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20th Century American Women Artists: Selections from the Permanent Collection at Dickinson College

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20TH-CENTURY AMERICAN WOMEN ARTISTS

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Toshiko Takaezu
Sarai Sherman
Barbara Latham
Blanche Dillaye

Frankenthaler
20TH-CENTURY AMERICAN WOMEN ARTISTS

SELECTIONS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION AT DICKINSON COLLEGE

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22 JANUARY - 20 FEBRUARY 1999

THE TROUT GALLERY
EMIL R. WEISS CENTER FOR THE ARTS
DICKINSON COLLEGE
Acknowledgements

This exhibition and catalogue are the work of the members of the Art Historical Methods Seminar, a course designed as a survey of art history and theory and as an introduction to curatorial experience. The seminar members have selected, identified, documented, researched, and catalogued the works exhibited here. They also helped to plan the general appearance of this catalogue as well as designed and assisted in the exhibition installation. In the process of all this, ending in a flurry of editorial activity in mid-December and a last crescendo of reception planning, painting, hanging, lighting and labelling in January, we have been helped in every step along the way, and would here like to express our gratitude.

Our thanks go first to the staff of the Waidner-Spahr Library who helped us find our way through the wonderful spaces of the new facility. Knowing that final manuscripts would be due right after Thanksgiving added to our sense of irony when we discovered that the art books would be the last section of shelving to be moved to the new quarters. It is perhaps for this reason that this particular group of curators has a higher than average sense of adventure, not to say level of panic, when it comes to research. Our success would not have been possible without the help in particular of our liaison Izabella Tomljanovich, who is as gifted a navigator through the new library space as she is in virtual spaces, as well as the interlibrary loan librarians, Tina Maresco and Sandra Gority. For those artists about whom very little was published, we are grateful to the many museum professionals who were willing to track down difficult exhibition histories or even biographies for us. These include Charlotte Kotik of the Brooklyn Museum, Aurora Deshauteurs and Cheryl Leibold at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and Patty Jacometta at the Carnegie Museum of Art.

We also thank Eric Denker, who made his catalogue essay on Grace Albee, still in press, available to us in manuscript form; also Tyler Graphics Incorporated sent us documentation about the Frankenthaler print. In addition, some students were able to reach directly the artists or a member of their family; these people were extremely helpful, and include Mary Barringer, Phyllis Cohen and Leslie Brown; to all, we feel extremely fortunate to have been afforded so much of their time and very useful information.

We also thank the staff of The Trout Gallery. To the registrar Dwayne Franklin and his assistants Adam Gramofsky, Todd Arsenault, and Jennifer Michel, as well as to Sheren Bidule (assistant registrar) we offer our gratitude for the numerous gallery visits for selection and study of objects. We also know that our whole semester went smoothly due to the help of Stephanie Keifer, who as usual worked double-time in her double duties as office administrator to both the Fine Arts Department and The Trout Gallery. We gained valuable insight into education planning for museum exhibitions from our educators Martha Metz and Wendy Pires, and we know that they will help us to reach a much broader public through the Outreach programs, with the help of assistants Mattie McLaughlin and Kirsten Houghton. We thank Martha and Wendy especially for their incredible patience as we developed throughout the semester a real knack for arriving in the gallery to check one more detail just as they were beginning classes or meetings there. Helping all of us in the myriad tasks of exhibition preparation were my assistant Adrienne Deitch and our Gallery intern Krista Mancini. Finally, we thank Gallery attendants Skip Marcello and Ann Martin for their work which so often includes much more than “attending.”

For this beautiful catalogue we want to thank Kim Nichols and Dottie Reed, publications directors who led us thoughtfully through class discussions and deliberations, and who lent us their excellent design skills in order to bring to fruition our ideas and desires. We thank Pierce Bounds for making the photographs of the objects for publication and, in advance, Bob Cavenagh and the Media Center staff for creating a virtual version of this exhibition for our college web pages. In addition, we thank my colleague in art history Melinda Schlitt for lending her expertise in helping us with lighting for the exhibition.

Lastly, we proffer our continuing, heartfelt gratitude to the many donors who over the last one hundred years, have provided us with the marvelous works by twentieth-century American women artists for the permanent collection. Three great friends of the Gallery, whose donations are reflected in the current exhibition—Meyer P and Virginia Potamkin, Paul Kanev, and Grace Lisa—as well as one whose donations are not—Eric Denker—have been responsible for the significant gifting of work by women artists; without their generosity in this regard, we would not have been able to consider such an exhibition, let alone have had such a wonderful, difficult selection in order to accomplish it. In one case, the artist herself donated the work, and we are most grateful to Toshiko Takaezu for adding so significantly to our collection in this way. Finally, Paul Kanev offered a magnificent loan for this exhibition, the stunning Tales of Genji V by Helen Frankenthaler, printed in 1998, as a promised gift to the gallery, previewed for the first time here.

As adviser to the Seminar this year, I would like to end this note by congratulating the members of the class, whose enthusiasm and professionalism are so evident in the quality of this exhibition and catalogue. I applaud in particular their cooperation with one another, with freely exchanged ideas, opinions, and information, and their working together on all aspects of the project. That at each step of the process, one of the members of the seminar seemed prepared to take the lead, accomplish extra work, and guide us to decisions was remarkable; that the group as a whole met on their own, to continue discussions and work, offers some indication of the degree of responsibility with which they approached this project. They have accomplished an impressive exhibition with intelligence and grace.

The members of the Art Historical Methods Seminar, Sharon L. Hirsh, adviser

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INTRODUCTION

The twenty works exhibited here, all selections from the Dickinson College permanent collection, represent the engaging diversity of interests and talents of American women artists in the twentieth century. Nowhere is the versatility and vitality of this group of artists more clear than in the contrast between the oldest and the most recent work included here, which span a full ninety-nine years. The earliest work in the show, a small, precisely sketched rendering of rooftops, was drawn by the now little-known Blanche Dillaye, in the blend of careful observation of nature and adherence to basic design principles taught to her by Thomas Eakins at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; she included the drawing in an exhibition there in 1899. The most recent work in this exhibition—completed in 1998—is, by contrast, an ambitiously large and complex 48-color woodcut by the outspoken Abstract Expressionist Helen Frankenthaler, movement which garnered great support in America, especially in large cities such as her native Philadelphia. Following her training under Thomas Eakins (who was, in 1886, dismissed from the Academy for his untraditional inclusion of women students in all facets of studio work, including drawing from the nude male model), Dillaye set out for Paris, and later returned to Philadelphia to play a major role in several of the artists’ groups and exhibition societies there. Dillaye had taken full advantage of her unusual upbringing (for a female), first in her aunt’s advanced Ogontz School for Young Girls, and later during her tutelage under the outrageously egalitarian Eakins; she epitomized the “new woman” who was both the rage and the fear of many at the turn of the century. Frankenthaler, on the other hand, began her painting career in the early 1950s when “great women artists” were unheard of; yet she was one of many women who participated in the extensive changes in painting, towards personal gesture, abstracted forms, and new techniques of painting itself (she worked for a long time with the canvas spread on the floor). Frankenthaler established a high profile reputation in Manhattan and throughout the country long before the surge of feminist-inspired inroads into the art world of the 1960s. By the 1970s, and the rise of a new generation of young women artists seeking new equality in their profession, she was a singular model. Thus both Dillaye and Frankenthaler, so completely different in their choice of media, model, and mode of expression, were artists who were women “ahead of their time”, and serve as excellent beginning-and-end examples to this exhibition.

In the ninety-nine years separating the examples of works by women artists exhibited here, much happened in the history of women’s rights. Anyone knowing this history, focusing on the feminist movement of the 1970s and its aftermath in the 1980s, might assume a very different kind of artist—and art—to emerge in our later examples. In some respects this is true, since a few of the most recent examples in this exhibition—Faith Ringgold’s The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles and Betty Saar’s Self Portrait with Mystic Sky, for example—are clearly self-conscious commentaries on the artists’ identity, in these particular cases, as African American women. On the other hand, however, it is intriguing to note that, in many ways, the works by many
other women artists included in this exhibition—those artists who worked after the suffragette movement but long before the women's movement of the 1970s—had nonetheless much to say about being an artist who happened to be a woman. Is it an accident, for example, that Helen Siegl would work on images of inventive fantasy for children's books when she herself was a mother of eight? Or that Kyra Markham, working during the Depression to provide positive views of a downtrodden society, would choose to make her protagonist a woman begging for coins? Or that Sarai Sherman, when using biblical stories to illustrate contemporary issues would select the stirring, sexual story of the young bride in the Song of Solomon?

The work of these artists is a good reminder of the fact that art is, despite all other valid considerations, a personal expression for the artist who makes it: despite our postmodern tendencies to place critical emphasis on the work and the viewer, on psychoanalytic investigation or deconstructive strategies, the fact remains that these are works by people, whose identities are closely bound to the works themselves. Given this relationship of the women artists to their work, it is perhaps suitable to conclude this introduction with a consideration of the working habits and creative ideas of the artists represented here.

