Collection Highlights

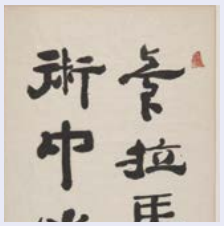
KALAMAZOO INSTITUTE OF ARTS

Table of Contents









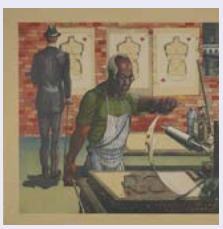
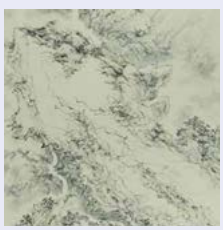






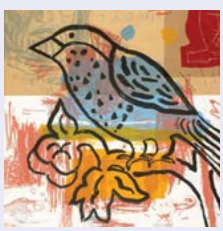




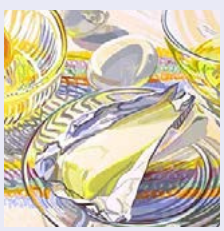




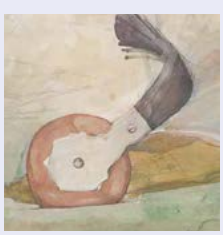


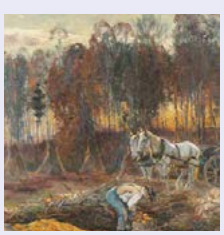


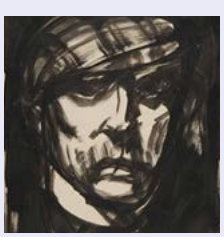
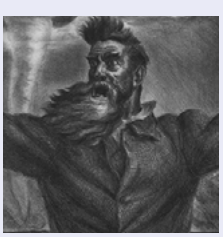























Since its founding in 1924, the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts has built a collection of nearly 5,000 artworks. Enjoy an in-depth exploration of a selection of those artworks acquired by gift, bequest, or purchase support by special donors, as written by staff curators and guest editors over the years.

FREDERICK HENRY EVANS

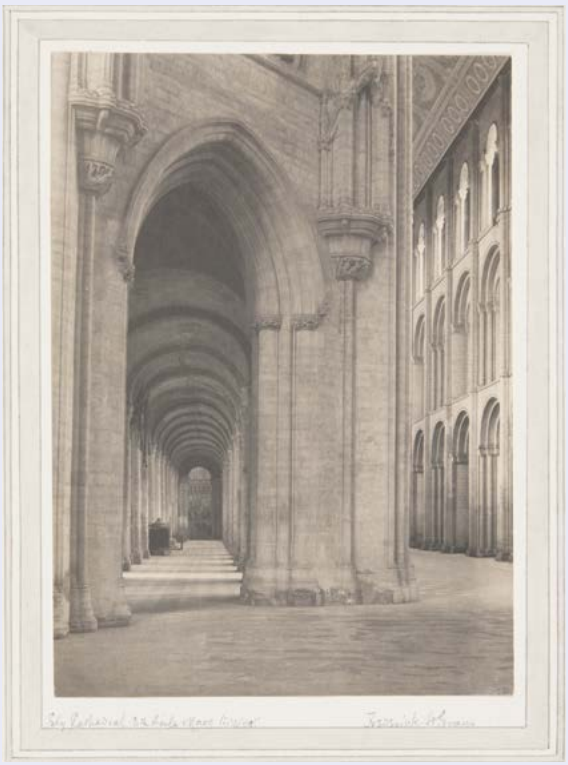
English photographer Frederick Henry Evans (1853–1943) is best known for his meticulous representations of English and French cathedrals. In midlife, after retiring from being a bookseller, he took up photography. Influenced by the patience and carefulness of medieval ecclesiastical builders, he soon became known for his painstaking methods. He often studied his architectural subjects for weeks to evaluate various light conditions and establish the optimal moment at which to capture his image. Inspired by both religiosity and a devotion to perfectionism, the order and detail of his photographs recall the careful and skillful works of other late-19th- and early-20th-century British photographers, etchers, and writers who were similarly inspired to document and celebrate medieval cathedrals. Like Evans, many of these artists were alarmed by society's growing modernity and impiety, and chose to create works inspired by the patience, devotion, ingenuity, and craftsmanship of the people who had erected these grand structures centuries before.

At a time when the quick-and-dirty "snapshot" was growing in popularity and many Pictorialist photographers sought to advocate for their medium's status as art by altering their images to more closely resemble paintings, Evans became known as a passionate advocate for carefully composed, unaltered photographs. Though celebrated for the skill and detail of his work both in the first few decades of the twentieth century and today, the unpopularity of his anti-Pictorialist stance resulted in obscurity during his later years.

Ely Cathedral, in Cambridgeshire, is one of the grandest medieval cathedrals in England. Erected on the site of a 7th-century Anglo-Saxon abbey, the Romanesque structure was built over the course of nearly three centuries beginning in 1083. On an architectural level, it is renowned for its grand spaces, refined details, and unusual 14th-century octagonal tower. Evans's photograph, captured from the perfect angle to allow the nave and aisle's arches to echo as they recede into space, shows the cathedral as a model of neatness and order—a tribute, seemingly, to its careful design and construction.

Mostly built in the 12th and 13th centuries, Chartres Cathedral has an even greater reputation, having long been hailed as one of the most beautiful and influential medieval structures in Western Europe. Pictured here is a portion of the choir wall (16th–18th centuries), which features a series of 40 vignettes from the stories of Mary and Jesus. This photograph is less grand than many of Evans's others, instead focusing on the ornateness of the cathedral's interior architecture and the illumination of these elaborate details under the natural light filtering through the building's stained glass windows.

Seen together, these two images not only illustrate some of the different approaches that Evans employed as he worked on his extensive church photography project, but also invite us to consider the majesty of these structures, their social functions within the communities that erected them, and their meaning within our world today.



Frederick Henry Evans, *Ely Cathedral*, ca. 1900, platinum print.
Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Wm. John Upjohn, 1995/6.23.

Frederick Henry Evans, *Chartres Cathedral,* ca. 1900, platinum print.
Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Wm. John Upjohn, 1995/6.24.

JILL WASKOWSKY

Jill Waskowsky's lithograph *Kirk II* pays homage to Kirk Newman, a prominent sculptor, teacher, and contributor to the Kalamazoo art community. Newman was well-regarded for blending traditional craftsmanship with playful, abstract concepts. In this portrait, Waskowsky captures his multifaceted nature by juxtaposing realism with stylized, whimsical elements, reflecting Newman's artistic and personal legacy.

Newman's black suit and lifelike expression ground the piece in realism, evoking the seriousness of a formal portrait. However, any formality presented by Waskowsky's realistic depiction of Newman's face is humorously disrupted by adding a brightly colored geometric hat that towers above his head, and an oversized bowtie. These whimsical elements, composed of abstract shapes and vibrant colors, echo Newman's ability to think beyond conventional boundaries, reflecting his belief in creativity as a tool for exploration and innovation. The circular cutouts in the suit and the exaggerated gesture of the hand refer to the imagery seen in Newman's own lithographs.

Kalamazoo artist Jill Waskowsky is a retired art educator and was also a friend of Newman's. She created this lithograph while assisting Newman with a lithography project. Waskowsky's personal relationship and connection to people and students compelled her to shift her focus from still lifes to portraiture. Waskowsky's portraits communicate more than her sitter's likeness. Here, Waskowsky encapsulates Newman's legacy: a serious educator and artist with a deeply playful and innovative core. *Kirk II* honors Newman's contributions to Kalamazoo's artistic community. Waskowsky invites viewers to celebrate the creativity, humor, and humanity that defined Newman's life and work.

Jill Waskowsky, *Kirk II*, 1983, lithograph, hand-colored. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Donation from Edward Sackley III, 2006.42.

TODD ZIMMERMAN

Longtime Kalamazoo resident Todd Zimmerman created *An Animal's Tale of Michigan* for the KIA's outreach program between 1987 and 1995. He envisioned the project as an entertaining introduction to Michigan history for children. The 36 panels of the series highlight the state's historic industries (from fur trading to car manufacturing), famous figures (including Tecumseh and Henry Schoolcraft), landmark structures (such as the Soo Locks and Lake Michigan lighthouses), and cultural contributions (like fine art and Motown music).

One panel alludes to Pontiac's Rebellion, the 1760s conflict named after an Odawa chief who helped lead Indigenous nations in a widespread uprising against British rule in the wake of the redcoats' victory in the French and Indian War. Unlike their French predecessors, who had crafted a complex network of alliances with the Great Lakes region's Native nations, the British treated its Indigenous peoples as conquered subjects, ignoring their customs and allowing colonists to freely settle throughout the region. The Rebellion ended in stalemate but forced the British to reconsider their policies.

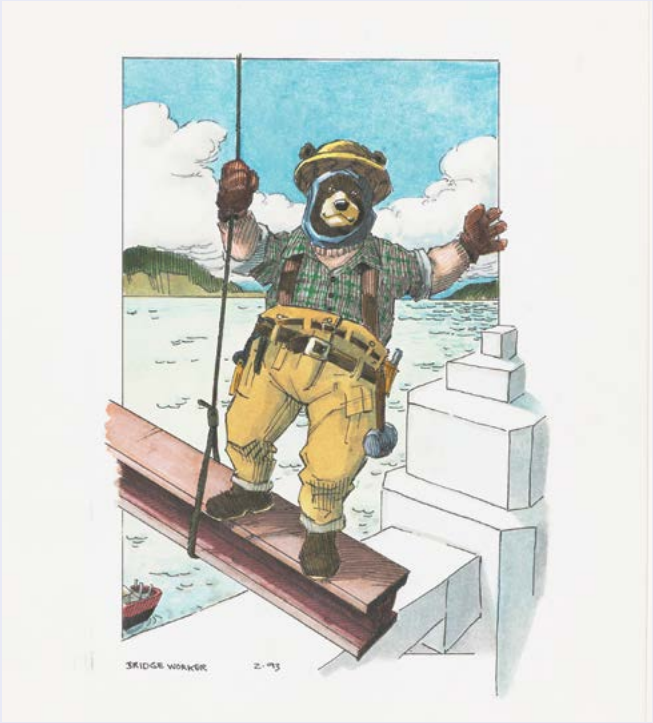
A second panel focuses on Lewis Cass, who was the territorial governor of Michigan from 1813–1831. During this lengthy tenure, he helped explore and map the region, negotiated agreements with Native groups (including the Lenape, Odawa, Ojibwe, Potawatomi, Seneca, Shawnee, and Wyandot), and guided the territory towards statehood, which it achieved in 1837. Cass became a U.S. Senator from the new state and later served as a cabinet member, ambassador, and Democratic Party Presidential nominee. Today Cass's legacy is mixed because of his advocacy for a state-by-state solution to the nation's political conflict over the legality of slavery and his role in implementing policies that forcibly displaced Indigenous groups.

Zimmerman also highlights the construction of the Mackinac Bridge, completed in 1957, which not only finally connected Michigan's two peninsulas, but also immediately became an iconic state symbol. The five-mile-long bridge is one of the longest in the world and features an innovative design intended to ensure it is safe against the high winds that sometimes whistle through the Straits of Mackinac. It replaced an expensive and inconvenient ferry system and, in the decades since its opening, has helped feed the explosion of tourist activity on the Upper Peninsula. Today, about four million cars cross the bridge each year.

With the exception of tourists, all of the people in Zimmerman's series are represented by animals native to Michigan. A final panel acknowledges the important role of tourism in the state's modern economy, showing an elephant and rhinoceros from out of state vacationing along the lakeshore. The animals' clothes humorously cast them as quintessential tourists — a final sign of the sense of whimsy that plays a key role in Zimmerman's series despite its historic subject matter.

Todd Zimmerman, *An Animal's Tale of Michigan: Pontiac's Rebellion,* 1987, watercolor and ink on paper. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Permanent Collection Fund for the Artreach Study Collection, 1989/90.54.5

Todd Zimmerman, *An Animal's Tale of Michigan: Lewis Cass,* 1987, watercolor and ink on paper. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Permanent Collection Fund for the Artreach Study Collection, 1989/90.54.11



Todd Zimmerman, *An Animal's Tale of Michigan: The Mackinac Bridge, 1987, watercolor and ink on paper.* Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Art Auction Fund for the Artreach Study Collection, 1994/5.32.21

FRITZ SCHOLDER

In honor of the KIA's partnership with Art Bridges and the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas, which brought several works by Native American artists, including two paintings by Fritz Scholder to the KIA through June 2025, Scholder's *Indian with beaded sash* from the KIA's collection will also be on view this fall. Born in Breckenridge, Minnesota in 1937, Fritz Scholder was an artist who initially eschewed painting the Native American experience. An early student of Oscar Howe, a notable artist of Yanktonai Dakota descent, Scholder then went on to study with Wayne Thiebaud at Sacramento State University. Other artists such as Francis Bacon, Leonard Baskin, and Willem de Kooning influenced Scholder's artistic practice. It was not until he began teaching at the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in 1964 that Scholder created his first paintings of Native Americans in response to the lack of representation of contemporary Native American lifestyles.

Scholder's dynamic compositions featuring bold colors and expressive brushwork that blended figurative, abstraction, and Pop Art brought him mainstream recognition. By 1969, the artist left the IAIA to pursue a full-time career as an artist. At that time, he expanded his practice to include photography, printmaking, and sculpture. A 1970 invitation to the Tamarind Institute printshop introduced him to printmaking and resulted in a 14-year partnership. *Indian with beaded sash* is one of those series of prints created during his years working with Tamarind. Portraits like this were controversial within and outside the Native American community, with some seeing his depictions of Native peoples as reifying European and American ideals of Native American life. Regardless, Scholder's paintings subverted Native American stereotypes such as "the noble savage," and instead shed light on the lasting traumas and daily realities affecting Native Americans such as alcoholism, displacement, and unemployment.

As he was one-fourth Luiseno and German, Sholder did not consider himself "fully Native." Scholder created images that critiqued Western and non-Native ideas of Native Americans. He embraced the paradox of emotions his works instilled and saw them as a way to draw people in. An irony especially, in light of this depiction of his *Indian with beaded sash,* which at first glance could be perceived as a stereotype of an Indian persona. However, portraits like these are larger-than-life representations of Native people; perhaps, alluding to society's inability to comprehend and appreciate Native American contributions and experiences fully. Although Scholder received wide national acclaim, he did not want to be considered a proponent of the New American Indian Art Movement. Nonetheless, Scholder influenced generations of young Native American artists. In 1980, Scholder stopped painting Native American portraits and life, instead focusing on depicting his travels and other interests such as mythology, death, and the afterlife until he died in 2008.

Fritz Scholder, *Indian with beaded sash,* 1975, color lithograph. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Permanent Collection Fund, 2012.2.13.

DALE CHIHULY

Dale Chihuly (b. 1941) is most well-known for his work with glass but, his works on paper offer a fascinating glimpse into his creative process. One of the most striking aspects of Chihuly's drawings is their fluidity and dynamism. Whether depicting swirling forms reminiscent of his glass sculptures or abstract compositions inspired by the natural world, Chihuly's drawings possess a captivating sense of movement and vitality. Often created while standing over the paper, his use of line and color is alluring, creating compositions that are at once harmonious and dynamic.

Unlike the controlled environment of the glass studio, Chihuly's drawings are driven by experimentation and spontaneity. His sketches serve as a means of exploration, allowing him to test out new ideas and concepts before committing them to glass. In this sense, his works on paper are essential tools for innovation and discovery, serving as a playground for his imagination to roam freely. However, works like *Basket Drawing* are not merely preparatory sketches; they are works of art in their own right, they are uninhibited and imbued with energy.

Whether he is working in glass or on paper, baskets have been a part of Chihuly's work since the late 1970s and his first major drawing series was *Basket Drawings*. Chihuly was inspired by the baskets of Northwest Indigenous tribes he saw at the Washington State Historical Society. He admired the meticulousness required as well as the organic, asymmetrical shapes they often took. Chihuly didn't just incorporate Indigenous basketry and textile motifs into his own artwork, he helped create a reciprocal exchange of inspiration and influence with Indigenous communities. The introduction of glass art into American Indian communities was largely propelled by the innovative efforts of Lloyd Kiva New, Cherokee and co-founder of the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), and Dale Chihuly.

Dale Chihuly, *Basket Drawing,* 2005, acrylic on Arches Archival Paper.
Collection of the Kalamazoo Instititute of Arts; Elisabeth Claire Lahti Fund, 2006.14

JANE LUND

Born in 1939 in Queens, New York, Jane Lund attended the Pratt Institute, Queens College, and the New York School of Social Research. Lund's vibrantly colored and meticulous pastels are meditative and incredibly realistic. The nature of Lund's practice is painstaking — one work can take almost a year to complete. Rather than drawing from direct observations, Lund prefers to create intimate portraits from numerous photographs and studies.

Rendered in the hyper-realist style for which she is best known, *Portrait of a Scholar* depicts an elegant woman staring outward toward viewers. This approach, from the positioning of the sitter to her expression, is typical of Lund's practice. However, this seemingly somber demeanor does not allude to the sitter's character. Instead, Lund relies on traditional portraiture tactics — props and attire — to provide further clues about this scholar. Wearing large hoop earrings, the woman holds a book in her left hand while bracelets adorn her right wrist. Her deep blue tunic bears ornate shifting designs around the sleeves and collar. A larger hexagonal patterned prism fills the center of the caftan and connects to the patterns trailing below it and across the woman's chest. Lund combines aspects of adornment and emotion to suggest her subject's complex nature. Furthermore, by not using the person's name as the title for the work, Lund challenges viewers' understanding of who a scholar is and what they might look like.

