

OLGA ALBIZU

Born 1924, Ponce, Puerto Rico

Died 2005, New York, NY

Untitled, 1959

oil on canvas



Olga Albizu studied and worked in New York City at the forefront of what became known as the Abstract Expressionist movement in modern art. Despite being among the pioneers of this style that dominated the art scene from the 1940s into the 1960s, and perhaps because she was Latina, Albizu did not receive timely recognition. She stopped painting in the 1970s. Albizu is an artist's artist. The intrinsic qualities of color, form, mark-making, and composition are her subject matter. She pursued her work with a high level of ingenuity and leadership in the field.

Having earned a degree in art from the University of Puerto Rico, she left her home in 1948 to further her studies in New York at the Art Students League. She studied painting with Esteban Vicente in Puerto Rico and with Hans Hofmann in New York. Albizu

continued her postgraduate studies in France and Italy in the early 1950s, returning to NY in 1953. Her work also included designing many record album covers for RCA and Verve for their symphonic recordings and famed bossa nova series.

Davis Museum at Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA, Museum purchase, The Dorothy Johnston Towne (Class of 1923) Fund

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

Born 1887, Sun Prairie, WI

Died 1986, Santa Fe, NM

Blue--A, 1959

oil on canvas



Georgia O'Keeffe is among the best-known female artists of her time. As early as 1916, she was already experimenting with nonrepresentational subject matter in very limited tones. There are four small watercolors from that year in the collection of New York's Museum of Modern Art, called *Blue #1-4*. These formative works mark the beginnings of O'Keeffe's unique abstract style and were made while she was teaching art in west Texas. Soon she moved to New York City and began a personal and professional relationship with pioneering photographer and gallery owner Alfred Stieglitz, whom she married in 1924. He and a small circle of like-minded supporters worked tirelessly to bring modern art from Europe to the United States in the early decades of the 20th century. O'Keeffe played a central role in this effort and became an

inspirational figure for many aspiring female artists. She was one of few women to receive a major museum exhibition prior to the 1960s. During this era, O'Keeffe quickly became known for her large, richly colored abstract paintings of flowers that overwhelmed viewers with their beauty and lushness, not unlike *Blue--A*. While O'Keeffe's work is represented in many museums around the world, *Blue--A* remained in her possession and is now part of the permanent holdings of the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in New Mexico, where O'Keeffe lived fulltime from the late 1940s until her death in 1986.

**Georgia O'Keeffe Museum,
Gift of The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation**

FAYGA OSTROWER
Born 1920, Łódź, Poland
Died 2001, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

#5907, 1959
etching



When the KIA acquired this print in 1967, Ostrower was considered to be a leading contemporary printmaker. In 1958, the year before she created #5907, she became internationally recognized when she was awarded a major prize at the Venice Biennale.

Ostrower was born in Poland to a Jewish family that relocated to Germany in 1921 and then emigrated to Brazil through Belgium in 1934. She was well on her way to a rich career as an artist and teacher in Brazil when she traveled to New York in 1955 on a Fulbright Scholarship to train at Atelier 17, in the last year before this renowned

European printmaking workshop returned to Paris after its World War II hiatus in the United States. Atelier 17 exposed her to the most advanced techniques and trends of the time, which she adopted with vigor to produce works such as #5907.

Many of Ostrower's works illustrate social issues, depicting women washing clothes, children from the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, and other scenes portraying the life of the poor. However, in the 1950s, the artist abandoned the depiction of figures and began creating abstract works in a style resembling that of German Expressionism. This aroused criticism stemming from the artistic and cultural beliefs of that era. However, Ostrower persisted, continuing to be introspective, in search of her own rhythm and moral pathway.

Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Directors Fund Purchase, 1967/8.7

LOLA ALVAREZ BRAVO
Born 1907, Lagos de Moreno, Mexico
Died 1993, Mexico City, Mexico



La Espina (The Thorn), ca.1950, printed 1975
gelatin silver print

Lola Alvarez Bravo married Manuel Alvarez Bravo in 1925, when he was beginning his career as a photographer in Mexico City. They worked side by side for nearly a decade. Together, they were part of the cultural circle that included groundbreaking artists such as Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo (her friend from girlhood), Rufino Tamayo, and David Siqueiros. After their divorce in 1935, both artists went on separately to achieve success and acclaim among Mexico's most consequential photographers.

Alvarez Bravo's interests coincided with an international movement in photography focused on capturing everyday people in unassuming moments and activities. Like many of her colleagues, she heralded the indigenous cultures of Mexico. Much of her work resulted from observing the world around her and waiting for exactly the right moment to capture her subject. *La Espina* reveals this

desire: Alvarez Bravo's lens presents a couple, perhaps in a marketplace, as a woman observes her companion plucking a thorn from their foot. In the photographer's capable hands, this act becomes a moment for consideration. Alvarez Bravo's first major solo exhibition occurred in 1944 at the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City. From 1951 to 1958, she ran her own gallery, where she presented the only solo exhibition Frida Kahlo had in Mexico during her lifetime.

Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Dr. Edward (Ted) Lance-Gomez Family in memory of Rosa Marcela Calderón de Lance, 2020.32

JUDITH GODWIN
Born 1930, Suffolk, VA
Died 2021

Untitled, 1958
oil on canvas



Judith Godwin settled in New York City in 1953 and began her studies at the Art Students League with German abstract artist Hans Hofmann. Her work first received serious attention in a 1957 exhibition at the Betty Parsons Gallery, a premier venue for emerging Abstract Expressionist artists. Color, composition, and the visual effects created by the manipulation of methods and materials characterize this style of art. (Parsons's work is also included in this exhibition.) Godwin's large, gestural abstractions are as powerful as any of her contemporaries', but she always felt shunned by the art world because of her gender. To make ends meet during the 1950s and '60s, she took jobs restoring houses, working as a carpenter and an apprentice to plasterers and masons. She also designed fabric and dabbled in interior design. Her paintings began to be exhibited more regularly in the 1970s, and her place as a significant figure in the history of Abstract Expressionism has only in recent years been rectified.

