

The Sara Roby Foundation Collection



Bruce Kurland/*Bone, Cup, and Crab Apple*

On the one hand you have social realists, surrealists and dada. On the other you have non-objective painters, abstract expressionists and action painters. Those of the first group would like to make over society. They hate its evils and stupidities. Those of the second group give up: things are too bad to bother about, so they escape into the realm of technique where they communicate with each other: they are poets' poets. I don't want to reform or protest in my painting, nor do I wish to withdraw into a world where I paint about painting. There is, I think another area. I want to reveal the essence of things, of people, of nature, beyond reform, protest or the joke, and more than technique itself.

—Wynn Chamberlain

Acknowledgements

The University Art Gallery is grateful to those students in the Department of Art and Art History who are committed to the idea behind this kind of exhibition. Without them, it would not have been possible. They took suggestions graciously and came to terms with the difficult, often complicated, problem of expressing in words the impact of an image.

We would also like to extend our appreciation to Professor Kenneth Lindsay, under whose critical eye many revisions were made and esthetic positions questioned; his interest in the project supported our enthusiasms and his assistance proved invaluable. Professor Roger Stein provided us with additional help on all problems regarding form and "elements of style." We are grateful for the advice offered by Konrad Kuchel of the American Federation of Arts, the organization responsible for administering the Roby Collection; our gratitude is extended to Tom Leavitt, Director of the Herbert F. Johnson Museum, and to Professor John Weld who first suggested the exhibition to our late Director Stanley Ferber. Installation of the Sara Roby Foundation Collection was made possible by the efforts of our Gallery Technician Walter Luckert, Rachael Sadinsky, Jim Spano, Barbara Perkins, Roger Cook, Steven Ruchefsky, and George Pérez-Orta; Katherine Gleason, Linda Del Bianco, Diane Juray and Monica Jennings helped prepare this catalog.

The University Art Gallery also extends its gratitude to editors Binx Keefe, Peg Nordstrom, the Washburn Gallery of New York, Phil Tomashek from the University Printshop, Kenmore Color Plate of Buffalo and photographers Geoffrey Clements and Chris Focht for their invaluable contributions to the production of this catalog.

Exceptionally, the Gallery decided to publish the Roby Collection exhibition catalog after dismantling the show to provide students with the time necessary to work in close proximity with original works of art in the context of their exhibition space. Both graduates and undergraduates selected individual pieces to research. In some cases, the artist was a new name; in others, a familiar pivotal point in twentieth-century studies. The catalog is the result of the efforts of those students involved in the ongoing process of formulating questions concerning the art of their times.

Table of Contents

	PAGE	AUTHOR
Will Barnet/ <i>Sleeping Child</i>	64	Diane Juray
Robert Birmelin/ <i>Concrete Viaduct</i>	63	Amy Bellows
Isabel Bishop/ <i>Mending</i>	24	Monica A. Jennings
Charles Burchfield/ <i>Night of the Equinox</i>	12	Susan A. Stein
Paul Cadmus/ <i>Night in Bologna</i>	55	Sara Gregg
Paul Cadmus/ <i>Preliminary Sketch for "Subway Symphony"</i>	56	Sara Gregg
Kenneth Campbell/ <i>Nike</i>	67	Linda Strauss
Wynn Chamberlain/ <i>Interior: Late August</i>	40	Susan A. Stein
Guy Pène Du Bois/ <i>Shovel Hats</i>	15	Robin J. Levey
Jimmy Ernst/ <i>Timescape</i>	44	Deborah Oliva
Philip Evergood/ <i>Dowager in a Wheelchair</i>	31	Barbara Perkins
Frank Gallo/ <i>Man in a Rocker</i>	75	Deborah Oliva
Nancy Grossman/ <i>Twisting Column Figure</i>	95	Barry Neuman
George Grosz/ <i>A Hunger Phantasy</i>	27	Monica A. Jennings
Edward Hopper/ <i>Cape Cod Morning</i>	28	Susan A. Stein
Wolf Kahn/ <i>High Summer</i>	87	Madeleine Smithberg
Ben Kamihira/ <i>Tree in the Square</i>	80	Madeleine Smithberg
Herbert Katzman/ <i>Self Portrait</i>	76	Edith Cooper
William Kienbusch/ <i>Across Four Pines (Hurricane Island)</i>	43	Amy Bellows
Karl Knaths/ <i>Clam Diggers</i>	60	Deborah Oliva
Yasuo Kuniyoshi/ <i>Fakirs</i>	19	Sheryl Romeo
Yasuo Kuniyoshi/ <i>Strong Woman and Child</i>	19	Sheryl Romeo
Bruce Kurland/ <i>Bone, Cup, and Crab Apple</i>	10	Edith Cooper
Gaston Lachaise/ <i>Head of a Woman</i>	16	Rachael Sadinsky
Jacob Lawrence/ <i>Escape</i>	70	Victoria R. Hahn
Jacob Lawrence/ <i>Dreams No. 2</i>	73	Victoria R. Hahn
Jack Levine/ <i>Inauguration</i>	51	Sheryl Romeo
David Ligare/ <i>Sand Drawing #3</i>	84	Monica A. Jennings
Marisol/ <i>Untitled</i>	68	Victoria R. Hahn
Reginald Marsh/ <i>George Tilyou's Steeplechase</i>	20	Jane E. Pierce
Keith McDaniel/ <i>Gloucester, #2</i>	88	Patricia Barshinger
Kenneth Hayes Miller/ <i>Bargain Hunters</i>	23	Jane E. Pierce
Howard Newman/ <i>Half Woman, Quarter Bird</i>	92	Barry Neuman
Louise Nevelson/ <i>Sky Totem</i>	47	Barbara Perkins
Bernard Perlin/ <i>The Farewell</i>	32	Joseph Inguanti
Joseph Raffael/ <i>Watercolor #28</i>	91	Maxine Friedman
Cornelis Ruhtenberg/ <i>Sewing a Doll I</i>	83	Maxine Friedman
Charles Sheeler/ <i>San Francisco</i>	48	Susan A. Stein
Saul Steinberg/ <i>Sag Harbor</i>	79	Rachael Sadinsky
Mark Tobey/ <i>Canticle</i>	36	Sara Gregg
George Tooker/ <i>In the Summerhouse</i>	59	Joseph Inguanti
Robert Vickrey/ <i>Fear</i>	39	Joseph Inguanti
Max Weber/ <i>Trio</i>	35	Diane Juray
Footnotes	97	
Bibliography	98	

*University Art Gallery
State University of New York at Binghamton*



Foreword

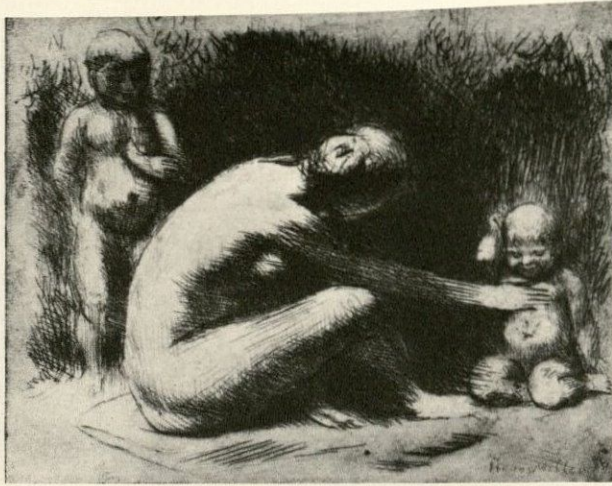
The University Art Gallery had the privilege of living and growing with forty-six exceptional works of art from the Sara Roby Foundation Collection. On view for an entire semester in our galleries, the individual pieces enabled us to trace the development of a visual experience particular to our culture: American modernism. A cross-section of artists was chosen to supplement works in our own Permanent Collection and to fill in important stylistic gaps. Lloyd Goodrich, former director of the Whitney Museum of American Art, has pointed out that "the Foundation collection consists of works by artists of many differing viewpoints and styles, but their most frequently recurring characteristic is a concern with form."¹

Whether veterans or newcomers to the American art scene, the artists represented in the collection share similar concerns: the investigation of what constitutes the "real" and how it can be expressed formally. Karl Knaths, voicing the esthetic preoccupations of many of his contemporaries, explained it in the following way: "When the composition remains abstract, I always feel a certain need for a meaning. I like to see a shape as a measure of color that is beautiful in itself take on the character and meaning of a natural object."²

From the time that Steiglitz first opened the doors of his Photo Secession Gallery on lower Fifth Avenue in 1905 through the beginnings of Action Painting in the fifties and up to today, American art has undergone profound changes, many of which are reflected in the Roby Collection. From a 1925 Kuniyoshi to a 1974 acrylic by Keith McDaniel, from the early exquisite head by Lachaise to Kenneth Campbell's *Nike*, from the crisp, clear-edge style that Will Barnet developed and softened into the forms of his "marvelous period" to the expansive, expressive space defining human gesture in Katzman's large drawings, the Roby Collection offers the possibility of reseeing and rethinking the problematics of our American artistic idiom.

The experimentations of Max Weber, one of the avant-garde artists introduced by the 291 group under Steiglitz, are emblematic of what was happening to the American painters who sought to articulate a new vision: eclecticism prevailed and European influences were still visible. Weber's studies in Paris with Matisse, his friendship with Henri Rousseau and Delaunay, his strong interest in African sculpture, were contributing factors to the modification of a rapidly developing esthetic. Cubist influence in his work was evident between 1915 and 1920, when in France, Braque and Picasso were studying the effects of fragmented surfaces within the picture plane. Weber survived the terrible aftermath of the war years and, turning from abstraction, responded to the concerns and fundamental conservatism of a country recovering from war — his work became increasingly representational although distortions of form remained, and with them, an expressionistic quality which would continue to characterize Weber's work. Underscoring the public outcry against radical departures from the known, the 1913 opening of the International Exhibition of Modern Art at the old New York Armory was a *succès de scandale*. The break was made.

Kenneth Hayes Miller



In an attempt to dilute the impact of an “alien” European abstractionism, artists working in the States during the twenties, when Americans were reading Sinclair Lewis and Theodore Dreiser, responded to a new cultural awareness: industrial scenes and machine forms suddenly marked the landscape. The Precisionists, or Immaculates, defined the parameters of the new style — use of specific subjects, elimination of superfluous detail, rigidly structured compositions and severity of line. Its leading exponent was Sheeler, whose abiding interest in architectonic ordering grew out of his early studies of Giotto and Piero della Francesca.

The major trend contending with Steiglitz’s Europeanized cult of “the happy few” was the Ashcan School, headed by Robert Henri. Henri resisted and rebelled against the neat categories of critics who labeled him a “realist.” He strongly adhered to his conviction that the artist alone must speak for his own work, its disposition and its stylistic statement. The Ashcan School evolved as a movement rooted in the idiosyncrasies of the American scene. Subjects came from lower-class urban settings, “life” was valorized over “art” — and it won the approbation of the masses. Paul Cadmus soon followed in the footsteps of those New Yorkers rediscovering the hidden recesses of their city.

A decade later, painters like Edward Hopper and Charles Burchfield came to the attention of the art-viewing public. Often referred to as Rural American Scientists, both men would ultimately move out from under the rubrics so detested by Henri — Hopper in the direction of portraying the isolated observer/voyeur who humanizes pictorial space, and Burchfield toward a highly charged personal intensity which found expression in his haunting watercolors.