As it happened, Blanche Dillaye not only went to Paris in her younger years, but also sent back to her native Philadelphia long, annotated reports of her experiences there. That her activities as well as reports were viewed as unusual at that time is evident in the fact that her remarks were not only published by the Philadelphia papers, but reprinted as well in the New York Times. In the August 23, 1894 edition of that paper, she (as regular exhibitor in the New York Etching Club) was quoted as admitting that it was "amusing to come upon the streets of this famous old town [Paris] on a morning and find their still, staid, almost deserted air disturbed by a new and awful creature known as the American art student." She explained further that this phenomenon was predominantly female, one who "[i]n low shoes and lank ankles, with a palette as big as a barn door on her thumb, her sketching traps swung over her shoulder or lugged under her arm,...strides with long, masterly steps through the market place, a conquering-army air about her that would hardly seem to be justified by the canvas which she carries boldly exposed to view with perhaps her maiden effort in landscape on it." Dillaye's bemusement at seeing so many of her own kind in Paris speaks volumes about the changing conditions of art education that influenced all of the women artists seen in this exhibition. Dillaye was witnessing the sudden boom of women who sought art training but who, at the end of the nineteenth century, were still the victims of a long-standing stereotypical mentality that—even in their own peers—maintained that the female art student was and would always remain an amateur. The identities and work of the famous women Renaissance painters that we now know (for example, Sofonisba Anguissola, Lavinia Fontana, Elisabetta Sirani, or Artemisia Gentileschi) were completely unknown to nineteenth century art lovers. The few women who achieved acclaim in that century (for example the French woman Rosa Bonheur in painting or the American Harriet Hosmer in sculpture) were not only considered the absolute exceptions that they were, but were also subjected to subtle suggestions that they were not, perhaps, truly "female" to have accomplished so much in a man's domain. As Linda Nochlin has pointed out, in an article now recognized as instrumental in establishing critical questioning of the art historical canon in 1970, one key to this situation by the late nineteenth century was the training—or lack of it, to be more precise—for women artists. As has elsewhere been established, the problem of women artists' inaccessibility to required training occurred already in the Renaissance, when the development of illusionism based on mathematical and scientific perspectives coincided with the discontinuation of sending girls to public schools: in Renaissance Italy in particular, girls were limited to home or convent education that undervalued mathematics and science at precisely that time when a new pictorial vision imposed the need for just such principles to be mastered by artists. Nochlin established, furthermore, that such restrictions continued fairly unabated throughout most of the nineteenth century, when "high art" that focused on illusionism and especially the nude figure were prized at precisely that time when most women were neither
trained in the scientific principles nor allowed to study anatomy, especially by sketching from the live model. Thus the view adopted by Blanche Dillaye during her early months in Paris was one that had been assumed by most since the Renaissance; it was also the view of most in America, who not only adopted the same gender-based distinctions in society and art, but who were also aware of European continuations of those distinctions. When, in 1868, the American Winslow Homer visited Paris and sent back numerous pictures to be translated into illustrations for *Harper's Weekly*, he included a view of Paris’s most famous museum, notably showing *Art Students and Copyists in the Louvre Gallery, Paris* (Fig. 1). Here, the predominantly female students are depicted as serious, yet engaged in that form of art learning that was not emphasizing direct observation, scientific knowledge, or even creative invention: Homer’s women are working in the time-honored tradition of learning from the masters, by diligently copying their works.

That our exhibition chronologically begins with Blanche Dillaye is therefore instructive, since she herself soon after her stay in Paris, and no doubt emboldened by her experiences under the enlightened teaching of Thomas Eakins, broke most of these gender expectations, continuing to work as an earnest exhibitor in New York, playing a respected role in the artistic community of Philadelphia, and never wavering in her self-identification as an artist.

Investigation of the lives and works of the nineteen other artists included in this exhibition, all Americans working in the twentieth century, has furthermore proven the degree to which many later women followed the lead of artists like Dillaye. These artists, almost all traditionally and university trained, were critically recognized throughout their career, and continuously worked as professional artists. Often, it is they who are now the teachers, holding faculty positions at universities or working with students in master-classes and workshops (Fig. 2). They are, therefore, properly identified not as women artists but as artists who have significantly enriched our views and our visions of the twentieth century. It was the desire of the curators of this exhibition, having begun with the selection of American women artists of the twentieth century, to most forcefully emphasize not the common bonds of these artists—although some may be present—but rather the incredible diversity of media, skill, style and ideas that they possess and present to us here.

Sharon L. Hirsh

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2. Women were barred from the study of the nude model from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century; unfortunately, such study was considered in America as it was in Europe to be the basis of solid training in most fine art media. See Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1996), 7.
JUDITH BROWN (1931-1992)

**The Knight, 1963**

Welded steel, 28 1/4 x 12 3/4 x 26 in. (71.7 x 32.4 x 66 cm.)
Not signed
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Meyer P. Potamkin, 69.1.7
Not previously exhibited
Unpublished

Judith Brown's *The Knight* is made of welded steel from found objects, including the mechanical pieces used to form the knight and his horse. A primary motif is the gear, which is used for the knight's head and doubles as the base. In *The Knight*, Brown uses objects of modern industry to construct the horse, which was the traditional mode of transportation in pre-twentieth-century society. In 1892, Henry Ford built the first automobile and founded Ford Motor Company, encouraging people to stop riding horses and start driving cars. In the 1960s, the machines were at their peak; cars and other machinery parts were being mass produced, and ironically these machines were described as having horsepower engines—referring to the first means of transportation. Created during the age of the automobile, it is not surprising that Brown's sculpture of a medieval figure is welded from junkyard machinery.

Brown's primary method of creating *The Knight* is welding, which is the melting of metal using an electric current. The process requires intense focus since it can be extremely dangerous due to the high voltage and poisonous gases and fuels given off by the heated metal. It is easy to see the places Brown solder-welded; connections on all of the different pieces like the head, spear, and shield are obvious. The shield has metal drippings on it, which Brown created by melting the metal and letting it drip right onto the round form; this process is spontaneous, whereas the figure had to be carefully planned.

Brown uses found objects (scrap steel, shaped steel, and junkyard objects) to construct *The Knight*, and through this fused assemblage a new image is created. Brown's daughter, Leslie, has said that her mother liked the idea of taking found objects and making them into something that was entirely her own. This is untraditional sculpture, which does not insist upon the polished imitation of living forms, or carry specific purposes like trophies of war, symbols of professions, or attributes of gods. Brown's work, like many other twentieth-century sculptures, follows neither the traditions of finished figure nor carries a monumental function. As such, it follows the trend started by Pablo Picasso, who broke with traditional sculpture when he made a guitar out of sheet metal and cardboard in 1912.

Brown grew up in New York City where she attended private school, and subsequently graduated from Georgeschool, a Quaker boarding institution. She was of the upper-middle class and her weekly activities included horseback riding and the theater. Her love of theater helped her to get more involved in the arts, and her love of horses provided her with favorite sculpture motifs. Brown majored in art at Sarah Lawrence College and studied sculpture with Theodore Roszak, who was well known for his constructed pieces of molten forms in welded and brazed metal, often violent or cataclysmic in theme. He was a major influence in Brown's life, and she had great interest in his work in metals. After graduating from Sarah Lawrence College, Brown married and opened her first studio, still under the tutelage of Theodore Roszak. She later set up a studio in Reading, Vermont, at her mother's summer home. In 1978, she bought her own studio in Manhattan where she did some commissioned work. These included her "Carytids," steel monumental sculptures which were commissioned by PepsiCo in Purchase, N.Y., and a series of small sculptures for Tiffany's New York store window.

Throughout Brown's life, it was important that she use her artistic talent to earn her living. According to her family, she would do almost anything to sell a piece; she would reduce the price of the work, adjust the payment plan the buyer had agreed upon, and even break up pieces in a series. Brown also gave away her art as gifts for her friends. Brown wanted her works to be owned and enjoyed; by making gifts and encouraging buyers, she assured that her work is now all over the country in private and public galleries as well as in individual homes.

Brown's *The Knight* reflects the industrial atmosphere that America was witnessing in the 1960s. By making this sculpture from found machinery parts, she created a beautiful work of art from junk. Like Picasso and Roszak before her, Brown was able to create from cast-aside metal an enduring work of art.

Heather L. Troutman

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1. All of the personal biographical information in the essay is based on an interview by phone with Leslie Brown, November 18, 1998.
HELEN GERARDIA (1903-1988)

Lithograph, 21 3/4 x 17 in. (55.2 x 43.2 cm.); image: 17 7/8 x 14 in. (45.5 x 35.6 cm.)
Signed: l.r.: Helen Gerardia
Gift of Peter Horn, 87.7.4
Exhibited: 5th National Print Show (Silvermine Guild); Jewish Museum of New York City; Museums in Spain Travel Show; Pratt Institute (Brooklyn, NY); Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York City, NY); Fayette Art Museum (Fayette, AL); Georgia Museum (Athens, GA); Lowe Gallery (University of Miami, FL).
Unpublished

Although Helen Gerardia was born in Russia, she came to America under the wing of the Abstract Expressionist painter Hans Hoffman; she was training with him at the time and attended his school from 1946-47. In addition, she trained in numerous other schools and workshops, mostly throughout the forties. She was accomplished in more than one media, and often her shows included both painting and lithographs. Another one of Helen Gerardia’s accomplishments was owning the Gerardia Workshop, where she taught a wide variety of techniques in different media including etching, lithography, and painting.

Gerardia became most well-known for her works executed between 1952 and 1972. Some of her works were said to be somewhat cubist; however, her style seemed to change, with the addition of color, in 1959. Ascent, which is not dated, does contain bright color, and the assumption can be made that it was done around or after this time.

Ascent is striking in composition, space, shape, and color. It has a composition that is based on a diagonal throughout the entire picture plane. This strong diagonal, including all the objects against a dark background, runs from the bottom right corner to the top left corner of the lithograph. This is often considered to be a strong format for a composition; Gerardia, however, added some drama of her own. The drama is created by the direction in which the diagonal runs: right to left. It creates a conflict for western viewers by contradicting the manner in which they would normally read. However, this contradiction also creates a more forceful upward movement and therefore produces an accurate impression of the title, Ascent.

Gerardia’s use of color is also a unique quality of the lithograph in relation to her elaboration of positive and negative space. Her only use of color besides black and white is in the background which is a vibrant deep lavender. The lavender is an element which makes the composition even stronger. Her use of color, as described by a critic in 1959, “...carries her most personal message and softens the public statement...” It compels the viewer to concentrate more on the direction of the objects in the picture, but also allows for the negative space created by these geometric shapes to stand out to the viewer.

The negative space altered by these geometric shapes is just as much an integral part of the composition as the objects themselves. The background color emphasizes the negative space and adds depth, softening the harsh outlines of the geometric shapes. The shapes should not be ignored either; they are strong geometrics, made less rigid by a curvilinear half-ellipse. This softer shape makes the work more approachable and less threatening for the viewer.

Gerardia exhibited at some of the most well-known museums in the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, to good critical reception. As one critic wrote, “Her themes are clearly expressed and show good arrangement....” Yet another wrote of her as being “...an industrious artist, and hardly a day goes by that one of her prints or paintings don’t go on view or win a prize in some corner of the country...the results are often visually exciting and pleasing in pattern.”

Helen Gerardia was an accomplished artist whose style was consistently strong without becoming trite. She had a sense of what she wanted from her art as well, especially from the arrangements of her compositions. Ascent exemplifies her understanding of all the formal elements which is an integral part of creating a work of art. Perhaps Ascent achieved an ambition which Gerardia spoke about: “To be the best artist I possibly can. To pursue my own vision with confidence.”

Kara R. Kucheniba

3Decree and Head (1989), 8.
4Decree and Head (1989), 8.
7Art News (March 1957): 56.
8Contemporary Biography: Women (1964), 188.
VICTORIA EBBELS HUTSON HUNTLEY
(1900-1971)

Lower New York, 1934
Lithograph, 16 5/8 x 13 3/8 in. (42.2 x 34 cm.); image: 13 5/8 x 10 1/8 in. (34.5 x 25.7 cm.); plate: 14 1/8 x 10 5/8 in. (35.8 x 26.9 cm.)
Signed: l.r.: Victoria Hutson 1934
Gift of Mrs. Grace Linn, 59.1.4

Born at the turn of the century, Victoria Ebbels Hutson Huntley began life in Hasbrouck Heights, New Jersey and then proceeded to have an extremely lucrative career for a female artist at that time. Although hers is not a household name, Huntley has created many lithographs such as Lower New York and was commissioned for murals as well.