The John and Susan Horseman Collection, Courtesy of the Horseman Foundation

YVONNE THOMAS
Born 1913, Nice, France
Died 2009, Aspen, CO

Summer Day, 1952
oil on canvas



Most viewers react to the physical qualities of Abstract Expressionist compositions such as color, size, or brushwork without realizing that many of the pictures were inspired by a specific idea or are intended to carry emotional meaning. *Summer Day* reveals the artist's early and long-term interest in vibrant colors and energetic brushwork. Combined with loose geometric forms, the overall effect creates a striking composition that demonstrates her promise and eventual recognition as a contributor to modern art history. Thomas was a first-generation Abstract Expressionist.

Born in France, she came to the United States as a young girl and was educated in New York City. Like so many other artists in this exhibition, she studied at the Cooper Union, the Art Students League, and with Hans Hofmann. In 1948, she was one of only five students at the short-lived Subjects of the Artist school, where she worked directly with its founders Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, William Baziotés, and Barnett Newman, all of whom became textbook names in the history of modern art. Two fellow European artists, Willem de

Kooning and Marcel Duchamp, both of whom became towering figures in 20th-century art, were among Thomas's close personal friends.

The John and Susan Horseman Collection, Courtesy of the Horseman Foundation

MARY ABBOTT

Born 1921, New York, NY

Died 2019, Southampton, NY

Ariel Wind, ca. 1951

mixed media on linen



Ideas stimulated by listening to music, reading literature and poetry, and observing nature are the sources of Mary Abbott's compositions. Perhaps Ariel, the airy spirit in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, inspired the free use of material and vivid mark-making of this work. Both his "breezy" character and the freshness of strong—tempestuous—air movement are conveyed in this exuberant, gestural picture.

Mary Abbott was a central figure in the New York City art movement of the 1940s and '50s that became known as Abstract Expressionism. She received little recognition for her work until

recently, like most female artists of her time.

Abbott studied art at the Art Students League. She was one of only a few people to attend the Subjects of the Artist school in the late 1940s. There she met Willem de Kooning, who became an important influence on her life and work. Her portrait of de Kooning's wife, Elaine, can be found on view in the KIA's permanent collection.

The John and Susan Horseman Collection, Courtesy of the Horseman Foundation

MINNA CITRON

Born 1896, Newark, NJ

Died 1991, New York, NY

Slipstream, 1956

etching and aquatint



Slipstream is from the second half of Citron's long and prolific career. It is from a series known as *The Unchartered Course*, which explores combinations of printmaking accidents with controlled processes to create compelling visual effects. Citron's work from the 1920s into the 1940s was completely different, as it focused on realistic but satirical depictions of everyday life, in particular, the roles and activities of women in her Union Square neighborhood in New York City. Gender and sexuality were central to *Femininities*, her first critically acclaimed solo exhibition, in 1935. She shifted to abstraction during the 1940s after joining Atelier 17, the renowned Parisian printmaking workshop that had relocated temporarily to New York during World War II. Atelier 17 introduced her to intriguing and innovative techniques pioneered by Marcel Duchamp and André Masson. For the remainder of her life, Citron continued to make prints and worked figuratively and abstractly.

She identified with the 1970s women's movement for equal rights and in 1985 received the Women's Caucus for Art Lifetime Achievement Award for her decades-long advocacy of issues concerning women.

**Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Gift of Christiane Hyde Citron
from the estate of Minna Citron**

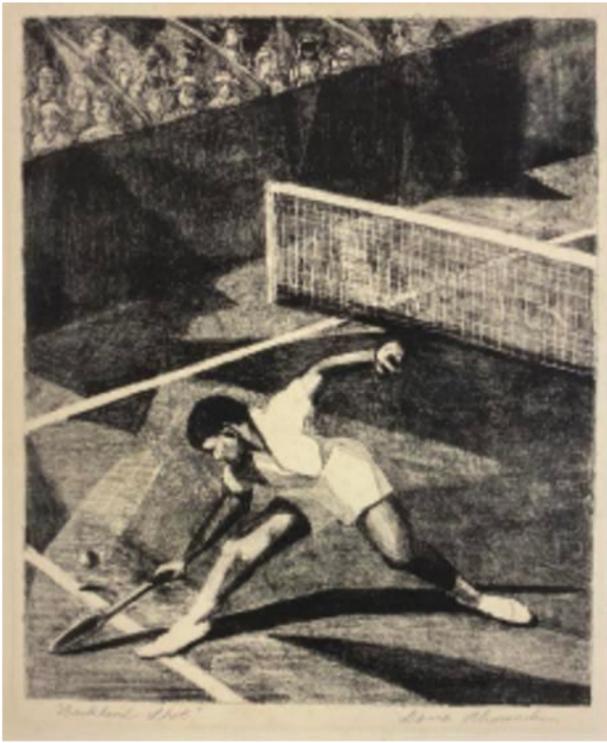
DORIS ALEXANDER THOMPSON

Born 1906, Mobile, AL

Died 1995, Magnolia Springs, AL

Backhand Shot, 1950

lithograph on wove paper



A backhand shot is defined as a common tennis stroke and also a strong verbal retort. Even on its surface, this lithograph is more than an innocent depiction of a regular tennis match. Simply by depicting a Black athlete in this era of segregation, Thompson calls to mind the social divide present in the United States, where so many clubs and organizations refused to admit people who were not white. This composition's being only in black and white seems to reinforce this point.

During the 1950s, Althea Gibson, an African American and future Hall of Famer, rose to become the world's top player in women's professional tennis. Gibson became recognized not just as a tremendous player on the court but also for her firm stance against racial and gender discrimination.

Most of Thompson's work focused on subjects from her life and surroundings. A native Alabamian, Thompson learned lithography in Philadelphia at the art school of Temple

University. By the late 1940s, she was featured in an article in a Montgomery newspaper that reported her to own one of only a few lithographic presses in the South.

Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Gift of Samuel G. Townsley, Carswell M. Walcott, and Lynn Yonge

COREEN MARY SPELLMAN

Born 1905, Forney, TX

Died 1978, Denton, TX

Purina Store, Circa 1950

watercolor and graphite



In addition to being an artist, Coreen Mary Spellman was an important activist dedicated to promoting opportunities in the arts for women. In 1925, Spellman earned her bachelor's degree in costume design from Texas State College for Women. During the mid-to-late 1920s, she attended classes at Harvard University and the Art Students League and earned the first of her several master's degrees, from Columbia University. In 1940, she was a co-founder of the Printmakers Guild—later renamed the Texas Printmakers—a workshop and exhibition space that, until 1961, did not admit men.

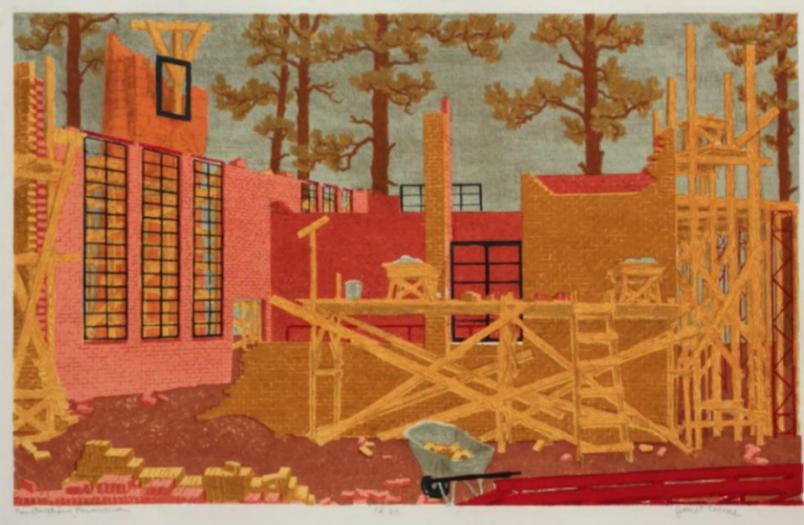
Purina Store (the storefront is the Dick Harris Grocery in Denton, Texas) calls upon a typical American scene as a point of departure for a modernist exploration of color and form. The frontal presentation provides a highly flattened view emphasizing the relentless checkerboard decoration contained within the rigorous architectural symmetry of the building and relieved only by advertised specials. Isolated and standing alone, the store appears to be loosely echoed at the bottom of the sheet by a presumed reflection from a wet street. Human presence is limited to a single figure on an advertising

poster, although the double doors humorously suggest the gaping mouth of a creature, leaving the customer to be "consumed" upon entrance.

Collection of Michael T. Ricker

JANET ELIZABETH TURNER
Born 1914, Kansas City, MO
Died 1988, Chico, CA

Construction: Powerhouse, 1956-1957
serigraph



founded by Coreen Spellman, whose work is also in this exhibition.

Although known for centuries and used in various commercial art applications, the techniques of serigraphy—also known as silkscreen or screenprinting—were not used by fine artists until the late 1930s. The National Serigraph Society was founded in 1940 to promote the medium's possibilities among printmakers. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, Janet Turner was the group's president. Turner crafted an impressive career as an international artist and influential university professor who worked primarily in Texas and California. While in Texas in the 1940s, she was a member of the all-women's Printmakers Guild, co-

While Turner is best known for her rhythmic images of wildlife in natural settings, *Construction: Powerhouse* is an architectonic exploration based on a powerhouse on the Stephen F. Austin State College campus (now Stephen F. Austin State University) that remains in use today. The print's vibrant presence transports it from the realm of representational rendering toward an expressionistic exploration of form, color, and space.

Collection of Michael T. Ricker

FANNIE HILLSMITH
Born 1911, Boston, MA
Died 2007, Jaffrey, NH

African Abstraction, 1951
gouache on brown paper



Fannie Hillsmith found endless fascination in pattern, texture, and form. *African Abstraction* relies heavily on an animated hourglass or bow-tie form, which she reiterates in various sizes, variations, and orientations. The waisted form's reiteration suggests fabric design, with its earthy tones recalling Malian mudcloth and using African fiber arts as a powerful source of modernist inspiration. Hillsmith's hourglass form is likely derived from an antique oil lamp kept in her home. The lamp appeared regularly in her work, in a variety of distorted manifestations.

**Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Gift of
Michael T. Ricker in honor of
Patti Troth Black**

IRENE RICE PEREIRA
Born 1902, Chelsea, MA
Died 1971, Marbella, Spain

Untitled from *The Nature of Space*, 1956
gouache



Irene Rice Pereira signed her works as I. Rice Pereira to obscure her female identity. This simple act sheds immediate light on the essence of a problem—gender did matter in the 1950s New York art scene. Rice Pereira believed that women artists received second-class or even less consideration. Throughout her life, she openly spoke, wrote, and worked as a teacher and artist to rectify inequality in the art world. In order to fund her private publishing efforts, she created and sold small deluxe editions, each embellished with a unique work, as seen here.

While teaching at the Works Progress Administration Federal Art Projects Design Laboratory, Rice Pereira developed her signature style of layered geometric forms over fields of intriguing colors designed to explore optical and spatial illusions. This gouache is a classic example of her mature work, inspired by abstract art in America and that of the European Avant-Garde. Rice Pereira began exhibiting at important New York venues in the early 1930s. By 1953, she was a well-respected painter, and her work was

featured as a centerfold in *Life Magazine*.

Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Gift of Michael T. Ricker in honor of Karen Bearor

JANE FREILICHER
Born 1924, New York, NY
Died 2014, New York, NY

Peonies on a Table, 1954
oil on linen



Jane Freilicher was part of an informal circle of artists and writers known as the New York School. Most were affiliated with the prestigious Tibor de Nagy Gallery, where Freilicher had her first one-person show in 1952. Writers such as John O'Hara, Kenneth Koch, John Ashberry, and James Schuyler admired her to the point of referencing her in their poems directly or citing her as a source of their inspiration. Larry Rivers, Grace Hartigan, Fairfield Porter, Joan Mitchell, and Helen Frankenthaler were just some of the other artists who became her close friends in the 1950s. Over her lifetime, Freilicher had over 50 solo exhibitions, in addition to many group shows. From the 1970s to the present, she has only garnered more attention and respect for her long and prolific career.