Union Square, the Bowery and Coney Island were the loci chosen by artists like Kenneth Hayes Miller, Reginald Marsh and Isabel Bishop, who belonged to the Fourteenth Street School. Their commitment was not so much to accurate renderings of modern city life as it was to vignettes of the individual human condition within that life — the person alone or the couple alone in a sea of urbanized humanity — usually intimate, occasionally sordid, already foreshadowing the alienation that would be a central concern in the

writings of Sartre and Camus. The work of the Fourteenth Street School recreates on a smaller scale the sense of New York described by George Grosz in the thirties:

*That great wonderful city. I love this town. I have seen tramps sleeping on newspapers in Union Square . . . I have seen negroes, Chinese, red-haired Irishmen, sailors; Broadway aglow at night; the huge department stores; workers in overalls suspended between steel girders . . . Wall Street and shouting brokers at the stock exchange. I have seen obscene shows, where sweet girls stripped to the applause of men . . . the town is full of pictures and contrasts.*³

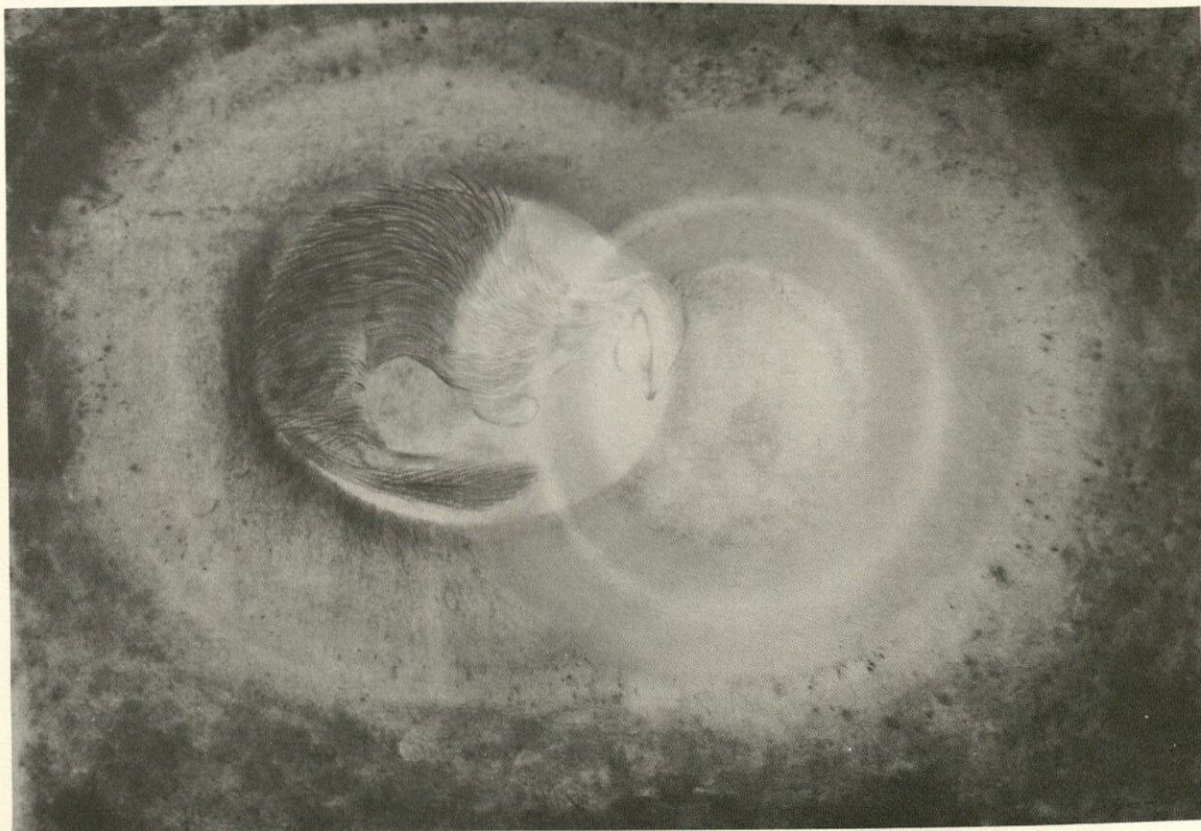


George Grosz

Trying to capture the brilliant "white way" that was Broadway, Mark Tobey devised his system of white writing. The intricate linear webs moved farther and farther away from representing, evolving instead into an abstract calligraphy.

*It goes back as far as 1920-22. I was living in the Village, painting and thinking and feeling that in some way I had to demolish form. Yes, all the earlier ideas of wanting to be a sculptor, being interested in the Renaissance, this was taken out and the idea became to transform to some more fluid condition. I didn't want finalities anymore, I wanted endless extension. I needed to establish a more vibratory experience — breaking up the forms into smaller forms which later on became, what shall I say, just space attempts. I couldn't stand the separation between space and finitudes anymore. I had to demolish it, somehow, and the only way I could demolish it was excessive interpenetration, which finally ended in sort of rivers of lines and movable focus.*⁴

Morris Graves



Morris Graves, largely self-taught, was very much influenced by Tobey with whom he studied for a short time. Graves's strange organic imagery is the recognizable outgrowth of an age drawn to psychoanalytic discourse and introspection (Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* had been translated, as had Breton's *Surrealist Manifesto*, and the public was reading them). A sense of displacement and difference pervades the subtle configurations of animal forms, delineating and bracketing flat space, ungrounded and evanescent, hallucinatory in nature. Redon's flower, with the dark eye at its center, is close at hand.

The highly subjective fantasies of Graves, their otherworldliness, is strikingly distinct from the very worldly sophistications of Marisol's style: witty satire and formal juxtaposition of unlike elements are recurrent factors in her drawings, prints and sculpture. The excursions of this Paris-born artist into an almost surreal domain have inspired Robert Creeley and other American poets to incorporate her work into their own. Her vision and caustic commentary on modern modes reinforces Karl Knaths's observation that "there is a region of the mind as well as the soil."⁵

Jill Elyse Grossvogel
Curator

Catalog of the Exhibition

of the Sara Roby Foundation Collection

University Art Gallery

(Works are arranged in chronological order; all dimensions
are given in inches and height precedes width)

Bruce Kurland

American (1938 –)

Bone, Cup, and Crab Apple, 1972

Oil on masonite (8 × 10)

A bone, cup, and crab apple stand, delicately balanced, on a shelf placed against a background that denies space. Saturated with form-giving light, the objects stand out in sharp relief against the flat, neutral field. In a conceit that may be an acknowledgement of the *trompe l'oeil* tradition in still-life painting, Bruce Kurland has heightened the relief still further by the impasto painting on the bone, a still-present reminder of the flesh that once clothed it. It would appear, furthermore, to be an earthy, contemporary restatement of the *Vanitas* theme that was popular in the seventeenth century and was expressed in the form of a skull placed amidst abundant foodstuffs and precious material objects.

Indeed, Kurland's roots lie in the Dutch still-life painting of the seventeenth century. His acknowledged admiration for the work of Carel Fabritius may be seen in the way that his objects are suspended in light-drenched space, reminiscent, perhaps, of Fabritius's *Goldfinch*. Kurland's subjects are the fruits, flowers, gamebirds, and animals depicted in still-life since antiquity. The themes of his works, however, are not the objects themselves, but balance and imbalance, space — open and interrupted — time and motion. Kurland's small, spare works bear a message of instability and uncertainty. His objects are still arranging themselves; his space is enigmatic. The small field on which his objects are placed gives them an aspect of monumentality which, in turn, belies their small scale.

A Kurland gamebird hangs suspended by a string attached at some unseen point; the light, fragile creature leans heavily on a board that makes a strong horizontal movement across the plane of the picture. The head is bent at a right-angle and the dead eye stares out at the viewer. In a similar composition, it is a rabbit which hangs suspended, its head and forequarters resting on a board that appears to be suspended in air. The weight of the animal is counterbalanced by a connecting board, cantilevered by three pears.

The transience of life, a recurring theme in traditional still-life painting, is allied in Kurland's works with the immediate sense of instability and movement in time and space, which captures the viewer and effectively engages his participation in the artist's experience.

COVER ILLUSTRATION



Charles Burchfield
 American (1893 – 1967)

Night of the Equinox, 1917/1955
 Watercolor (40 × 52)

Rain from gloom-streaked skies spins melancholy puddles in *Night of the Equinox*. As electrified foliage waves above rooftops, wide-eyed phantoms emerge from the shingles of Salem houses. Brooding covers the grassy land. Wrenched from the inner residue of awesome childhood fears, Charles Burchfield's confrontation with the elemental forces of nature stands apart.

Drawn to northern regions of the United States, to certain months of the year — November, March, August — and insistent, throughout, upon watercolor as his medium, Burchfield's art transcends both regionalism and naturalism. The locales of Buffalo, New York or Salem, Ohio trigger haunting youthful remembrances. States of weather coalesce with Burchfield's states of mind:

One of the most exciting weather events of the whole year was what we called the spring equinoctial storm . . . It seemed as if terrific forces were abroad in the land. It was delightful, lying there in bed with a sense of cozy security, to imagine that outside fearful monsters were at war with each other.

The pendulum swings between realism and fantasy throughout Burchfield's career. By 1943, almost as if exorcising a decade-long spell of realism, he attempted to recapture his youthful style and vision by literally returning to, reworking, and enlarging earlier watercolors. *Night of the Equinox*, dated 1917/1955, belongs to this later phase of the artist's career.

Finished in the calligraphic manner characteristic of his youth, the work on closer examination reveals its underlying construction; the piecing together of five sections formed the large watercolor. The intervening realist years modified Burchfield's early style. Deeper spatial recessions, increased architectural solidity and a self-conscious control point to stylistic revival.

Symbols employed from the artist's 1917 *Conventions for Abstract Thought* gracefully fuse into the compositional design. Representing a range of predominately gloomy moods, this vocabulary of abstract motifs of "conventions" mimics the syntax of the whole. The mood of "fearful monsters . . . at war with each other" is recollected. *Night of the Equinox* pictorially documents Charles Burchfield's acute awareness of his own unsilenced inner life.





Guy Pène Du Bois
 American (1884 – 1958)

Shovel Hats, 1923
 Oil on wood (19½ × 14½)

It was with the New York Realists that Guy Pène Du Bois began working as a painter and, later, as a critic. His art has been called satirical; it is narrative in most cases, often tinged with ironic humor.

Guy Pène Du Bois first studied art in 1899 at the Chase School in New York City. In 1906, he began as a reporter and critic for *New York American* and continued there until just before the opening of the landmark Armory Show, for which he was hired to edit a special edition of *Arts and Decoration*. He continued as editor for *Arts and Decoration* until 1920. During part of that time, he was also employed as a critic for the *New York Tribune* and the *New York Evening Post* where he worked at articulately defending the modernist position. It was at this time that Du Bois began to devote himself exclusively to painting.

Du Bois's work is impelled by a sense of reality reinforced by his years as a journalist. Color is significant: the red skirt that the woman is wearing in *Shovel Hats* is emphasized by the light directed upon it. The intensity of primary color contributes to the overall compositional balance. The vibrant yellow serves to accent the haughty pose of the woman who is wearing it.

There is a disturbing quality about this painting; the undefined direct source of light as well as the mask-like faces accentuated by the light are both artificial. All the figures are constrained within a space; the interrelationship between the men in the background and the women in the foreground, is unclear. Furthermore, the setting and the event taking place are ambiguous. The viewer's uncertainty, however, is allayed by Du Bois's attentiveness to detail and mood.

Although he was an early member of the Ashcan School, Du Bois's individualistic approach soon became evident. *Shovel Hats* is not atypical of Du Bois's style of painting; his work consistently documents real situations and character types. The figures depicted in *Shovel Hats* are animated; this is especially noticeable in their faces. The two central figures are women who rely on arrogant gestures to convey general impatience and social class; the superciliousness of the wealthy is a familiar *leitmotif* in Du Bois's works.