As a lithographer, Huntley chose an unusual medium for a woman at that time to work in, requiring a complex studio with heavy materials and press. Even the stone used for lithography is not easily maneuvered around, and as the contemporary critic FA Whiting commented, "[it] may have been her slight stature and delicate childhood that stirred her admiration for grand, vital forms."1

Spending a majority of her career in the city, Huntley was familiar with the skyline and the cityscape it had to offer. The overall geometry and cubistic precision are instantly appealing to the eye and present a New York that is not being held back by the Great Depression that was engulfing the nation at that time. Huntley presents an aerial view that is interrupted with new style skyscrapers rising up directly into the viewer's field of vision. This perspective forces the viewer to look past the buildings to the small monument in the background, recognizable as the Statue of Liberty.

As an American landscape, Lower New York shows a view of the city from an unexpectedly high position, and this poses a major question that is put forth by this print, and that is basically because most scenes like this were from a lower point of view. The answer leads back to the period in which Huntley was working. Focusing on the hopelessness of the Depression was not her intention, and instead she shows a New York that is booming with industry, a statue that evokes hope and freedom, and a city whose architecture is changing with the times. Showing the idea of the economy nearly destroyed by the Stock Market Crash is not as important for her as showing the technology and industrial rise of the approaching Golden Age in the city. The elevated perspective chosen by the artist suggests this forward advance in society, and Huntley's positive approach in this print was clear to contemporary reviewers. In a review for the Magazine of Art, the critic FA Whiting summarized that "Mrs. Huntley in spite of her recognition of the brooding unrest and tragedy inherent in social problems of our day, is chiefly concerned with making a universal statement of the permanent good of living. Lower New York emphasizes this ongoing positivity while trying not to focus on the negative social and economic aspects of the time."2 At the time of this particular print, Huntley was becoming known for her works and Whiting's article was emphasizing not only her abilities as a muralist (after she won a commission in 1937), but also her potential as an artist.

From Huntley's connection to New York and the distinctive aerial view, another hidden theme can be extracted. This alternative reading is beneficial to the fact that people, even if uneducated, would recognize this American scene as a representation of New York at a time when the city may have been considered "a male space." The 18th century Rousseauian theory of men representing "culture, energy, form and mind" while countered with women corresponding to "nature and the earth," was an interpretation which was still accepted by many in society of the 1930s.3 With several skyscrapers and the solid geometrical and vertical structures in the foreground, melded with the less defined and blurred Statue of Liberty, surrounded by water, there is perhaps a suggestion of this Rousseauian idea, and Huntley's questioning of it. Put into this context, men are the aspects that maintain and keep a city productive and operational and are represented by the tall buildings and skyscrapers while women in nature have Ellis Island to portray their feminine domain.

In a gender-segregated field like the art world at that time, Victoria Huntley would have found herself separated from "male specific spaces" by barriers. The barrier seen here is from the understanding of aerial perspective. We know she is not floating and therefore there must be either glass from a window she gazes out of, or a balcony. This inclusion of a closed space that was considered socially acceptable established a conflict for those women who wanted to gain access to public spaces beyond their socially-defined sphere.4 Huntley's attempt of this escape is intriguing because she looks beyond her barrier into a denied world and indicates her presence rather successfully. Public visibility for women in the 1930s was more extant than it had been in the past, and many women artists worked in the New Deal Art Programs, but the fact that so little is known about these women artists of the twentieth century is proof that this barrier still existed.

Lower New York is used as a device to portray the American landscape in an optimistic, positive way and to establish the idea of female and male spaces in the city. Huntley's artistic ability brings the modern view to a crisp...
and concise black and white study that frames the city in a way that is unexpected. With the troubled times far below, Huntley creates a feeling of advancement and hopefulness towards the future.

Kerry Joyce

2 Whiting (1938), 638.
BARBARA LATHAM (1896-1986)

In the Park, c. 1937
Wood engraving, 11 7/8 x 15 1/4 in. (30.2 x 38.7 cm.)
Signed: l.r. Barbara Latham
Gift of Mrs. Grace Linn, 51.1.62

The nineteenth century was a time of growth and urbanization in the United States. People flocked to major industrial cities seeking jobs and prosperity. With this rapid popularization of urban environments came the necessity for city-planned parks. Frederick Law Olmstead (architect of Central Park) among others, looked at the benefits of city parks in Europe. Olmstead felt it was important to create a place “designed to shut out the urban environment” providing “the elements of a rural setting that met the psychological and social needs of residents of the city.”

One of the most significant arguments for city parks was sanitation; it was noted in Europe by American travelers that parks were sanitary escapes from diseased and dirty city streets.

For the last two hundred years, urban dwellers have increasingly sought out parks as calming escapes from the fast-paced city. Families congregated on clean grassy patches to relax and become closer to nature. However, these activities were greatly modified as a result of the Great Depression. Americans no longer had the luxury of employment accompanied by relaxing weekends in the park.

Latham’s work entitled In the Park creates an atypical view of parks and city life in general. Latham was born in Walpole, Massachusetts; she attended Norwich Academy and Norwich Art School as well as the Pratt Institute and the Art Students League. She married the painter Howard Cook and settled in New Mexico after living in such places as France, Italy, and Africa. She was a well-recognized illustrator of children’s books containing Western and South American themes. In the Park is unlike Lathams book illustrations, however, because it is a reflection of her own society rather than a fictitious story.

American society changed drastically in the 1930s as a result of the Great Depression; art was no exception. The introduction of New Deal Art Programs provided jobs for artists and public art to be seen by all. Programs such as the Works Progress Administration and the Federal Art Project employed many. Although Latham may not have participated in such programs, her work suggests an influence of this social context.

In the Park is an ambivalent view of a city park. The potentially ominous style and subject matter may be read as a negative view of city life in the 1930s. However, when considered more thoroughly, this image may be a quite positive illustration of society, and in particular, the city.

The overall appearance of the work is very dark, suggesting a nighttime scene. However, Latham used the technique of wood engraving, a technique that creates a very dark image which has no relation to the subject matter. Therefore, this work can also be a view of daytime park activity. The abandoned baby carriages, on one hand, are questionable because there are no children nor parents present. One explanation for this could be a pessimistic impression of society by the end of the Great Depression. Latham may be implying that times were so bad, parents couldn’t care for their children in the city so they abandoned them in the natural landscape of the park. This is only one reading of the work, however; the figure of the street vendor in the center of the work may suggest an alternative interpretation.

This street vendor has a well-supplied wagon of food and she, herself, has the appearance of being fed and nourished; therefore this image may indicate a shift to a more optimistic view of society. In addition, the abandoned baby carriages, which at first appear desolate, may in fact be just the opposite: rather than these children being neglected, it is possible that they are simply at play out of the viewer’s sight. Americans, at the end of the 1930s, were finally able to overcome the hardships of the Depression and their young children demonstrated this new hope. If at play, Latham’s unseen children are healthy, happy, and looking towards a more positive future. Another indication of this optimistic presence is the representation of the two figures in the back of the work sitting on a park bench, who because of their placement in the work, appear to be mothers or caretakers. In this case, they would be yet another clue implying a more flourishing society where people can again afford the finer things such as personal child care.

In the Park, at first glance, may appear dark and dreary. However, another interpretation presents an argument for an alternative, optimistic view of urban society approaching 1940. This park is not a destitute place but one of much potential where there is an abundance of food, commerce, and a suggestion of healthy and playful children eager for a positive future.

Adrienne Deitch

KYRA MARKHAM (1891-1967)

Penny, Lady?, 11/50 1936

Lithograph, 11 4/5 x 16 in. (30.0 x 40.6 cm)

Published: Nancy Pergam, Iha/s (Bronxville, NY: Sarah Lawrence College Art Gallery, 1977), 7, 11 and 14.


Signed: l.r.: Kyra Markham

Watermark: II: GCM

Gift of Mrs. Grace Linn, 51.1.64

A symbol of Kyra Markham’s generation, Penny, Lady? shows a man and a woman begging for money. During the Depression years, such scenes of poverty and homelessness were typical on the streets in the city. As viewers, we have an interesting point of view on the scene: the older man and woman look eagerly up at us as if we have just stumbled upon this cityscape. Markham enlarges the woman’s hand to enhance her projection towards us, and this spatial disjunction is heightened by the awkward addition of three horse’s hooves in the upper right corner of the work. Two children face the opposite direction, entertained by some other event on the street. Although Markham has arranged her figures in an unusual manner, she has managed to tie the portions of the scenes together, making it readable to the viewer in a spatially dramatic manner. An American Scene Painter of the thirties, Markham created art in reference to the unfortunate social conditions during the Depression.

The Depression years brought economic hardship and a division of social class. While some people were optimistic for a better life in the future, others saw little hope for a recovery without solving the problems they had at the time. In Markham’s Penny, Lady?, she focuses on the figures depicting lower class society. The elevated point of view provides a sense of control over the couple. The viewer, trapped by the old woman’s confrontation, represents hope for recovery from her poverty-stricken lifestyle. During the Depression, the American family was living on thirty dollars a week. Inadequate food and clothing, crowded housing, and a lack of proper health care were just some of the effects of a lower income. Social stratification was most evident during these years because people were forced to obtain money any way they could. Penny, Lady? is a work which has abjectly described the division of classes, since Markham has implied the upper social class by the position of the viewer. There was an unequal distribution of income in the thirties and forties which hurt the working and lower classes. Markham has dressed the figures in tattered clothing, but gives these rags an amorphous quality. Shaped by her remarkable use of light, the clothes appear rounded and soft.

Placing the older woman in the center of the print suggests several interpretations. Markham may have intended to represent feminist issues during the time. Since women’s role was limited to a life at home, they were restricted in developing their interests, but also their sexuality. It is interesting that Markham chose to place the woman in the center, with the man slightly behind her; she goes against the social norm to heroicize the woman for her persistence. The woman is hopeful and enthusiastic, as she extends her hand and leaps out from where she is standing.

Since unemployment was high during the Depression, many people were forced out into the streets to find financial assistance. The couple in Penny, Lady? comes out from behind a cart to greet the viewer. The handle on the side of the large box cart behind the woman indicates that it is a mechanical calliope, “a set of organ pipes controlled by a mechanical means, usually a barrel.” The woman holds a tambourine in her right hand. A popular instrument since the medieval times, the tambourine adds a happy and spirited feeling to the setting. The woman’s excited expression and local color act as our link to the on-going scene that we the viewers have stumbled upon. By incorporating instruments in the scene, Markham has transformed this scene of poverty into a scene of jovial city life.

