue working in the trompe l'oeil style in a range of media, as evidenced by works in this gallery from Sheldon's collection.

Supporting Information

- The earliest account of *trompe l'oeil* comes from ancient Greece, where a contest took place between two prominent artists, Zeuxis and Parrhasius. The story goes that Zeuxis painted grapes with such skill that birds flew down to peck at them. Not wanting to be outdone, Parrhasius painted an illusionistic curtain that fooled even the discerning eye of his fellow painter, who tried to draw it to one side. (from royalacademy.org.uk)
- The *trompe l'oeil* strategy experienced a period of popularity during the seventeenth century along with the rise in popularity of still life painting. Although not all still life painting achieves the hyperrealism of *trompe l'oeil*, there was a high emphasis placed on verisimilitude and accurate perspective.

Themes

- Visual humor
- Mastery of perspective and treatment of detail
- Elevation of everyday / banal objects
- Material of art object v. material it appears to be
- “Objectness”

Discussion Prompts

- What strategies do artists use to make their works look like the real objects they appear to be? How do they reveal their tricks?
- Why would an artist choose an ordinary object (a crushed cardboard box, old purse, dollar bill, or amp) as the subject matter for their art? If you made a trompe l'oeil sculpture, what object would you choose to inspire your creation?
- Why might an artist choose to depict an object in a trompe l'oeil style?

Helpful Links

- Art History 101: What is *trompe l'oeil*?
<https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/art-history-101-trompe-loeil>
- Trompe l'oeil lesson plan from the Philadelphia Museum of Art
http://www.philamuseum.org/doc_downloads/education/lessonPlans/Stepping%20Into%20A%20Painting.pdf

- Elements of Art: Form (video)
<https://net.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/5087995a-6e3f-4e1a-a3e2-41f21bece763/elements-of-art-form/#.WZbu2hJSxR0>
- Trompe l'oeil in Fine Art
<http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/painting/trompe-loeil.htm>

Exhibition Checklist

Kaye, Otis

Dollar Bill, circa 1940

etching with tempera

2 3/4 x 6 1/8 inches (6.98 x 15.56 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, Nebraska Art Association, Gift of Carl and Jane Rohman



For more about Otis Kaye:

- <http://www.msfineart.com/artists/otis-kaye/>

Levine, Marilyn

Leather Bag, 1990

Ceramic

9 x 10 x 4 inches (22.86 x 25.4 x 10.16 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Olga N. Sheldon Acquisition Trust



For more about Marilyn Levine:

- http://www.franklloyd.com/dynamic/artist_bio.asp?ArtistID=38

Oshiro, Kaz

Fender Showman Amp with Cabinet #2 (Duct Tape and Cigarette Burn), 2002

acrylic, bondo on stretched canvas over wood

48 x 30 x 11 inches (121.92 x 76.2 x 27.94 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Joell J. Brightfelt Art Acquisition Fund, through the University of Nebraska Foundation



For more about Kaz Oshiro:

- <https://walkerart.org/magazine/kaz-oshiro-lifelike-walker-art-center-2>

Rauschenberg, Robert

Tampa Clay Piece 3, 1972

Fired and glazed clay with silkscreened decal, fiberglass, epoxy, soil patina

20 5/8 x 24 1/4 x 4 15/16 inches (52.388 x 61.595 x 12.541 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Gift of Carl and Jane Rohman through the University of Nebraska Foundation



For more about Robert Rauschenberg:

- <http://www.theartstory.org/artist-rauschenberg-robert.htm>

New Deal Prints

At the start of the Great Depression in 1929, Americans faced one of the most uncertain periods in the nation's history as businesses, banks, and farms across the country began to fail, leaving many people out of work and destitute. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt instituted the recovery plan known as the New Deal, creating several programs that would strengthen the economy and give employment and financial relief to those in need—including artists. The most expansive program to employ artists, the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP), was initiated by the president in 1935.

In addition to providing employment, one of the WPA/FAP's objectives was to provide a meaningful cultural experience for all Americans during the time of the Depression, a goal achieved through federally sponsored exhibitions of WPA/FAP art and through the distribution of original works of art to schools, libraries, hospitals, and other public institutions.

While the WPA/FAP was beneficial for artists working in a variety of media, printmakers in particular were given unprecedented opportunities under this program. In the WPA/FAP workshops, artists and professional printers collaborated in an environment that resulted in stylistic experimentation and technical advancements in printmaking. Also, the content and style explored by printmakers was virtually unrestricted by project supervisors, allowing artists to express their social and political viewpoints through designs that could be reproduced in multiple and distributed with relative ease to large numbers of the American public.

After the WPA/FAP ended in 1943, many artworks were allocated to public institutions and museums like Sheldon. The objects on view in this gallery present issues of interest to printmakers during the Depression and allow viewers to consider the benefits of government support for the arts.