Peonies on a Table reflects the essence of Freilicher's interests. Not unlike earlier 20th-

century artists such as Pierre Bonnard and Henri Matisse, she preferred realistic subject matter and expressed a love of everyday beauty that was in contrast to the more analytical and abstract art of the day. She frequently paired interior still lifes with landscape views in a soft, breezy style in which attention to brushwork, color, and light figured prominently.

Collection of the Grand Rapids Art Museum; Museum Purchase, Wege Fund

MARION GREENWOOD
Born 1909, New York, NY
Died 1970, Kingston, NY

Carib Mother, 1954
lithograph on paper



Marion Greenwood specialized in creating upbeat paintings and prints of ordinary people from different cultures and ethnicities across the world. She traveled extensively and sought themes with universal appeal, such as this depiction of a mother and child. Greenwood's career followed a remarkable path available to American artists whose careers were sideswiped by the stock market crash of 1929 and the ensuing economic depression. She had studied in New York and Paris, and lithography was already a part of her early repertoire, but it was through government-sponsored commissions—in both the United States and Mexico—for large-scale mural paintings that she found early success. Between 1932 and 1936, Greenwood and her sister Grace Greenwood Ames, who was also an artist, completed five major mural paintings in Mexico, where artists such as Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco were popularizing the centuries-old art form. She continued the practice in the United States in the late 1930s, creating paintings for spaces like post offices and public housing buildings. In 1937, Columbia University hired her to teach fresco painting. During World War II, she continued to secure government-supported jobs such as serving as one of only two female

artist war correspondents for the United States Army. She completed her last mural project in 1965 for Syracuse University. Its subject was the roles of women around the globe.

Collection of the Grand Rapids Art Museum; Bequest of John Cary

FRANÇOISE GILOT
Born 1921, Neuilly-sur-Seine, France
Lives in New York, NY and Paris, France

Melancolie, 1959
oil on canvas



Françoise Gilot, an extremely prolific painter, printmaker, costume designer, book illustrator, author, and poet, is highly regarded as an accomplished artist. Gilot's career both suffered and thrived from her personal relationship with Pablo Picasso from 1943 to 1953. During this era, she earned the reputation for being a major feminine voice for the School of Paris. By 1952, her work was represented in galleries in Paris, London, and New York. Throughout her career, Gilot's style and subject matter have varied greatly and range from pure abstractions to figurative work, landscapes, and still lifes. Her profound knowledge of culture as a result of studying literature and art may have inspired her consideration of melancholy. The timeless theme has for centuries inspired artists like Gilot to explore the subject intellectually, emotionally, and formally from a modern point of view.

Gilot studied art from childhood into adulthood despite her family's wishes that she choose a more traditional occupation. Before abandoning the pursuit of a law degree from the University in Paris in 1943, she earned a B.A. in philosophy from the same institution in 1938 and a degree in English literature in 1939 from Cambridge University in a program conducted through the Sorbonne and the British Institute in Paris.

**Collection of the Grand Rapids Art Museum;
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. John Halick**

KATHRYN ALBIN HODGMAN

Born 1907, Michigan

Died 1987, South Carolina

***Lady With a Quilt*, 1951**

oil on canvas board



Kathryn Hodgman is remembered in the Kalamazoo community for both her artwork and her civic-minded initiatives. She was an energizing influence on art in Kalamazoo from the day she arrived in 1930, fresh from her studies at Wellesley College, to create an art department at Kalamazoo College. She served there as the department head from 1930 to 1939. Hodgman persuaded nationally known artists with whom she was personally acquainted to come to Kalamazoo for lectures and painting workshops, which helped establish the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts as an important art hub in the Midwest. While Hodgman never achieved national renown, during the 1930s, '40s, and '50s her

artwork was featured in both group and one-person exhibits in Michigan, New York, and elsewhere in the United States.

Lady with a Quilt is a portrait of Iris Praus, a polyglot, a lover of fashion and antiques, and a former secretary for the A. M. Todd Company in Kalamazoo. The painting not only honors “women’s work” but also exemplifies Hodgman’s colorful, vigorous, and expressive brushwork.

Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Mrs. Oscar Renshaw, 1977/8.102

BETTY PARSONS

Born 1900, New York, NY

Died 1982, New York, NY

***Untitled*, 1950**

watercolor and graphite on paper



Betty Parsons is best known as a pioneering New York City gallery owner who introduced contemporary American painting— called the New York School and eventually Abstract Expressionism—to the world. From 1946 into the early 1950s, she launched the careers of artists such as Jackson Pollock, Clyfford Still, Ellsworth Kelly, Mark Rothko, Judith Godwin (also in this exhibition), and Robert Rauschenberg. Over the decades and until her death, she sought out young “new” artists and was always particularly passionate about providing

exhibition space for women and LGBTQ artists who received little or no recognition elsewhere because of prejudices against their gender or sexuality. Parsons created a dynamic, fast-paced atmosphere by scheduling twelve shows every year from September to May. Artist Helen Frankenthaler commented, “Betty and her gallery helped construct the center of the art world. She was one of the last of her breed.”

Parsons reserved summers to pursue her own painting and sculpture. She studied art formally in Paris in the 1920s and '30s. She had her first solo exhibition of watercolors at the Midtown Gallery in New York in 1936. Abstract, expressive works such as the watercolor *Untitled* reflect her interest in championing new ideas in nonobjective art at this pivotal time in history and in her own life.