The subject is Dr. Eileen Julien, who became Lund's friend when they were Bunting Institute Fellows in the Radcliffe College at Harvard University from 1985 through 1986. A Professor Emeritus of Comparative Literature, French, and Italian in the College of Arts and Sciences at Indiana University Bloomington, Julien's research spanned African and American literature and oral traditions. Says Julien, "In the African context, I have been especially interested in the perceived tension between being 'modern' and being 'ourselves' and what this implies for understanding the relationship between 'indigenous' or 'local' resources…" Lund's creation of life-like compositions like *Portrait of a Scholar* are homages to her close friends and relatives.

Jane Lund, *Portrait of a Scholar,* 1995, pastel on paper. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Gift of Judith Kirsch Van Solkema and Sherman Van Solkema, 2024.1.

ROCKWELL KENT

American artist Rockwell Kent (1882-1971) is best known for paintings and illustrations inspired by his passion for and travels to far northern and southern regions. His extended sojourns in Maine, Vermont, upstate New York, Minnesota, Alaska, Newfoundland, Ireland, Greenland, and Tierra del Fuego had a formative effect on his creative practice. These adventures inspired several published memoirs, as well as countless paintings, prints, and drawings. Most of his paintings focused on the striking contours of vast, austere snowy lands, icy seas, and the intrepid figures who lived and worked within those forbidding climates. By contrast, his prints and drawings are often more philosophical, concentrating on the emotions of monumental lone or paired figures who rest upon or travel through Arctic-inspired land- and seascapes.

These four prints reveal some of the characteristic elements of Kent's printmaking practice—simplifying, idealizing styles; an interest in masculinity and the male form; passions for maritime themes and the grand emptiness of the Arctic; a penchant for invoking mythological and religious imagery; and a focus on figures who confront the viewer with a persistent sense of weariness, despair, and endangerment. Several of the figures look off into the distance, not only conveying anxiety and yearning but also inviting viewers to join them in contemplating the sublime character of the natural world. The longing suggested in these gazes reveals Kent's indebtedness to the nineteenth-century Romantic Movement, which inspired painters to depict figures looking out over grand vistas in desperate search of spiritual meaning and emotional fulfillment. These prints also reflect Kent's interest in Transcendentalism, a related American philosophical movement that encouraged individualism and an appreciation of nature rooted in mystical feeling. He hinted at the significance of philosophical and spiritual influences on his work when he wrote, "I don't want petty self-expression. I want the elemental, infinite thing; I want to paint the rhythm of eternity."

In many cases, Kent's prints were a part of his commercial illustration practice, which included cover and interior illustrations for books and magazines (including his most famous work, a set of drawings accompanying a 1930 edition of *Moby-Dick*), as well as advertising campaigns for major corporations. *The Precipice*, for example, was reproduced in *Harper's Magazine* in 1928. Meanwhile, *The Lookout* was one of a dozen prints used in a 1930-31 American Car and Foundry Company campaign featured in prominent magazines like *Time* and *Town & Country*. For these and other advertising illustrations, Kent avoided direct focus on the product being sold, instead offering connections between the company's offerings and the mythic visual universe that he had cultivated, in which transcendental meaning and natural beauty were paramount.

Rockwell Kent, *The Lookout,* 1930, wood engraving. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Donald S. Gilmore, 1968/7.

Rockwell Kent, *Pinnacle,* 1928, lithograph. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Director's Fund, 1964/5.

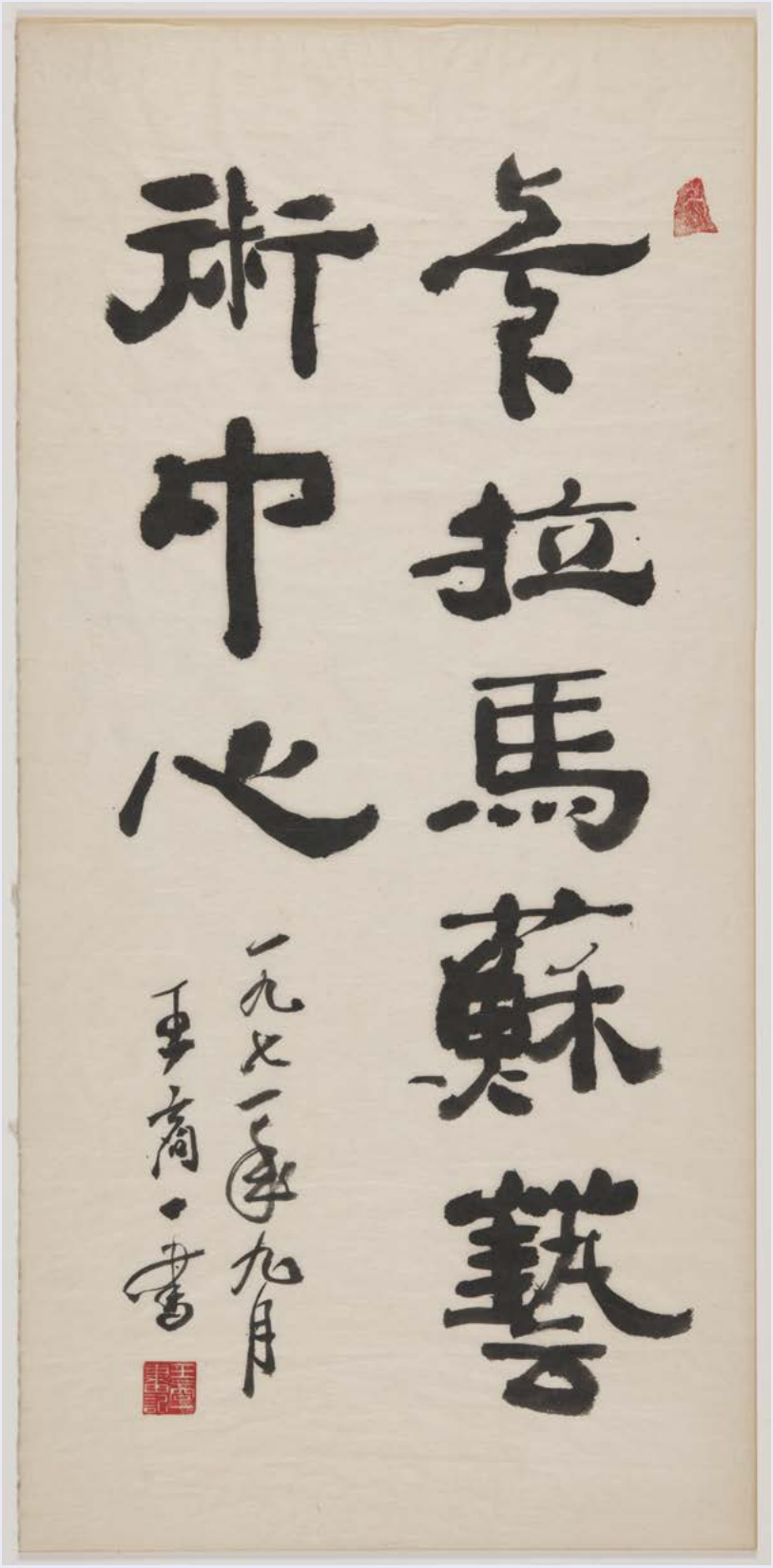
Rockwell Kent, *The Precipice,* 1927, wood engraving. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Director's Fund, 1964/5.

Rockwell Kent, *And Now Where,* 1936, lithograph. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Stewart, 1994/5.2.

SHANG-YI WANG

Born in 1905, Shang-yi Wang was a contemporary Chinese artist whose works included both landscapes and calligraphy, two traditional Chinese art forms.

This is one of Wang's calligraphic works.In China, the practices of painting and calligraphy developed simultaneously but were not regarded with the same prestige until the Song Dynasty (960-1279). Calligraphy was the dominant form of artistic expression for the majority of early Chinese history and shows the beauty, power, and simple expression of the word. The Chinese language is particularly expressive, because each sign is logographic, or depicting a word, and the meaning of each symbol can be somewhat ambiguous. This ambiguity leaves room for both artistic expression and interpretation. Calligraphy is done almost exclusively in black ink, with a brush. The Chinese characters in this untitled piece read "Kalamazoo Art Center," along with the artist's signature. Shang-yi Wang, who passed away in 1972 at the age of 67, instilled a love of art in his son, longtime Kalamazoo resident Dr. Paul Wang. Dr. Wang, an artist and art collector, has work in the Kalamazoo Institute of Art's permanent collection as well. This piece represents the larger purpose of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts: to form a place that represents the backgrounds of artists from around the world, and to shed light on the cultural significance and importance of visual art forms globally.



Shang-yi Wang, *Untitled,* 1971, ink on paper.
Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of the Artist, 1971/2.

NORMAN AKERS

A member of the Osage Nation, Norman Akers created colorful monoprints that often layer contemporary and pop culture imagery alongside references to his cultural heritage. For years, Akers alternated between painting and printmaking. Initially, his prints served as preliminary compositions for future paintings, but 15 years ago printmaking practice his primary medium. Akers notes that his training as a painter still comes through in his works. The prints juxtapose very flat elements with an illusion of space influenced by the canon of Western art traditions.

While many prints may appear flat and graphic, Akers works to create depth by densely layering his relatively small prints. He uses found images to create intricate cut-out collages that are turned into monoprints, and *Race for Place II* consists of three layers of imagery. The back-most layer depicts a clash between Native Americans and settlers. On the left-hand side, Native Americans commandeering birch bark or dugout canoes make landfall in a wooded area. In the center of the image, Native Americans, armed with bows and arrows, battle axe-wielding settlers. Dying or wounded bodies are strewn throughout the scene. The battle continues to the upper right corner. The next layer depicts two hands, palms facing outward toward viewers. A web of string is intertwined between the thumb and forefinger on each hand, reminiscent of cat's cradle — a game ubiquitous in cultures around the world for hundreds of years. Finally, the work is layered with images of birds, UFOs, and a Lakota Sioux man. The latter image was found in an old Merriam-Webster dictionary as the illustration for *tom-tom drum*. George Washington and Abraham Lincoln hover above the scene in flying saucers, looking for a place to land. Akers borrows these two portraits from the ones used on U.S. currency. The birds in this work, like the silhouette of the scissor-tailed flycatcher on the left-hand side, symbolize migration.

Akers uses humor to address ideas of identity, colonialism, immigration, and migration. At times, his works express political themes, but he does not think of himself as a political activist. In a 2020 talk for Kansas State University, Akers said that from an indigenous perspective, everyone in the United States is an immigrant, and that the instinct to search for a better life is universal.

Norman Akers, *Race for Place II,* 2011, color monoprint. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Elisabeth Claire Lahti Fund purchase, 2013.

MINOR WHITE

Born in Minneapolis, Minnesota on July 9, 1908, Minor White is known for striking black-and-white photographs that captured people, places, and land. Throughout his career, White used photography to explore spirituality and the meaning of life. Together with Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Weston, and Ansel Adams, White founded the renowned photography magazine, *Aperture.* He taught extensively at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco and later at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. After his death on June 24, 1976, his photographic archives went to Princeton University. White's photographs are not only a part of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts' collection but also in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the National Gallery of Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago, among others.

White's grandfather was an amateur photographer. His grandfather's encouragement during childhood led White to study botany at the University of Minnesota. There, in his photomicrography classes, White learned to develop and print photographs. Those magnified studies of nature profoundly influenced the artist's practice. Said White, "A lot of times people would show various strange forms in art, modern art...and I'd say, I've seen all that under a microscope..." After graduating, White channeled his creativity into poetry, eventually moving to Portland, Oregon where his passion for photography reignited. There, he joined the Oregon Camera Club and refined his developing and printing techniques. White became a Works Progress Administration (WPA) photographer, which brought him to eastern Oregon in 1940. He immersed himself in reading about "the philosophy of photography, Edward Weson, and the F/64 school." White's approach to photography has been called philosophical — even mystical. He believed that image-making was a profound act that could provide an opportunity to commune with the universe. White had a unique perspective about a photograph's ability to provide a bridge between the sacred and the profane. This realization drove much of his photography and teachings. His images are steeped in introspection, somberness, and a quiet solitude, presumably in an effort to discard worldly desire. His careful abstractions invite scrutiny. Said the artist, "At first glance, a photograph can inform us. At second glance it can reach us."

Minor White, *The Steely Barb of Infinity: #13,* 1960, gelatin silver print.
Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Director's Fund purchase.

JUDITH ROTHSCHILD

Judith Rothschild came of age as an artist in New York during the 1940s and was influenced by European avant-garde movements and artists like Fernand Léger. Throughout her career, Rothschild struggled to reconcile her figurative and abstract works. While a proponent of abstraction, she also believed that Abstract Expressionists and artists like Piet Mondrian removed too much from art and that the work was impersonal and distanced from the human experience. Rothschild questioned how art could "say anything meaningful about life when it avoids all traces of life as corporeally experienced."

The artist experienced success early in her career. *Still Life* was painted just three years after her first solo show in 1945 at the Jane Street Gallery in New York City. With its tightly composed geometric abstraction and a title that gives definition to the scene, this painting demonstrates the balancing act she worked to achieve. Rothschild created abstract imagery in which the tangible subject could be identified. Here, viewers can make out the shapes of a lemon and lime, fruits that are certainly standard in many still life compositions. Rothschild was determined to set her own path to artistic success. She worked in New York during the heyday of the male-dominated Abstract Expressionists, and rejected much of their stylistic approach. Rothschild moved to California, where she reconciled the figurative with the abstract in her own bold, fervid manner. And while her European and Cubist-inspired forms might seem commonplace today, in the 1940s and 50s they were innovative and a fresh take on longstanding art historical traditions like landscapes and still lifes.

Rothschild studied art at Cranbrook Academy in Bloomfield Hills and at the Art Students League in New York City. In 1945, she was accepted into the prestigious American Abstract Artists organization. Rothschild was committed to bettering her fellow artists and was involved in many art organizations. She served as the trustee of the American Federation of Arts, the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, MA, and the New York Studio School, and on several museum committees. Her work is included in the collections of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Phillips Collection.

Judith Rothschild, *Still Life,* 1948, oil on canvas. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of the Patricia Wyngaarden Fitzpatrick estate.

WILLIAM KENT

As a self-taught artist, William Kent began creating sculptures and prints in 1947. Kent became interested in art when he attended Yale University School of Music from 1944 to 1947. During the first decade of his career he focused on sculpture. He then turned to printmaking in the 1960s, creating more than 2,500 prints over the next thirteen years.

In the 1960s, Kent's work was often categorized as Pop Art, evoking comparisons to works by Andy Warhol. He continuously rejected such categorization and comparison, retorting that, "I was never aware of Warhol. He had no influence upon me. In the early 1960s he was not really a known figure. It's the New York art establishment that turned Warhol and other Pop artists into gods." While his image and objects were adopted from popular culture, his work was philosophically, conceptually and technically distinguished from the movement. In contrast to Warhol's work that often glorified everyday objects and celebrities, Kent's interest in everyday objects reflected his political and intellectual commitments. His work addressed a wide range of social issues including violence, corruption, environmental issues, racial uprisings, and the Vietnam War. Art historian Robert McVaugh wrote of Kent's work: "His prints are not in their essence either about style, about art, or about popular culture. Instead Kent's prints reflect the frustration of an artist acutely aware of the disjunction between his fundamentally Romantic vision of the world and the socio-political order of his time."

Kent's *Leave the Moon Alone* similarly highlights the artist's progressive views on politics. Created five years before the first moon landing, it responds to the overall political and social climate during the 1960s. On May 25, 1961, President John F. Kennedy delivered a speech, where he called for the nation to "commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth." For Kent, the US's preoccupation with space exploration revealed a poignant hypocrisy: America was still reeling from the Kennedy assassination, racial uprisings, and President Lyndon B. Johnson's decision to begin bombing North Vietnam. *Leave the Moon Alone* approaches the moon landing within this complex political context. The work critiques the Congressionally supported multi-billion dollar trip to the moon, funded by taxpayers but presumably, financially benefiting major corporations. The artist's particular mixture of emotions is expressed through the form of the Egyptian goddess of the moon (Bastet, the cat-goddess) in the lower left, juxtaposed against an image of an astronaut and rockets on the right side. Kent continued to create biting political and satirical works up to his death in 2012, leaving behind a rich collection of works that remains as relevant as ever.

William Kent, *Leave the Moon Alone,* 1964, intaglio.
Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Director's Fund Purchase.

FRED EVERSLEY

During the 1960s, Fred Eversley was one of the few Black engineers who worked with NASA and major aerospace companies designing high-intensity acoustical laboratories. After moving to California in 1964, Eversley used his scientific explorations to pioneer new optical investigations into the use of light and form. Associated with the Los Angeles Light & Space movement of the 1960s, he developed a process that involves spinning liquid plastic around a vertical axis until the centrifugal forces create a concave surface. The artist's interest in the parabola, which concentrates all forms of energy into a single focal point, became a signature area of inquiry for him. As a key figure in Los Angeles' contemporary arts scene, Eversley's practice reflected the technological advances of that era with his use of plastics, polyester resins, and industrial dyes and pigments. The artist's abstract, three-dimensional meditations on color––including the luminous lens-like objects for which he is perhaps best known—entice viewers to approach his work. These pieces prompt questions about how the biological and optical mechanics of sight determine what and how we see, as well as how we understand each other.

While *Untitled,* 2021 is akin to many of Eversley's polyester forms resembling mirrors or large optical lenses, this particular piece stands out due to its unique medium. Instead of being a sculptural manifestation of his investigations, it is an oval-shaped, multi-dimensional print. Its swirling, vibrant colors, reflective surface, and seemingly concave shape beckon viewers to take a closer examination. Depending upon one's vantage point, the translucent pinks, purples, and blues of *Untitled* shimmer and ripple, playing not only with the viewer's perception, but also with the light and its surroundings. The shifting and morphing of colors, reflections, and light, lend the work an air of constant transition. Here, Eversley's reflective surface is especially potent. As art critic Natalie Haddad points out, "the correspondence between the parabolic lens and the eye can conjure associations with surveillance or panopticism, underscored by the layering of our own reflections with the distorted views and reflections of others." Mirroring the turbulent political environment in which it was created, this print encourages, even relies upon, viewer interaction. *Untitled* alters the audience's perceptions by challenging their understandings of what sculpture can be, while also confronting the turmoils of the world around them. Ultimately, the artist's works become a reflection of what people and the world can become beyond the limits of form, space, and time.