Supporting Information

- **The Great Depression** began on October 29, 1929, a day also known as “Black Tuesday” when the American stock market crashed. The impact was far reaching and deep. With one-quarter of the American workforce unemployed and an unstable, the country was suffering as were the American people. The Great Depression was a time of great social and political unrest. Many Americans struggled to provide for their families during the Depression years (1929-1939).
- **The New Deal** was the set of federal programs launched by President Franklin D. Roosevelt after taking office in 1933, in response to the calamity of the Great Depression, and lasting until American entry into the Second World War in 1942. The purpose of Roosevelt's New Deal program was to stabilize the economy and provide jobs and relief for Americans. The New Deal was made up of a series of experimental projects and programs that aimed to restore some of the dignity and prosperity lost by the Americans.

- Many New Deal programs were innovative, even radical, in treating artists, writers, and playwrights as workers deserving of support. This was new in America, where artists since colonial times had been considered marginal “extras” in our society.
- Printmaking became a vital form of artistic expression during the years of the government sponsored Federal Art Project (FAP), a unit within the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Printmakers produced high-quality etchings, lithographs, wood cuts, wood engravings and, later, screen prints that were socially relevant and often conceptually innovative. All FAP sponsored works were intended for distribution to public buildings, including schools, libraries, and hospitals. In contrast to easel paintings, sculptures, and permanently installed murals that were one-time, unique events, each print image was replicated in editions of multiple impressions. Prints, therefore, were a practical and inexpensive means of complying with the Project's defined mission to make original works of art accessible to the general public.
- The American landscape was a prevalent theme during the Depression era. Some printmakers crafted nostalgic images of peaceful country scenes that reassured the nation, drawing upon America's agrarian past in a way that was familiar and comforting to many viewers. Others chose to depict bustling cities, focusing on industrial feats that signified technological progress. The transition between a rural way of life and an increasingly urban one was a timely theme; for example, Mabel Dwight's lithograph displayed on this wall illustrates a train station in rural Pennsylvania surrounded by symbols of industrial progress.
- Many artists depicting the landscape adhered to the representational, narrative mode of the popular American scene movement, while others took the opportunity to experiment stylistically. Works on view here by Jolan Gross-Bettelheim and Stuart Davis exemplify printmakers' interest in and freedom to explore abstraction through modern movements like futurism and cubism.
- In March of 1933, an estimated one-fourth of the US population was unemployed, a statistic that demonstrates how significant labor issues were to Americans during the Great Depression. Depictions of productive agrarian workers and strong urban laborers served as uplifting symbols of American resilience, yet printmakers also confronted some of the more negative aspects of labor in both rural and urban scenes. Some chose to illustrate farmers struggling with the devastation left by drought and the Dust Bowl, while others addressed the plight of workers forced to undertake dangerous occupations in order to earn a living wage.
- Prints on view in this exhibition by Blanche Grambs and Elizabeth Olds are the result of their visits to the mines of Pennsylvania where they observed conditions in the mining camps. Coal was a particularly perilous industry at that time, and the miners' fights for unionization and protection from the dangers of the work were rich subjects for many politically motivated artists. A number of printmakers, in fact, were members of left-wing organizations that actively advocated for workers' rights. Herman Volz's pro-union views are evident in his surrealist-inspired scene titled *Scab*, a disparaging term for a person who works while others are on strike.

- **Lithograph** – A print made by drawing or painting on a lithography stone with an oily or waxy substance. The stone is covered with a layer of gum arabic and acid, which etches the stone in all of the space *not* covered with the wax. Water is applied to the stone, gathering in the etched zones and resisted by the wax. Ink is applied, sticking to the wax, but not the water. Finally, paper is pressed to the stone, picking up the inked portions.
- **Chromolithograph** – A colored lithograph
- **Wood engraving** – A printmaking and letterpress printing technique, in which an artist works an image or matrix of images into a block of wood. Functionally a variety of woodcut, wood engraving uses relief printing, where the artist applies ink to the face of the block and prints using relatively low pressure.
- **Linocut** – A print made by carving out negative space in a linoleum tile, inking the positive relief, and pressing the tile to a piece of paper (much like a rubber stamp).
- **Etching** – A plate of metal is first covered with a layer of acid-resistant varnish or wax, called the “ground.” The artist then scratches through the ground with an etching needle to expose the metal beneath. When the design is complete, the plate is dipped in acid, which eats away the lines where the metal has been exposed. The depth of the lines depends on the length of time the plate is exposed to the acid. Once the ground has been removed, the metal plate, with its incised lines, can be printed in the same way as any intaglio plate.
- **Aquatint** – A means of etching tonal values named for the effects it creates, which look rather like ink or watercolor washes. The technique can be used to produce shaded areas in a printed etching that range from light to dark, and is useful in figure studies, portraits, or landscapes where modeling or atmospheric tones may impart realism and/or drama. The process involves biting with acid a fine network of lines around grains of resin; the tiny etched channels hold ink that prints as a veil of tone.