There is little information about Markham; during the time of the Depression she was, however, successful in illustrating American scenes. People who do remember her describe her as “a large woman, dynamic, strong-willed, vigorous, hard-working, fascinating to watch and totally devoted to her work.” She had a narrative style that survived in almost all of her works. Even though the scenes were typical of American life, she added her own “fantasy to the genre.”

With a lithographic crayon, Markham has softened the overall image. This approach helped Markham to create tonal values throughout her work. She uses the light to mold, exaggerate, and at times obscure her figures and their features. Concerned with the struggling lower class, Markham thus softens the typically harsh scene of poverty, portraying these characters as victims of a society plagued by the Depression.

Markham’s work has been exhibited in several institutions throughout New York and Pennsylvania, including the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the National Association of Women Painters and Sculptors, and the National Academy of Design. In 1939, she completed works for the Works Progress Association at the World’s Fair in New York. One of the purposes of this Fair was to promote the American scene, whether they be country or city scapes. Penny, Lady? provides Americans with a chance to catch a glimpse of what city life was like in the thirties.

Tobey Sparrow
5 Grusky (1994), 361.
Mystic Sky with Self Portrait, 1992

Color silkscreen on pasted board, 20/100, 25 3/8 x 21 1/2 in.

Signed: I.e.: Betye Saar 1992
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Meyer P. Potamkin, 1997.4
Not previously exhibited
Unpublished

I attempt to create an object that suggests spirituality without pertaining to a specific religion. My goal is to show cultural differences and universal similarities.

Betye Saar, 1995

Mystic Sky with Self Portrait embodies a certain maturation achieved by an artist whose work and career is a continuous journey of one woman's life reflected in her art. Betye Saar was born in Los Angeles, and was educated at the University of California, California State University, and the American Film Institute. Saar has been involved with art all her life, but established herself as a professional artist at the age of 34.

Saar began working as an artist in the early 1960s, when the civil rights movement was gaining momentum; Saar, along with many others, used art as an instrument to explore racial and cultural issues raised at that time. Empowered by injustice, these artists "gave visual form to the growing gulf between the white American dream and the black American reality.”

Saar, inspired by Joseph Cornell, a 1930s American surrealist known for his constructed boxes of found objects, began assembling materials confronting issues of racism on many levels. She presented stereotypical derogatory images of African Americans like Uncle Tom, Jim Crow, and Little Black Sambo in mixed media collages. These included the well known Liberation of Aunt Jemima, which depicts the popular image of Aunt Jemima in a box with a broom in her right hand and a revolver in her left. It is a powerful and angry commentary on the United States' treatment of African Americans, especially women.

Decades later, Saar's work has now become less political and more private, even spiritual. Mystic Sky with Self Portrait reflects this shift in subject matter and intentionality. For many years, Saar has possessed an interest in many religions of the world, the occult, and astrology. "She studies, travels, and collects ideas and icons from other cultures and incorporates all these things within her art.” This work exemplifies her fascination with mysticism and the occult in relation to her own experiences, dreams, and feelings.

Saar's mature style is visible in the work as she demonstrates life experience through the use of objects and symbols.

In Mystic Sky with Self Portrait, Saar illustrates herself physically visible only in the lower right corner; the rest of the work is comprised of floating signs and symbols, some extending out from the piece itself, suggesting a reference to her early assemblages. Most of the symbols chosen for the work are found in multiple religious and spiritual contexts. For instance, one of the objects is a triangle with an eye in the center, a common icon that even appears on the United States dollar bill. In early Christian iconography, this image was a symbol of divine omnipresence or trinity. The eye has been associated with the idea of light and intellectual perspicacity, an image of spiritual expressivity.

Finally, the triangle was also considered in ancient China to be the sign for woman. Another universal image represented by Saar is a heart. Ancient Egyptians believed the heart was the source for all knowledge. In the Bible, the heart is described as the "inner person." Hinduism considers the heart as the seat of Atman, the counterpart in mortals of the absolute. Saar also illustrates a hand with emphasized lines relating to palmistry, astrology, and the role of the cosmos. According to the practice of palm reading, the lines on the hand, the life line, heart line, and health line tell much about a person. Saar's choice of the eye, heart and hand may be as a window into her soul for viewers to see.

Many additional objects and symbols are visible in the work, relating to the role of all life within the universe.

Saar, influenced by numerous beliefs, shows herself as part of this cosmic world. Contrary to traditional self portraiture, Saar's illustration is psychological rather than physical. This idea of "coming into representation” has become increasingly common in the post-Freudian twentieth century but was developed earlier by such artists of the Symbolist and Expressionist periods.

Mystic Sky with Self Portrait is a representation of Betye Saar on spiritual as well as creative levels. She refers to artists of the past by incorporating psychological rather than physical concepts of self portraiture. She alludes to her own artistic progression by using her earlier collage-like techniques. By further incorporating many universal symbols, Saar engages the audience in her own cosmic experience.

Adrienne Deitch

4 Betye Saar, Brandywine Workshop, (James Van Der Zee Gala, 1992), n.p.
6 Bierdelmann (1992), 122.
7 Bierdelmann (1992), 166.
8 Bierdelmann (1992), 166.
FAITH RINGGOLD (B. 1930)

The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles, 1996
Nine-color lithograph, 22 1/2 x 30 in. (57.2 x 76.2 cm.)
Signed: l.r.: Faith Ringgold 1996
Inscribed: LL: 1/100
Gift of the Dickinson Club of Washington, 96.3
Exhibited: Unraveling the Mask: Portraits of Twentieth-Century Experience
(Carlisle, PA: The Trout Gallery, 1997).

Faith Ringgold's work reflects her identity as a twentieth-century African-American woman. Although she was taught to copy Rembrandt, Cezanne, and other European artists, she soon incorporated African-American culture into her works. She studied in many different countries and in 1991, while in Paris, began working on a series of quilts which she later called the French collection. Ringgold's nine-color lithograph, seen here, was created as one of a series of prints made after the quilts. In The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles, Ringgold uses a very simplified style; the figures appear appliquéd, as they would in a quilt.

When Ringgold made each quilt, she wrote a story directly on it to describe what was happening in the image. Her main character in all of these quilt stories was a woman named Willia Maria (an artist, model, and café owner living in France) who was created by Ringgold as an "alter ego." The story behind this print is Willia Maria's desire to become an artist and entertain these eight women she met in Paris. These nine women contrast with Van Gogh, who had gone to Arles in order to create an artistic revolution with other male artists; unlike the nine women who did achieve their goals, Van Gogh failed. Through this depiction Ringgold shows that success is not limited to the white male.

Willia Maria's eight female friends, depicted in the story quilt and this print, are all famous civil rights advocates. Madam C.J. Walker, known for manufacturing hair goods and cosmetics, visited the White House in 1917 to present a petition favoring federal anti-lynching legislation. Sojourner Truth (Isabella Baumfree) was an anti-slavery activist who became a speaker for abolitionism and women's suffrage, petitioning Congress to give ex-slaves land in the "new west." Ida Wells was editor and co-owner of a local black newspaper called "The Free Speech and Headlight." She helped establish the groundwork for the NAACP, the oldest civil rights organization in the country. Fannie Lou Hamer assisted in organizing a voter registration drive in Ruleville, Mississippi to challenge the unjust voting laws which required that everyone had to pass a literacy test before voting. Nineteenth-century heroine Harriet Tubman raised money for clothing and schools for the poor; she is most well-known for her involvement with the Underground Railroad where she saved more than 3,000 slaves. Rosa Parks is famous for her refusal to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus, thus starting a 381 day boycott against the Montgomery buses which resulted in the desegregation of the city's transportation system. Mary McLeod Bethune founded the Daytona Normal and Industrial School for Negro Girls, and she organized and became President of the National Council of Negro Women. Finally, ending the half-circle around the quilt is Ella Baker, a civil rights advocate who worked with Martin Luther King. It is partially through these eight women's efforts that African-Americans have the freedom they have today.

Faith Ringgold was born in Harlem, where her father was a driver on a city sanitation truck and her mother was a fashion designer. It was her mother who stimulated Ringgold's love of fabric; however, both parents insisted that she graduate from college. She enrolled in the education program at the City College of New York because the liberal-arts program there was not open to women. Ringgold now is a professor at the University of California in San Diego, as well as an artist, an author, a wife and a mother.

Female African slaves have been credited with bringing quilt making into American culture. Quilting bees provided an opportunity to socialize and get better acquainted with one another, thus allowing the traditions of African-American culture to continue. Ringgold acknowledges her heritage and the heritage of these nine women by using an actual quilt as her medium.

Ringgold feels the need to shed light on who she is as an African-American woman outside of the stereotypes, so she tries to retell the stories of the African-American. In The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles, Ringgold honors some of the many women who helped bring about change in our nation's struggle for human rights, and inspires the viewer to make something happen if they desire it enough. Ringgold has said that she will never tell her students that they will not make it as artists because "it doesn't matter if a person has talent. All it takes is to really, really want it. You can turn that no talent into talent." This motto reflects the determination and perseverance which is depicted in The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles.

Heather L. Troutman
12 Her works reside in the permanent collection of many museums including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Museum of Modern Art. She has received more than 75 awards, fellowships, and citations, two National Endowments for the Arts Awards, and eleven honorary doctorates.
Simplicity is a word that describes Phyllis Cohen's works and yet the artistic challenge of the woodcut printmaking method that she uses is anything but simplistic. *Bowl of Cherries on Lace Tablecloth II* is one example of an image she can carve from a block of wood, although this particular print was made using more than one block. Her use of multi-colors makes the entire process more complicated and results in a work that is more visually exciting than if it had been done in black and white.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Phyllis Cohen did not begin her artistic career as a woodcut printmaker, but as a painter. As well as not finding her medium immediately, she was not on an artistic path at first either. In 1957—when she attended Cornell University in Ithaca, New York—her major was, surprisingly, government. Her work in woodcuts began only in the mid-seventies, and since then she has created a large body of prints including the one seen here.

Her method "adheres to a traditional technique but pushes the boundaries of the medium; she works each area of the block individually, carving each as a separate piece of a larger puzzle." This leads to a finished product which is a sharp and precise print with bold colors that are both simple in shape and intricate in their relationships. The artist herself best describes the two methods she uses: "after creating an image, I cut the block creating, in effect, a jigsaw puzzle. Those individual pieces not left as flat surface areas are relief cut and/or incised before they are inked, reassembled, and printed on a press. There can be as few as five individual pieces and a single pass through the press, or as many as fifty pieces and five printings. Apart from the jigsaw technique, I sometimes use the Japanese method of printing: carving a single block per color."