Fred Eversley, *Untitled*, 2021, pigment print on reflective silver polyester film with gloss laminate. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; David and Muriel Gregg Estate Fund purchase.

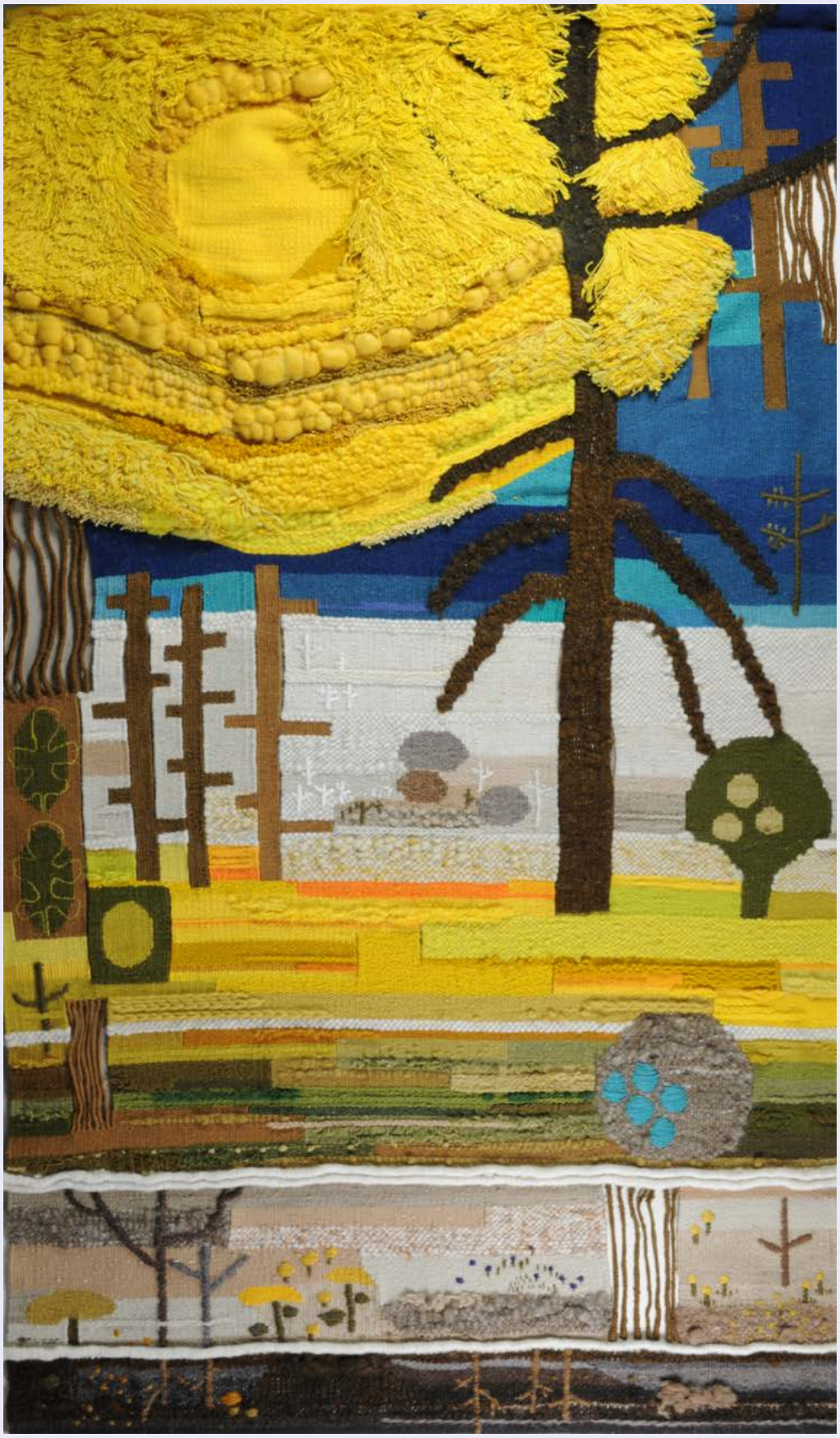
KATHERINE ARDIS UX

Artist and longtime arts educator Katherine Ardis Ux found inspiration in nature and the artists she met while traveling the world. Her interest in weaving surfaced while studying the craft in Stockholm, Sweden, in the 1950s. Later that decade, her passion for weaving deepened during a two-year trip traveling throughout Central and South America where she worked with and learned from local artists.

Connecting with nature and incorporating it into her daily life were priorities for Ux, so much so that she and her husband had their home physically relocated to a more secluded location when a McDonald's restaurant opened nearby. One can see the influences of nature throughout many of her works, including in this wall hanging. In this piece, an immense sun looms over a forest scene of changing seasons. Her time spent in Mexico decades prior most likely inspired this large sun. Reflecting on her experiences with the intense sun during her travels, she recalls, "It was in front of you, behind you, above you, surrounding you."

Friends of Fillette Many—a friend of Ux, a Kalamazoo Public School art instructor, and a patron of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts—commissioned *Growth* as a memorial to her life. Ux titled the piece *Growth* because of Many's ability to inspire and challenge her students to grow as artists and people. Ux wrote briefly about her friend and the work saying, "Her [Fillette Many's] greatest and most lasting impression upon me was her interest in individual development and growth of both the children of Kalamazoo and the art teachers. She expected a continued growth and a striving in each of us for excellence. This feeling I tried to express in my wall hanging. I worked with natural fibers—wool, linen, and silk. Some of the yarns are hand-spun and vegetable-dyed. I tried to express life and growth through the cycle of the seasons and endless sequence of change with earth, sea, and sky playing a part but the Sun dominating all."

Ux's art-making process was instinctive. While she created some preparatory drawings, her works developed primarily on the loom. As a result, the artworks are a mix of planning and spontaneity, with the artist embracing the imperfections that handweaving allows. Using threads of varied material and weight, Ux creates a tactile and vibrant scene that combines her reverence for nature with her mastery of craft. Writing about her practice, Ux wrote, "I like giving form to an idea, I try to express an idea or a feeling with excitement and enthusiasm… I like exploring, experimenting, feeling free, and finding out what I can do. I am always hoping to do better." With these words in mind, *Growth* is both a tribute to her friend and fellow artist and symbolizes Ux's desire for continuous improvement in her artistic pursuits.



Katherine Ardis Ux, *Growth,* 1973, handwoven wool, linen, and silk. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of the friends of Miss Fillette Many in her memory.

CONRAD EGYIR

From ancient Egypt to present, the practice of portraiture has flourished globally for over 5,000 years. Portraiture records the lives of individuals in ways that illustrate beauty, intelligence, leadership, wealth, and other qualities.

Irving's Class, 2021 by Conrad Egyir, is a portrait of a masked individual.The composition, infused with philosophical musings, both conceals and exposes aspects of the sitter's character. Cleverly using a face mask, the artist conveys the challenges and opportunities presented by this current pandemic moment in our society. The mask also disguises the sitter's gender.

Egyir begins his process by using photography to capture his subjects with props intended for the final painting. As the work evolves, the artist adds and subtracts elements that contextualize and emphasize the sitter and the subject matter. The process gives rise to a type of personal tableau that, like history, represents a narrative that has evolved from an original (in this case, photographic) "truth."

This painting is the first of a new series of works by Egyir where he combines philosophical and spiritual references with symbolic crowns. Three books confer knowledge and power upon the head of a sitter. Two books directly reference the vibrancy and diversity of the Detroit-area contemporary arts scene. The last volume refers to Dapper Dan, a designer and fashion icon from Harlem, New York. Seemingly, the sitter carries the historic and contemporary legacies of both Harlem and Detroit, two communities that have indeliby impacted the globe through Black creativity. Despite having the nose and mouth covered, during Covid, social distancing, and quarantines, this creative legacy has not been silenced. The Black Cube logo refers to an imaginary creative space that will give rise to new artistic endeavors.

The peace lily in a gold planter (left) and lush green leaves (right) are hopeful signs of peace, prosperity, and resurrection. The words *Tabula Affinatatum* refers to healing, explicitly referencing a chart that identified compatible combinations for medical treatments commissioned by pharmacist Franz Huber Hoefer in 1766 for the Grand Duke of Florence's apothecary. To the sitter's left, Egyir declares *amare*. The word is widely recognized as Latin for "to love," but it also carries meanings in Sanskrit, Igbo, and Amharic referencing immortality, strength, and physical beauty. With these words, Egyir evokes emotional and spiritual characteristics that connect art and creativity to the core tenants of humanity, including a desire to build on the past to create healthy new beginnings.

Conrad Egyir, *Irving's Class,* 2021, oil, acrylic, mounted wood on canvas.
Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Elisabeth Claire Lahti Fund Purchase

KENOJUAK ASHEVAK

Kenojuak Ashevak (ken-OH-jew-ack ASH-uh-vac), one of the most well-known Inuit artists, was a pioneering force in modern Inuit art. Ashevak grew up in a semi-nomadic hunting family and made art in various forms in her youth. However, in the 1950s, she began creating prints. In 1964, Ashevak was the subject of the Oscar-nominated documentary, Eskimo* Artist: Kenojuak, which brought her and her artwork to Canada's—and the world's—attention. Ashevak was also one of the most successful members of the Kinngait Co-operative, also known as the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative, established in 1959 by James Houston, a Canadian artist and arts administrator, and Kananginak Pootoogook (ka-nang-uh-nak poo-to-guk), an Inuit artist. The purpose of the co-operative is the same as when it was founded—to raise awareness of Inuit art and ensure indigenous artists are compensated appropriately for their work in the Canadian (and global) art market.

Ashevak's signature style typically featured a single animal on a white background. Inspired by the local flora and fauna of the Arctic, Ashevak used bold colors to create dynamic, abstract, and stylized images that are devoid of a setting or fine details. Despite the harsh environment, the Arctic has an abundance of wildlife—especially birds which captured the imagination and creativity of Ashevak throughout her career (she made over 100 different images of owls alone). The raven is a common sight in the Arctic as it is one of the few species of birds that dwells there year-round. Its large black body makes it easy to spot against the stark white winter landscape. Perhaps its ubiquitous nature has made the raven prevalent in Inuit cultures and folklore. Although the folklore and stories vary across the vast Arctic communities, many see the raven as extremely intelligent and duplicitous creatures that can be both helpful and dangerous,sly tricksters, and possessors of knowledge, among other things. Ashevak explained that her art did not attempt to portray realistic images of animals or the Arctic landscape, but rather she wanted to convey her emotions, values, personal connection to nature, and her indigenous culture. Her work is an exploration of line, form, and color and serves as a mode of sharing, interpreting, and honoring her Inuit heritage with the world.

Kenojuak Ashevak, *Spectacular Ravens*, 2003, stone-cut print. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Jayne Clement, 2014.61

ROSA ROLANDA

This work demonstrates Rosa Rolanda's mastery in creating unique spatial planes and illuminates the vibrancy of Mexican culture. In *Tehuanas,* the artist conveys the beauty and elegance of an esteemed group of Mexican women, wearing garments signifying their heritage. The Tehuana are a celebrated matriarchal society in Oaxaca, Mexico. The artist presents women clothed similarly in embroidered dresses with lace embellishments. Each woman is adorned meticulously. The last woman wears gold-drop earrings and holds a yellow fan, while a braid encircles her head, crowned by a single flower that recalls a dove. The other two women have similar floral wreaths on their heads and both wear chokers, and the woman in the direct foreground holds a blue handkerchief similar in coloring to the first woman's bodice. What is the connection between these women? Regardless of their connection the women are an alluring group, exhibiting a refined dignity.

Born in Los Angeles, California, Rosa Rolanda's parents were of Scottish and Mexican descent. Rolanda was deeply inspired by Mexican culture. In her travels throughout the country, she memorialized local customs, settings, and styles of dress. This work not only celebrates the artistic talents of an important woman artist and her Mexican heritage, but also acknowledges the life of Rosa Marcela Calderón de Lance, whose family facilitated this gift and who too was very proud of her Mexican heritage. Tehuanas is an exquisite painting by Rosa Rolanda which not only honors Mexican heritage and womanhood but also reveals the vast richness of experiences contributing to American culture.

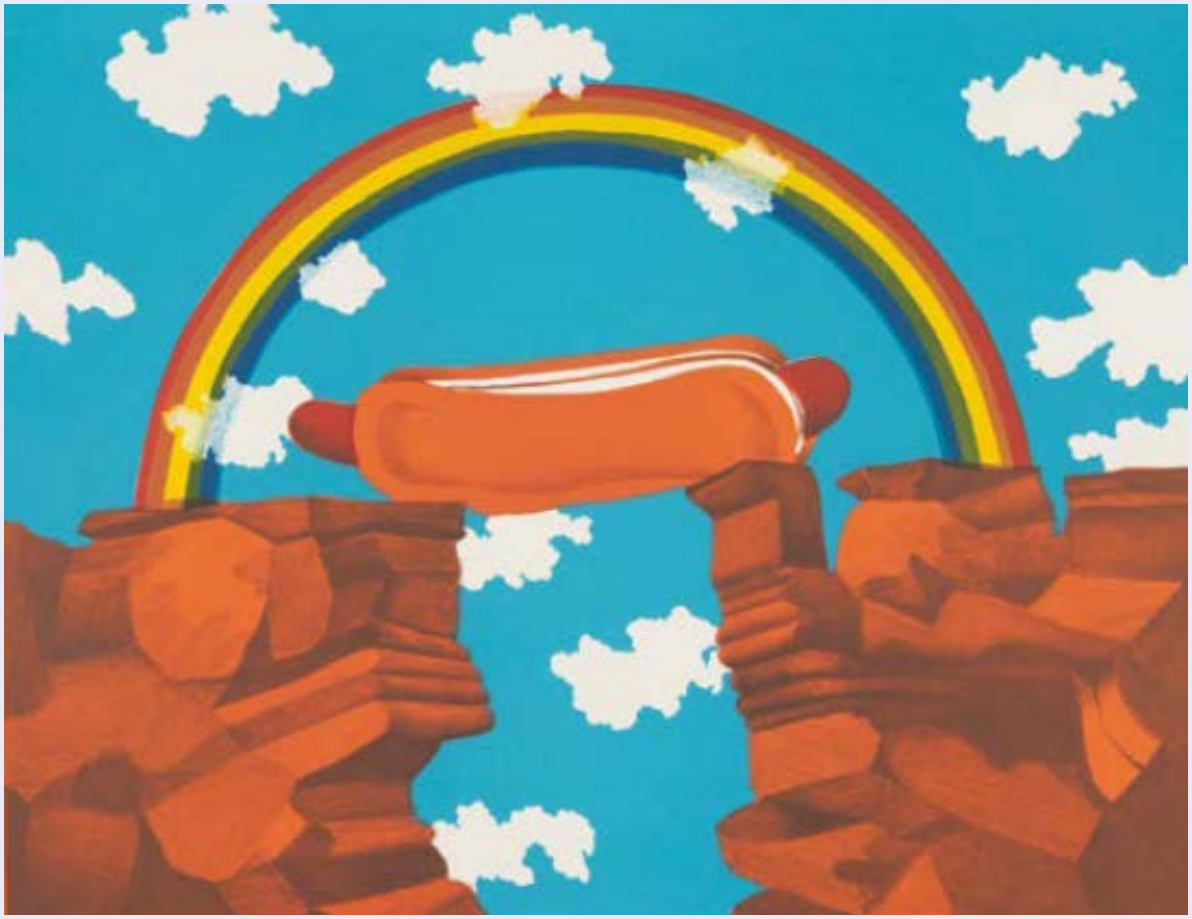
Rosa Rolanda (1895-1970), *Tehuanas,* ca. 1935-1940, Gouache on pape, , Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts;, Gift of Dr. Edward (Ted) Lance-Gomez Family in memory of Rosa Marcela Calderón de Lance 2020.28

RUSSELL T. GORDON

What does *Hot Dog Bridge,* 1974, a seemingly whimsical work, try to convey to the viewer? Is it a gentle ribbing towards the art world that, at times, can be all too serious? Is it a commentary on the American experience—what's more American than a hotdog? Does the rainbow spanning a southwest landscape symbolize hope and unity?

Unfortunately, Russell T. Gordon (1936-2013) wrote little about his specific works. Perhaps this was the artist's attempt to allow the works to speak for themselves, giving viewers the ability to apply their own meaning and space to reflect on their experiences as they relate to the piece. Gordon's compositions are colorful and often use interesting comparisons, along with contradicting or unnatural elements such as a hot dog serving as a bridge. Gordon remarks in the book Russell T. Gordon: Over Easy (Forget and Gordon, 2010), "Finally, every day, on a fundamental level, I want to engage you, the viewer, with the painting's dynamics; I then want to pull you in. The multiple layers, the mix, the collage, the assemblage of elements from many different sources, and the juxtaposition, provide energy and emotional force. It must be this way in my painting because it is this way in my life."

Gordon was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Despite a lack of support from his family to pursue a career in art, he earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Temple University and a Master of Arts degree and Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Wisconsin. Gordon held many teaching positions at prestigious institutions like the University of California, Berkeley, and Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. His work has been widely exhibited throughout the United States and Canada and can be found in numerous museum collections, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Fine Art Museum of San Francisco.