Gaston Lachaise

French-American (1882 – 1935)

Head of a Woman, 1923

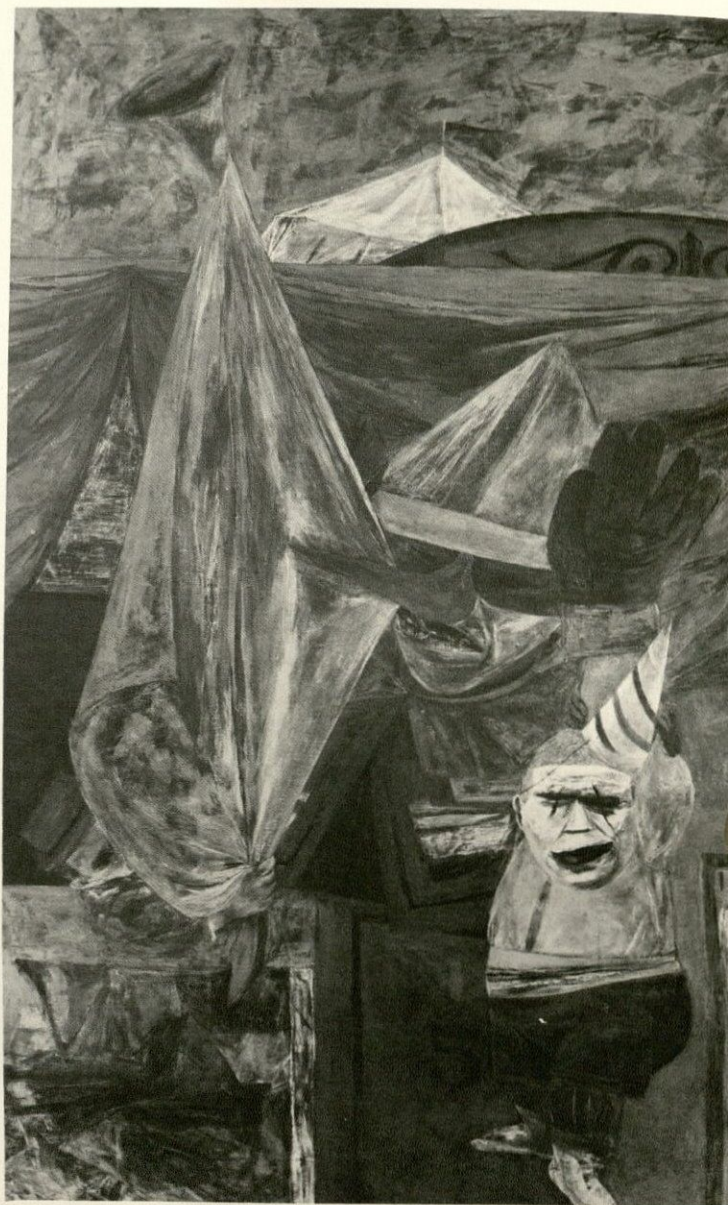
Bronze ($10\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{3}{8}$)

Between 1900 and 1905, Lachaise met Isabel Dutand Nagle, an American who led him to Boston in 1906, away from the Académie and from his “dream of Rome.” Inspired by Isabel, who later became his wife, Lachaise re-examined classical models to reflect his vision of the physicality which is Woman. His sculptures blend ideal beauty with his own emotional intensity to give female forms their sensual and forceful energy.

Born in Paris, Lachaise’s earliest influence came from his father, Jean, a prominent woodcarver and cabinet-maker. Lachaise spent much of his childhood accompanying and assisting his father who inspired him to recognize physical labor as a virtue. At sixteen Lachaise entered the Académie Nationale des Beaux-Arts to study under classical sculptor Gabriel Jules Thomas. Here, his work reflected the conservative Académie’s ideal of beauty.

Head of a Woman is emblematic of Isabel’s importance in Lachaise’s life. The large proportions of the head firmly staring ahead capture the power and determination of the woman. The smooth transition of facial planes into the piling hair masses and the characteristic unity of the rounded volumes illustrate Lachaise’s belief that “sculpture is entirely [the] relation of forms.”





Yasuo Kuniyoshi
 Japanese (1893 – 1953)

Strong Woman and Child, 1925
 Oil on canvas (57 × 45)

Fakirs, 1951
 Oil on canvas (50 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 32 $\frac{1}{4}$)

Strong Woman and Child, painted in 1925, is representative of Kuniyoshi's early style; the color scheme, greys and sombre earth tones, reminiscent of the restrained palette of Japanese woodcuts. Although Kuniyoshi himself denied that his Japanese origins could be ascertained from his paintings, his works are, nonetheless, a synthesis of eastern and western esthetics. Kuniyoshi's use of perspective in his early paintings is an uneven resolution of both the oriental and the occidental systems. In *Strong Woman and Child*, the result is a playful tension between the two ideologies; the receding space of western art and the vertical space of Asian art.

Kuniyoshi painted *Fakirs* in 1951. In the interceding years between *Strong Woman and Child* (1925) and *Fakirs* (1951), Kuniyoshi's style drastically changed. In 1925, and then again in 1928, he visited Europe. These two European experiences signalled the end of his early primitivism. Kuniyoshi's primitivism was predominantly characterized by his startling use of light. The light in the early paintings was an ambiguous light, the light of dreams. Kuniyoshi's early works conveyed a strong sense of personal mythology. The illumination was steady, and as such, it denied the passage of time and froze the composition into an expanded present. With Kuniyoshi's introduction to European modernism, and plastic painting, his concern subsequently shifted from the "time" of abstract art to the "space" of abstract art. In *Fakirs*, the forms are flattened against the picture plane, dissolving three-dimensional space.

Kuniyoshi's most startling transformation, however, was his new use of color. He replaced his previous limited color range with greens, vibrant turquoises, and deep pinks and reds. The transformation coincided with and complemented Kuniyoshi's broadened sphere of pictorial imagery as carnivals and masquerades were added to his *oeuvre*. The combination worked well since the garish colors imbued the scenes with a heightened, hectic intensity. However, the colors, brash and discordant, fail to reflect the gaiety of the circus milieu, revealing instead only its decadence. Kuniyoshi's new use of color is not a contradiction of terms, but rather a tribute to his oriental inheritance, for in Asian art, bright, gaudy colors are traditionally symbols of death and tragedy.

Although political by nature, Kuniyoshi nonetheless denied allegiance with the social protest school that was in vogue during the thirties. But with the forties, reflecting the despair of the Depression, the rise of fascism, and the cataclysmic effects of World War II, Kuniyoshi's subjects exhibited a growing social awareness. In Kuniyoshi's carnivals, the viewer is not deceived by the pretense of the facade, but instead perceives only the underlying sense of melancholia.

Reginald Marsh

American (1898 – 1954)

George Tilyou's Steeplechase, 1932

Egg tempera on composition board (30 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 40)

A preoccupation with the earthy, often seedy lifestyles of the New York populace was a consistent trend throughout Reginald Marsh's career. The Bowery, the burlesque halls, cafes, and amusement parks were all places Marsh frequented in his search for the *zeitgeist* of his era. Developing out of the liberal realist tradition of Robert Henri and the Ashcan School, Marsh embraced the city and its teeming masses.

Lost in reverie and oblivious to her environment, the archetypal Marsh woman in *George Tilyou's Steeplechase* exudes an aura of eroticism and lasciviousness, perched on a wooden steeplechase horse with pelvis thrust back, her dress inadvertently raised to reveal a fleshy and voluptuous thigh. Ignoring the obvious intentions of his companion, the sailor-beau attentively focuses on a distant object of which only the woman on the left, emblematically clothed in red, is aware; she sanctions the scene with a watchful and knowing gaze.

A predominant action of straining forward exacerbates the illusion of speed and mobility. Heightened by the strategic placement of primary colors, the quintessence of Marsh's style is revealed in his examination of contours and rhythms. Influenced greatly by his teacher from the Art Students League in New York, Kenneth Hayes Miller, Marsh applied his knowledge of Renaissance and Baroque plastic principles to the raw material of the present. An observer and recorder of the "real," Marsh reaffirms the dynamics of the urban scene and its inhabitants.





Kenneth Hayes Miller
American (1876 – 1952)

Bargain Hunters, 1940
Oil on canvas (30⁷/₈ × 36¹/₈)

The vapid stares and interaction among these somnambulistic *Bargain Hunters* create a mood of sustained detachment and isolation. Oblivious to their surroundings, the self-containment of these robot-like consumers is reinforced in the work by the anxiety in the gaze of the partially hidden child in the foreground.

Bargain Hunters reveals Miller's fundamental desire to achieve three-dimensionality through form and movement. The crooked arms and tilted hats, directing the eye to circle the crowd, work with the background diagonals to create a mobile and oscillating energy throughout the foyer. Miller stabilizes the composition by the placement of massive columns behind the strong Giotto-like shoppers, to emphasize their weight and verticality. "In its order and balance Miller's work is essentially classic," observed Lloyd Goodrich in 1951. The resonant, carefully selected tones speak eloquently for Miller's gifts as a colorist and serve as vehicles for the differentiation of volumes in space.

In the late twenties, Miller found his forte in the familiar panorama of pedestrian shopper scenes and the casual daily incidents of Manhattan life. His dual exposure to the Renaissance emphasis on dramatic form and the liberal realist tradition of close observation enabled him to synthesize his immediate perceptions of the contemporary world with his desire to express mobility in form.

Isabel Bishop

American (1903 –)

Mending, 1947

Oil on composition board (25 × 16⁵/₈)

Isabel Bishop, a contemporary genre artist, executed *Mending* in an unmanipulative fashion, as though she had captured a piece of life at a privileged moment. Working in her studio in Union Square, Bishop watches, then deftly records, city dwellers in repose. Often seen in couples, the girls of lower Fifth Avenue are a recurrent leitmotif in Bishop's work just as they had been for her contemporary Reginald Marsh who was working in the same neighborhood. *Mending*, however, is one of Bishop's infrequent paintings of the male figure. During the early thirties, she produced a series of "bum drawings" and used Walter Broe, a New York vagabond, as a model.

Casually seated at the base of a public monument, a grey vagrant mends the rip in his trousers. Bishop's penetrating eye for gesture keyed in on the moment the thread was being pulled through the cloth. The figure is not posed; it speaks of life and movement. Furthermore, by constructing an intricate network of hundreds of specific lines and brush strokes which resemble an impasto texture effect, the artist animates and builds the character of the man. Such completeness, rather than suggestiveness, typifies Bishop's work. The deliberate choice of softened tones of cream and brown provide the painting with its subtle harmony and color mood.

Bishop's genre subjects would not be possible without the city which is the vital source of her imagery. Although the subject matter of *Mending* is atypical of her work, the texture, line, and color clearly reflect the formal elements that constitute Bishop's artistic style.





George Grosz

German-American (1890 – 1959)

A Hunger Phantasy, 1947

Watercolor on paper (24 × 18)

Active in Germany until 1933 as a satirical painter, draftsman, and a commentator on World War I and its aftermath, George Grosz later dealt with the complicated political and social upheavals taking place on the American scene. Completed during his stay in Huntington, Long Island, the watercolor, *A Hunger Phantasy*, depicts an emaciated, stick-bodied image which is part of a series known as *The Stickmen*. The image is leering at a fat grotesque figure indulging his craving for food. This same pair is also portrayed in an earlier work, *Attacked by the Stickmen*. The giant-headed stickman with bulbous insect-like eyes has a long lineage. One source for this creature derives from the thin chimerical soldiers of *A Piece of My World II* and *The Ambassador of Goodwill*; the other source upon which Grosz draws is the stick-like creature of *The Insect Men Are Coming*. Inspired further by actual incidents, he continued to refine his stickman after receiving news from Germany of the subsistence level and hallucinations that hunger generated during the war. Concentration on the face and hands of the central obese figure is a distinguishing characteristic of Grosz's work; in *A Hunger Phantasy*, the face is swollen and red-fleshed.

Stylistically and ideologically, Grosz identified with and was part of the German Expressionist movement. *A Hunger Phantasy* is the nightmare vision of a man reacting against existing norms and calling for a new order. Grosz embellished his painting with the intensely bold, often dissonant colors characteristic of the Expressionist palette; they evoke strong visceral reactions and clash against each other in the attempt to convey the social injustices. A product of a complicated parentage, the stickman is contrasted strikingly with the glutton. The fat-thin motif becomes an allegory for our society's excesses and dehumanization.