The print *Bowl of Cherries on Lace Tablecloth II*, is a woodcut that includes basic images with a main focus on a bowl of red cherries. The bowl sits on what appears to be a white lace tablecloth that has been placed over a wooden table, creating an interesting image. The wood of the table seems to be the relief part of the woodcut but, the method that Cohen has used here is actually a process that has the tablecloth being the area that was cut away and the table as the area that was inked. Cohen's simplicity is seen in this print, despite the complicated method of the printmaking process. The boldness and subtlety as well as the distinctive quality of the work give it a crispness and solidity. The use of light and dark, simple geometric shapes, and the effect of the different textures on a woodcut, all combine to make this print visually interesting, especially with the main focus of the viewer directly on the cherries.

Fruit has regularly been considered a feminine form, "and there is often a comparison between fruit and human flesh, particularly female analogies." Sitting in a white bowl with no visible imperfections, the cherries take on a shade of red that makes them look ripe and succulent. "A bowl of fruit is said to belong to charity and can represent a reward of virtuousness and can even symbolize heaven." With these interpretations in mind, the forms that are recognized as cherries, are here a symbol of a woman's fruit, and not necessarily a sexual reference. While cherries can be seen in iconographic ways, many of Cohen's works are fruits that were available out of convenience more than for symbolic reasons.

Phyllis Cohen's primary intention for this particular print was a technical challenge: she cut away parts of the wood to create an embossed look, and to do this she incorporated both of her woodcut methods. Along with her complex carving process, the importance of Cohen's colors cannot be neglected. The bold cherry-red and the white lace are perfect for representing this idea of pulling the image out of the wood. "The tremendous appeal for Cohen in working with this medium is in the combination of the aesthetic and the craft inherent in woodcut printmaking."

*Bowl of Cherries on Lace Tablecloth II* complements this idea of the artist's ability in hand-pulled forms and it is a demonstration of the complexity and laborious process that goes into a woodcut. Throughout her work, Cohen often used many objects such as fruit and flowers to study and interpret in her complex printmaking methods. Here, the pieces of Phyllis Cohen's puzzle come together to form *Bowl of Cherries on Lace Tablecloth II*.

Kerry Joyce

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5 Interview, by phone, with Phyllis Cohen on December 7, 1998.

In the woodcut *Sunny Day*, Leona Pierce presents a scene in a nearly square format with two images of a boy and sun placed within the picture plane, primarily using the colors of red and black to enhance the contrast of figure and ground. Pierce was especially known for her woodcuts as well as her work in painting and other graphic arts.

Born in Santa Barbara, California, and the daughter of two school teachers, Pierce attended Stripes College where she studied with Millard Sheets before going on to Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles. She further studied at the Art Students League in New York City, where she worked with Cameron Booth and Yasuo Kuniyoshi.

A major theme of Pierce's oeuvre is children and children at play, as pictured in *Sunny Day*. The two images of the boy and sun are inked in black, while the background is layered in hues of purple, yellow, and red. Red, the dominant color of the background, contrasts substantially with the black figures of the boy and sun, which appear to be receding into the background. This high contrast of colors, as well as Pierce's technique of cutting with the grain of wood, allows side grain to show from the original woodblock, creating a "crayoned texture in the colors, and allotting to a decorative work of art, as well as a sense of realism of the material."1

Together, the boy and sun symbolically represent the emotion of happiness. The figure of the boy appears to be doing a cartwheel, an activity associated with the carefree and innocent attitudes of youth. As a critic of the time suggested, "Pierce focused her work on the subject of small children, playing and amusing themselves with delightful abandon."2 The image of the sun is seen as a provider of warmth and nourishment, which in many cultures are qualities associated with happiness.

The combination of the particular colors of this work displays a positive message as well. The warm color red can be associated with the color of blood, a symbol for life and birth; it is also linked to the concept of liberty and patriotism, Christ, and warmth. The blend of yellow and purple with the red further indicates optimism and hope, as "yellow is a bright color associated with delight and felicity, and purple is a color associated with divine attributes."3 Black also has many positive aspects about it: "black is a symbol for might, dignity, and humility."4 *Sunny Day* thus expresses happiness and peace.

During this period in her life, Pierce worked primarily in woodcuts, and exhibited regularly in New York. In 1951 and 1953, she exhibited at Wehye Gallery, illustrating the "child's world from the child's point of view," and subjects that were mostly "children and children's games."5 Children represented American society during the 1950s, as some interpreted it to be a period of confidence and happiness. World War II had just ended, and the "Era of Good Feelings" was taking place. The fifties were also a time when there was a tremendous increase in marriage, with a subsequent "baby boom": "between the years of 1948 and 1953 more babies were born than had been over the previous thirty years."6 The baby boom lasted for most of the fifties, forming a society that "revered the family in an extraordinary degree."7 It seems that the boy in *Sunny Day* signifies these feelings of assurance and optimism as well as the adoration America had towards children at this time, possibly correlating to the feelings of Leona Pierce herself during this phase in her life.

Anne C. Cabell

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5 S.P. (1951), 21.
Ruth Jacoby earned a Bachelor of Science from New York University and completed postgraduate studies at the National Academy of Design. She married Charles Jacoby in 1929, and the couple formed the interior design and decoration firm of Ruth and Charles Jacoby. Jacoby has received a number of prestigious awards and has exhibited her work in numerous museums and galleries; she is a member of the American Institute of Interior Designers and the National Association of Women Artists.

again and again is a two-dimensional, vertical canvas. The shapes in the painting, that is the letters that create the phrase again and again, are repeated on the canvas without variation. The letters themselves are interesting; the shape of the letters cannot be characterized as geometric, vertical, horizontal, or curvilinear, and therefore are remarkably neutral.

Lines often suggest emotions, such as anger or calmness. In this painting, however, the line represents a lack of emotion. Jacoby used stencils to create a smooth, thin, uniform line throughout the work, which contributes to the painting's rigid style. There is no question that the line is flat and linear; nowhere in the painting does it take on a painterly appearance. Furthermore, the "a" in the middle of the "again" lines up with the "d" in the "and" the entire way down the painting. Although this line directs the viewer's eye downward, the repetition of the elongated "d" in the word "and" also serves to counter-accentuate the verticality of the painting.

Ruth Jacoby (b. 1903)

Acrylic on canvas, 40 1/4 x 20 1/4 in. (102.2 x 51.4 cm.)

Not signed

Gift of Mr. Roy Neuberger, 85.5.2


Minimalism has the distinction of being the first art movement of international significance to be completely engineered by American-born artists. Minimalism is primarily noted for reducing the role of the artist in the execution of art, replacing this with purely formal considerations. Ad Reinhardt wrote in 1963 that, "The one object of fifty years of abstract art is to present art-as-art forever."

This painting could be characterized as Minimal art because of its extreme simplicity. For the October 1965 issue of Art in America, art critic Barbara Rose wrote an article entitled "ABC Art," in which she designated this new art that sought to represent the "minimal." Minimalism has the distinction of being the first art movement of international significance to be completely engineered by American-born artists. Minimalism is primarily noted for reducing the role of the artist in the execution of art, replacing this with purely formal considerations. Ad Reinhardt wrote in 1963 that, "The one object of fifty years of abstract art is to present art-as-art and as nothing else, to make it into the one thing it is only, separating and defining it more and more, making it purer and emptier." But for all its simplicity, Minimalist art is anything but simple.

Viewing again and again as a whole involves combining all the formal elements of style (shape, line, color, pictorial depth, and composition), which work together to create a complex composition of intense meaning. Line and shape, along with color, provide the illusion that the painting is a continuation. This illusion and the meaning of the repeated words "again" and "and" combine to produce a deliberately neutral composition that is an expression of repetition, monotony, and boredom. Jacoby's work borrows its form, the repetition of a commercial image or text, from Pop Art. Combining this with Minimalism, the artist's representation of neutrality through repetition is strengthened.

Jacoby's painting is boring and should be read as such: it is an attack on the post-war culture of middle-class America in the 1960s, that sought to reach a comfort level through conformity, again and again.


Artists such as Donald Judd, Tony Smith, Carl Andre, Robert Morris, and Dan Flavin were influential in shaping Minimalism. Atkins (1990), 99.

VIOLET OAKLEY (1874-1961)

Portraiture Study (George Washington), 1922

Pencil on paper, 18 5/8 x 24 7/8 in. (47.2 x 63.2 cm.)

Signed: l.r.: V Oakley 1914

Gift of Milton E. Flower, 1991.6

Not previously exhibited

Unpublished

Violet Oakley is most well-known for her mural paintings at the State Capitol in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. However, it is important to recognize that Oakley holds a unique place in American art, not only because of this unusual commission, but also because of the spirit revealed throughout her work. Oakley was a remarkable woman whose art reflects her talent, her strong morals and her religious nature.

Oakley was born into a family who exposed her to the arts at a young age; at thirteen, Oakley began her studies at the Art Students League in New York. Oakley subsequently studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and for a year at the Drexel Institute. At twenty-four, Oakley was given a major commission to design stained glass windows for the Church of All Saints in New York City. However, on July 21, 1902, Violet Oakley was awarded her most important commission, a mural to decorate the Governor's Reception Room at the Capitol in Harrisburg. The architect, John Huston, wanted the "State Capitol to celebrate Pennsylvania's role in the world, and its humanized vision into a narrative that was comprehensible to everyone." Since Oakley viewed her own work as a way to portray international law and to convey political justice, Huston sought her to produce the largest commission given to a woman artist. Oakley created an illustration of William Penn's view of liberty and freedom during the 1770s. The main theme for the murals was the founding of the colony of Pennsylvania, entitled The Founding of the State of Liberty Spiritual. Since Oakley was a devout Christian Scientist, she eagerly researched William Penn and the Quaker philosophy. Instead of simply showing a single historical event, she presented in her mural a combination of historical figures and scenes of religious persecution in England. As the panels continue on the wall of the Governor's Reception Room reading from left to right, Oakley introduced William Penn and his ideal New World. In 1929, Oakley wrote a book, The Holy Experiment, which was a folio of portraits of George Washington. In choosing to do a portrait of Washington, Oakley had a great responsibility to capture the leadership qualities of this established icon.