Russell T. Gordon, *Hot Dog Bridge,* 1974, lithograph, Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Christopher A. Graf

DONALD WILLETT

Donald Willett was a dedicated abstractionist who, like many of his fellow artists, investigated the properties of paint and experimented with various painting styles. A 1957 graduate of the Cranbrook Academy of Art, a faculty member, and painting department chair from 1964 to 1968, Willett was presumably well aware of the various modes of contemporary painting in the 1950s and 1960s. Certainly, Red #1, 1968, crosses the boundaries of multiple mid-century explorations—geometric abstraction, hard-edge painting, op art, pop art, and postpainterly abstraction—in a skillful composition that lures viewers through layers of warm colors into the painting's cool blue center.

The geometry of concentric circles is daunting technical territory for many painters. Willett's handling of the challenge is exemplary. He further illustrated his skill by creating light and shadows atop colors that simultaneously defy logic to convey a strong energy and tension between the outer red circle and the vibrant red square background. Willett's composition recalls the innovative "Target" paintings by Jasper Johns and Kenneth Noland from the mid-1950s into the 1960s. Both Johns and Noland challenged traditional notions of painting by conflating abstraction and representational imagery in minimalist compositions that visually pushed or extended one's perception of the picture plane. Like his counterparts, Willett investigates the spatial relationship between layers of circles and the overall expanse of the canvas. Unlike Johns and Noland, Willett embellishes his surface with light and shadows, unusual colors, dimensionality, and realism to reference the "target or bulls-eye" as both an object, and perhaps, a vessel of meaning.

Little is known about Willett's personal biography. His work is found in only a few museum collections. Thus, the KIA is fortunate to have Red # 1, 1968. The work employs a skillful composition of circles, vibrant coloring, and a seemingly ordinary subject, thereby challenging viewers' visual perceptions.

Donald Willett, *Red #1*, 1968. Gift of Philip and Allene Dietrich, 1975/6.43

DENISE LISIECKI

This watercolor demonstrates fine detail in its depiction of surface texture in the delicate patterns of the wood grain and the intricate wrinkles and folds of the crumpled paper. Spilling out of the paper wrapping is a bouquet of blush pink gladioli and vivid crimson lilies. The graceful petals and fragile stamens extend beyond the image's frame, drawing viewers into the scene.

Lisiecki draws upon a long tradition of painting and flower symbolism. Gladioli are also known as the Sword Lily due to their sword-shaped leaves. The birth flower for those born in August, the gladiolus signifies remembrance and infatuation, telling the receiver that he or she pierces the heart. It can also represent strength of character, faithfulness and honor.

Lilies come in different shapes, sizes and colors. In general, they symbolize purity and refined beauty. Depending on the color or type, the flower can convey different meanings: white symbolizes modesty and virginity, while orange symbolizes passion.

Watercolor is unforgiving; it cannot be painted over or corrected. Lisiecki shows her mastery of the medium by tightly controlling the movement of water and paint across the paper's surface. The artist uses dramatic lighting and shadowing to lure the viewer's gaze toward the painting's enigmatic center.

Lisiecki was inspired by Sondra Freckelton, a Michigan-born and renowned watercolorist, who she met in 1983 at an artists' conference. The two later attended a Detroit workshop together and became close friends until Freckelton's passing in 2019.

Flowers in a Paper Bag recalls Freckelton's realistic techniques, and reflects Lisiecki's approach to rendering natural forms while heightening their surroundings to convey a sense of tension. Although there are no figures within view, the presence of humans is implied. The unwrapped flowers lying on the wood surface seem to have a story to tell. The flowers may represent being in a state of transition, i.e. the journey from outside (garden or flower shop) into the house, and finally, into a vase. Perhaps the artist alludes to the fragile nature of beauty, while also demonstrating the thin line between prosperity and ruin.

Lisiecki, Director of the Kirk Newman Art School at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, is an award-winning artist who received a BFA in painting at Miami University, and an MA from SUNY Oswego. She has been represented by galleries throughout the U.S. and has had numerous solo and group exhibitions. Her work can be found in more than 50 museum and corporate collections. She has received grants from the Michigan Council for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Fari Nzinga
Curatorial Fellow

Denise Lisiecki, *Flowers in a Paper Bag,* 1987, watercolor on paper. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Art Auction Fund Purchase, 1998/9.18

KUNIYOSHI UTAGAWA

Yoshisaburô, the artist who would become known as Utagawa Kuniyoshi, was born in Edo (present-day Tokyo) in 1798. At the age of 14, Yoshisaburô joined the Utagawa School of ukiyo-e artists, led by Utagawa Toyokuni I (1769 – 1825). Toyokuni I gave Yoshisaburô the name Utagawa Kuniyoshi, "Kuniyoshi" being a combination of the names "Toyokuni" and "Yoshisaburô."

In 1814, Kuniyoshi ended his apprenticeship and set out as an independent artist. In direct contrast to the peaceful views of a scenic Japan provided by Hiroshige and Hokusai, the following decades saw a rise of the fierce, fearsome and fantastical in ukiyo-e.

From 1847-48, Kuniyoshi designed a series dedicated to each one of the 47 samurai of legend.This sheet features a warrior known as Sanpei in the fictionalized kabuki account of historical events of 1701-1703. The revenge of the 47 rōnin, or samurai, also known as the Akō incident or Akō vendetta, happened when a band of rōnin (leaderless samurai) avenged the death of their master. The story tells of a group of samurai who were left leaderless (becoming rōnin) after their daimyō, or feudal lord, was compelled to perform seppuku (ritual suicide) for assaulting a court official. After waiting and planning for a year, the rōnin avenged their master's honor by killing the official. In turn, the rōnin were themselves obliged to commit seppuku for committing the crime of murder. This true story was popularized in Japanese culture as emblematic of the loyalty, sacrifice, persistence, and honor that people should preserve in their daily lives.

Perhaps to maintain his fighting skills, Sanpei fends off a lamp using his katana sword. The extensive narrative describes Sanpei quietly biding his time while secretly plotting with the other rōnin to avenge the death of their master. The text also includes two short poems. One describes the interdependence of a lord and his loyal retainers. The other poem contemplates the unknown journey toward death. The play subversively

challenges the authority of Japan's shogun, the chief military dictator. In accordance with Confucian ideals, filial duty — or, in this case, loyalty to a local master — is presented as paramount, even above adherence to the shogun's law.

Fari Nzinga, PhD
Curatorial Fellow, KIA & Kalamazoo College

Kuniyoshi Utagawa, *Yukukawa Sanpei Munenori* from the series Deeds of the Faithful Warriors (the Story of the 47 Ronin), 1847-1848, woodblock print. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Stan and Connie Rajnak.

OLGA ALBIZU

"…a conversation between color and form."

Born and raised in Puerto Rico, Olga Albizu grew up knowing the value of creativity in art and music. Her mother was an accomplished pianist and on Sundays, Albizu's family listened to the Metropolitan Opera on the radio. She could not have known that one day, those worlds would merge in the late 1950s to the mid-1960s, when Albizu's artwork graced RCA and Verve Records album covers for the Boston Symphony (conducted by Charles Munch), Bob Brookmeyer and His Orchestra, The Rod Levitt Orchestra, and Stan Getz's collaborations with Charlie Byrd, João Gilberto, Luiz Bonfá, and others. While the cover art for these albums represents Albizu's mature style and are similar to our collection's Untitled (shown), the music itself ranged from deep, rolling, and dramatic compositions to lively, frolicking and brassy arrangements. Collectively, the works reflect her extraordinary ability to convey the varying qualities of musical styles from piercingly energetic to boldly symphonic.

Hailed as one of Puerto Rico's major Abstractionists, Albizu attended the Universidad de Puerto Rico, studying under famed New York Studio School founder and teacher, Esteban Vincente between 1945-47. Considered one of his most preeminent students, she was introduced to the tenets of Modernism, though he dissuaded his students from practicing beyond figurative or still life genres. His geometric and Cubist impulses of that era are seen as formative to Albizu's practice and inspired her to pursue painting professionally. After graduation, she obtained a post-graduate fellowship, which afforded her the opportunity to study in New York, Paris, and Florence.

Between 1948-51, Albizu studied with famed Abstract Expressionist Hans Hoffman. Under his tutelage her works explored the modes of the moment, non-representational, flat angular forms; and eventually Albizu added more dynamic coloring, creating more structure to her fractured geometries. In 1951, the influence of abstraction lyrique (an art movement popular in France that rejected geometric abstraction, replacing it with intuitive brushwork and the application of paint directly from the tube onto the canvas) found its way into her work. Albizu replaced angular lines and shapes in her compositions with overlapping squares of color. Within the next four years, Albizu's signature style emerged via overlapping, masses of rhythmic forms infused with vibrant colors.

In *Untitled*, viewers see undulating swathes of squares in blues, greens, blacks and reds that overlap, jostle, and expand the pictorial plane. This effect is what the artist called "a conversation between color and form." Although completely abstract, the work perhaps alludes to a place or moment in time, or the bustling nature of city life. Created during the height of her work with RCA and Verve Records, *Untitled* is luminous, yet tenebrous, invigorating, yet temperate.

Despite Albizu's paintings being reproduced on album covers, critical acclaim eluded her. She stopped painting in 1984, but recently her originality has been rediscovered. Untitled demonstrates an artist tapping into the restorative and formative powers of color, and the tactility of the medium to impact the canvas.

Rehema Barber
Chief Curator

Olga Albizu, *Untitled,* 1965, oil on canvas. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts. Purchased in memory of David and Muriel Gregg through the generosity of their estate, 2018.23

CHILDE HASSAM

Frederick Childe Hassam trained as a draftsman at a New England wood-engraving shop and in 1881, opened his own commercial illustration company to use his skills in both watercolor and oil painting. In 1886, he traveled to Paris to advance his talents at the famed Académie Julian. Returning to America three years later, he brought with him the pastel palette and broken brushstrokes of the French Impressionists, and began depicting truly American subjects with a view to American productiveness and pastoral New England charm.

He became known for his impressionistic depictions of Boston, New York, and the countryside of New England, and is often credited with introducing what became known as American Impressionism during the 1890s. Among Hassam's most famous paintings are his representations of the patriotic, flag-draped streets of New York and Boston at the onset of World War I. Hassam said at the time, "The man who will go down to posterity is the man who paints his own time and the scenes of everyday life around him."

Telling the Bees, Hassam's watercolor from 1891, refers to a slice of folklore common in 19th-century New England, when farmers kept beehives to provide honey for family needs and to sell. A tradition concerning the bees observed that when a member of a family died, someone had to tell the bees about the death and drape the hives in black cloth. Otherwise, the bees would leave the hives and not return. In this important watercolor, one can see the box-like hives in the background and the girl who carries the message. In true Hassam style, it's the play of atmosphere on the scene that is most important.

Don Desmett
Interim Curator

Childe Hassam, *Telling the Bees,* 1891, watercolor on paper. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts. Gift of Mrs. Dorothy Upjohn Dalton

RON ADAMS

Ron Adams has always been associated with the graphic arts, studying drawing, illustration, and commercial art at schools in and around Los Angeles. At the age of 29 he began working at the renowned graphic workshop Gemini G.E.L. Beginning as an assistant printer, Adams went on to become a master printer, working with many leading artists like Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Frank Stella, and Ellsworth Kelly. In 1973, Adams worked for Editions Press, San Francisco, before moving to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he opened Hand Graphics. It was there that he collaborated with artists including Judy Chicago, Luis Jimenez, John Biggers, and Charles White.

In 1987, Adams returned to solely producing his own art, including one of his most important prints, *Blackburn*, in 2002. The print was an homage to his friend and fellow master printmaker Bob Blackburn (1920-2003). Adams was moved to make the tribute because there were so few black lithographers at the time. Adams has stated that the print "also stands as a larger tribute to those who work behind the scenes to create edition prints and are seldom recognized for their contributions to the final work of art."

Stylistically, the composition relates to the work of Charles White or the Mexican Muralists via the inflated figurative structure Adams gives to *Blackburn's* muscles and commanding hands, which extend powerfully into the foreground, along with the formidable gaze he trains on the task at hand. The figure in the background, perhaps an art collector, studies the finished product. It may be telling that this figure is a white man, dressed to establish his status, while *Blackburn* is in a plain shirt and work apron. Adams balances the composition with hard and soft surfaces and elaborate details of common items like plants, tools, and the paper prints hung on the brick wall. Adams says of his style, "I enjoy attempting to create form and volume and quite often I take liberties in exaggerating my forms and gestures to express the mood or emotion I am trying to capture."

Don Desmett
Interim Curator

Ron Adams, *Blackburn,* 2002, lithograph. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Permanent Collection Fund purchase

ARNOLD CHANG

The expansive vista is a traditional subject with a long history in Chinese painting. Gazing upon a mountainous landscape provided a brief, refreshing escape for the deskbound Confucian bureaucrat with time for only an imaginary journey.

This hanging scroll reveals Arnold Chang's immense experience with traditional artistic conventions, not only as a painter, but as a respected art historian and connoisseur. His dry brush technique communicates the craggy roughness of bark and stone. The soft gray washes masterfully indicate hazy distances. With no ink at all – only the whiteness of the paper – mists billow at the base of waterfalls.

While traditional ink painting should be deeply observant of nature, it is not bound by Western notions of realism and perspective. Painters typically invent imaginary – even fanciful – representations of mountain and water. From a "floating perspective" above ridges and rivers, the viewer can soar in and over the entire landscape without the limitations of the single viewpoint common in Western painting.

One convention for signaling a division between near and far is the insertion of opaque clouds to obscure the middle ground. However, in this painting's middle ground, Chang interjects a diagonal, rocky protrusion that interrupts the river's path. Somewhat like the topsy-turvy stairways of M.C. Escher, this ambiguous stretch of rock stitches near and far together in a way that is both visually seamless and logically perplexing. The result is a compelling blend of traditional scenery and contemporary abstraction. Chang's contemporary *Landscape* provides not only the anticipated rejuvenating journey through nature, but also an invigorating exercise for the mind.

Karla J. Niehus
Interim Curator of Exhibitions

Arnold Chang, *Landscape,* 2010, ink on paper. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Joy Light East Asian Art Acquisition and Exhibition Fund, 2017

VANDORN HINNANT

"Geometry can serve as a visual bridge between the physical sciences and the science of consciousness."

Gateway to Memory is a prime example of Vandorn Hinnant's ongoing exploration of the mathematical and scientific study of the universe. Based on the golden ratio, Hinnant has grounded his compositions in sculpture, drawing, and mixed-media paper works on an awareness of universal order. He says his forms are "a reflection of the geometries of nature and embody some of the energetic matrices of Nature's pre-material templates." They are a direct connection between the arts and sciences.

Gateway to Memory has a delicate surface that is layered with subtle color shifts and intricate marks that indicate an energy that magnifies the human experience in relationship to the cosmos. When two or more circles share a radius they become the foundation for all of Hinnant's artworks.

"I see the circle as a symbolic representation of the human soul—the soul's origins," he says.

The fine lines produced by the tracing of concentric circles with Prismacolor pencils and acrylic paint actually produce delicate layers of surface textures in very fine, minute detail. But it's the mapping of the space by the overlapping of circular patterns that brings energetic life to the composition. Gateway literally radiates from the center in a colored burst resembling the visual scene of a star being born.

The multi-layered symmetrical mandala grows from an ancient Tibetan tradition of creating physical patterns to represent sound—known from ancient times to be, along with light, one of the dual aspects of creation.

As Hinnant states, "The harmonic spatial frequencies embedded in my work reminds me of a quality of being that is attainable by all. This geometry has the potential to activate our often dormant awareness of universal order, and the love, beauty, and grace of the soul."

Don Desmett
Interim Curator

Vandorn Hinnant, *Gateway to Memory,* acrylic paint and Prismacolor on cotton rag paper. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Elisabeth Claire Lahti Fund Purchase, 2017

MARILYN JOHNSON

"Some people have a concept in their heads; I paint from a reaction to my visual experience. I paint better when I work quickly."

–Marilyn Johnson

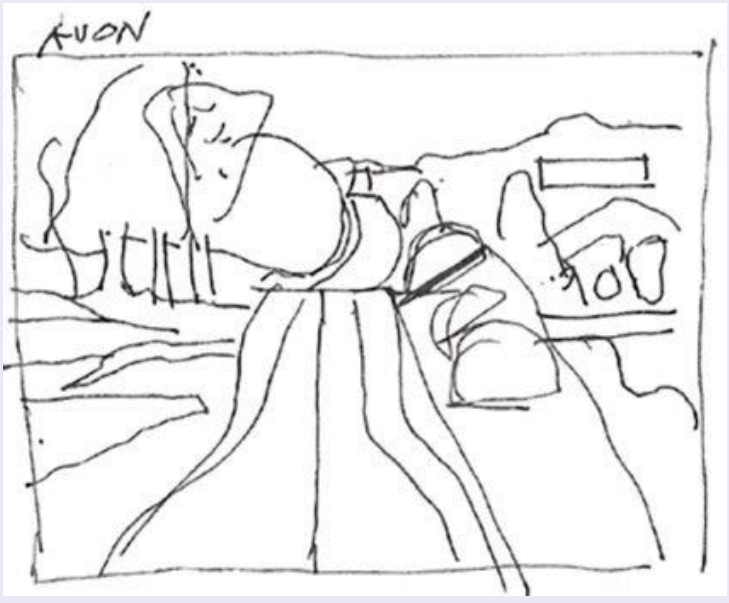
A consistent quality of Marilyn Johnson's (1927-2017) abstractions is the dynamic interplay of shape and color. Less apparent is their basis in nature, with the boldly outlined forms derived from fragments of fleeting scenery. She called these paintings of her latter years "roadscapes." The term reveals her process and the origins in landscape–in this case observations of the road, trees, and water in the Finger Lakes region of New York.