Collection of the Grand Rapids Art Museum; Gift of Louis K. and Susan Meisel

MARY FRANK

Born 1933, London, UK

Lives in Lake Hill and New York, NY

Untitled Wood Figure on Two Pedestals, 1959

wood



In 1949, at 16, Mary met and fell in love with photographer Robert Frank, nine years her elder. Displeased with his daughter's "unladylike" relationship, Mary's father sent her to a psychiatric institution. She remained in solitary confinement there for two weeks before her mother retrieved her. Mary recalls, "The experience of solitary confinement had a profound effect on me. It left me with a terrible idea of what it is to be alone." The next year, Mary became pregnant, and with her mother's permission (as she was a minor), she married Robert Frank.

To Mary, Robert was the artist of the family, and she just "made sculptures," mostly small, wooden abstract forms. Although largely self-taught, Mary was influenced by Max Beckmann, Hans Hofmann, and Cuban-American ceramist Margaret Ponce Israel. Her first exhibition, a group of sketches, was held in 1958 at the Poindexter Gallery in New York City. However, Mary always felt on the fringes of the art scene, and therefore free to create her own aesthetic path. She did not follow the popular aesthetics of the Abstract Expressionists in New York at the time.

In the 1950s, Frank's wood sculptures grew in size, and their forms became unrestrained and more abstract. However, she clarifies that they are never fully abstract and are always rooted in natural forms. Frank was also careful to make forms that shift visually depending on the viewer's angle and perspective.

**Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts;
Gift of the Longview Foundation, 1961/2.294**

DORIS CAESAR

Born 1892, New York, NY

Died 1971, Litchfield, CT

Young Girl with Upraised Arms, 1952

bronze



By the 1950s, Doris Caesar had already cast bronze sculptures for nearly three decades. However, during the '50s, she narrowed her focus and abandoned the male figure, portraiture, and details. Instead, she explored a single topic—the female form—more deeply and fully. Caesar's forms are expressionistic in style, with elongated bodies, small heads, and masklike faces. In 1959, the Whitney Museum of American Art curated an exhibition entitled *Four American Expressionists*, which featured Caesar alongside three male counterparts. Curator and essayist John I. H. Baur wrote about Caesar's sculptures for the catalog, saying, "They speak in spontaneous gestures, tempered by an odd

self-consciousness, and evident awareness of their bodies and what these tell of a woman's inner life. If the revelation is nearly painful in its intimacy, it is also a deeply compassionate expression of the essences of womanhood."

Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Cameron Davis, 1960/1.280

NORA DRAPCE

Born 1886, Daugarpils, Latvia

Died 1968, Kalamazoo, MI

Exodus, 1958

gouache



Nora Drapce was one of the major figures in Kalamazoo's art community in the 1950s and '60s. Little known as an artist in the rest of the US, Drapce had been a widely exhibited painter in Latvia and Eastern Europe in the early 20th century. She was also an esteemed professor, having taught painting for 15 years at the College of Art in Liepaja, Latvia. That part of her life ended in 1944 when, at 58, she became a political refugee. After six years in refugee camps in the heart of Nazi Germany, Drapce immigrated to Kalamazoo, where there was a growing Latvian community.

In 1950, she became an artist-in-residence at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, a position she held for the rest of her life. Much of Drapce's early work was destroyed during World War II, and only 50 of her early European works remain. In the work that Drapce produced for several years after the war, both the subject and somber palette refer to the devastation and misery she witnessed. Her *Refugee Cycle* paintings belong to that period. Of her paintings, Drapce said:

"Sufferings of refugees, despair, and resignation have brought in my art and accent that seems strange and gloomy to people who have the luck to live quietly in their own homes. I have the conviction that the people who have suffered much cannot play with abstracts or simply with ideas of art for art's sake. The hard reality has left too much of an impression."

Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Bequest of the artist, 1968/9.68

VICTORIA MARSHALL LITTNA

Born 1921, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Died 1991, Kalamazoo, MI

Thoughtful Woman, 1951

oil on canvas



In 1965, Victoria Littna moved to Kalamazoo from London with her husband, Francis, who was also an artist. Victoria became a force in the local and regional art community teaching at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts and the Battle Creek Art Center. She was supportive of all local arts, including the visual arts, dance, music, and theater, and showed her own work extensively throughout the Midwest. When speaking about her art, Littna referred to herself as a "colorist." Like *Thoughtful Woman*, many of Littna's paintings are full of color and expressive brushstrokes. Her works demonstrate influences from European movements like that of the Fauves, who preferred scenes with strong emotional colors over realistic depictions.

emotional colors over realistic depictions.

Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Purchased with funds from the Friends of Victoria Littna, 1990/1.85

MINNA CITRON
Born 1896, Newark, NJ
Died 1991, New York, NY

Barrier Reef, 1954
etching and aquatint, ed 25/50



otherwise compressed space.

The emphasis on texture seen in *Barrier Reef* (and *Slipstream*) differentiates Minna Citron's form-focused works of the 1950s from earlier Atelier 17 works, where the automatic drawing (engraving) emphasized by that printmaking workshop is evident. *Barrier Reef* is a dense, moody image composed of angular, swirling fish forms struggling against powerful currents and potentially threatened by the grander spiky forms suggestive of reef outcroppings. A slight but deliberate misalignment in printing during the plate's second pass through the press gives the work a sense of depth in an

Collection of Michael T. Ricker

DOROTHY DEHNER
Born 1901, Cleveland, OH
Died 1994, New York, NY

Cage for a Walking Stick, 1952
ink and watercolor



Dorothy Dehner transitioned through several styles and subjects in her work. Humorous early drawings of rural life segued into surrealist nature-extracted drawings, which were then followed by a series of angst-ridden figurative compositions reeking of autobiographical stress—the *Damnation* series. By the late 1940s, and largely in response to her experiences at Atelier 17, she purged figuration from her work and dove into full nonobjectivity, represented in part by a series of elegant and precise drawings—formal explorations of forms in space. Created the year she finalized her divorce and received her teaching certificate, *Cage for a Walking Stick* is a contemplative and architectonic composition that helped mark the end of her self-doubt and professional insecurity.