Charles Wilson Peale was the first artist to capture the characteristics of Washington in portraiture in 1776. Since then, artists have focused less on the physiognomic details of Washington and more on the essential features which make him most recognizable. Oakley chose to show the typical view of Washington in profile, capturing his grand Roman nose, pursed lips, powdered hair pulled back from his face, and intense stare. She did not need shading, or the effects of light to capture the image she wanted: the contour lines which define his features were sufficient. Although the drawing may have been executed as a cartoon for the mural, Oakley managed here to capture Washington's iconic identification.

Oakley had much success in the mural paintings for the State Capitol, and was offered several commissions until her death in 1961. She taught mural painting at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts from 1913-1917 and became one of the Founders of the Philadelphia Art Alliance. Her work has been an inspiration for young female art students. By portraying such influential men as George Washington, Violet Oakley took on the challenge to depict an American icon, one still considered "the most sought after portrait subject in the world."

Tobey Sparrow


7. She received several awards in the thirties and forties including the Joseph Pennell Memorial Medal for distinguished work in the graphic arts from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Walter Lippincott prize for her portrait of Quita Woodward, and the Mary Smith prize from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

BLANCHE DILLAYE (1851-1931)

A Sketch of Roof Tops, 1899

Pencil sketch, 7 1/8 x 9 7/16 in. (18 x 23 cm.)
Signed: L.l: with snail monogram
Gift of Mrs. Grace Lynn, 51,1.22
Unpublished

The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts dates back to 1805 as America's first formal art school. Thomas Eakins began teaching there in 1876, consequently earning for the Academy the reputation of “the most demanding and single-minded art school in America.” Blanche Dillaye entered the Academy as a student; she studied painting under Thomas Eakins, from 1877 until 1882. She learned the technique of etching from Stephan Parrish in Philadelphia and also traveled abroad from 1885-1887, when she studied painting further with Eduardo-Leon Garrido.2

Dillaye was born in Syracuse, New York, but was sent to study at the Ogontz School, founded by her aunt, “where young women seeking an alternative to the traditional finishing school could acquire a thorough acquaintance with literature, the arts, and science.”3 After one year of drawing instruction, she both began teaching at Ogontz and followed the advanced studies program at the Pennsylvania Academy. Dillaye was a strong leader within the art community in Philadelphia; she was president of the Philadelphia Water Color Club, founder of the Fellowship of the Pennsylvania Academy, and served as one of its vice presidents, and was a founder and president of The Plastic Club.4

Dillaye’s hard work and dedication to her artistic career are further exemplified by her participation in many of the Salons in Paris, as well as in major expositions in the United States.5 As a symbol of her motto, taken from Shakespeare, “He goes but slowly, but he carries his house on his head,” she signed many drawings like A Sketch of Roof Tops, exhibited here, with a snail monogram.6

The subject matter and execution of A Sketch of Roof Tops typifies her trained style, appreciated by Dillaye’s contemporaries.7 As Gladys and Kurt Lang have summarized: “Her early work was praised for its accurate drawing, good handling of light and shade and a fine discernment in choice of subject matter.”8 A Sketch of Roof Tops is an example of her trained eye for composition and specialization in architectural views which she depicted throughout her travels in the United States, England, Europe, and Canada.9 Although the site of Dillaye’s scene is unknown, she has certainly captured the charming landscape of a village extending over a hillside, and has probably positioned herself in such a way that her view, when sketched on paper, is perfectly composed. Working within the landscape genre, Dillaye’s technique represents a transition between the standardized mode of picturesque drawing, rooted in the eighteenth century, and the “rustic naturalism” first evinced by Romantic painters like John Constable (1776-1837).10

A typical example of a proponent of the picturesque style of drawing is John C. Clark, writing in 1827: “Clearness and simplicity are excellencies which, united to accuracy constitute perfection in sketching.”11 When analyzing Dillaye’s drawing, we see these qualities of accuracy and clearness from her use of linear and aerial perspective, and from the avoidance of excessive embellishment.

Clark’s emphasis on aerial perspective is particularly emblematic in Dillaye’s rendering of the trees. Clark claims that, when “...a few forms indicating the extremities of trees or bushes should be sketched with freedom, this may be produced by avoiding small forms...observing that the line thus produced by the pencil should be of the broken or tremulous description, for the exclusion of stiff or formal lines constitutes a charm in sketching.”12 But the charm in Dillaye’s sketch is also due to her use of line as a suggestion rather than as a direct statement; this can be seen in the subtle tracing of the bricks of the houses in the foreground. Instead of outlining each brick in the building, she supplies only enough information for the viewer to associate the rest of the implication with its meaning, that is, the idea of an entire brick or many bricks within the structure. This flirtation with line is parallel to her own definition of line: “...line is by its nature suggestive but not imitative, it deals with selection and omission, not with the elaboration and subtle tones. In all arts reserve is strength; selection presupposes knowledge; and tact in omission is the refinement of understanding.”13

Krista Ann Mancini

1 As quoted in Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang, Elected in Memory: The Building and Survival of Artistic Reputation (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 132.
4 Biographical information from Philadelphia Art Alliance, Memorial Exhibition of Watercolors and Etchings by Blanche Dillaye (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Art Alliance, 1932).
5 Peet (1988), 54. These include: Ohio Valley Centennial, 1888; 1893 Columbian in Chicago, the Woman’s Building and the Lady’s Parlor of the Pennsylvania Building; Cotton States and International in Atlanta, 1895; Pan-American at Buffalo, 1901; Exposition Universelle (Lorien, France), 1905; Louisiana Purchase in St. Louis, 1904; National Conservation Exposition in Knoxville, 1913; Panama-Pacific San Francisco, 1915; and Philadelphia’s Sesqui-Centennial, 1926.
7 As Gladys and Kurt Lang have summarized: “Her early work was praised for its accurate drawing, good handling of light and shade and a fine discernment in choice of subject matter.”8 A Sketch of Roof Tops is an example of her trained eye for composition and specialization in architectural views which she depicted throughout her travels in the United States, England, Europe, and Canada.9
8 Previous research on Blanche Dillaye’s works has proven the ease with which mistakes can be made with the naming of titles. Here, I have concluded that what is listed as “House-Tops (unspecified medium)” in The Annual Exhibition Record of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1876-1913, is in fact A Sketch of Roof Tops.

12Clark (1827), 7.

GRACE ARNOLD ALBEE (1890-1985)

Peaceful Afternoon, n.d.

Wood engraving, paper size: 8 x 9 1/2 in. (20.3 x 24.2 cm.); image: 5 3/8 x 7 5/16 in. (13.7 x 18.5 cm.)

Signed: l.r.: Grace Albee; on block: l.r.: G. Albee

Inscribed: l.r.: artist's proof

Watermark: Fidelity Union Skin

Gift of Mrs. Grace Linn, 51.1.2

Unpublished

Not previously exhibited

Delicacy and attention to detail were two of Grace Albee's greatest artistic talents; both are evident in her wood engraving Peaceful Afternoon. Although not dated, the print had to have been completed prior to 1951, when The Trout Gallery acquired the work as a gift from Mrs. Grace Linn. Like a window, Albee's wood engraving invites the viewer to move closer and to focus on the scene as if it were a moment frozen in time. The majority of Albee's prints are illustrations of outdoor scenes, specifically American farmland and nature studies of the four seasons. Peaceful Afternoon represents a glimpse of American farm life in autumn. In the foreground, on the left side of the print and in front of large vessels for carrying water, Albee includes a goat. Behind the vessels, there is a structure with shutters that appears to be a barn. The most prominent image in the print is a tree, dropping its leaves on the ground, where a few chickens sit. The earth under the goat, visible in the foreground, is dried up and barren.

The title of the work, Peaceful Afternoon, provides one with the time of day represented. This is an afternoon: it represents the process of slowing down and preparing for night time. The goat is at rest and for the moment, the chores have been abandoned. The composition also appears to represent the season of fall, which relates to the time of day, since both signify the process of slowing down and the nearing of the end of a year or day.

Grace Albee was born in Scituate, Rhode Island; she studied at the Rhode Island School of Design, and, later, with Paul Bonet in Paris. The painter/printmaker is most well-known for her black-and-white wood engravings, and her work is represented in prestigious art collections in the United States and abroad. In addition, Albee won numerous awards during her lifetime; she was the first woman to receive the Benjamin West Clinedinst Memorial Medal for lifetime achievements in the fine arts. Exhibitions that featured her work include American Prize Prints of the 20th century, 30 Years of American Printmaking, and the 20th National Print Exhibition.

World War II had an effect on the art that Albee created; it was during this time, when her five sons were all serving in World War II, that her art flourished. The artist once commented on this connection between wood engraving and her personal circumstances, saying, "it became a balance wheel and a distraction from some of life's worries." Printmaking provided Albee with a peaceful pursuit. In the late 1930s, Albee chose to concentrate on rural scenes, such as the farmhouses and barns that surrounded her during the forty year period that the Albee family lived in the countryside of eastern Pennsylvania. Peaceful Afternoon is typical of Albee's production during this period. Her work displays an attention to detail that would have necessitated her full concentration and extensive time. Both the artist's practice of creating the print, and the viewer's experience of looking at the print, can be described as a peaceful escape. The artist and viewer, through experiencing the print, depart from the reality of war, city life, and stress, or whatever element of his or her life that is a constant preoccupation.

Besides being particularly placid from a visual point of view, Albee's work is also thematically self-consciously American. Her regionalist subject matter is interesting when one considers the fact that her artistic career was refined during WWII. Albee's prints reveal how at least one American artist, and perhaps more importantly a mother with sons fighting in WWII, kept her calm, and invites us to join her, in a Peaceful Afternoon.

Mattie E. McLaughlin

7 Albert Reese (1949), 2.
8 Albert Reese (1949), 2.
SISTER MARY CORITA KENT (1918-1986)

This Beginning of Miracles, 1953
Silkscreen, 16 x 20 in. (40.6 x 50.8 cm); image: 15 1/12 x 19 3/8 in. (39.4 x 49.3 cm.)
Signed: l.r.: Sister Mary Corita
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Meyer P. Potamkin, 69.1.33

Sister Mary Corita was a woman of many accomplishments throughout the span of her life, not only as a nun and educator at Immaculate Heart College, but also as an artist. Although she eventually left the Immaculate Heart community, while she was there her time was well spent.

Corita was born in Fort Dodge, Iowa and at the age of eighteen she joined the sisterhood of Immaculate Heart College located in Los Angeles. She did not begin teaching within the community, as a professor of art, until she was twenty-eight; she eventually earned a master's degree in art history from the University of Southern California. Later, she was appointed to the National Advisory Council on Education Professions Development by President Johnson in 1967. Sister Mary Corita left the convent and the Immaculate Heart College in 1968, and became known as Corita Kent.