During regular family drives from Kalamazoo to her mother's home south of Rochester, Johnson began a practice of rapid sketching from the passenger seat. Looking through the rectangular windshield, she made numerous small, square ink drawings in neatly ordered columns like sequential film stills or storyboards. A scene labeled "Avon" (a town in Livingston County, her destination) may have supplied the basic structure of this painting, with elements added from other sketches.

In *Crossing Livingston County Again,* a country road becomes a vertical green shaft flanked by abstracted foliage and lakes in calming greens and blues. From this lower region of fitted, larger forms, we feel an acceleration toward the busier, multicolored layering in the "distance." The painting retains the spontaneity of the sketches, while enhancing the sense of depth and motion. The final painting is neither a simplification nor an embellishment of a single view along the road. Rather, the roadscape, like memory, is a very individual assemblage of transitory visions and impressions along a greater journey.

A well-respected painter of portraits, urban landscapes (especially "house paintings"), and abstractions, Marilyn Johnson was a positive force on the Kalamazoo art scene from the 1970s until she passed away. She exhibited regularly, winning local and state awards. This abstraction and a portrait by Johnson enter the KIA collection as the first acquisitions through the Helen Sheridan Memorial Fund, provided by Sheridan's husband, David Isaacson.

Marilyn Johnson, *Crossing Livingston County Again,* 2014-2015, oil on canvas. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Helen Sheridan Memorial Fund



Sketch by Marilyn Johnson. Courtesy of Wendy Johnson

CHARLES MARION RUSSELL

No imagery is more distinctly American than Western art.

Charles M. Russell was a major force in establishing the image of the cowboy, the quintessential American hero, as a romantic symbol of independence and adventure.

Just such a character commands the landscape in *Trail Boss*. The foreman in charge of the cattle drive has dismounted, pausing with lasso and smoke to shrewdly survey the prospects ahead. Behind him, the wagons have halted and a cloud of dust signals the approach of the herd.

Known as the "cowboy artist," Russell is known for accurately depicting the appearance, characters, and activities of the West. He journeyed to Montana at age 16, his head filled with great-uncles' spirited tales of fur-trapping and frontier life. His Yale-educated father hoped the trip would dispel romantic notions and inspire the boy to study.

However, young Charley stayed and spent 11 years working the herds. In his spare time, he observed, sketched, and painted the waning way of life on the open range. Eventually supporting himself comfortably on sales of his art, Russell made his home in Montana as one of the most respected and successful Western artists of his time.

In December, Trail Boss was permanently reunited with a companion piece, *Homesteaders*. Already in the KIA collection, *Homesteaders* was a bequest of Genevieve Upjohn Gilmore in 1989. Over the years, Gilmore's daughter, Martha Parfet, periodically loaned *Trail Boss* to the KIA. The watercolor was generously bequeathed to the KIA collection upon her passing last year.

Charles Marion Russell (American, 1864-1926), *Trail Boss,* c. 1897, watercolor and graphite underdrawing on paper. Gift of the Estate of Martha Parfet

Charles Marion Russell, *Homesteaders*, c. 1881, watercolor on paper. Bequest of Genevieve U. Gilmore

CHIURA OBATA

"We feel the presence [in sumi-e] of a certain moving spirit, that mysteriously hovers around the lines, dots, and shades of various formations."

—D.T. Suzuki, scholar of Zen Buddhism

Through sweeping sheets of rain and distant mists, Chiura Obata grants us a tantalizing glimpse of the craggy volcanic basin of Lake Towada—Japan's largest crater lake. The Japanese-American artist is best known for his paintings of California's Yosemite, but in this work he recalls a treasured national park in northern Japan. Obata's mastery of the sumi-e tradition is apparent in the confident energy guiding his brush, along with his facility in handling gradations of light to dark ink and the time-honored focus on the natural world.

Sumi-e, Japanese ink painting, is essentially a monochromatic form of watercolor. Because a wash of ink cannot be modified afterwards, the artist must study and internalize the essence of the object or scene before touching brush to paper. Obata instructed his students not to paint directly from life, but instead to paint the recalled impression of the scene at a later date. Sumi-e may be understood as a kind of spare, visual poetry expressing the artist's personal feelings about nature, rather than its actual appearance.

By the time he painted this work, however, Obata had become adept at blending Western and Eastern ways of seeing. The framing of the composition, dynamic expression of rain, and somewhat naturalistic descriptions—such as the reflections of rock in the rain-dappled water—present a level of drama and detail that may have developed from the artist's exposure to blending of Eastern and Western practices.

The young, precocious Obata began to train as an ink painter at age 7 and at age 14 ran away to Tokyo, where he was attracted to artists who were experimenting with Western styles of painting. In 1903, the 17-year-old booked passage to San Francisco and made California his home. In an inspiring immigrant's tale, he became a respected professor at the University of California, Berkeley, and dedicated his life to building cross-cultural understanding. Through the dark days of discrimination toward Asian immigrants and WWII internment camps, Obata recognized that by teaching Japanese art, he could transform Americans' fascination with an "exotic" art form into deeper cultural understanding and acceptance.

Karla J. Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

Chiura Obata, *Towada Lake,* c. 1930-1970, ink and wash on silk. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Donald S. Gilmore

HOWARD HODGKIN

"I am a representational painter, but not a painter of appearances. I paint representational pictures of emotional situations."

This boldly expressive, colorful painting was featured among 70 portraits recently exhibited at London's National Portrait Gallery in Howard Hodgkin: Absent Friends. Two weeks before the March opening, the artist passed away at age 84, after a career as one of Britain's greatest contemporary artists.

Just returned to us from Europe, First Portrait of Terence McInerney appears abstract, but as the title advises, should be understood as a portrait. The artist always approached blank panels with a specific subject in mind—in this case, a vivid visual memory of his friend, an art dealer who shared Hodgkin's passion for Indian painting. First Portrait progressed from a literal likeness to an expression of the artist's emotional connection to Terence.

A reclining figure with a bearded face can be discerned, but as Hodgkin worked his surfaces, the figure was overtaken by layers of color and shapes that expressed the artist's personal feelings toward the man.

Recognized as a master of color, Hodgkin confidently wields contrasting warm and cool tones in stripes and dots that both emphasize the flatness of the painting and subtly suggest depth. Barely contained behind orderly rows of blue dots, a core of vibrant volcanic orange glows. Hodgkin—who painted on wood rather than canvas—often surrounded his scenes with painted borders that extended onto the frame as a way to contain fragile memories.

At the 1984 Venice Biennale, Hodgkin's solo installation representing Britain was widely admired and drew 50,000 visitors. He hung his two portraits of Terence McInerney (this First Portrait and a Second) together on a gallery wall he had painted green to reflect and diffuse the shimmering light from the Venetian lagoon. Time magazine said of his work in Venice, "Not since Robert Rauschenberg's appearance at the Biennale 20 years ago has a show by a single painter so hogged the attention of visitors, or looked so effortlessly superior to everything else on view by living artists."

Though recognition did not come early, he earned numerous honors during his lifetime, including the Turner Prize (1985) and British knighthood (1992).

Karla J. Niehus
Curator

Howard Hodgkin (British, 1932-2017), *First Portrait of Terence McInerney,* 1981, oil on wood. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; gift of Richard and Ethel Groos

JAUNE QUICK-TO-SEE-SMITH

History and myth layered with indigenous and mainstream culture

The art of Native American artist Jaune Quick-To-See Smith invites multiple levels of meaning by juxtaposing language and images inspired by personal experiences, history, myth, and indigenous and mainstream culture. Sometimes playful but often serious in tone, she aspires to stimulate a new level of consciousness in the viewer.

The titular four directions (north, south, east, and west) are traditionally represented by the colors black, red, yellow, and white; all are present in this print, alongside brown and blue. The earth's four directions have deep spiritual meaning, and can variously stand for the stages of life, nature's cycle of seasons, even the world's diverse humanity.

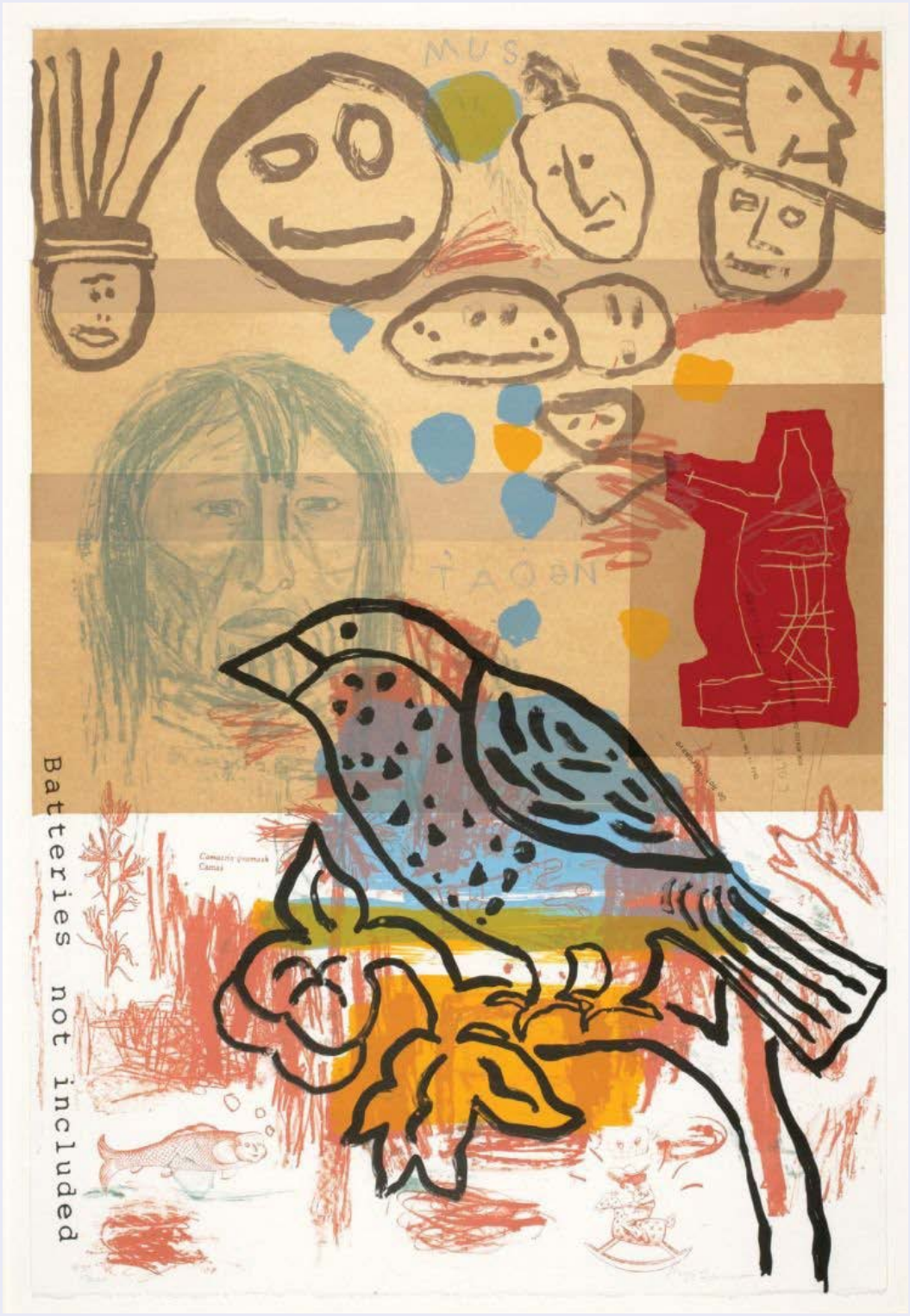
The prominent bird's speckled breast calls to mind the cactus wren—native to Smith's home in the Southwest. A Southerner might recognize a brown thrasher, Georgia's state bird, perched by a cotton boll. Or is it a spotted common starling, a European invader whose range now spans the continent? Smith's ambiguous imagery asks us to plumb our own experiences to draw meaningful associations.

Smith's collaged images represent aspects of Native American stories. The coyote is a clever but reckless trickster whose behavior cautions listeners against greed, arrogance, and socially inappropriate behavior. A fish-man harkens to beliefs that water and sea life make life on land possible and sustain human existence.

She reveals a critical reflection of mainstream tales of the American West. A child on a rocking horse emulates a television cowboy.

A faded blue sketch of an Indian with ceremonial paint offers an unreadable expression. Cartoonish faces with "Mohawk" hairstyles and headdresses more pointedly illustrate our caricatures of Native peoples—but with a light touch that notes their absurdity.

With the phrase "Batteries not included," the artist further contrasts today's world—powered by manufactured energy cycles—with the battery-free, seasonal rhythms that sustain nature and traditional Native culture.



Jaune Quick-To-See-Smith, *Four Directions,* 1994, lithograph, chine collé and linocut. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Permanent Collection Fund Purchase

CATHERINE HINKLE

Catherine Hinkle (1926-1974) was described by her instructor, Bauhaus leader László Moholy-Nagy, as his "little color genius." *Interlude* exemplifies Hinkle's mastery of color and design. From a distance, this work appears monotoned, but scrutiny reveals points of vivid color. As if guided by some unknown, organic logic, warm and cool colors pulsate in clusters, along incised, undulating rows and columns. The vibrant cells dissolve into grey and purple tones toward the painting's edges.

"My paintings are not an attempt to capture or re-make visual reality, but rather, they are color experiences or interpretations of abstract qualities through color. The key to understanding my work is not to see what is painted, but rather to feel it."

Hinkle's statement affirms the philosophy of Suprematism, which urged painters to abandon the depiction of recognizable objects and instead express the "supremacy of pure artistic feeling." Hinkle's grid-like compositions may be viewed as an evolution of Suprematist abstraction, employing simple shapes and surface texture to suggest a sense of imagined space. The New Bauhaus instructors, transplanted from Germany to Chicago, introduced such avant-garde movements to their American students.

In the Midwest, far from the physical, spontaneous Abstract Expressionism that dominated New York, Hinkle developed a controlled style that trod a path between the prevailing gestural and color field forms of abstraction. Despite recognition by Art in America as a "new talent" in 1956, Hinkle set aside painting to support her husband's art career while she pursued book arts and printing. She lived the Bauhaus ideal that all the visual arts should be integrated and valued equal to painting and sculpture.

Catherine Hinkle died in Kalamazoo in 1974, at 49. While a 2013 solo exhibition at the KIA reintroduced and celebrated her vision, the recent substantial gift of work to the museum, long held in her sister's private collection, will expand opportunities to bring Hinkle's accomplishments to light.

Julia Koreman, Curatorial Intern
Karla Niehus, Interim Curator of Exhibitions

Catherine Hinkle, *Interlude*, 1951, oil on canvas. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of the Marilyn Hinkle Trust

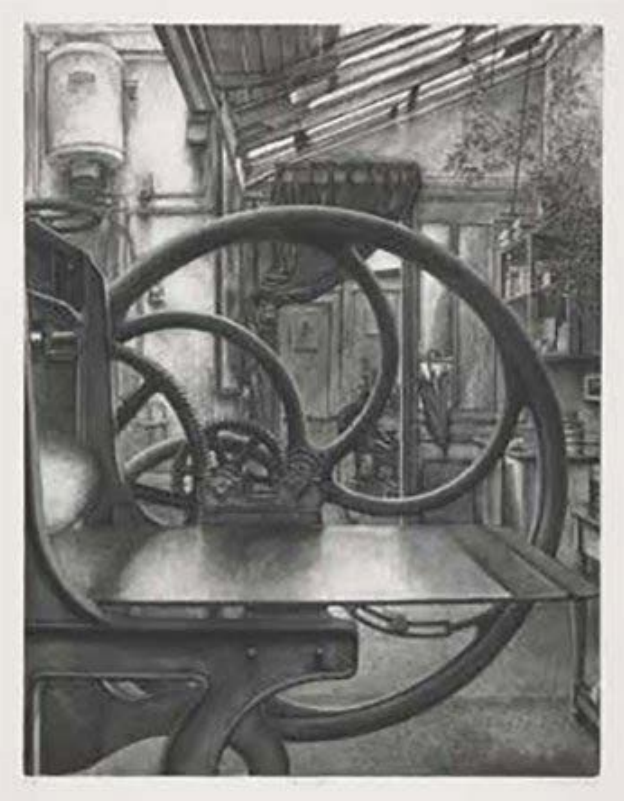
ÉRIK DESMAZIÈRES

An artist possessing keen powers of observation and technical virtuosity can elevate a commonplace site, like an office or studio, to something unexpectedly marvelous. Érik Desmazières, whose work recalls the precision and detail of master etchers from centuries past, is one such artist. Widely recognized as one of the finest printmakers of his generation, Desmazières is known for composing compelling, hyperrealistic scenes and also intriguingly surreal fantasies. Here, he brings these two strands together. Etched lines render minute detail, while modulated tones in aquatint create an extraordinary atmosphere.

Atelier René Tazé IV and V are two in a series of meticulously observed views of a Parisian studio belonging to master printer René Tazé. In a long association with Desmazières, Tazé has printed over 200 of the artist's plates in his studio. Desmazières is captivated by Tazé's formidable, old-fashioned printing press. The artist persuades us of the beauty of its arcs and angles, cogs and gears, reflections and shadows. Between the crescent spokes of the wheel, we glimpse commonplace details of the studio space: a water heater connected to criss-crossed pipes, an umbrella hooked on a window, stacked tins and boxes of Érik Desmazières, Atelier René Tazé IV, 1992, etching, aquatint, roulette. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Paul G. Smithson printing materials, a tangle of vines stretching from potted soil toward a skylight propped open by a broom, and a heavy curtain pulled aside to reveal more serpentine iron machinery and rectangular doors. In the graceful repetition of curves and circles overlaying the angular architecture of the studio walls, Desmazières finds a joy in the geometry of this humble space.