Edward Hopper
American (1882 – 1967)

Cape Cod Morning, 1950
Oil on canvas (34 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 40 $\frac{1}{8}$)

What are you seeing out the window lady?
.....
I only see the years. They come and go
In alteration with the weed, the field
The wood.
 What kind of years?
 Why, later years –
Different from earlier years –

"In the Home Stretch," by Robert Frost

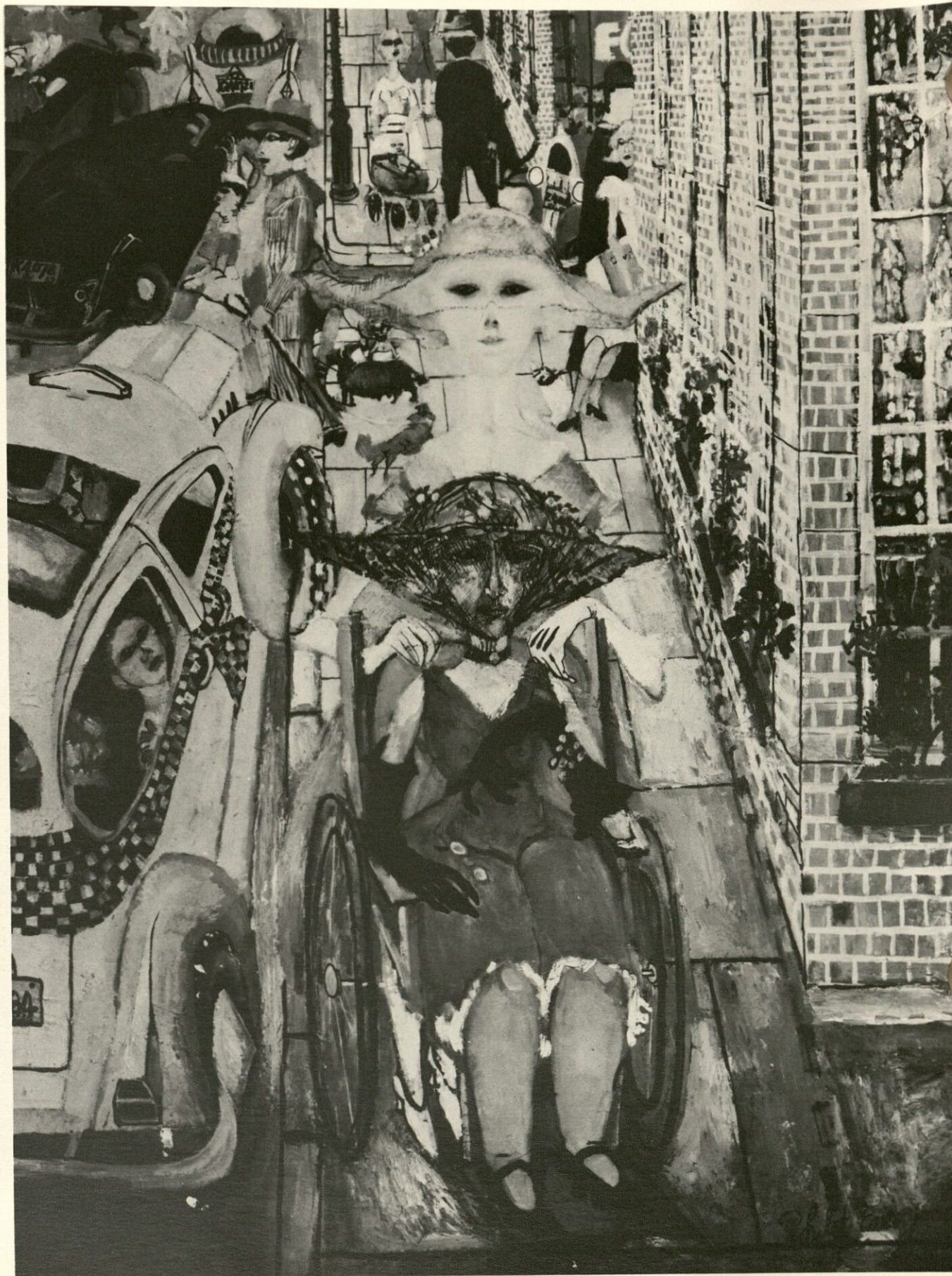
Hopper's compositions often engender this peculiar dialogue between what is being seen through the window and the elusiveness of what lies beyond. Stunted in movement, tensely transfixed in a moment of cognizance but never action, his figures vacillate between what captures and what stills action.

Enframed and staring out of the window, the middle-aged housewife acts as compositional foil to an outer environment from which she has been sharply set apart. Against the harsh geometricity of the domestic confine, the dark sketchy wilderness stretches. The known rivals the unknown; the domestic confronts the untamed; the private world faces the public. Between the stasis of the moment and the lure of the beyond, the window motif acts as transmitter.

An inner-outer dialogue ensues. Looking out of the window into a wooded New England setting metaphorically invites looking inward to the uncharted country within ourselves, untrampled and frightening yet beckoning. Impeding physical penetration, the window's pane summons only visual/conceptual probing of that which arrests sight. Hinged on the threshold to awareness and enriched by placing the mysterious calling beyond, the transitional and unresolved moment motivates a line of questioning similar to that in Frost's poem, "In the Home Stretch."

Simple compositional titles, containing such temporal references as "morning" or "evening" betray an interest in time that Hopper shares with the poet. Hopper's familiarity with and sensitivity to Robert Frost's concerns are evident. Employing the native landscape, particularly the New England countryside, as a backdrop for individual human dramas, the poet and artist transcend what their deceptive realism and their "homespun roughness" tend to veil. Fidelity to an American mode of expression merges with the artist's characteristic visions in *Cape Cod Morning*, painted toward the end of Edward Hopper's career.





Philip Evergood
American (1901 – 1973)

Dowager in a Wheelchair, 1952
Oil on canvas (48 × 36)

Philip Evergood was one of the principal American artistic social commentators of the thirties and forties. He dedicated himself to exposing, interpreting, and recording the characters and concerns of his day.

Although born in New York, Evergood was educated in England. He attended Cambridge briefly, but left to study art at the Slade School. In 1931 he returned to the States and was confronted by the human situation in the New York of the thirties; strongly affected by the social and economic crises he observed during the Depression, Evergood devoted himself to the ideal of an egalitarian society. His paintings from that era were strong protests about contemporary social inequities. In his later works, however, including *Dowager in a Wheelchair*, "satire dances with a kind of malicious gaiety."⁶ His 1952 canvas mocks the self-indulgent wealthy widow. Using the symbolic imagery of a "royal" procession (the dowager in her wheelchair-throne with a lady-in-waiting) juxtaposed against the clamour of the city, Evergood emphasizes her aristocratic egocentrism by her obliviousness to the real world. The exaggerated gesture of the dowager's gloved hands ironically describes her false sense of dignity.

Evergood makes use of sensational color to characterize the gaudy taste of the dowager, the prudish reserve of the young matron and the contrasting vitality of the world around them. The disjointed space and perspective further add to the inner city's hustle-bustle.

Despite the prevalence of Abstract Expressionist work during Evergood's later period, he remained essentially uninfluenced by its formal concerns. He held fast to his contention that art should deal directly with humanity, and he continued to produce visual commentaries satirizing aspects of the American social scene.

Bernard Perlin

American (1918 –)

The Farewell, 1952

Casein tempera on composition board (34 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 47 $\frac{1}{8}$)

According to Daniel M. Mendelowitz, Precisionism involves “curious aspects of commonplace experience with almost hallucinatory sharpness of form and clarity of detail to achieve effects of magical strangeness.” Mendelowitz is not the only author who identifies Bernard Perlin as a Precisionist or an artist who has married abstractionism with an American realistic tradition.

The Farewell is a fine example of this trend, which has its roots in Surrealism. Instead of shocking the spectator with the juxtaposition of incongruous elements, Perlin mystifies an often romanticized theme. Rejecting the “sweet sorrow” of parting, in favor of encapsulating the frigid moments after, Perlin relies on a figural rendering which is essentially realistic. The artist’s minute brushstrokes are precise and accurate.

Significant differences exist between *The Farewell* and Perlin’s earlier works as a *Life* magazine artist-correspondent during and shortly after World War II. The sketches and paintings from that period were a means of reporting personal experiences in the Aegean with British commandos, and in Tokyo during the first days of American occupation. Dashed off in quick strokes, the figures are almost caricatures. Unlike these earlier works, *The Farewell* does not volunteer any information to the viewer. Rather than informing, it unnerves.

The entire panel is filled with bare trees and the disturbing presence of a man and an elderly woman close to the left edge of the picture plane, with another male figure walking toward the right. Perspective is ambiguous — trees in the woods appear to be stacked rather than to recede. Flatness of form prevails. Corporeality and movement are limited in this strange, dormant landscape. Although there is color variation, the tones are muted. Surrounded by a narrow halo of warm tone, the figures on the left nonetheless are located on the side of the panel in which a cool background predominates. Arm in arm, they walk to the periphery of the scene they will soon leave. Outline rendering of their profile heads calls to mind Egyptian tomb reliefs; their eyes glare forward, and though their bodies are in motion they appear static. Motion is more apparent in the bent head and leg of the man walking toward the right. By presenting the back rather than the face of this figure, Perlin invites the beholder, who stands in a similar attitude, into the picture. The space between the viewer and the panel is thus bridged by a figure with whom the beholder identifies.

Relying on a tightly realistic style in a cool, fantastic setting, Perlin expresses the strangeness of a real and natural event. He evokes the mystery and eeriness of death, the final farewell.





Max Weber

Russian-born American (1881 – 1961)

Trio, 1953

Oil on canvas (24½ × 29½)

In *Trio*, Max Weber relies on his extensive knowledge and participation in the major modern art movements as a springboard for solving complicated formal problems: Weber had a fundamental understanding of the concepts of European modernists whose abiding interest in the problem of spatial relationships he shared. His early studies under Arthur Dow, who helped to introduce the principles of Japanese and Chinese art in this country, enabled Weber to abandon naturalism in favor of design, striving to awaken its power by controlling it. Weber's work reflects the stylistic and thematic influences of the Fauves, Cubists, and the Futurists; his interest in Primitive and Oriental esthetics remained strong as did his awareness of his Jewish family roots in Russia where he was first exposed to folklore art.

Through *Trio*, Weber exhibits his growing preoccupation both with a free style and with a rhythmically balanced organization of forms in space. The figures of the three Picasso-like musicians in *Trio* remain recognizable but are delineated with quick, bold brushstrokes which merely serve to suggest their forms. To convey a third dimension, the seemingly linear arrangement of figures is organized into a receding triangle, positioned against a solid Cézanne-like background which emphasizes their geometric organization. This triangular structuring is counterbalanced by pose-rotation of each figure, adding a sense of movement to an otherwise static composition.

Colors are naturalistic but spare, almost implicit, freely applied brushy strokes of pigment. Thus, figures appear transparent, and the background tones can be seen through the forms. Weber does not attempt to depict a complete scene but merely provides the components of an equation for a setting or context.

Weber is eclectic: he works in so expanded a range of styles that it is difficult to discuss his works developmentally. Rather, he is best understood when one studies those specific ideas and subjects which held his attention along the way. By simultaneously imitating and implementing a variety of different stylistic approaches, Weber pioneered what we now think of as American modernism.

Mark Tobey
American (1890 – 1976)

Canticle, 1954
Tempera on paper (17 × 9½)

For Mark Tobey “the cult of space can become as dull as that of the object. The dimension that counts for the creative person is the space he creates within himself.” *Canticle* embodies a spiritual quality rather than the intellectual proclivities characteristic of many American abstract paintings in the fifties. Like the small scale of *Meditative Series* painted during the winter months of 1954 in New York City, *Canticle* is an abstract expression of space which is personal and highly contemplative in nature.

A sea of fine white lines contrasts with shimmering bands of color. Tobey’s “white writing” emerged from his internalization of Chinese calligraphy first learned from a friend, Teng Kuei, in 1923 and subsequently reinforced during a later trip to China and Japan in 1934. This oriental calligraphic impulse is transformed to suit Tobey’s varying modes of expression from the ecstatic energy of tense, angular lines in *New York* (1944) to the quiescence of organic, curved lines that shape the structure and mood of *Canticle*.