This Beginning of Miracles of 1953 is a perfect example of the direct religious meaning of Corita's early works. The theme of this particular work was taken from the Bible, specifically the Wedding at Cana. The significance of this particular story was the miracle of Jesus turning water into wine for the wedding guests to enjoy. The title of the work was adapted in its original form from the New Testament Book of St. John, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested his glory." The significance of this literary source is Corita's unconventionality in illustrating it. Although she is using a traditional biblical story, she modernizes it by creating an abstract work and incorporating modern elements such as architecture from the twentieth century.

"Religion obviously meant something to this woman, but it was not treated in any sentimental way. . . . It appealed to [one's] social sense." Corita not only produced interesting and enlightening religious works of art during her career, but also exhibited, taught, and eventually went on to operate a private gallery of her own. By creating works like This Beginning of Miracles, which emphasized a more modern side of religion and "appealed to the social sense" of her viewers, she may have changed the way people often thought of religion and religious women in the twentieth century.

Kara R. Kuchemba
7Miller (1953), n.p.
SARAI SHERMAN (b. 1922)

Who is this that Looks forth like the Dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun,
Plate VIII from the Series The Song of Solomon, 1966
Etching, paper size: 19 5/8 x 25 3/8 in. (49.8 x 64.5 cm.); image: 12 1/2 x 16 5/8 in. (31.8 x 42.2 cm.)
Signed: l.r.: Sarai Sherman, li.: 9/25
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Meyer P. Potamkin, 69.1.31

make a series of etchings portraying a religious theme. It is interesting that she chose the book Song of Solomon because it is a very sexual story and is rarely illustrated. The work was made during the early feminist movement of the 1960s and those issues may have influenced her choice of subject. The Shulamite, who came from Shulem in Issachar, was outspoken, especially about her sexuality. Admitting to the Israelite women that she was black and desirable, she proclaimed, “I am black and beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem... Do not gaze at me because I am dark.” (1: 5)

The Song of Solomon is an example of Sarai Sherman’s use of Old Testament biblical stories to express contemporary issues. In this case, Sherman was commissioned to make a series of etchings portraying a religious theme. It is interesting that she chose the book Song of Solomon because it is a very sexual story and is rarely illustrated. The work was made during the early feminist movement of the 1960s and those issues may have influenced her choice of subject. The Shulamite, who came from Shulem in Issachar, was outspoken, especially about her sexuality. Admitting to the Israelite women that she was black and desirable, she proclaimed, “I am black and beautiful, O daughters of Jerusalem... Do not gaze at me because I am dark.” (1: 5)

The biblical book Song of Solomon is a profession of passionate love between Solomon and his bride, the Shulamite. The color scheme and the two figures in plate eight all refer to the literary source and are combined in the bride’s figure. The etching is about the woman, and as such, everything in the picture refers to her. She both dominates the etching’s space with her physical presence and incorporates the various colors of the print into her body. The sun, sky and gazelle represent elements that are directly related to her.

These visual connections correlate to comparative verses, in particular that of 6:10. In this verse, maidens, queens and concubines praise Solomon’s bride by saying: “Who is this that looks forth like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun.” These images correspond to the glowing sun, the blue layers of night color, and the white area lit by the rising sun. After the imagery of the dawn, the woman is compared to the moon, which in the etching, is represented by her blue head floating in the night sky. Her head is in the realm of night and is round like the moon’s shape.

The gazelle is compared to both the Shulamite and to Solomon. In verse 8:14, the bride says to her lover: “Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag,” and then in the verse 2:9, she equates him with the animal, saying, “My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.” The stag is commonly used as a sexual symbol, and here the gazelle is also used as such, presumably for the male lover. In addition, although female comparisons to a gazelle might have emphasized the animal’s elegance, thereby softening it and “feminizing” it, the terms in which the bride and the gazelle are described in the verse are strikingly overtly sexual: “Your breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle,” (7:3) Thus the gazelle in Sherman’s etching could both represent Solomon as her counterpart and lover, as well as the bride herself. The latter interpretation is further supported by the fact that other images and pictorial elements are based on verses that refer exclusively to her.

The dawn represents the awakening passionate love, the coming into womanhood, and the next phase of the Shulamite’s life as a married queen in a foreign court. She is no longer a chaste child; she is ready to leave her home and her virginity behind for the role of a wife, mother, and lover. It is a powerful moment that is explored in this work of art: the gazelle and the rising sun are symbols of the woman’s dawning sexuality.

This eighth plate is a good example of the sensitive issues that Sherman communicates. The way that various elements of the etching are incorporated into the
Shulamite’s figure and her identity translates Sherman’s topical interests into poignant visual language.

Lale Sylvia Ismen

6Venturoli and Bryant (1963), 7.
7Penelope and Ragghianti (1983), 31.
HELEN SIEGL (b. 1924)

Aurora, n.d.
Woodcut, 9 7/8 x 7 7/8 in. (25.1 x 20.1 cm.); image: 7 7/8 x 5 in. (20.1 x 12.7 cm.)
Signed: I.r.: Helen Siegl
Gift of Sellers Collection, 88.16.56
Not previously exhibited
Unpublished

Daughter of Leopold and Amelia Hapsburger, Helen Siegl spent her childhood studying at the Academie für Angewandtekunst in Vienna, Austria. Following her graduation in 1947, she had a variety of jobs as a designer, book illustrator, and graphic artist. In 1953, she moved to America to join her husband Theodor, who was the conservation and technical adviser to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In America, Siegl continued her artistic career, making relief prints from wood, linoleum, and plaster blocks. Siegl invented and developed the plaster block technique which was used as a "substitute for woodblock prints during wartime when materials were hard to come by." Eventually her work became better known, and was handled by art galleries throughout the country. Then, as Siegl explained, "I was asked to illustrate specific manuscripts with woodblock prints," many of which appear in children's books such as Mother Goose: Twelve Rhymes on Broadside; Aesop's Fables, and William Cole's The Birds and the Beasts Were There: Animal Poems. These illustrations depict many of the same characteristics evident in Siegl's work Aurora.

Aurora is a colored woodcut that was probably completed sometime after 1953, around the time Siegl began making woodblock prints as illustrations. Woodcuts became a mid-twentieth-century trend when its major attraction became the "natural beauty of its grain." Aurora is identified as a woodcut by the horizontal lines that indicate the grains of wood. It appears as if Siegl has used two blocks of wood, as shown by the white gap within the colored picture plane.

Siegl's style and choice of medium are appropriate to the general themes of her works: children, animals, and religious events. Her style is natural, exhibited by the pattern of her images and choice of media in the work. The medium depicts basic genuine characteristics by which each figure is cut with the grain of the wood, simplifying their form. The town is reduced to geometric forms while the center figure displays a series of linear lines harmonious to the natural grain effect produced by woodcuts. The colors are bright and attractive, expressing feelings of joy and optimism.

Siegl's choice of color and title can be directly linked to the astronomical term aurora borealis. For centuries the aurora borealis has been described as "curtains of colorful lights displayed throughout the night sky." Some common colors seen in the aurora borealis are red, blue, and violet, similar to the colors displayed in Aurora. In Aurora, the background colors of blue, purple, and turquoise recede into the background as the warm color, red, projects boldly from the image. The bottom of the print is cast in a dark green and grey, showing the city visited by this nighttime display of lights, and focusing the attention of the viewer on the high saturation of the complementary color, red. Siegl's use of color and composition draws the viewer to the center figure; a mystical animal upon which a small human figure rides.

Together, the image of the animal and human figure adds an exotic and illusionistic element to Siegl's work Aurora. Like the aurora borealis, the images in Aurora fill one's mind with thoughts of mysticism and wonder. Many cultures have come up with various myths and legends about the aurora borealis, thus producing fairy tales, a common interest of children.

Siegl shares this interest of fairy tales, and the subject she chose in Aurora depicts a theme related to her work as an illustrator for children's books. Siegl's interest in children was inherently natural in relation to her life; she and her husband had seven boys and one girl. As the viewer sees in Aurora, there are fictional and creative components in the work, and "when working with children, an artist can work freely and imaginatively."

In Aurora, through composition, subject, and color, Siegl has created a single focus point on the mystical animal image, allowing for her to express her "personal magic." This work is more than just a way for Siegl to illustrate her cleverness and artistic freedom, however; it is also a work for her audience, who are welcomed into this fantasy land of Aurora.

Anne C. Cabell

2Something About the Author, 34 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1984), 25.
5Helen Siegl, as quoted by Joanna Foster and Lee Kingman, Illustrators of Children's Books (Boston: Horn Book, 1968), xiv.
6Foster and Kingman (1968), xiv.
HELEN FRANKENTHALER (B. 1928)

**Tales of Genji V, 1998**

48-color woodcut, stencil on rust TGL handmade paper, 42 x 47 in. (106.7 x 119.4 cm.)

Signed: l.r.: 34/36 Frankenthaler

Chop mark: interlocking geometrics (Tyler Graphics, Ltd.)

Promised Gift of Dr. Paul Kanev

Not previously exhibited


An 11th century Japanese court lady called Murasaki Shikibu is credited with writing the world's first novel called *The Tales of Genji*. The story, about the passionate meanderings of an emperor's son in Heian, Japan, has inspired artists since its conception.

Helen Frankenthaler's brand new series of prints are highly influenced by the tale as well as the Japanese traditional printmaking processes which have historically told the *Tales of Genji*. Frankenthaler's series of six prints required 90 wood blocks, 231 colors and three years to complete. To begin, Frankenthaler painted on wood panels as models for the prints. Then she and her team of printers hand made a thick, absorbent, colored cotton paper. The artist sought pieces of wood with grains that struck her aesthetically; these pieces of wood were then inked and printed on special paper to study the grains.¹

Frankenthaler had studied in the mid-1940s with Rufino Tamayo at the Dalton School in New York. In 1950, she met the critic Clement Greenburg, who did much to promote her career; she made her presence known in the art world at the age of 24, when her painting entitled *Mountains and Sea* marked her as a pioneer of her generation. At that time, she was closely associated with the Abstract Expressionists. In 1958 she became permanently associated with the school when she married the painter Robert Motherwell. Her first one-artist show came in 1959 at the Andre Emmerich Gallery in New York.²

Until 1961 Frankenthaler worked strictly in painting and was an innovator in that field. Although she was an Abstract Expressionist, her work went in a different direction from that of her contemporaries. Following in the footsteps of Jackson Pollock, Frankenthaler pioneered new techniques in abstract painting: instead of the traditional brush and easel she laid raw, unsized canvas and paper on the floor of her studio and poured pigment onto the surface, eliminating the Expressionist painterly brushstroke. A propensity toward experimentation was also revealed in Frankenthaler's frequent incorporation of plaster, sand and other materials in her paintings. The effect that the new materials had on her paintings was the development of monumental, serene images with multiple diaphanous layers of color.³

In 1961, at the urging of several artist friends, Frankenthaler reluctantly went to work in a New York workshop called Universal Limited Art Editions. There she began to experiment with printmaking. Initially, Frankenthaler found printmaking's fragmented procedures disorienting; a painter at heart, she sought to make prints painterly.⁴ But Frankenthaler was soon inspired to explore the new medium's versatility. She first and foremost considers herself a painter, but the language and process of printmaking intrigues her; here the ukiyo-e style of Japanese printmaking is apparent in her strong calligraphic gesture and line. Frankenthaler's art is about space via line, texture and especially color. In this print, sweeping lines create the effect of a Zen painting with the illusion that the color continues indefinitely.