The later print (V) might appear to be a mechanically produced negative image of the positive scene (IV). However, careful comparison reveals small differences that confirm the prints were pulled from unique plates. Reportedly, the artist was so taken with the reversed, negative image that appeared on the plate during the preparation of version IV, he determined to reproduce the strange, dark vision as a finished print. The result is a magical, "through the looking-glass" interpretation of reality, a place that is both familiar and surreal. Taking time for precise observation and reversing our usual point of view– these are an artist's secrets to recognizing our own world again as a richly wondrous place

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions



Érik Desmazières, *Atelier René Tazé IV,* 1992, etching, aquatint, roulette. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Paul G. Smithson

Érik Desmazières, *Atelier René Tazé V,* 1993, etching, aquatint, roulette. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Paul G. Smithson

SAMUEL LEVI JONES

Samuel Levi Jones: Kristiana

The raw materials of Samuel Levi Jones's work—encyclopedias and law books—are library discards. Stitching flayed and truncated books to canvas in stacked columns, Jones binds emotional, expressionistic action to a conceptual, minimalist composition and color palette. The covers have been violently stripped from all but two volumes. Their shabby leather spines identify the books as bound records that once filled law library shelves, providing authoritative examples of legal precedent. Though the bound format may be discarded in a digital age, the content—now shifted to databases—still informs future legal decisions.

Kristiana, like related works by Jones, is a critique of existing systems of power and authority in our society. Law books, encyclopedias, and the Eurocentric canon of "classic" literature all buttress select experiences and practices while excluding other narratives. Jones recalls, as a young schoolboy, unquestioningly accepting the "truth" presented by the encyclopedia. But in 2011 he began to scrutinize a 1972 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica as a representation of power and cultural values: Who merited inclusion? What truths were affirmed? What voices were excluded?

African Americans were largely absent, with luminaries including Martin Luther King, Jr. and Frederick Douglass grouped in an entry under a shared racial designation.

After working with encyclopedias, Jones began to address his frustration with law enforcement and the legal system by tearing apart law books and then creating a new order—a process he called "cathartic." *Kristiana* is the name of a teenage girl who approached a Texas police station in January 2015—seeking help—and was fatally shot by officers. *Kristiana* and a related work, titled *McKinney,* both reference tragic incidents involving excessive use of force by police. Jones responds, through his work, to numerous recent conflicts that have stimulated a national conversation about power and protection. He has unbound these static volumes and enacted a metaphorical restructuring of their authority through artistic action. American law, created to be dynamic, can be similarly unbound when citizens choose to restructure social hierarchy through political action.

Karla J. Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

Samuel Levi Jones, *Kristiana,* 2015, book remnants sewn on canvas. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Elisabeth Claire Lahti Fund Purchase

JANET FISH

Your initial response to work by Janet Fish may be sensory overload. But keep looking. The frenzy of color, line, and pattern will coalesce into an inviting, domestic still life–although "still" hardly seems an appropriate term for an image radiating such energy. "The real structure of the painting comes from the movement of color and light," stresses the artist. She is fascinated by the play of light on ordinary objects such as dishware, wrappers, and fruit.

In *A.M.*, raw eggs and shells, butter, and a juiced orange bask in dazzling sunshine. Intense, white light passes through clear glassware onto a rainbow-striped cloth, discharging a frenetic tangle of shadow and dancing color. For the opportunity to heighten the effects of light and color, Fish will skew reality. She favors the energy of gestural strokes over a photographic, but static, likeness. Fish set this breakfast table not for plausibility, but for each object's interaction with light. To fully explore layered translucencies, she serves the viewer uncooked egg yolks and "whites" in clear glass. No brown toast will dull a table-top harmony in whites and yellows, in which a whole stick of butter is given a lead role. The reflective metallic wrapper flaunts its virtuosic folds and crinkles. The subject of this print is not "breakfast," but "morning light." The effect is a flood of joyous warmth.

Janet Fish studied at Yale in the 1960s, during the reign of Abstract Expressionism. While she absorbed the gestural approach and color theory, she could not embrace strict abstraction. Artist Alex Katz encouraged her to relax and have fun, to look around her for inspiration. She saw commonplace objects, the keyed-up color of shiny food wrappers, and, like Pop Artists, often incorporated commercial imagery and exuberant colors into a "fine art" medium. Within the 1970s revival of representational imagery, which included Photorealism, Fish developed her own distinctive reinvention of the still-life tradition.

A Janet Fish still life is never a memento mori, darkly warning against transient, sensory pleasures. Her work revels in sensory pleasures, urging us to linger in the simple joy and pure radiance of morning light.

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

Janet Fish, *A.M.,* 1994, screenprint. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; James A. Bridenstine Fund Purchase 2016.14

FLORENCE WHITE WILLIAMS

Florence White Williams often depicts the serenity and simple beauty of the Midwestern landscape. In Distant Hills, delicate trees, a fresh blue sky, and windblown grasses create a peaceful, inviting scene. The rugged, sandy terrain leads into a familiar landscape, likely Indiana or Michigan dunes. Subtle reds, oranges, and ochres hint at the end of summer and the coming of autumn. The high, midday sun illuminates the tops of the trees and warms the valley below.

The Vermont-born artist studied Impressionist techniques at the Chicago Academy of Fine Art and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Typical of Impressionist painters at the time, the use of stroke and color is prioritized. In Distant Hills, the textured layers of paint delicately transition from foreground to background. The strong use of greens and violets moves the eye throughout the scene, while visible brush strokes add dimension and depth to the forest below.

Williams established a career in Chicago as a painter, teacher, designer, and illustrator of children's books. She was active in several Chicago and Illinois artist associations and exhibited work across the country, earning multiple awards and acknowledgments. Williams' illustrations for the 1924 edition of Anna Sewell's popular novel Black Beauty may be her most widely recognized work.

Rachel Stickney
Curatorial Intern

Florence White Williams, *Distant Hills*, c. 1925-30, oil on canvas. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Keith and Nadine Pierce, Columbus, Ohio

CLAES OLDENBURG

A monument proudly commemorates a grand historical figure or event…unless that monument was designed by pop artist Claes Oldenburg (American, b. 1929), who is best known for his oversized sculptures that monumentalize mundane objects as political or fanciful commentaries. Oldenburg's Proposal for a Colossal Monument in the form of a Typewriter Eraser for Alcatraz Island (1975) is among his ironic "proposals" that challenge conceptions about public monuments. In this print, the colossal scale of the eraser dwarfs the island of Alcatraz. Knowing that this project's scale would make it infeasible, why would Oldenburg purposefully design it?

By the time Oldenburg created this proposal, Alcatraz, the federal penitentiary infamous for its brutality and inhumane conditions, had been closed for more than 10 years. After its abandonment, the island was home to numerous occupations by Native American groups in the 1960s and '70s, asserting their claim to the island under the Treaty of Fort Laramie (1868), which promised the return of federal lands, if abandoned. In his proposal, could Oldenburg have been drawing attention to the "erasure" of people, promises, and institutions that formed the island's history?

In art critic Robert Hughes' opinion (Time, 1972), "Nothing Oldenburg does is lacking in irony.…" Perhaps in this proposal, Oldenburg wished to evoke the feeling of an inmate being "erased" from society when entering prison. He may also have sought to bring attention to the "erasure" of the agreement between the government and the Native American people concerning Alcatraz. Oldenburg may also have recognized both the typewriter eraser and Alcatraz as antiques slowly being "erased" from people's memories.

Although Oldenburg used now-antiquated subjects, his proposal remains relevant and stimulates a more complex response. The mundane nature and gargantuan size of the typewriter eraser allow for an initial smile. However, more pointed political questions are sparked by Oldenburg's specific placement of this eraser, poised to wipe out an entire island and its problematic history. And while public discussion of Alcatraz has faded today, we still talk about prison in echoing conversations concerning Guantanamo Bay. While Alcatraz is no longer a site of active protest, and even the typewriter has fallen out of use, issues raised in Oldenburg's 1975 print remain pertinent today.

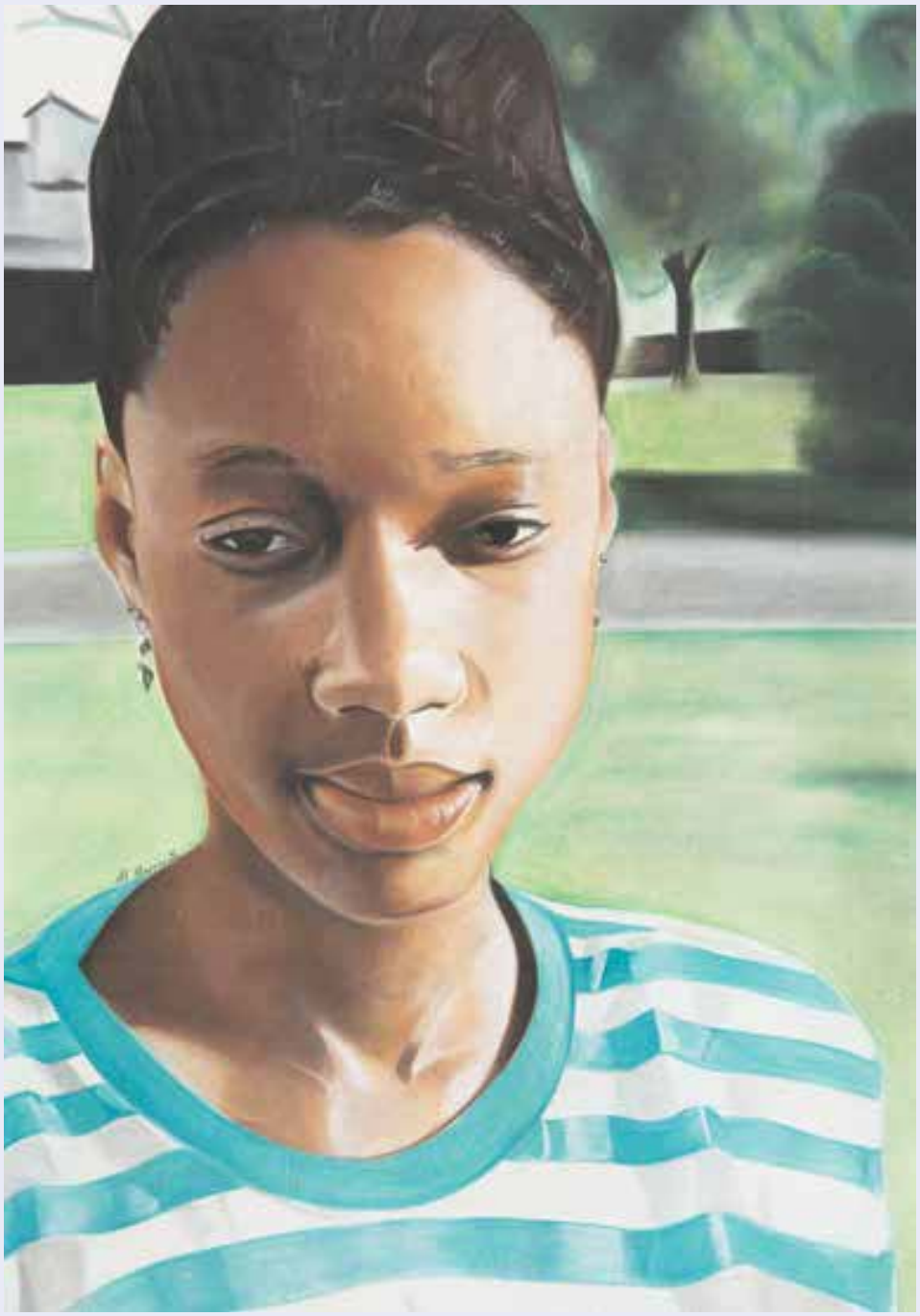
Kelin Michael
Curatorial Intern

Claes Oldenburg, *Proposal for a Colossal Monument in the form of a Typewriter Eraser for Alcatraz Island,* 1975, offset lithograph. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Elisabeth Claire Lahti Fund Purchase.

AL HARRIS, JR.

Portrait of Kia, a pastel by Kalamazoo artist Al Harris, Jr., is composed and cropped much like a photograph—the figure is portrayed in sharp focus with a strong light defining her features, while the background fades into softer focus. A young woman—the artist's eldest daughter—gazes past the viewer from beneath heavy-lidded eyes with a quiet intensity and maturity that belie her youth. The artist uses portraiture to express life experiences and to communicate his thoughts and feelings about the important relationships in his life with his family, friends and students. His preferred medium is pastel, a difficult and demanding material that requires a great deal of concentration and control. Influenced by artist Chuck Close, Harris takes photographs of his sitters as preliminary "sketches," recording a series of facial expressions, poses, and gestures to help him visualize the final image he creates.

Born in Detroit, Al Harris, Jr., showed an early affinity for art; his mother enrolled him in art classes at the Detroit Institute of Arts when he was just six. He came to Kalamazoo in 1971 and received his B.A. degree in art education from Western Michigan University in 1975. He has exhibited regionally, and has also played an important role in our community as a respected and influential art teacher in the Kalamazoo public school system. Harris has mentored many students, inspiring them to embrace their own experience in their creative work as artists, designers and teachers. Portrait of Kia was selected to become part of the collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts when it was awarded the Ward H. and Cora E. Nay Director's Fund Purchase Prize in the 1995 West Michigan Area Show.



Al Harris, Jr., *Portrait of Kia,* 1994, pastel on paper. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Ward H. and Cora E. Nay Director's Fund Purchase

MATHIAS ALTEN

An Important Gift to the KIA

In *Husking Corn at Dusk*, colorful highlights and thickly applied paint heighten the drama of evening light at the close of a long day's work. Two men, accompanied by their sturdy horses, harvest corn while the sun sets behind darkening trees. This Midwestern scene, typical of Mathias Alten's work and the American Regionalist impulse, honors the quiet dignity of agrarian labor.

Inspired by the rural Michigan landscape, Alten lived in Grand Rapids his entire adult life, though he was born in Germany and traveled frequently throughout his career. In the years immediately prior to completing this painting, Alten traveled in Holland and Spain. He practiced how European artists captured the brooding skies of Holland and then experienced the colorful, sun-drenched landscapes of Spain.

Exposure to the Impressionist painters' fascination with light brightened Alten's color palette when he returned to Michigan. In *Husking Corn at Dusk,* thickly applied paint gives substance to the illuminated clouds and radiant energy of the evening's final rays through the trees. The horses' manes and tails glow in the lowering light. Corn cobs—economically described by bold strokes of yellows and golds—mirror the warm brilliance of the sun. Alten absorbed European conventions and innovations, but adapted those practices to describe the American landscape with his unique visual vocabulary.

Through the generosity of the artist's granddaughter, Anita Gilleo, this impressive work has been donated to the collection of the KIA from the estate of Eleanore Alten Gilleo. Jim Kahllo facilitated the acquisition and the handsome framing of this work by one of the region's finest painters.

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

Mathias Alten, *Husking Corn at Dusk*, 1915, oil on canvas. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of the estate of Eleanore Alten Gilleo.

RENÉE STOUT

In honor of Black History month (February) and Women's History month (March), we offer works by Renee Stout.

Some artists create imaginary portraits that correspond to their personal impression of a person. Such works often emphasize the subject's symbolic significance. Famous for her beauty and occult powers, Marie Laveau was a Voodoo priestess who captivated New Orleans in the 1800s. Renee Stout evokes Laveau's mesmerizing presence through such details as the snake mysteriously emerging from her hair. As a way of personally identifying with the Voodoo queen, the artist uses her own likeness – which you can see in her self-portrait at right.

Renée Stout

Renée Stout, *Marie Laveau,* 2009, color lithograph. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Elisabeth Claire Lahti Fund Purchase.

EMIL NOLDE

During Jim Bridenstine's tenure as director, the KIA collection grew by 65%, with the addition of about 1740 works over 24 years. Because choosing one favorite to highlight in this issue was impossible, he suggested we feature the first work he helped acquire. Typical of Bridenstine, it comes with a story. Shortly after he assumed the position of director, KIA benefactor Genevieve U. Gilmore passed away, bequeathing to the KIA a small number of works from her collection not claimed by family members. Bridenstine recalls the family generously inviting him to list pieces most desirable for the KIA collection, so that they might steer clear of these works when making their choices. Gilmore's collection included works on paper by many notable American and European artists, and Bridenstine asked Curator Helen Sheridan to rank selections, with the provision that Emil Nolde's Self Portrait top the list. People close to Bridenstine know his love for portraiture. Why? "I love people; people have stories."

What story can we read in Emil Nolde's self-portrait of 1910? We see a solemn character poised at the edge of darkness, with downturned mouth and rough features starkly illuminated. Spontaneous strokes of ink suggest a sense of urgency. A simple, plaid cap partially obscures the artist's eyes, making his intense gaze hard to read, but still magnetic. One might read reproach, but also yearning. He may feel caught between despondency and determination, failures and successes, shadow and light.

Nolde was born of peasant farmers in northern Germany. Often feeling lonely and misunderstood, he found solace in religion and a connection with the earth. Nolde admired the work of Van Gogh, and felt similarly compelled to make art. He wrote that elements of nature "aroused my enthusiasm as well as tormented me with demands that I paint them."

Nolde painted this portrait during his early years as a practicing artist, which he called his "Years of Struggle" (1902-1914). He marked 1902 as the beginning of his life as a practicing artist. Nolde's distortion of form and color for the sake of expression excited some younger German artists. They invited him to join their group in Berlin, known as die Bruecke. At first elated, Nolde soon realized he was too solitary and needed independence to develop his own expressionist vision. He wrote in 1909 of striving to paint his emotional response to nature, rather than its appearance.

"Nature truly and exactly copied does not create an artwork….Nature converted by the addition of one's own soulfulness and spirituality raises the work to an artwork."

As Nolde found his unique style, he experienced some successes, but also bitter rejections. In 1910, he was expelled from the Berlin Secession for vehemently criticizing their dismissal of his new style and other expressionistic work by younger artists.