Collection of Michael T. Ricker

YNEZ JOHNSTON
Born 1920, Berkeley, CA
Died 2019, Los Angeles, CA

***African Journey*, 1952**
color etching, ed 7/25



Ynez Johnston received her MFA degree from the University of California, Berkeley in 1946. Two years later, while teaching at Berkeley, she studied intaglio printmaking, soon adopting it as a central method of her early work. As with Fannie Hillsmith's *African Abstraction*, Johnston's *African Journey* references travel as well as the works of indigenous cultures that were significant to the development of modern art.

For her earliest color etchings, Johnston used stencils to apply color printing inks to the surfaces of her intaglio plates, which were already inked in black for printing. This allowed her to print with a single pass through the press rather than a separate pass for each color.

Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Gift of Michael T. Ricker in honor of Patti Troth Black. GMOA 2022.132

YNEZ JOHNSTON
Born 1920, Berkeley, CA
Died 2019, Los Angeles, CA

***Grey Reef*, 1956**
watercolor, ink, and graphite



Ynez Johnston's early works consisted of densely packed and intricately rendered compositions suggestive of maps or charts, informed by her personal glyph-like language. Her stream-of-consciousness style resulted in delightfully tangled images. By the time of *Grey Reef*, Johnston's compositions had become freer in form, including the presence of contemplative "empty" spaces. Such drawings were often executed on irregularly shaped sheets.

The dense area of *Grey Reef* suggests a type of tourist map dominated by oversized images of locally famous landmarks, while the overall form of the dense area also suggests the bow of a ship. The outlying regions are random, meandering lines suggestive of automatist surrealism, in which the unconscious mind directs the pen. Like Minna Citron's *Barrier Reef*, Johnston's drawing calls upon a construction of the natural world (a reef) to reference the complexities facing and inherent in both nature and humanity.

Collection of Michael T. Ricker

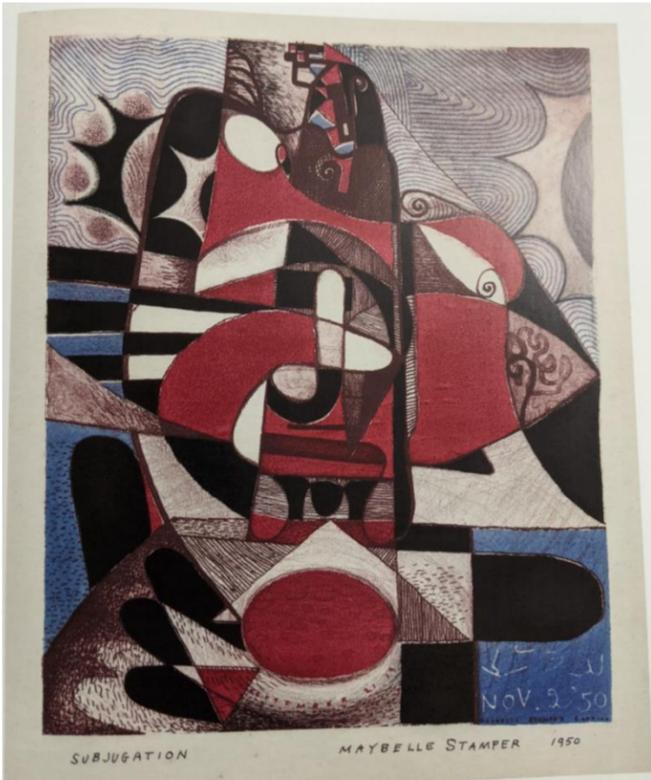
MAYBELLE RICHARDSON STAMPER

Born 1907, Dublin, NH

Died 1995, Captiva, FL

Subjugation, 1950

color lithograph



Subjugation, heavily wrought and highly compressed, displays only suggestions of the sources in nature commonly encountered in Maybelle Stammer's work. In *Subjugation* groups of forms battle for domination, each vying for a position of strength while pressing the others into the background.

Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Gift of Michael T. Ricker in honor of David A. Lewis

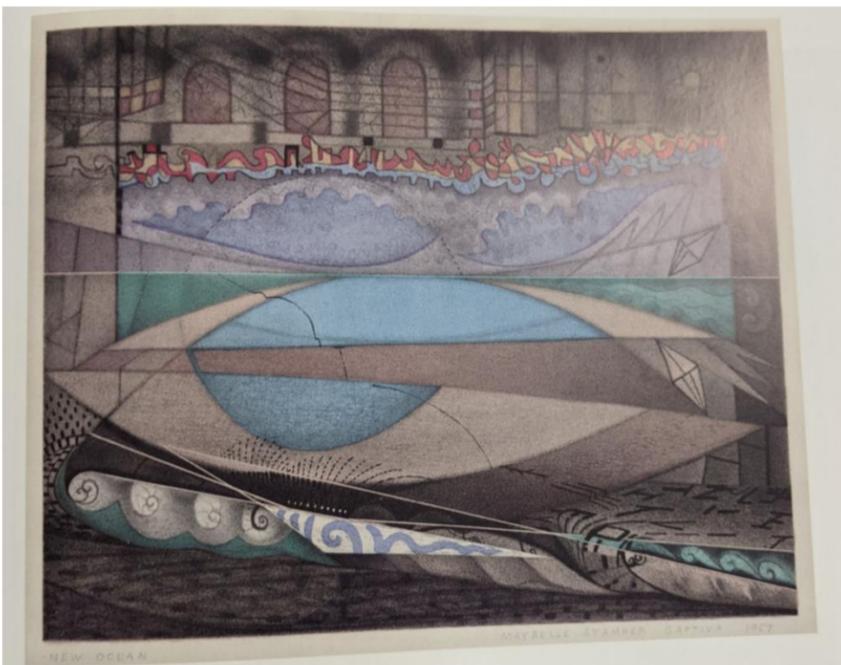
MAYBELLE RICHARDSON STAMPER

Born 1907, Dublin, NH

Died 1995, Captiva, FL

New Ocean, 1957

color lithograph with hand additions



Maybelle Stammer used multiple stones, and at times hand embellishment, to create her color lithographs. Yet her creative pathways were more complicated than one might think. Stammer developed a sophisticated method to explore variations in color lithography, creating multiple permutations of an image through branching pathways. The two impressions shown here represent two different creative pathways. While the differences are subtle, the journey of exploration tied to their creation was pivotal to Stammer's artistic philosophy. Rather than so-called state proofs, which mark the linear progress of a printmaker's work on a single plate/stone/block, she chose multiple printing pathways, using multiple stones and varying colors and even printing sequences, often

branching several times before culminating in a series of simultaneous artistic solutions.