Frankenthaler's approach to printmaking is a ritual of trial, with constant adding, changing and deleting: "I want to draw my own images, mix my own colors, approve of registration marks, select paper—all the considerations and reconsiderations. Assuming that those who work in the workshop are artists at what they do, I can then entrust the actual duplicating process to other hands that possess— hopefully—their kind of magic. Sharing and participating to the end."⁵

With *Tales of Genji V*, Frankenthaler has taken her printmaking to a new level. The colors are rich and layered. The effect of each of the 48 blocks used for this print can be seen in the diaphanous layers of color, reminiscent of her breakthrough paintings of the 1950s. There is a remarkable sense of the artist's touch in the print, a quality that is rarely accomplished in woodcuts. Here, Frankenthaler has achieved her 30-year goal of creating a print which captures the essence of painting through the process of relief printmaking.

Patrick E. Smith

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MARY BARRINGER (b. 1950)

*Baby Jar*, 1982
Ceramic, 4 3/4 x 7 1/4 x 6 1/8 in. (12.1 x 18.4 x 15.5 cm.)
Signed: on bottom: Barringer

*Unpublished*
Not previously exhibited

_Baby Jar_ belongs to an untitled series ranging from 20 to 30 pots. These pieces are hand-sized and curve under themselves, exploring the way that the pots meet the ground. These works do not stand the way that traditional pots do; rather they roll and are rounded on the bottom, giving the pots great depth but also personality. For the series, Barringer was inspired by pre-Columbian sculpture such as the West Mexican, Guatemalan, and Helisco figures. These small sculptures are often seated and have either both legs extended or just one, with the other limb curled beneath the figure.

The title _Baby Jar_ reflects the pot's identity as a jar but it is also a reference to seated Guatemalan dolls.1 *Baby Jar*'s two horizontal points resemble the limbs of the Guatemalan dolls in that they protrude from the rounded base of the jar-like legs. _Baby Jar*'s base is curved so that it is very deep and seems as if it would rock if pushed, the two points extend from a cushion-like shape, which makes the jar have an exciting relation to the ground, meeting it but avoiding a heavy impact. The potential to roll also suggests movement in a way that a heavy, flat base would not.

Barringer obtained her B.A. at Bennington College in 1962, then studied at the Pratt Institute from 1968 to 1969; in 1971 she worked as an apprentice to Michael Frimkess.2 Barringer then established the Park Street Potters, which was a studio as well as a shop. Her works are well-received, especially in the New England area, where she is most well known. She has taught extensively and has served as a visiting artist at museums and universities.3

Barringer was a student in the 1960s and, as such, was taught in what she calls "the Leach and Cardew-soaked system,"4 referring to these two artists' division between a preoccupation with the clay form versus an emphasis on glaze, the transformation of minerals. For many years Barringer felt that she lost control over the pot once it was submitted to the kiln. She started experimenting with glaze techniques in the 1970s and 1980s and discovered that she could stay involved by working with various grounds and slips, building them up towards a final product: "slips are both the material and conceptual 'missing' link between clay and glaze." The interactive process is very important to her and she feels that slips experiment with, and essentially allow for changes until the object enters the kiln.5

_Baby Jar_ reveals this interest in process. The entire body of the work is marked with short strokes resembling cross-hatching. Within these marks are residues of brown slip. Barringer wiped the pot after glazing it so that the natural clay shows and the glaze is left only in the incised texture. She made the glaze function as a part of the texture, and thus as part of the pot. The glaze of the _Baby Jar_ is not separate from the formal identity of the clay pot; instead, the glaze and the form complement each other.

The _Baby Jar_ 's form is closed because its walls reach around the pot, leaving only a small opening on top, which is covered with a separate lid. The work's form is strong yet irregular. Although _Baby Jar_ is related to functional ceramics in that it is a vessel, the pot's main purpose is aesthetic: it reads like sculpture, inviting the viewer to walk around and view it from different angles, as its formal identity changes with each view. When viewed from different angles, the pot reveals various shapes. From one side, the shape looks as if it is comprised of conical points of equal emphasis and a perfectly curved back side. But when the pot is turned, one of the points appears more dominant, pulling the pot into a tear-drop shape. The lid echoes this form and points in the same direction.

The pot as a whole is important because of the attention that Barringer gave to even the obscure parts like the bottom. The underside was textured, glazed and incised just as carefully as more visible areas. Barringer emphasized certain aspects of the form by drawing two lines on the piece: one is a large arch that is inscribed on the bottom, tracing the pot's curve, and the other line starts from the pointed side of the lid and extends down to the end of the dominant point. The second line draws attention to the direction of the form which moves towards the point. The two lines emphasize the different forms that play in the pot, but at the same time they also emphasize the pot's integrity.

In 1985, Barringer exhibited coil-built stoneware vessels at the M.S. Gallery in Hartford. The _Baby Jar_ is consistent with the style of these works: it is coil-built and also has had the same surface and slip treatment. These pots were rubbed with dry Connecticut river-bank clay instead of being glazed. After bisquing, the pots were sometimes brushed with a slip which was also made from river clay. The slip was then sponged and sprayed off with a Gerstley borate wash, and fired to achieve a brown or grey earth-tone.6

_Baby Jar_ is a beautiful work with a strong form and interesting glaze; it is a good example of how Barringer places emphasis on process in every stage of the pot's making. _Baby Jar_ is still a functional pot, yet it works like sculpture. It is at once a single object and form, but is also a three-dimensional object with various shapes working with it. The use of elements from pre-Columbian sculpture gives the _Baby Jar_ a shape and personality that are unique.

Lale Sylvia Ismen
Interview by phone, with Mary Barringer, on November 24, 1998.


Exhibited: TOSHIKO TAKAEZU
Stoneware, 9 3/8 in. diameter (23.9 cm.)
Signed: on bottom: 83 TT
Gift of the Artist, 83.11
Published: David Robertson, from the creation of utilitarian vessels culminated in the
Takaezu is best known for making: closed forms. Her break
19
most symbolic works ... The poetic outside evokes the mys­
pinhole for an opening-have become some ofToshiko's
Closed Form,
the object is moved. "Not only does the chiming suggest
and recall the interior of the vessel, from which the viewer
has been excluded, but more importantly it plants a seed of
extent inside, an aspect Toshiko considers an important
element of these works. Their dark interiors remain a secret
place. The outcome is random designs which suggest a nat­
ural landscape. The colors are dark and warm at the same
time: a sandy beige of the vessel, and a dark brown which
runs along the bottom and embraces the bulging sides. This
combination suggests a beach and rocky mountains or
earthly dunes, a reminder of the Hawaiian landscape in
which Takaezu grew up.

Takaezu was born in Pepeeko, Hawaii, to Japanese
immigrant parents who labored on a sugar plantation.
She grew up with limited financial resources, in a family
of eleven children. This atmosphere, combined with the
strong work ethic instilled by her parents and her culture,
is where Takaezu developed her creative and independent
attributes. Among her many awards, she received the
Dickinson College Arts Award in 1983.

As early as 1954, Takaezu was creating closed forms
ranging widely in size and pigmentation. The title of this
object, Closed Form, suggests something inside, and living;
indeed the object is so round that one can sense a pressure
from the inside as if it were breathing. The implication of
these qualities is that this is a representation of a vegetable
newly picked from a garden, which the artist has acknowled­
edged as a major influence. The significance of agriculture,
the planting and harvesting of crops, is personal to the
artist yet universal in importance.

There is a centuries-old tradition of celebrating the
harvest. Takaezu’s own Japanese heritage celebrates the
New Year with a festival of agricultural renewal, and the
honoring of time as cyclical. The glazing on Takaezu’s
form is a simple contrast between light and dark which
can also be related to the seasons. Dark days are experi­
enced in the winter months, and the bright days are in the
summer. The vegetable form of Takaezu’s object is a proud
symbol of her harvest, accumulated for the sustainment of
the winter months ahead.

This reading of the harvest in Takaezu’s work is related
to another suggestion inherent in Closed Form: the concept
of the Goddess. The Goddess has been connected to nature
from as early as Paleolithic times, embodying a myth that
Teaches all life is interrelated and sacred. The earth has
always been referenced with the Goddess, such as The
Great Earth Mother Gaia (meaning ‘earth’), who was
believed to have created the universe. Understanding
the concept of the Earth Mother/Goddess in relation to
Takaezu’s work produces even greater significance to its
iconology. Not only is the vessel created from clay, a prod­
uct of the earth, but its spherical shape further reverberates
to the cyclical nature and interconnectedness of life, which
is concurrent to the mythological definition of the goddess.
In the video Portrait of an Artist, Takaezu states that she
feels an interrelatedness to all life, and in relation to the
production of her work: “...You feel it [the overwhelming
beauty of nature], it gets in you, and it comes out in your
work.” The experience of nature for Takaezu is not an
end in itself but a process involving inner transformation
which begins with the artist and continues in the viewer.
The tactile quality of the glove, the roundness of the form
and the incorporation of sound all evoke an interaction
with the piece on the part of the viewer. Barry Targon,
writing for American Craft, has stated that “For an artist's
achievement to reach across time and the shifting attitudes,
conventions and tastes of varying societies and cultures, it
must touch what we as human beings share and what does
not change. Such work must release archetypal energies.”
In Takaezu’s Closed Form, these energies are universally
understood in terms of mass, volume and shape which are
all signifiers to the cyclical nature of all life forces.
The main theme of the Goddess symbolism is the mystery of birth and death and the renewal of life, not only human but all life on earth and indeed in the whole cosmos. Symbols and images cluster around the parthenogeneric (self-generating) Goddess and her basic functions as Giver of Life, Wielder of Death, and, not less importantly, as Regeneratrix, and around the Earth Mother, the Fertility Goddess young and old, rising and dying with plant life." Marija Gimbutas, The Language of the Goddess (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publisher, 1989), xix.

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2Lee (1987), 11.
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