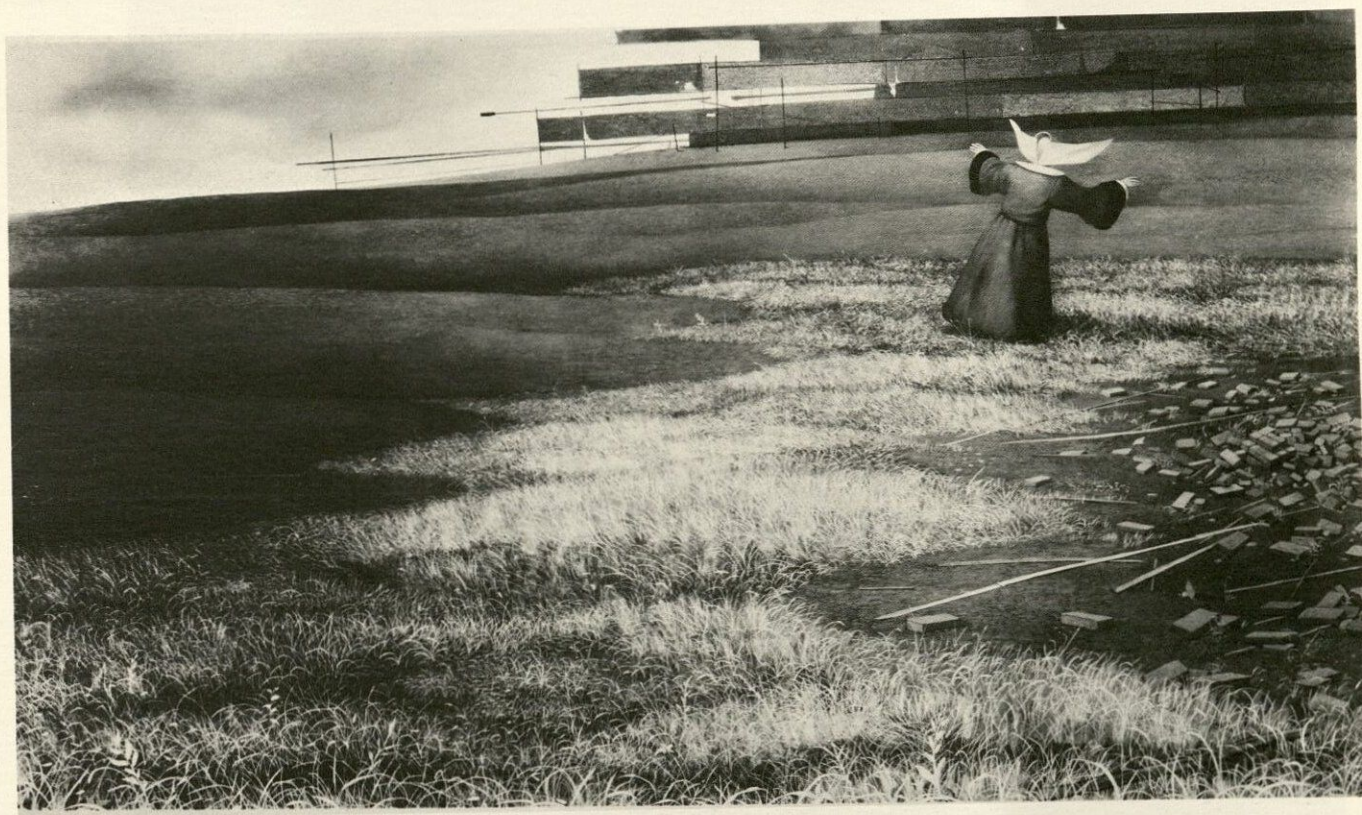
The delicate veil of “white writing” models space by intermittently fusing with the undulating glow of the colored ground and fills the two-dimensional space with a feeling of quiet joy and expression. Spatial dimension is further enhanced by the exposed rose-tinted triangle jutting into the painting from the lower left.

Unlike Jackson Pollock’s Action Painting, Tobey’s “white writing” creates a restful unity conducive to quiet contemplation. His spiritual expression of space is couched in the postulates of the Bahá’í world faith to which he converted in 1918. The doctrine of “unity, ‘progressive revelation,’ and humanity” provides a transcendental point of departure in Tobey’s painting.





Basrelief



Robert Vickrey

American (1926 –)

Fear, 1954

Egg tempera on composition board ($34\frac{3}{4} \times 58\frac{1}{2}$)

Fear, says Robert Vickrey, is a social commentary piece portraying "a nun fleeing the rubble and erosion of contemporary civilization." Though Vickrey uses the image of nuns (as in the University Art Gallery's own *Basrelief* by Vickrey), *Fear* bears little other resemblance to the majority of highly realistic egg temperas characteristic of this Yale-trained artist.

Only *The Labyrinth*, which Vickrey completed in 1951, evokes the same feeling of entrapment: three years later Vickrey uses the nun from *The Labyrinth*, standing with outstretched arms on tall, bending grass, for *Fear*. The desire to escape is made more apparent for the figure appears to run. Rubble on barren earth to either side of a strip of vegetation and an isolated human being recall elements of post-World War II drama. Many contemporary absurdist playwrights applied concepts of demolition and nuclear holocaust to their works. *Fear*, an attitude characterizing the escalating Cold War of the fifties, manifests itself in the emptiness of the landscape, the ominous, dark grey sky, and Vickrey's thin opaque application of paint.

The artist who has proved himself to be a master of illusion in rendering figural rotundity and receding space uses a shallow, more timid approach in *Fear*. Empty, dead ground extends finger-like projections into the living grass. The nun, acting as an objective correlative for the qualities of piety and purity, attempts to flee the meaninglessness of her environment; but, as in an absurdist drama, there is no one to turn to, nowhere to go. Possibility exists only in the vague, rubble-filled emptiness where an undefined structure punctuates the landscape.

Wynn Chamberlain
 American (1928 –)

Interior, 1955
 Tempera (23 × 16)

Instilled with the mood of a darkened palette, steeped in penetrating observations, interwoven with temporal and sexual allusions, Chamberlain's *Interior* goes beyond its 'slice of life' appearance. Within this setting, reminders of human presence attest to their having been hurriedly led to empty and ravaged beds through the newsstand versions of intimacy and pin-up sexual ideals. Barely illuminated by sunlight, the faded and worn wallpaper offset by bare wooden floors envelops the prostitute's quarters.

Designed for media-spurned fantasies of *True Romance*, the sparseness and impersonality of the bedroom are buffered only by clothes strewn in disarray about the room, the clutter of women's magazines, and gaily-printed feminine apparel spilling from overstuffed drawers. A sense of impermanence hangs menacingly from the broken shade.

Cloaked under a veil of greyness, the "human remains" resonate with the dull heartbeat of the watch dangling from the dresser drawer. Casually kicked off spike-heeled sandals and bed-strewn lacy nightwear contrast with the clothes of the visitor self-consciously folded upon ruddy work shoes.

A silent dialogue proceeds across the residue of a past summer morning in August 1955 and the "sparks" of an ongoing tragedy. The rising smoke from a still-lit cigarette stub relates the epitaph of Chamberlain's unsettling *Interior*.

Rejecting the witty, fanciful approach of John Wilde, the influence of his magic realist friend nonetheless appears in Chamberlain's "tight realism" and his adoption of the painstaking technique of tempera painting. A transitional piece, *Interior* looks back to the nightmare aspect of his earlier allegories and heralds the "visions" later captured, of figures engaged in meditative afterthoughts against mood-laden landscapes. While critics have tended to read biting social commentary into this mid-westerner's "bad dreams of a nation," the artist denies such intent: "There it is. I had a dream. It cannot be explained."





William Kienbusch
 American (1914 –)

Across Four Pines (Hurricane Island), 1956
 Casein on paper (40³/₄ × 27)

Blue sky sparkle, sea salt brine, fresh evergreen; concern with spirit and physicality, with the New England landscape and Puritan/Yankee life, from which William Kienbusch emerged, finds its resolution and opposition in his work. Nature becomes a language which the artist strives to translate in the attempt to represent the material world as he perceives it. Linking his esthetic concerns with personal experience, Kienbusch's art arises as a highly subjective statement.

Kienbusch studies his subjects as they appear in nature, making preliminary sketches and photographs. Once inside the ordered quiet of his studio, the artist relies on his memory and painterly instincts to capture the essence and impact of his vision. The dynamics of Kienbusch's perception are intensified by the moving whirl of the brush, great sweeps of color, and his articulation of space through broad expanses of geometric angles and areas. Sharp flat fields of blues and white are interrupted; they vibrate with the motion of pines momentarily frozen in the pervasive cold atmosphere.

A high horizon extends the limits of the blue and expands the wide sea around the small Maine island. Perspective also contributes to the sense of vastness; the artist suggests an aerial view of the panorama. A smooth azure calm directs the attention of the viewer toward the horizon where cloudwisps billow low and white. Brought back to the shore, the eye moves up through each pine, which functions as a vertical marker, separating one plane from another.

Balance is delicately handled, the forms subtly yet powerfully conceived: geometric lines and dashes of color sweep downward, then circle up again. Dark areas give gravity and volume to the thrust of the tree-tops and to the white and shadowed patches of ground below. Four pines point in deep blue-green strokes of color to their source of light; their energy and restless movement is echoed in the brushwork. Frequently used, diagonal rectangular forms move in positive rugged rhythms.

As Cézanne attempted to understand the underlying structure of his landscapes, Kienbusch relies on geometric forms to reinforce the power of nature. For both artists, it is in the elements of the real world that meaning is to be found, concealed and yet revealed.

Jimmy Ernst

American (1920 –)

Timescape, 1956

Oil on canvas (36 × 48)

By developing a personal idiom separate and distinct from that of his father, Max, Jimmy Ernst has maintained an independent artistic identity. At the age of twenty, inspired by his first viewing of Picasso's *Guernica*, Ernst launched his career as a formal abstractionist painter.

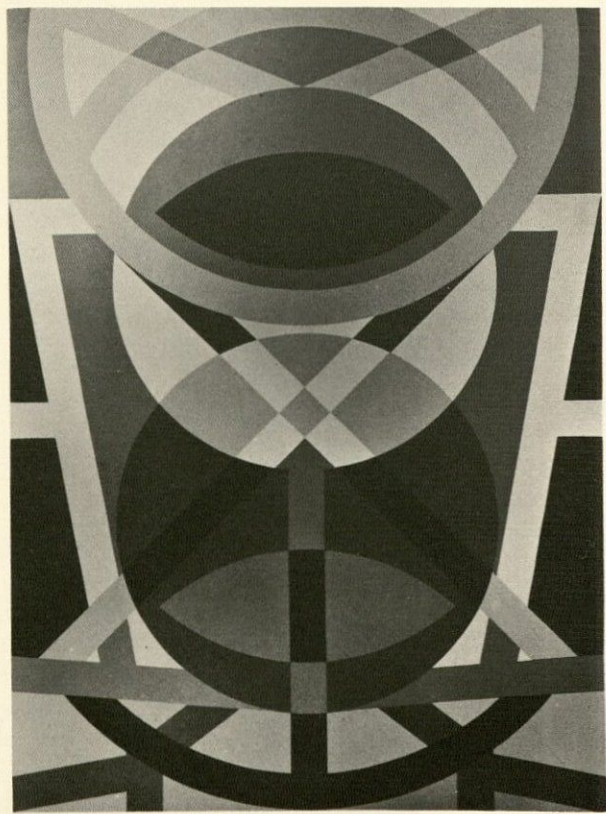
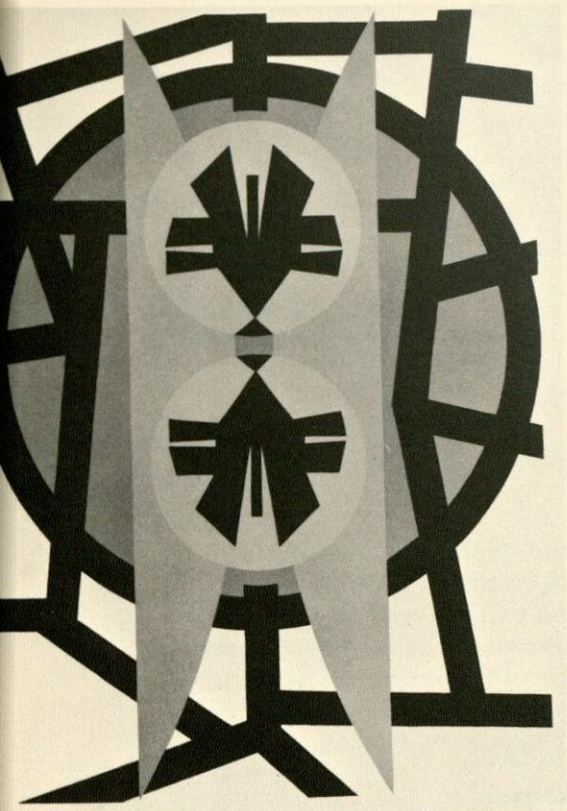
Ernst's paintings are large and consist of a network of interacting lines, planes, and geometric shapes. Working primarily in gouaches and oils, he directs the eye of the viewer through a collage of sharply delineated form and clear, intense color.