At the time of this Self-Portrait, Nolde's story was just beginning. He stood at the threshold of the German Expressionist movement. Like other artists challenging artistic boundaries (and especially those attempting to work through the Nazi era), Nolde and his artistic vision would be alternately cast in shadow and light.

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

Emil Nolde, *Self-Portrait,* 1910. Ink on paper. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Bequest of Genevieve U. Gilmore 1990/1.28

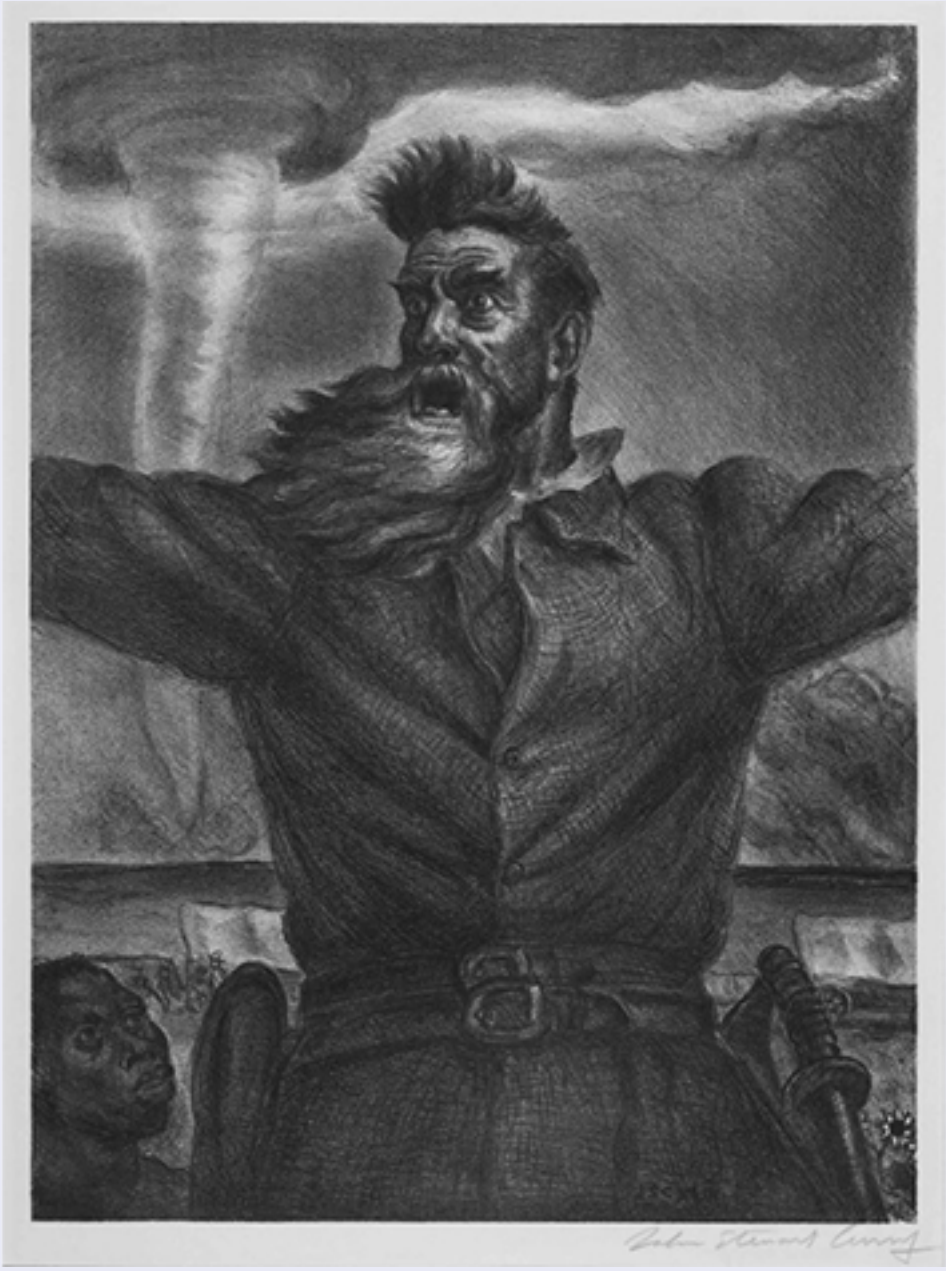
JOHN STEUART CURRY

With flaring eyes and wind-whipped beard, John Steuart Curry's vision of *John Brown* radiates moral outrage. He is as wild as the blazing prairie fire and whirling funnel cloud pictured behind him. Brown was among numerous Americans who flooded into Kansas in the 1850s, determined to influence whether the territory would enter the United States as a free or slave state. A man of powerful, moral convictions, he did not shrink from violent methods to advance abolitionist aims. He became notorious–but also celebrated–for his participation in the bloody conflict in Kansas and then the raid at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, which helped spark the Civil War.

Curry's print, *John Brown*, is derived from one of several murals commissioned for the State Capitol in the late 1930s. In the mural, Brown towers over the fratricide of Union and Confederate soldiers, with a Bible in one outstretched arm and a rifle in the other. In the print, a single slave gazes up at the raging abolitionist. Both images include a wagon-line of settlers entering a sunflower-dotted territory that promises both fertile land and devastating storms. Raised on a Kansas farm, Curry often portrayed the conflict between man and nature, which he felt forged the strong, God-fearing character of Kansans. But human conflict can also wreak death and destruction. Looming behind John Brown, the tornado and prairie fire may symbolize the gathering storms of a war over slavery. Published in 1939, the print would have been circulated among Americans anxious about possible involvement in a second great war in Europe.

By presenting expressive figures and narratives, Curry and other Regionalist artists tried to capture the cultural essence and spirit of the Heartland. But through the specific, Curry aimed to express the universal. Curry's John Brown raises questions that still trouble Americans. At what point do moral convictions and injustices necessitate violent intervention? When do treasonous or criminal actions become a moral imperative? *John Brown* shows the motivating passion and the repercussions of actions that can be viewed as either criminal or heroic.

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions



John Steuart Curry, *John Brown,* 1939, lithograph. Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Permanent Collection Fund Purchase in memory of David Markin.

JAMES CHAPIN

Though the musicians have yet to draw bows across strings, the visual rhythms of this watercolor are fully engaged. James Chapin has composed a syncopation of alternating blacks and whites, melodious brown tones in hourglass form, and grey-blue music stands in staccato accents–all of which crescendo to the tall contrabass. Chapin shapes the figures and instruments with a subtle faceting, a cubist device used to show a subject from several viewpoints simultaneously. The soft geometry introduces a flickering liveliness, which adds movement and complexity without abstracting the scene of performing musicians.

The Chapin name is more widely popularized by the artist's son and grandson: jazz drummer Jim Chapin and folk singer Harry Chapin. However, James Chapin was a valuable contributor to the American Modernist movement. Acquisition of this work is part of a broader collection effort to help the KIA more completely tell the story of early-20th-century American art.

The Musicians was purchased with funds given by Elizabeth Upjohn Mason and Lowell B. Mason, Jr. in memory of Betty Hawk, a dedicated supporter of the KIA. Over the years, Betty volunteered in the gallery shop and as a docent, donated art to the collection, and was appreciated for her dry sense of humor and clear insight.

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

James Chaplin, *The Musicians,* 1923, watercolor on paper. Purchased with funds given by Elizabeth Upjohn Mason and Lowell B. Mason, Jr. in memory of Elizabeth B. Hawk 2013.19

GRAFTON TYLER BROWN

This trout hanging on a board is a fish out of water-in more ways than one. As a somewhat atypical example of the trompe-l'oeil genre by an artist known for landscape painting, one could say the piece is a rare catch.

Trompe-l'oeil (literally, "fool the eye") is a category of still-life painting popular in America between 1880 and 1900. The convincing illusion of a door or vertical board occupying the surface of the picture plane forces realistically painted objects out into the space of the viewer. The sensation must have captivated 19th-century Americans much like the experience of today's 3-D movie.

Popular trompe-l'oeil variations pictured a door to which were affixed hunting equipment, game, creased papers, and other objects to enhance the illusion. Grafton Tyler Brown's more spare approach directs attention to the trout's rose blush and spotted skin, architectural head, and delicately fanning fins. Against the painted wood grain background, Brown's trout is not presented as a trophy of the fisherman's prowess or even of the painter's virtuosity, but as a native creature of the American wilderness.

In some ways, Brown lived the iconic American story: a young man heads West to seek opportunity. Brown was among numerous African American men who participated in the 19th-century wave of westward expansion. At home in Philadelphia, Brown had trained as a draughtsman and lithographer-a burgeoning, commercial field in the late 19th century. With his skills, he was hired in Nevada, then California, in the mid-1850s to draw maps, views of gold-mining towns and other growing settlements. Brown is recognized as the first Black artist working professionally in the American West.

After owning a lithography business in San Francisco for several years, Brown moved on to Canada to assist in a geographical survey. *Trout* was painted in 1886, a year of transition, when Brown moved from Canada to Portland, Oregon, shifting his focus from commercial work to landscape painting. While his life's work for over 20 years had been witness to the environmental effects of westward expansion, Brown had become interested in the preservation of America's natural beauty. He applied his skill to painting scenic views of Oregon, Washington and Yellowstone, for which he is best known.

In contrast to Brown, some prominent artists of the period produced landscapes that enhanced the West's romance and idyllic majesty-underscoring the belief, known as Manifest Destiny, that American expansion across the continent was a destiny ordained by God. Brown's more reserved, naturalistic style-revealed in his landscapes and this rare still life-may have developed from several factors: his environmental outlook, his experience as a minority in American culture and a habit of accurate detail, gained from his artistic training in lithography.

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

Grafton Tyler Brown, *Trout,* 1886, oil on canvas. Museum Purchase. 2012.62

BRIAN O'DOHERTY

Both title and structure of Brian O'Doherty's installation for the KIA lobby command the viewer to promenade-to step slowly and purposefully forward, then side-to-side. Three ropes are hung horizontally to bracket the space in front of each painted rectangle. Approaching the work from a frontal perspective rewards the viewer with the illusion of the rope lines rising and perfectly outlining each corresponding, diminishing rectangle, in succession. Walking from side to side provides a view of the ropes that restores dimension to the minimalist, aerial monument.

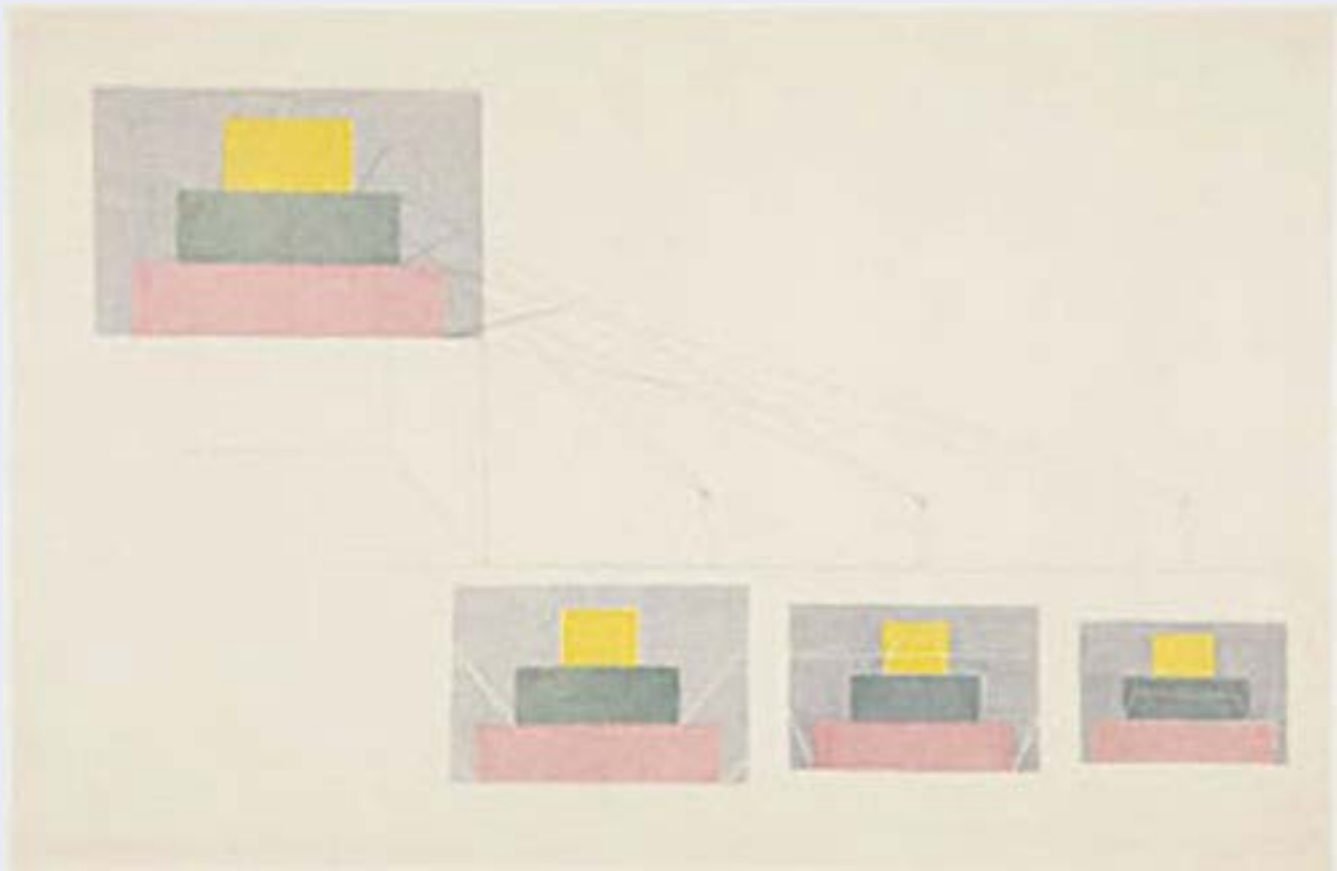
For O'Doherty, *Promenade* references the power of ancient monuments, like ziggurats and labyrinths, to direct an individual's movement and experience of a space. In his book, Inside the White Cube (1976), he argues that our experience of a painting or sculpture is similarly directed by the "white cube" architecture common to museum galleries today. His numerous "rope drawings," including Promenade, wrest control from the "cube" and manipulate the viewer's movement directly.

O'Doherty draws our attention to the performative aspect of viewing, through transitory works of art that become meaningful when the viewer moves through time and space. In a 1998 letter prior to installation, O'Doherty wrote, "There is, I hope, a sense of ascension, of (conceptually, at least) climbing a mountain, as it were, while experiencing the mysterious but undeniable satisfaction of things clicking into place (which they rarely do in life) sequentially." Promenade is a rare extant example of this series of largely temporary installations which so perfectly incorporated O'Doherty's contributions as a visual and conceptual artist.

The detailed drawing of the work was rendered in 2002, four years after O'Doherty installed Promenade. Work on ceiling panels in 2000 necessitated disassembly of the ropes. KIA staff members were able to rehang the ropes precisely as before, but requested a detailed drawing from the artist as a guide and precaution for the future.

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

Brian O'Doherty, *Promenade,* (active as Patrick Ireland, 1972-2008), Promenade, 1998, acrylic paint and rope. Art Auction Fund Purchase. 1999.25



Brian O'Doherty, *Promenade,* (active as Patrick Ireland, 1972-2008), Promenade, 2002, ink on paper. Art Auction Fund Purchase. 2002.51

ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE

An accomplished American photographer, Robert Mapplethorpe gained widespread notoriety for a selection of explicitly homoerotic images that were included in a museum retrospective exhibition of his work. Those images fueled a Congressional furor about government funding of the arts in 1989, amid heated disagreements about the definitions of art and obscenity and limits on freedom of expression.

In the year this photograph, *Thomas*, was taken, Mapplethorpe said "my work is about seeing–seeing things like they haven't been seen before." This applies not only to the most controversial images, but to his other major bodies of work: stylized images of flowers, celebrity portraits, and formally composed nudes.

Presentation of the white, female nude is prevalent throughout the history of Western art, but Mapplethorpe offers the opportunity for aesthetic appreciation of the idealized, black, male body. His accentuation of lustrous contours and rich, bronzed tones recalls Edward Weston's female nudes and studies of peppers. Against a solid black ground, the undulating line of the model's back and shoulders dips and curves as a sensuous abstraction. But Mapplethorpe's nudes, titled with the model's name, do not cross entirely into the realm of formal abstraction.

Here, the body's inherent symmetry is invoked by a frontal pose, but then disrupted by one bent arm. Vitality flows through the arc of the right arm, from the muscular shoulder to the firmly planted fist. If symmetrical, this pose would embody potential energy, a taut body coiled over toes and poised for upward movement. However, the left hand covers the head in a self-defensive gesture, so the coiled posture of strength simultaneously recalls a protective fetal position. The model shields his bowed head and torso, perching in careful balance on the slightest footprint. As positioned, the figure communicates both strength and vulnerability.

Thus, the right and left sides of the figure express the complexities and contradictions contained in each of us, or perhaps the disparity between how we perceive others and who they really are inside. The artist's compositional decisions enable us to see his model as both an object of great beauty and a figure of profound humanity.

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

Robert Mapplethorpe, *Thomas,* 1986, printed 1988, gelatin silver print. Elisabeth Claire Lahti Fund Purchase. 2012.12

FRED WILSON

Fred Wilson's work challenges us to take notice of unseen peoples and untold histories-particularly in relation to the experience of African-Americans. As the U.S. representative to the 2003 Venice Biennale, Wilson turned his attention to the largely unrecognized presence of Africans in Renaissance Venice.