Themes

- Social commentary
- Documenting American workers
- Abstraction of human form
- The roles of the artist, art, government
- Understanding history through art
- Printmaking - a democratic medium

Discussion Prompts

- Printmaking is sometimes considered a “democratic medium.” Let’s talk about why this is so, and why these particular prints speak to democratic themes. For example, think about how these were disseminated and what they depict.
- The prints in this gallery depict life during the Great Depression years – the 1930s. What do these images tell you about this period in history? How do they make you feel?

- Compare the black-and-white prints with the color prints. How does the use of color, or the absence of it, lend to the message or mood of the work?
- There are many images in this gallery that inspire hope and confidence. What other images can you think of that make you feel hopeful or confident?
- The prints on display in this gallery were made possible through government funding. Why do you think it's important for the government (the public) to support art? If you disagree with this, explain why.

Helpful Links

- History, "New Deal"
<http://www.history.com/topics/new-deal>
- Khan Academy, "The New Deal"
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-us-history/period-7/apush-great-depression/a/the-new-deal>
- History, "Great Depression"
<http://www.history.com/topics/great-depression>
- Khan Academy, "The Great Depression"
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-us-history/period-7/apush-great-depression/a/the-great-depression>
- Library of Congress, "New Deal Programs"
<https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/newdeal/fap.html>
- National Archives, "A New Deal for the Arts"
https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/new_deal_for_the_arts/#
- Smithsonian, *1934: Art of the New Deal*
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/1934-the-art-of-the-new-deal-132242698/>
- Artsy, "Nine Types of Printmaking You Need to Know"
<https://www.artsy.net/article/editorial-nine-types-of-printmaking-you-need-to>
- "Pressure + Ink: Lithography Process," from the Museum of Modern Art -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUXDItQfqSA>

Exhibition Checklist

Barnet, Will

Labor, 1937

aquatint

9 13/16 x 9 7/8 inches (24.92 x 25.08 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration



Blanch, Arnold

Portrait of a Farmer, circa 1935

color lithograph

11 1/2 x 10 inches (29.21 x 25.4 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration



Correll, Richard

Moving Timbers, 1940

color linocut

8 1/2 x 12 inches (21.59 x 30.48 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration



Davis, Stuart

Shape of Landscape Space, circa 1939

color lithograph

13 x 10 inches (33.02 x 25.4 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration



Dehn, Adolf Arthur

All Night Lunch, 1938

lithograph

10 3/16 x 14 inches (25.88 x 35.56 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration



Dwight, Mabel
Railway Station, 1939

lithograph

13 1/2 x 9 inches (34.29 x 22.86 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration



Good, Minetta
Columbia Heights–Brooklyn, 1939

lithograph

14 1/8 x 9 1/4 inches (35.88 x 23.49 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration



Grambs, Blanche
Mining Town, 1938

etching and aquatint

11 7/8 x 14 7/8 inches (30.16 x 37.78 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration



Gross-Bettelheim, Jolan
Gates and Bridges, 1936

lithograph

11 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches (29.21 x 21.59 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration



LeBoit, Joseph
Paving, 1937

lithograph

10 11/16 x 15 inches (27.15 x 38.1 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration



Lozowick, Louis
Night Repairs, 1939

color lithograph

11 13/16 x 8 13/16 inches (30 x 22.38 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration



Lozowick, Louis
Relic, 1939

lithograph

14 7/8 x 9 3/4 inches (37.78 x 24.76 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration



Olds, Elizabeth

Miners, 1937

lithograph

13 3/8 x 18 3/8 inches (33.97 x 46.67 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration



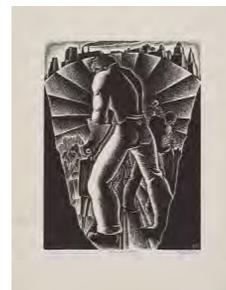
Rico, Dan

Subway Drillers, 1937

wood engraving

11 1/4 x 9 inches (28.575 x 22.86 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration



Soyer, Raphael

Furnished Room, 1937

etching

11 3/8 x 16 inches (28.893 x 40.64 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration



Volz, Herman

Scab, circa 1935

lithograph

14 x 9 7/8 inches (35.56 x 25.08 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration



Weissbuch, Oscar

American Scene, 1939

wood engraving

8 1/16 x 10 inches (20.48 x 25.4 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln,
Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works
Progress Administration



Ximenez, Alfredo

Water Front-Night, 1937

etching

14 x 9 1/4 inches (35.56 x 23.495 cm)

Sheldon Museum of Art, University of Nebraska-Lincoln,
Allocation of the U.S. Government, Federal Art Project of the Works
Progress Administration