The precision and craftsmanship of his compositions are integrated with a kind of impulsive gesturing, heightening the viewer's awareness of the tense balance between discipline and freedom. *Timescape* is emblematic of these deliberate "lapses" and returns to control within one work.

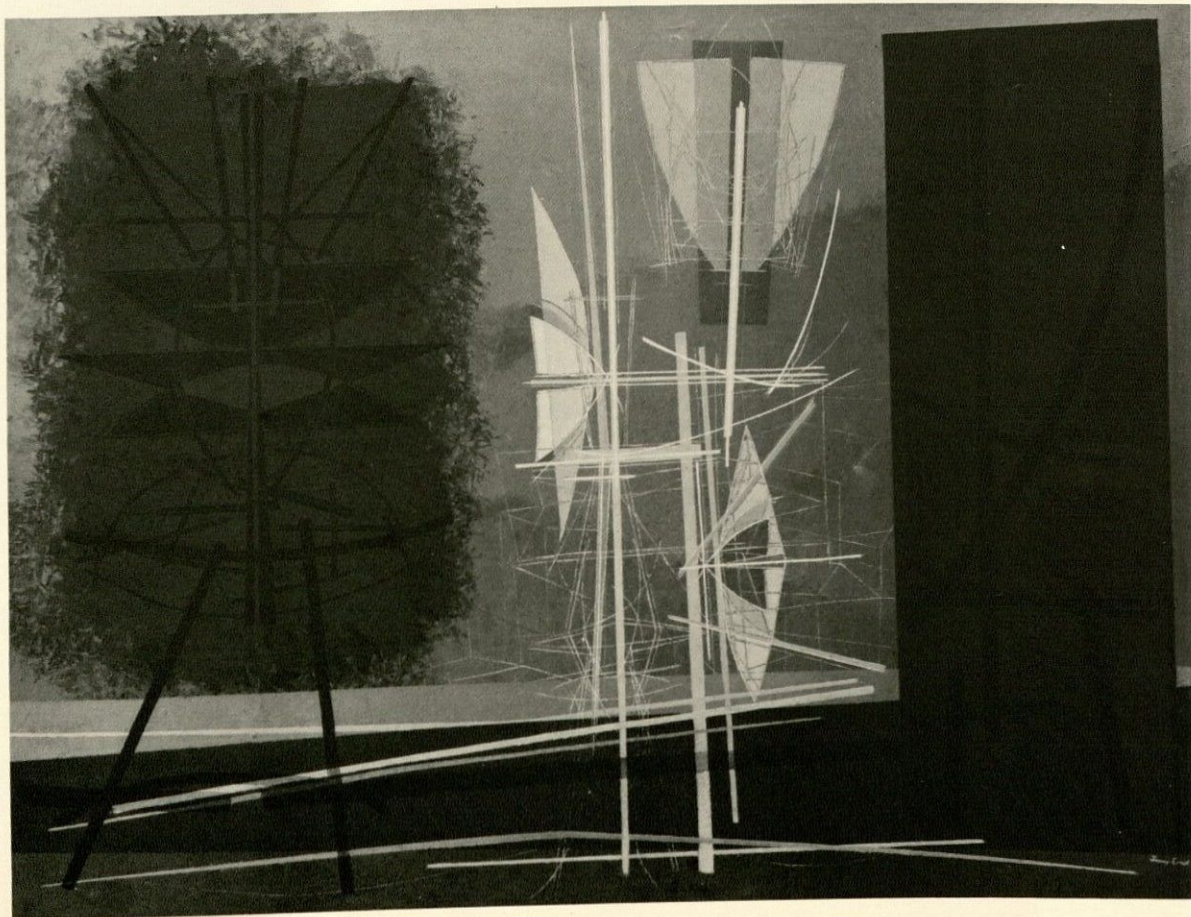
Bold, solid forms comprise a triumvirate of clustered patterns which block off the canvas into three sections. The tensions of this spatial design are absorbed in the flickering of interpenetrating planes behind the left-hand cluster, wispy lines and arcs which dance about the central cluster of rigid forms, and the relief of textural play which draws the eye in and out of the right-hand section of patterned cluster.

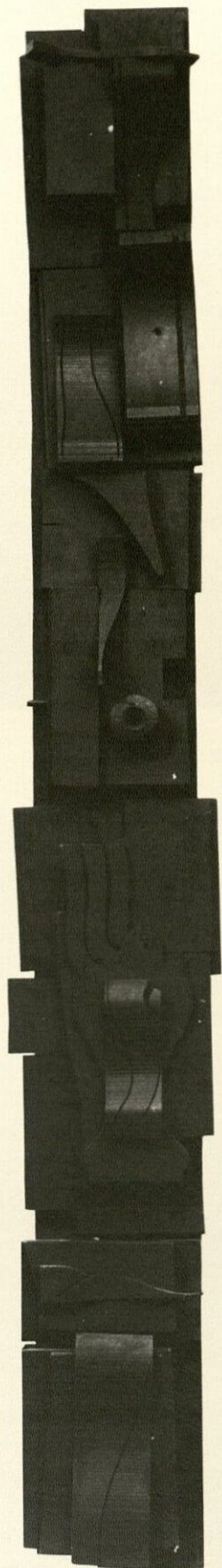
A constant intermingling of formal elements organizes the canvas specifically, but still allows it the freedom of its own mobility. By contrasting linear stability with soft pockets of color and texture, contained within the borderlines of the carefully designed network, the composition of *Timescape* belies its inherent vulnerability.

Theme and image are never preconceived: Ernst first addresses himself to the initiation of a canvas. When speaking of his art, he compares himself to a woman about to give birth: "Like a woman in labor, I'm working too hard at getting the job done to worry about what it will turn out to be."

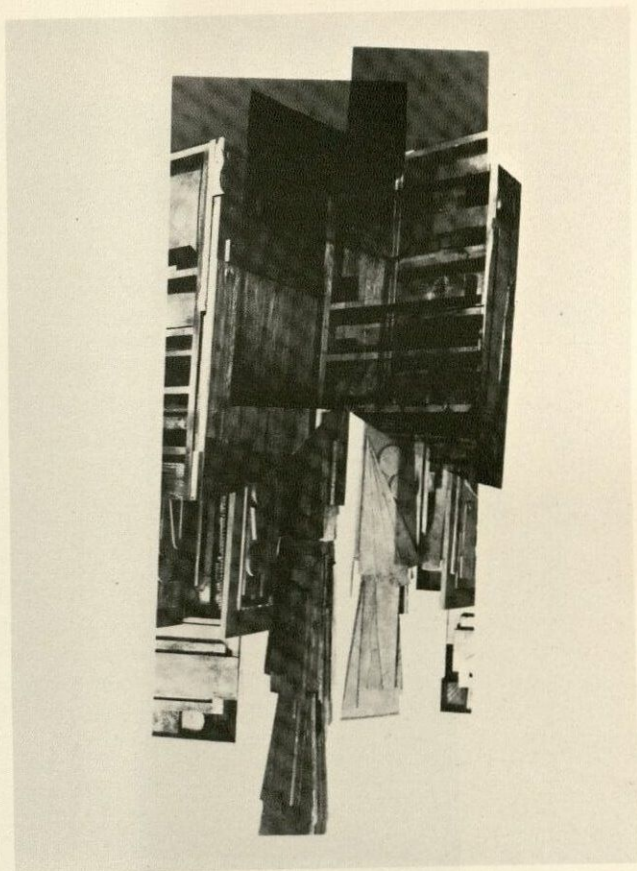


Untitled (portfolio of six serigraphs)





Composition, (silkscreen)



Louise Nevelson

American (1900 –)

Sky Totem, 1956

Painted wood (71 × 10 × 6)

Sky Totem is a good representative of Nevelson's assemblages. Her materials consist of furniture ornaments, incised, concave wooden blocks and lumber scraps. They are all painted uniformly black and thus neutralized into abstract forms. Nevelson assembles these elements in layers, juxtaposing silhouettes and surfaces. She constructs space by manipulating illuminated projections and shadowy recesses. The image, in its totality, captures the transient relationships of light and form in space by arresting the moment of change.

Louise Nevelson created *Sky Totem* at a turning point in her artistic development, at the transition between her early and mature styles. During the forties, she made assemblages from "ready made" objects, as the Cubists and Dadaists had done before her, using them abstractly in her "tabletop" landscapes, city scapes and "presences." In 1948 her progress was thwarted when her benefactor, Karl Nierendorf, died and she herself became ill. Although Nevelson did not actively exhibit for the next several years, she was at the center of the New York art scene. Her apartment became the salon for panel discussions on the arts, known as the Four O'Clock Forum, in which de Kooning and Rothko, among others, participated.⁷ By the mid-fifties Nevelson was producing wood landscapes again. The tabletop sculptures soon evolved into larger, free-standing columns and reliefs. It was at this point that she began painting all her wood forms black. In 1956, the year *Sky Totem* was made, she installed her first environmental show, entitled *Royal Voyage*, at the Grand Central Moderns Gallery. She turned the gallery space into an ambiance with assemblages suggesting regal personages, an ocean craft, and marine scapes. Nevelson's experimentation with stacking structural elements, an important step in the development of the sculptural walls for which she is best-known, originated in this exhibition. In the ensuing years she began using shadow boxes to contain her assemblage, giving the sculpture a new dimension for spatial illusion. Nevelson's 1958 exhibition, *Moon Garden Plus One*, was an environment of walls composed of stacked boxes and columns, including one of her greatest works, *Sky Cathedral*.

During her student years, Nevelson studied graphics at Atelier 17 with W. S. Hayter. The silkscreen, *Composition* (from the University Art Gallery's own collection), represents a more recent effort in which she uses the imagery of her mature sculptural style in multiple layers, further exploring spatial potentialities through graphic technique. *Composition* was originally published in a portfolio entitled *Artists and Writers Protest against the Vietnam War*.

Charles Sheeler

American (1883 – 1965)

San Francisco, 1956

Oil on canvas (32 × 22)

Affected by, yet never entirely accepting the non-objectivity or the “undisciplined and overstated approach” of Abstract Expressionism, Charles Sheeler’s later West Coast works blend abstraction with newly brightened color. An unwavering Precisionist sensibility underlies the works’ stylistic departure from Photo-realism. *San Francisco* demonstrates the artist’s use of the rigorous and sharply defined style to convey the American urban experience.

Derived from specific and familiar places, the few recurrent themes — landscapes, barns, industrial architecture, cities, still-lives, interiors — engender a static, classically harmonious world. Strong, functional forms, often selected for their inherent abstractness, were further abstracted by an idealizing vision which distilled perception.

Complexity of form and detail is eliminated from *San Francisco*. Linear arches, reminiscent of the Golden Gate bridge, enclose a tight juxtaposition of architectural and nautical imagery. Subordinated to the geometric logic of the composition, the artist’s vision of the city “records a plurality of images willfully directed by the artist.” The vertical rhythm of overlapping shapes synthesizes the layout of San Francisco buildings stacked against mountains. From “certain shapes having imprinted themselves deeply in his memory,” Sheeler’s multiple-image paintings arose.