Some of the issues raised in Wilson's complex Biennale installation are encapsulated in this untitled print of the same year. Here, Wilson superimposes photographic reproductions of two found objects: an engraved historical view of Venice and a painted, sculptural "Blackamoor." This term referred to African Muslims or any dark-skinned immigrants, many of whom supported the Venetian economy as skilled craftsmen, slaves, and even gondoliers.

Though their voices are absent from histories of the city, the image of the Moor as an exoticized slave persists in Venice today. Decorative sculptures of turbaned, servile figures, similar to the one pictured here, can be found throughout the city, lending faux grandeur to hotel foyers and advertising luxury goods. Nevertheless, Wilson feels that these figures, like the historical population they stereotype, are overlooked as "part of the furniture."

Wilson literally brings the marginalized figure of the Moor to the forefront of this work, where he cannot be overlooked. Furthermore, the artist fuses the transparent image of the African to that of the gondola, the emblematic icon of Venice. Has Wilson now made it impossible for us to see the famed gondola without considering the forgotten face of the gondolier? If so, can art train our eyes to also notice the Africans, Muslims, and other immigrants who live in the margins of Western societies today?

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

Fred Wilson, *Untitled*, 2003, C-print | Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Permanent Collection Fund, 2012.6

DAVID WILLIAMS

Sixth Form Girl, Primary I Girl is part of an early photographic series by Scottish photographer David Williams, completed as a six-month artist-in-residence commission for St. Margaret's School for Girls, Edinburgh, in 1984. The title of the series, *Pictures from No Man's Land,* playfully acknowledges the unlikely admittance of a male observer to the protective sanctuary of this girls-only world. His portraits sensitively record the young girls' developing identities within this largely outmoded educational environment.

Aside from the tell-tale 1980s Princess Diana coiffures, the photographs have an old-fashioned, timeless quality facilitated in part by Williams's use of an antiquated Rolleiflex TLR (twin lens reflex) camera-the kind that hangs from a long strap around the neck, putting the viewfinder at the level of the photographer's ribcage or navel. Through his (literally) averted gaze, we observe this generation's experience of a similarly timeless cycle: the journey from childhood through adolescence.

How quickly-seemingly within the blink of the camera's shutter-does the ponytailed child arrive upon the threshold of adulthood. As if Williams's twin lenses have the power to compress time, we can imagine *Sixth Form Girl, Primary I Girl* as a vision of the potential and the realization of the same girl. One could easily be a forward projection or the recollected past of the other. The first-year child brims with exuberant, unmasked anticipation. She stands straight, feet together, safe within her tightly buttoned uniform. The elder girl wears a more reserved, relaxed attitude, already preparing to shed her St. Margaret's-emblazoned cocoon and emerge, transformed, into the world beyond.

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

David Williams, *Sixth Form Girl, Primary I Girl,* 1984, gelatin silver print | Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Permanent Collection Fund Purchase, 2011.58

WHITFIELD LOVELL

Each work in Whitfield Lovell's ongoing Kin series conjoins a found object with a precisely drawn portrait. Provocative titles unite the object and portrait, stimulating emotionally charged associations. The artist produces these portrait drawings from anonymous identification documentation (ID) photographs: vintage photo-booth snapshots, passport photos, and police mugshots of African Americans from before the civil rights era. Lovell urges us to contemplate the humanity of the forgotten, ordinary men and women depicted in these institutional representations.

Under the title *The Moral Compass,* the presence of the roulette wheel amplifies the poignancy of this hard-knock face. Perhaps we read irony into the title, and judge this broken visage as documentation of a life squandered at the card table or roulette wheel. However, the work invites us to plumb deeper than the imagined history of a single man. Lovell offers not a stereotype, but a memorial to an "unknown" individual representing all those of his "kin" subject to the wheel of fate. What choices are available to a man whose life is guided by forces as capricious as a roulette wheel? Judgment turns to compassion toward our fellow men to whom Lady Luck delivers–by accident of birth, race, and circumstance–the misfortunes of prejudice and poverty, instead of the blessings of privilege.

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

Whitfield Lovell, *Kin LV (The Moral Compass),* 2011, Conte on paper, wooden roulette wheel | Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Elisabeth Claire Lahti Fund Purchase 2011.103

AKIO TAKAMORI AND GARY CIALDELLA

The following works have been added to the collection in memory of Helen Sheridan and her 25 years of service to the KIA, initially in the library, then as curator, and for 15 years as Director of Collections and Exhibitions.

Akio Takamori is a Japanese American ceramicist who creates distinctive figural sculptures and paints on the surface. *Duet* is additionally complex in that a painted ceramic figure then becomes a photographic, collaged presence on paper. Each print is made unique by the artist's addition of a hand-painted companion. The two figures are bound by shimmering lithographed rings.

Kalamazoo-based photographer Gary Cialdella is recognized nationally for his sensitive architectural portraits of place, in the social landscape tradition. House and AMOCO Refinery is part of his series documenting the impact of manufacturing decline on the residential Calumet region of Illinois. Four pieces from this series were purchased for the permanent collection.

Together, these works represent Helen's dedication to obtaining and exhibiting work by America's most compelling contemporary artists-from both near and far. We thank the numerous individuals whose gifts made these purchases possible.

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

Akio Takamori, *Duet,* 2008, hand lithography, archival inkjet, hand-painted collage.
Purchased with funds given in memory of Helen Sheridan, 2010.40

JILL MOSER

Drawing Meaning from Metaphor

Our typical first step toward making sense of a work of art-identifying an object or scene-can be unproductive when viewing abstract art. So how does one enter into a dialog with a work that is a tangle of calligraphic lines and faded erasures suspended in emptiness? A more intuitive approach akin to reading poetry or listening to music may lead to a more satisfying experience of work such as Jill Moser's *Acrobat* and other abstract prints commissioned by the Lincoln Center List Print Program. Like some poetry, Moser's work is both complex and spare, manipulating the space between language and image to directly communicate a feeling or perception.

Playfully ambiguous titles offer a starting point not only for the viewer, but sometimes also for the artist. Gently holding these words in mind, like a meditation, Moser lets concepts emerge and flow from an almost subconscious place through her arm to trace their own form on the paper. She feels that "the image is active in the process of describing itself."

The title Acrobat elicits associations with agile, twisting movement, which also describes the indigo loops. Simile provides further passage into the work: The arcs are like the acrobat's movements, too rapid for the eye to follow. The lines' hazy afterimages are as repetitive as the paths of many bees revisiting a flower. The lines are like jazz improvisations, weaving a complex sound that can never be precisely repeated.

Spending more time with a work rewards a viewer with richer associations. The visual lyricism of Moser's work draws a patient viewer beyond simile to metaphorical interpretations of intangibles such as relationships, moods, personalities, or silent, fragmentary narratives. Often Moser couples "figures" or works, prompting contemplation on the dynamic interplay of forms, and by extension, on our own human relationships and interactions. However, the isolated form in Acrobat encourages a more introspective meditation. Is this line exuberant, frustrated, capricious, tireless? In what ways can we identify with this line, which bursts forth with such energy, and is repeatedly drawn back toward an inscrutable core? Does it suggest rejuvenation or restriction?

The work of this emerging New York artist is readily identifiable by her signature gestures on an undefined ground. Yet, the subtle variations in each piece will bring to mind, for the unhurried viewer, a unique succession of similes, metaphors, and meanings.

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

Jill Moser, American (b. 1956), *Acrobat,* 2009, screenprint | Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Thomas W. Lollar, 2009.108

EASTMAN JOHNSON

An American Portrait

With the tolling tolling bells' perpetual clang,
Here, coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

Walt Whitman, *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd,* 1865

In the years following the Civil War and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, America's artists and poets helped mourn, then heal the country of its grief and suffering. Eastman Johnson's portrayal of Lincoln may have brought solace by invoking the quintessential American traits that Lincoln embodied-humility, hard work, self-reliance, and a desire for knowledge. This work presents a young Lincoln, who, like our country, glowed with future promise even in early years of hardship and darkness.

The future President sits alone in a dim cabin, lit only by firelight. The rustic hearth recalls a humble cabin of Lincoln's youth in the early 19th century, but also symbolizes the warmth of home and peaceful times of a nearly bygone era. Engrossed in his reading, the self-educated boy leans toward the modest hearth flame. The painter chose to illuminate the scene by a single light source, causing the solitary figure and the white pages of his book to emerge from the dark shadows. The firelight both contributes to the realism of the painting and serves as a metaphor for enlightenment and learning.

Eastman Johnson was a successful genre painter, celebrated for his realistic scenes of everyday American life and character. He applied techniques learned in Europe to create sympathetic portrayals of American slave life and waning rustic lifestyles in his native New England. Johnson also completed numerous portraits of prominent American politicians and literary figures. *The Boy Lincoln* (also referred to as The Boyhood of Lincoln) combines many essential qualities of an Eastman Johnson painting: a portrait of an important American, depicted with realism in an everyday setting, using devices that evoke the honorable character traits for which the individual was revered.

Shortly after Lincoln's death, Johnson's painting, like Walt Whitman's elegy When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd, acknowledged the country's profound sorrow, but looked ahead toward the rebirth of hope and the endurance of the American spirit.

The Boy Lincoln in the KIA collection is one of three related compositions by Eastman Johnson housed in Michigan museums. For an in-depth review of these, check out this "online exhibition."

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

Eastman Johnson, American (1824-1906), *The Boy Lincoln,* 1867, oil on panel | Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Purchase: Acquired through the generosity of an anonymous donor, 2009.106

MARC CHAGALL

Marc Chagall was determined that his third, and most ambitious, illustration project-a French publication of the Old Testament-would express both the mystery and immediacy he had always experienced in the ancient texts. The Jewish patriarchs and prophets had been so real and present to Chagall, as a child in Russia, that he expected to meet them in the village street, cloaked and capped like the peasants he would later so vividly recall in his paintings and prints.

Such characters fittingly populated Chagall's etched illustrations of a Russian novel and French fables. But to make the Biblical figures and their struggles alive and relevant to 20th-century readers, Chagall needed to see the Holy Land. He began to visualize the series during a trip in 1931. Keen observations of the people and landscape would bring authenticity to Chagall's dreamlike vision. Chagall, whose work embraced the real and surreal, was uniquely suited to evoke a time when the realm of angels so closely touched the world of men.

This image of King David illustrates the unfathomable (to the modern mind) tangibility of God's relationship to the men of the Old Testament. A shaft of heavenly light pierces the darkness, opening a channel to heaven that directs David's material utterances to a God who seems to be listening from just beyond the edge of the page-within clear sight of David, and yet not visible to us. Chagall invests light, word, and the relationship between God and man with a substantial physicality that was lost to modern society and philosophies.

In this illustration of Samuel II:22, King David is presented as a poet of psalms. At his feet rests the harp with which the young David first charmed the faithless ruler he would eventually supplant. Arms wide, David sings thanks to God for delivering him from the many troubles and enemies he encountered during his rise from young court musician and cunning slayer of Goliath to triumphant King of Israel, establishing Jerusalem as capital and holy city.

Completion of Marc Chagall's series of 105 etchings illustrating the Old Testament was interrupted by the chaos of World War II. Chagall etched the first 66 copper plates during Hitler's rise to power, then fled France and turned his attention to other projects in the United States during the 1940s. When Chagall was finally able to resume work on the Bible series for a new publisher after the war, he had seen 20th-century powers replay the timeless cycles of suffering and endurance, despair and courage. In the 1950s, as Chagall etched this radiant and joyous portrait of the ancient King who unified Israel, a Jewish homeland had once again been established-this time as the modern state of Israel.

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

Marc Chagall, *Song of David*, 1956-57, hand-colored etching | Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Lynn Bradeen in honor of his life-long best friend Carol Ginsberg McCain, 2010.68

STEPHEN HANSEN

Since beginning to sell his work as a teenager, Stephen Hansen has experienced no shortage of enthusiastic collectors. However, his whimsical papier maché sculptures have caused critics-and even Hansen, himself-to question "but, is it art?". Doesn't fine art employ precious pigments, marble, and bronze to wrestle with complex and serious subjects?

For a time, Hansen painted in a style he described as "realistic and morbid" but eventually decided that "serious" didn't have to mean "sombre," and he returned to papier maché. He characterizes his work as "distilled observations" of the world around him, creating visual puns that gently lampoon human foibles, social conventions, and turns of phrase. Hansen feels that "You can address serious concerns and actually get people to consider them if you present them in an amiable sort of way."

In *"But, Is It Art?",* Hansen stirs up a historically contentious dialog between critics and contemporary artists who challenge the conventions of composition, material, style, and content. And then Hansen places the debate in the mouth of a painter on his coffee break. A jovial workman in brightly spattered painter's whites perches atop a canvas. The title makes audible a fragment of philosophical coffee-break chatter. Meanwhile, his colleague finishes rolling on the cheery, primary-colored rectangles that parody the oversized, abstract paintings of Mark Rothko. Now accepted as an American master, Rothko defended his enigmatic work against critics in the 1940s, asserting its "tragic and timeless" subject matter. Hansen's drolly narrative sculpture is, in contrast, easily accessible and far from "tragic." However, the question "Is it art?" may well be timeless. Hansen invites viewers to be skeptical of the artificial distinctions between "high" and "low" art. If he's satirizing the arguments of critics, Hansen is razzing the artist, too. "I also recognize the fact that I'm participating in all of the absurdities around me."

As usual, Hansen poses a question, leaving the answers to the judgment of the viewer. But maybe we should take a break from the analysis of his papier maché creations and just lighten up. After all, "It is difficult to be pretentious, the most common pitfall of contemporary art, in a material so inherently silly."

Hansen's work can be seen at the new Kalamazoo airport terminal and in the KIA's upcoming exhibition, Off the Wall: Art in Three Dimensions.

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

Stephen Hansen, *"But, Is It Art?"*, 2011, papier mache, acrylic on canvas, and mixed media | Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Permanent Collection Fund Purchase, 2011.17

WILLIAM KENTRIDGE

Shadow silhouettes and sketched figures populate much of William Kentridge's work, including this print from one of his Nose series. The print's darkened borders and draping lines frame the figures, intentionally referencing the curtains of a theatrical proscenium. The figures and newsprint imagery relate to animations Kentridge designed to project on the set of the Metropolitan Opera's March 2010 production of The Nose.

The Shostakovich opera (1930) retells the satirical short story (1836) by Nikolai Gogol, in which an overly ambitious Russian bureaucrat wakes to find that his nose has inexplicably left his face and is gallivanting about town dressed as a uniformed gentleman of higher rank than himself! In a confrontation, the nose boldly denies that his proper station is upon the lesser man's face. In this print, the enlarged (human-sized) nose and a nude male figure posture and strut like overstuffed officers. The backdrop is papered in propaganda, including the profile of a man with censored nose and the caption, "Bpere" ("Lying!").

Kentridge sees parallels between the 19th-century bureaucracy Gogol satirizes, Stalinist Russia of Shostakovich's time, and the former apartheid system of his own native South Africa. The absurd logic of social hierarchy, government control, injustice, and personal responsibility are important themes for Kentridge. He feels that the problems of the real world are best revealed through the absurd. Gogol chose an absurdist construct-the separation of a man from his own nose-to externalize an internal struggle. The Nose series, like other works by Kentridge, explores the conflict arising within an individual who must conform to the values of an absurd political and social system.

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

William Kentridge, *The Nose,* 2010, etching (photogravure and drypoint with sugar lift) | Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Purchased with funds given by Mr. And Mrs. Thomas Lambert, 2010.31

ZHU CHENG

The beauty for which Zhu Cheng's painted fans were highly prized 120-150 years ago can still be readily appreciated today. Beyond their decorative appeal, these "bird-and-flower" paintings affirmed a connection to Chinese traditions during a period of political and cultural upheaval.

Much of this painting's beauty lies in a pleasing tension between circular movement and balanced calm. The arcs of several stems curve in harmony with the round silk, shaped to mount on a fan. A large blossom and small bird balance the view. This deceptively simple image demonstrates the artist's skillful execution of compositional traditions. Densely painted foliage balances the equally important unpainted space. The linear stems are adeptly arranged to stimulate the eye's continuous movement, without crossing the circular frame or appearing unnatural.

Keen observation of nature was essential to mastery of bird-and-flower painting. The tiny brown bird bears the features of a warbler, known in parts of China for its sweet song in springtime. Thorny stems, a distinctive bud, and razor-edged mature foliage contrasting with the reddish hue of tender, unfurling leaves accurately depict a rose. Though less commonly featured in Chinese art than the peony, the rose was also a traditional symbol of spring. A successful work was to be both decorative and symbolic. The artist reveals the fleeting nature of life in the moment before a bird flits away and a fading petal falls. Yet, a new bud promises continued life and beauty.

Shanghai experienced rapid change and growth during the 19th century, with pressures from civil strife on land and exposure to foreign influence by sea. As a result of the Opium Wars, China was forced to open the port city of Shanghai to foreign powers bringing Western ideas, culture, and commerce. From the southern countryside, rebel forces challenging ancient Chinese religious and social values caused disturbances that drove 100,000 people-including Zhu Cheng and many artists-to the relative safety of Shanghai between 1860-63. In the city, Zhu Cheng studied with two influential masters, synthesizing Zhang Xiong's traditional compositions and techniques with Wang Li's lively brushwork and vibrant color, which together defined the distinctive Shanghai style.

Bird-and-flower painting was already a 700-year-old painting tradition in the 19th century. Viewers understood these objects of beauty as expressions of Buddhist and Taoist philosophies that the divine exists everywhere, in the harmony of man and nature, animals and plants. Thus, works like Zhu Cheng's immensely popular bird-and-flower paintings connected the people of Shanghai to China's ancient cultural heritage during a time of turmoil.

Karla Niehus
Associate Curator of Exhibitions

Zhu Cheng, Chinese (1826-1899 or 1900), *Bird and Flower,* ca. 1850-1900, ink and color on silk | Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Albert and Betty Chang, UpJohn Company and Kalamazoo Valley Community College Retirees