Collection of Michael T. Ricker

MAYBELLE RICHARDSON STAMPER

Born 1907, Dublin, NH

Died 1995, Captiva, FL

***Three Lines of Writing*, 1956**

color lithograph



In *Three Lines of Writing*, Stamper forms a shallow yet perspectival passageway peppered with small marks suggesting animal tracks in the sand and informed with the words grow and love. The passage leads to a complex space occupied by what might be her own personal tree of life. Her notations play mathematical X and Y coordinates against the titular lines of writing, theoretically clarifying her cryptic message. Meanwhile, the swirling tree form may be simultaneously seen as a diagram of a waterspout, proposing nature's duality.

Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia; Gift of Michael T. Ricker in honor of David A. Lewis

MAYBELLE RICHARDSON STAMPER

Born 1907, Dublin, NH

Died 1995, Captiva, FL

***Every*, 1958**

Ink and watercolor on laid paper



Maybelle Stamper took much of her inspiration from the area surrounding her Captiva Island home, with her physical environment providing the springboard to explorations of form and space. While best known for her ground-breaking color lithographs, she was an industrious draftsman, often working with a spontaneity less frequently encountered in her lithographs. *Every* suggests the enduring presence of the sea as multiple lens-like forms evocative of both sea and sky move rhythmically across a

sheet backgrounded by map-line forms. Stamper used specific dates (here, June 14, 1958) on her work to suggest an existentialist snapshot of a world ruled by the interaction of beach, sea, and sky—an ever-changing world that nourished her creative spirit for nearly half a century.

Collection of Michael T. Ricker

MAYBELLE RICHARDSON STAMPER

Born 1907, Dublin, NH

Died 1995, Captiva, FL

The Jungle, 1951/52

color lithograph, ed. 13



Maybelle Stammer was a modern-day Symbolist, harboring a lifelong affinity for the fantastical work of Odilon Redon. Her figurative work regularly calls upon mysterious humanoid figures, often with sublime expressions. Both *The Jungle* and *Head August Nine* (displayed nearby) have a profound, near reverent quality, as if her subjects are sharing a type of divine knowledge. Both images bear Stammer's personal glyphic symbols, providing indecipherable notations presumably tied to her figures' mysterious intent. Stammer's reformed—even refined—figures pass through the artist's creative process to emerge as visionary messengers.

Collection of Michael T. Ricker

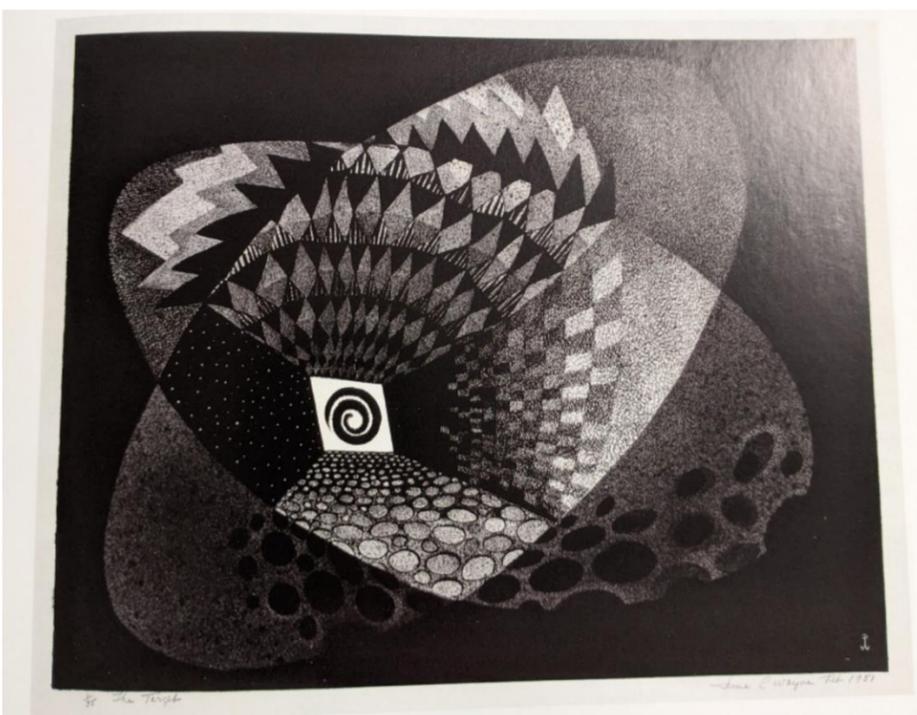
JUNE CLAIRE WAYNE

Born 1918, Chicago, IL

Died 2011, Los Angeles, CA

The Target, 1951

lithograph



June Wayne started practicing lithography in 1948. Due to the lack of lithographers in the US, Wayne spent the 1950s traveling back and forth to Europe to study with other artists and learn new techniques. Wayne was growing frustrated with the fact that lithography was not being recognized as fine art in the US and wanted to do something to change that.

In 1960, June Wayne founded the Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Still operating today, the institute is a printmaking workshop and research center that played a crucial role in reviving and advancing the art of printmaking, particularly in the United States. Instructions included printmaking foundations and traditional

techniques, as well as its support for experimentation and innovation. The Tamarind also offers artist residencies, workshops, and professional training programs that have trained many notable artists like Ruth Asawa and Sonia Gechtoff (represented in this exhibition).