Interrelated observations drawn from a variety of sites separate his later approach from the earlier reliance upon a fixed point of view. Photographic endeavors contributed to stylistic change; the artist grafted a procedure derived from double-exposures onto his abstractions.

As with other artists of the Precisionist group — Demuth, Dickinson, Lozowick, O’Keefe, Spenser — Charles Sheeler’s style varied in later years. Yet in the cool geometry of selective and controlled form, the abstractions betray the approach of a pristine formalist. A response to new currents in American painting and to this summer encounter with western scenery, *San Francisco* emerges from and remains defined by Sheeler’s Precisionist framework.





Jack Levine

American (1915–)

Inauguration, 1956–58

Oil on canvas (73 × 80)

Jack Levine lived through three manners of American art. In the thirties Regionalism was proclaimed as the first coming of a truly American art. The struggling city-scenes painted by the Social Realists and the abstract masses of color painted by the Geometric Abstractionists were not relevant to the Regionalists' definitions of American life, and as such were discounted as subversive and un-American.

The participation of the United States in World War II put a temporary halt to Jack Levine's work. As atomic power had revolutionized warfare, Abstract Expressionism revolutionized the painted surface in the fifties. Whereas, previously, the Regionalists and the Social Realists at least concurred on the validity of the representational image, the imagery employed by the Abstract Expressionists (Jack Levine referred to them as "space cadets") was alien to Levine's visual sensibilities.

More than a decade later, a new band of young artists proclaimed Pop Art as the visual idiom of the sixties. With large canvases displaying solely the accoutrements of popular culture, these artists exposed the shallowness of urban America and penetrated the fraud of American art. Jack Levine had been expressing these same sentiments throughout his entire career, but once again his paintings remained on the periphery.

Born of Jewish parents in a Boston slum in 1915, Levine was raised in a milieu of baseness and corruption. These childhood experiences became the raw material for many of his early works (e.g., *Feast of Pure Reason* from 1937 and *The Gangster's Funeral* done in 1952-53).

Levine's paintings afforded him financial stability, and enabled him to escape from the poverty of his past; his focus grew from concern with specific social injustices to the larger concern with social *structure* — government. Working more or less concurrently with the commencement of the Eisenhower administration, Levine began a series which examined, or more aptly scrutinized, the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government: *The Trial* (1953-54), *Election Night* (1954-55), *The Turnkey* (1956), *The Spanish Prison* (1961), and *Inauguration* (1956-58).

Inauguration, as the title suggests, is the depiction of the greatest ritual in our republic. The figures, alluding to familiar personalities (i.e., Mr. Truman, Mamie Eisenhower), are nonetheless not restricted to specific individuals. Levine rarely uses actual historical figures in his paintings, but rather creates characters who are at once highly individual and the epitome of a type. In this painting, the solemnness and reverence associated with an inauguration is shattered by the ubiquitous intrusion of the electronic apparatus of television hovering over the heads of state. Levine poses the television director in such a way as to suggest that he is really the stage manager of the entire procedure. In *Inauguration*, Jack Levine decries a nation whose only reality is that portrayed on the television screen, and whose people detect no heresy in the stage artificiality of one of its most important events.

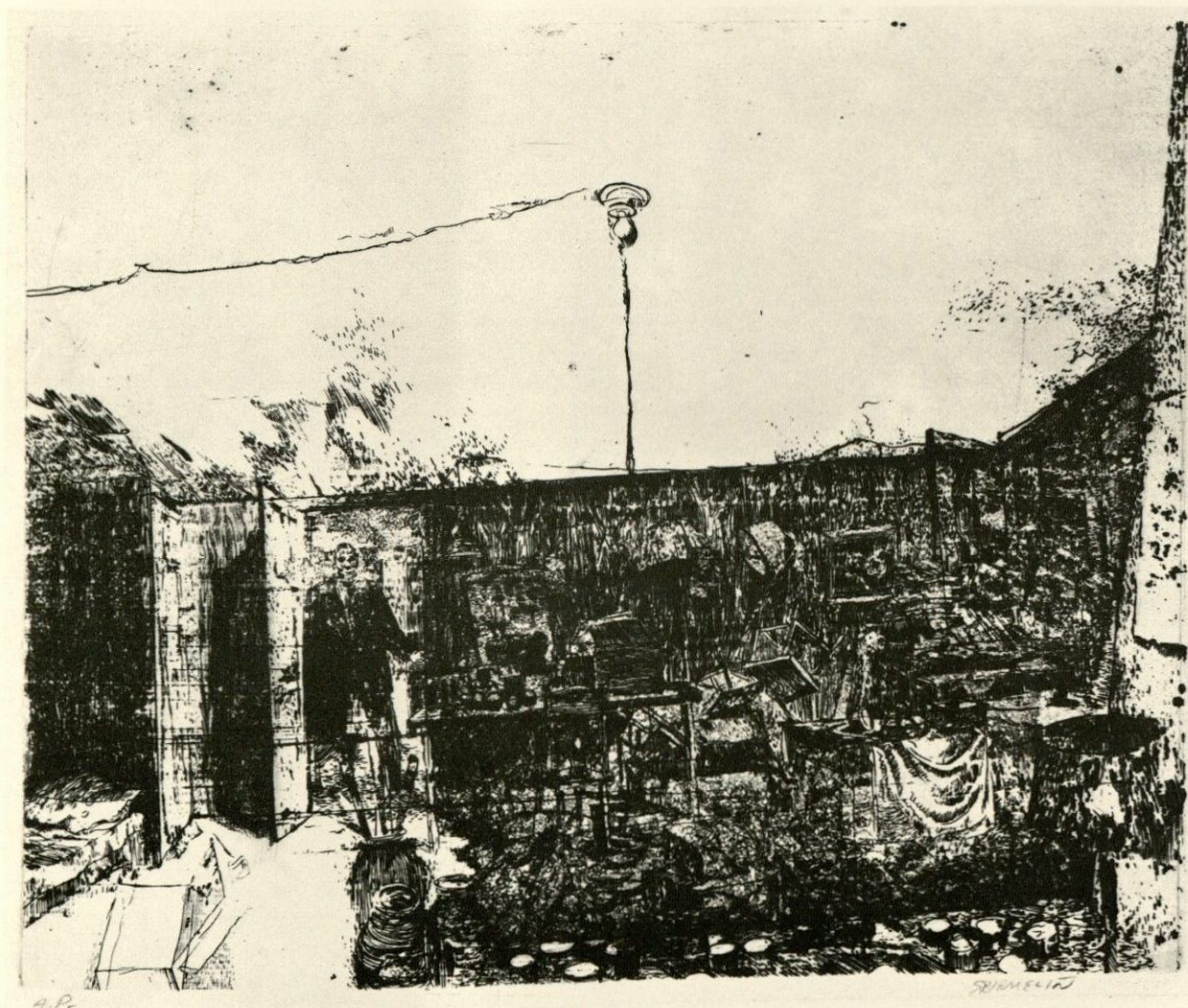


Robert Henri

*Works in the University Art Gallery's Permanent Collection
on Exhibit with the Sara Roby Foundation Collection*

- Robert BIRMELIN, *The Blackyard*, (lithograph) Acc. No. 1969.40
 Jimmy ERNST, *Untitled* (portfolio of six serigraphs) Acc. No. 1978.19
 George GROSZ, *Man Seated at Table*, (lithograph) Acc. No. 1969.21
 Robert HENRI, *The Bullfight*, (drawing) Acc. No. 1969.43
 Fred Dana MARSH, *Construction Workers*, (crayon and wash drawing) Acc. No. 1973.11
 ———. *Oriental Fantasy*, (oil on canvas) Acc. No. 1974.42
 Kenneth Hayes MILLER, *Play*, (etching) Acc. No. 1972.30
 Louise NEVELSON, *Composition*, (silkscreen) Acc. No. 1971.36
 Robert VICKREY, *Basrelief*, (tempera on masonite) Acc. No. 1976.1

Robert Birmelin





Paul Cadmus

American (1904 –)

Night in Bologna, 1957–58

Egg-yolk tempera on composition board (50 × 34)

Paul Cadmus creates an intriguing drama in *Night in Bologna* not exceeded in the spectrum of his socially satiric and homoerotic art. Relying on the time-honored, meticulous technique of egg-yolk tempera, Cadmus employs the traditional methods of perspective and draftsmanship to render the Bolognese arcades. Realistic staging of figures in three-dimensional architectural space sets Cadmus's art apart from the more frequently two-dimensional concerns of other modern artists and makes him formally comparable to Renaissance artists such as Piero della Francesca.⁸

In keeping with the Renaissance tradition, Cadmus re-introduces iconography, not common to most twentieth-century artists.⁹ Erotic iconography is Cadmus's specialty; the sac-like bag and walking stick grasped by the woman in *Night in Bologna* are emblematic of male genitalia, the tower projecting into the night sky is clearly phallic.¹⁰

Light plays an important role in heightening the mysteriousness of the atmosphere, although iconographically it is more ambiguous than Cadmus's other symbols. The most obvious association is the rose-red light of sexual passion which bathes the young soldier, turning his green uniform into a vibrant, flame-colored orange. Streaming out from behind a blinded window is a golden light — home fires? — a metaphor for the domesticity normally associated with the female presence, or perhaps for the gold of Midasian greed which the woman of the street collects as a reward for services.¹¹ Even more enigmatic is the blue-green light pouring down over the traveler/artist Cadmus, representing the mystical blue world of the artist's imagination and/or the green light of the artist envying the figure of the Italian soldier. The equivocal nature of light facilitates the transition from specific individual conflicts to the more fundamental human drama.

With one foot resting on a stone step, the young soldier turns his head to gaze at a voluptuous woman walking away from him. Her head is directed toward an impish man, identified as the artist himself, seated at a cafe table with a suitcase at his feet. Cadmus, apparently on his grand tour of Europe in 1931, peers directly at the dark-haired Italian soldier, ignoring completely the beckoning gaze of the woman. A triangle of misdirected sexual attraction is established.¹² Will the soldier anticipate convention and follow the woman towards the area of light or will he walk down the tunneled arcade toward a darker form of sexuality? It is a pivotal moment: the answer is implicitly stated in the tower looming directly above the soldier's head.

Preliminary sketch for *Subway Symphony*, 1974

Pencil, crayons, casein, watercolor on gray fabriano paper
(20³/₄ × 39³/₄)

This sketch represents a stage before the final completion of the largest painting of Cadmus's career, *Subway Symphony* (1976). It captures the essence of caricature used by Cadmus to satirize the hordes of humanity traversing New York by subway. The ironically titled *Subway Symphony* is really a grotesque representation of the discordance in city life, a mockery of the methods men find to escape the dread of living and the thought of dying.

Lolling back in drunken sleep, a young black man spills the contents of his escape medium, liquor, onto the floor between his legs. Cadmus presses us with the gruesome details of an even further stage of alcoholic deterioration, as a drunken derelict lies vomiting on the floor behind the bench. The reddened eyes of a long-haired hippie and oblivious sleep of the Bohemian couple exaggerate the vapid stupor induced by drugs. The obsession of older women to retain their youth is ridiculed: the dyed platinum hair, the green shoes that match the dress and eyeshadow of the huge woman with conical breasts serve to underscore Cadmus's satirical intent. Exploitation of the junk food hype are epitomized in the elephantine black woman who stuffs her face with ice cream, and by the hard-hat construction worker who, while scrutinizing the love gestures of the interracial couple, is about to bite into a Big Mac.

Cadmus spares no one. A sleazy, bubblegum-chewing Puerto Rican woman dangles a gold cross from her neck; it is a crucifix worn more for decoration than as a sign of dedication to her faith. Even the black man and his white female companion, immersed in their own physical attraction for each other, have built a corporate reality to escape the self-destructive anarchy taking place in the bowels of New York City.





George Tooker

American (1920 –)

In the Summerhouse, 1958

Egg tempera on masonite (24 × 24)

An example of George Tooker's work, *In the Summerhouse* displays the successful melding of age-old technique and modern intent. The artist cites the Italian Renaissance as one of his many influences and uses a method virtually unchanged since Giotto. Tooker paints in egg tempera — water-thinned, pigmented yolk. However, unlike his artistic forefathers, Tooker chooses common people as his subjects rather than aristocrats or enthroned Madonnas.

Divided into three rectangles of varying areas, demarcated by the vertical beams of the lattice-work enclosure, *In the Summerhouse* calls to mind the layout of a Renaissance triptych. Not only does the artist rely on line (the enlarged sketch is traced directly onto the prepared panel) but he delights in the repetition of forms. Three egg shapes compose the Chinese lanterns in the foreground. Also, the two prominent, extended arms, each of which holds one of these lanterns, follow a similar graceful curve. In addition to admiring the Flemish Primitives and Piero della Francesca, Tooker is also fond of the works of many fifteenth-century northern Italian painters and relief sculptors. The latticed "space-box," shallow treatment of depth, and the static pose of the girls may be thought of as manifestation of these influences.

Using a technique introduced to him in 1946 by Paul Cadmus, Tooker observes rather than comments on society. Concepts of observation are relevant to *In the Summerhouse*; not only does the viewer observe a scene but the figures in the painting, as in so many of Tooker's works, are observers as well. Not conscious of the beholder's gaze, the two girls stand transfixed, almost frozen, wrapped in private worlds of meditation. Curious, the older girl perceives with a blank stare a scene not visible to the viewer. Just as no communication exists between viewer and figures, the two girls lack human interaction. Despite the color tones of their fleshy arms and the warm hues of their dresses, the silent mystery of an unseen vision chills the emotional atmosphere.

Karl Knaths

American (1891 – 1971)

Clam Diggers, 1959

Oil on canvas (42 × 60)

Karl Knaths has been called an Abstract Expressionist and even a “romantic” Cubist in an effort to classify his individual style, but neither is appropriate. Drawing from the work of the Post-Impressionists, the Fauves, and the Cubists, his paintings resist categories, their prominent ingredient being a unique sense of pictorial design.

Inspired by his Cape Cod environment, Knaths typically used maritime subjects such as wharves, nets, fishermen, and boats in his work, but one of the most pervasive figures is the clam digger. Each rendition of *Clam Diggers* (1929, 1949, and 1959) is progressively more abstract than its predecessor; each attempts increasingly stylized renditions of the subject.

In *Clam Diggers*, 1959, a symbiosis of color and structure vivify the canvas. Angular strokes of black paint break up the figures to expose their plastic qualities, but form is nowhere sacrificed. Bold lines yield and respond to the agitation created by pulsating color. Although there are significant variations in value and hue, cool tones of blue, green, and gray pervade the picture plane. Despite conscious efforts at patterning and studied planning of chromatic harmony, the organization of *Clam Diggers* manages to generate spontaneity and freshness.

Degrees of abstraction and realism vary in the work of Karl Knaths, but throughout his career, form and color remained the controlling elements of his design. His approach is from the canvas to nature, and not vice versa; he conceived the design before seeking the subject. When once asked what he most wanted people to gain from his work, Knaths answered, “Poetry.”





Robert Birmelin

American (1933 –)

The Concrete Viaduct, 1960

Conte crayon on paper (25 × 24)

Born in Newark, New Jersey, Birmelin conveys the realities of city living, as they collide with the self-imposed dream quality characteristic of much of his work. Fascinated with the crowds of the New York subway, the artist presented in the late sixties, surrealistic views employing techniques both of peripheral vision and of ultra-realism. In his recent narrative scenes, *The Apartment Living Series*, Birmelin juxtaposes realistic interiors with unexpected and often impossible perspectives; problems of perception are pressed to their farthest limits to intensify pictorial descriptions. His style frequently reflects this fragmented realism, where figures and their surroundings take shape in the mind's eye rather than in their own material, though abstracted, two-dimensional presence. *The Blackyard* (from the University Art Gallery's own collections) reveals Birmelin's draftsmanship and technical mastery of lithographic processes. The clutter of living and its confusion emerges out of a tangle of line and shadow; figures and objects of a nightmarish quality, often recalling Francis Bacon's somber atmospheres, come to the fore and then recede only to be assimilated by another form. Light reveals and unifies objects while determining psychological effects, just as intense contrasts of light and dark increase the expressive quality of *The Concrete Viaduct*, which assumes a labyrinthine aspect.

Converging lines of tracks, the descending horizon, the slight bend of the viaduct wall echo the rhythms and movement of the train. Repetition of ties and rails is suggested; their actual presence remains implicit. Details are not allowed to clutter and confuse; the wildness of the high grasses clinging to the wall is scribbled in with a quick impatient hand. The concrete wall itself, felt and formed by a few broad strokes, holds back the encroaching earth, which unchecked, would seal the passageway the tunnel burrows into the land.

Smudged and frantic lines disclose Birmelin's intent to state more than a mere likeness of the locomotive on an iron rail. Working quickly, he evokes a haunting spirit and allows the spectator to experience the power of the railroad scene and yet simultaneously to be distanced from it. In a 1960 interview, Birmelin revealed his artistic ambition: "I should like to be able to observe and recall the familiar and the ordinary with such intensity that I should be able to leave traces of the experience for the sympathetic observer to re-experience in his own way."

Will Barnet

American (1911 –)

Sleeping Child, 1961

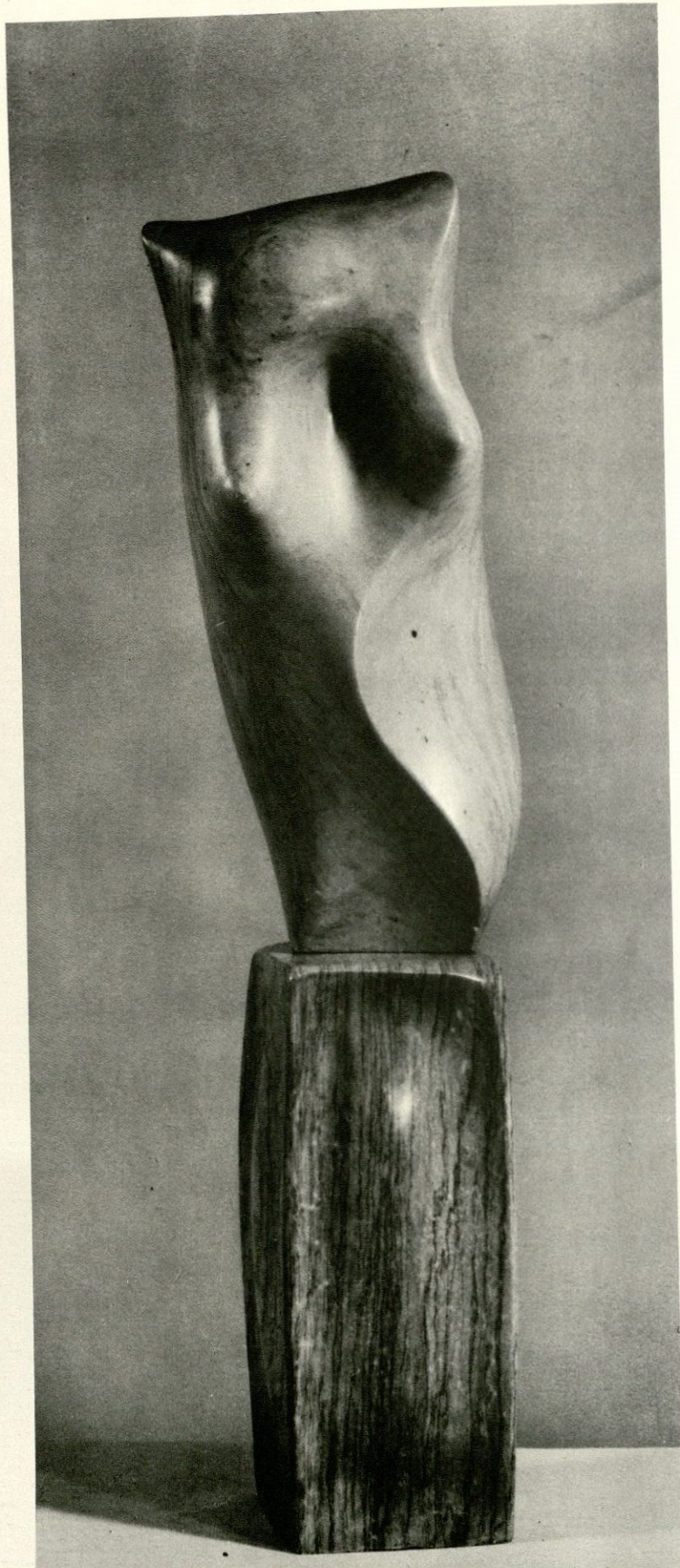
Oil on canvas (62 × 48)

Will Barnet's *Sleeping Child* represents the third phase of his stylistic development. Influenced by the work of Daumier and the Mexican mural painter, Orozco, Barnet began his painting career in the thirties as a Social Realist. Interest in the reduction of forms and the elimination of space led him to a more abstract style in the late forties. It was the human figure, though, that had always been a source of amazement and inspiration to Barnet, and in the late fifties he synthesized his earlier styles into a new one which he termed "geometric abstraction." Working with flat colors and geometric, hard-edged shapes, Will Barnet explores the relationship of human forms in two-dimensional space.

In *Sleeping Child* the perpendicular arrangement of the two females against a solid background reduces realistic, dimensional space, emphasizing the relationship of the two figures in and on the vertical canvas. One woman, sensually stretching upward, is awake and aware while the other, an adolescent, lies innocently asleep. Although pictured together, the figures do not interact but remain discrete entities; they exist diametrically opposed in a boundless, vast world. To counteract the isolation of the subjects from each other, Barnet attempts to control this vastness by carefully balancing and juxtaposing forms, paying special attention to their relationship to the edge of the canvas. Reinforcing the resulting equilibrium and constraint with quiet, monochromatic colors, Barnet creates a decorative pattern that is bold yet meditative. The overall effect is simple and subdued; it explores the poetry of the human figure. Thin application of the paint enables Barnet to produce a work in which the canvas appears to fuse with the subject.

Barnet relies on monumental and highly simplified forms. As one of the originators of "clear-edge" abstraction, he remained an individual amidst the Abstract Expressionists, preferring to call himself an Abstract Realist: "the abstract work is never concerned with amorphous feelings but always with visual images of very real experiences which demand, as did the more recognizable imagery of the earlier work, that each form exist in its own sharply defined character," Barnet explained.





Kenneth Campbell
 American (1913 –)

Nike, 1964
 Grey Vermont marble ($41\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$)

Campbell's *Nike* is the flow of space made solid. It pushes and pulls in a fusion of dynamic flight with female being. Campbell identifies wholly with what he creates, working the natural stone with his hands in the manner of the ancient Greeks. Campbell's movement on the stone as he shapes it is a response to the life within it. When stone is then stacked upon stone, the fusion of self and material is encapsulated in eternal balance. Once cut from the quarry, the stone, transformed, is again part of a greater whole analyzed by Campbell:

All art is a revelation of thoughts from other spheres. Always from one whole another whole is made. In this exchange of being, an entity evolves in a veritable organic way, a life in itself, stirring and expanding from the center of the stone. As we turn the stone about—a pebble in the palm of the hand, even though it may require a tractor to move it—each facet seems new and exciting. One endeavors to keep this intensity burning so that its wholeness comes to consciousness. At the moment of revelation, with the shock of recognition, all becomes clear.

In carving and constructing, Campbell creates the potential for movement poised. His method allows inner dimension to meet outer dimension as the volume of stone expresses itself in "a skin of tension" over the idea within it. Campbell moves with the configurations of the stone, then juxtaposes new pattern and new color. Campbell interacts with the mythic in his work by focusing on and unifying the polarities of finite time and eternity, movement and stasis: "We must tap the infinite," he says, "for art is mostly about eternity."

Campbell turned from painting to sculpture in 1954. As one of the few contemporary artists expert at stonecarving, he has also developed a unique lamination process as an outgrowth of his interest in color contrasts. Since 1968 his work has taken a new direction in the execution of a number of monumental works. Currently he is associate professor of art at the University of Maryland and works from his studios in New York City and the western Pennsylvania countryside.