Collection of Michael T. Ricker

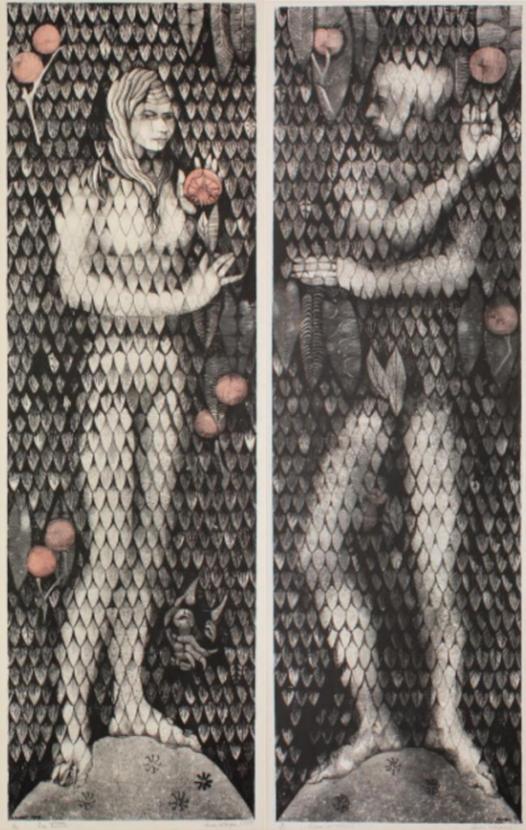
JUNE CLAIRE WAYNE
Born 1918, Chicago, IL
Died 2011, Los Angeles, CA

***Eve Tentée*, 1958**

original offset lithograph with hand coloring,
Ed. 4/90 from the first edition. One of twelve with hand coloring.

***Adam en attente*, 1958**

original offset lithograph with hand coloring,
Ed. 4/90 from the first edition. One of twelve with hand coloring.



June Wayne's paired lithographs *Adam en attente* (*Adam Waiting*) and *Eve Tentée* (*Eve Tempted*) employ geometrically structured elements (also seen in *Target*). A field of rigorously ordered diamond-shaped forms, which suggest both leaves and reptilian scales, directs the viewer's attention to the serpent watching Eve holding an apple.

Wayne drew both works directly on a single offset aluminum printing plate, and they were printed simultaneously. She also set aside a dozen prints from the first edition to be hand colored, electing to highlight with "rose-colored" watercolor the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Likely considering works such as Albrecht Dürer's *Adam and Eve*, 1507 (Museo del Prado, Madrid).

Collection of Michael T. Ricker

MAYBELLE RICHARDSON STAMPER

Born 1907, Dublin, NH
Died 1995, Captiva, FL

***Music Note Song*, 1959**

lithograph, ed 7



Living by the sea, Maybelle Stammer was embedded in a particularly synesthetic environment, where sight, sound, and even smell competed for cognitive priority. *Music Note Song* (the cadence of pronunciation determines whether it is a "Music Note" song or a comparative iteration of three distinct, separate, yet linked terms) posits a realm where organic forms nest within a cubist architectonic structure. Stammer's leaf forms serve as impromptu musical notations, while the free-form drawing recalls Paul Klee's habit of "taking a line for a walk." In such works as this one, Stammer supplies an evocation, rather than an explanation.

Collection of Michael T. Ricker

RUTH ASAWA
Born 1926, Norwalk, CA
Died 2013, San Francisco, CA

Untitled (S.530, Hanging, Two-Lobed, Continuous Form), ca. 1952-1954
brass wire



*whereas a solid sheet
is limited.”*

As a teenager, Ruth Asawa was one of the over 100,000 Japanese-Americans forced into an internment camp during World War II. In the camp, she studied art from professional artists who were also interned. After her release and graduation from high school, Asawa attended Black Mountain College, an experimental liberal arts college in North Carolina founded in 1933. There, Imogen Cunningham (also exhibited here), Paul Hassel, Josef Albers, Buckminster Fuller, the weaver Trude Guermonprez, and ceramic artist Marguerite Wildenhain all encouraged Asawa to pursue her work. Asawa credits artists and instructor Josef Albers as having a tremendous influence on her work. In an interview she said,

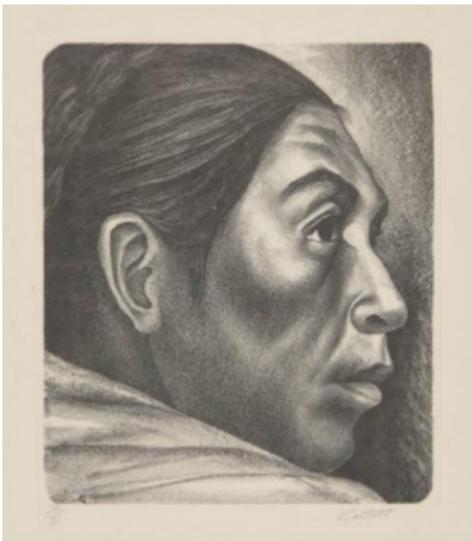
“...after college I found myself experimenting with wire. I was interested in the economy of a line, enclosing three-dimensional space. The lesson taught [to] us by Albers was to do something with a material which is unique to its properties. The artist must respect the integrity of the material. I realized that I could make wire forms interlock, expand, and contact with a single strand because a line can go anywhere,

When she began exhibiting her work in the early 1950s, her bulbous, woven sculptures were met with skepticism. Over the years, her innovative techniques and organic forms became celebrated globally.

Collection San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Gift of Robert B. Howard

ELIZABETH CATLETT
Born 1915, Washington, D.C.
Died 2012, Cuernavaca, Mexico

Cabeza Indigena, ca. 1958
lithograph



Elizabeth Catlett used her work to address socio-political issues concerning women, African Americans, and Mexicans, saying, “I am interested in women’s liberation for the fulfillment of women; not just for jobs and equality with men and so on, but for what they can contribute to enrich the world, humanity. Their contributions have been denied them...We need to know more about women.”

Born in Washington, D.C. Catlett was a student in the Howard University Department of Art from 1932 to 1937, studying with the likes of James Porter, Lois Mailou Jones (also in this exhibition), and James Wells. The year after graduating from Howard, she pursued an MFA at the University of Iowa, becoming the first African American to graduate from the program. There, Catlett studied with Grant Wood, who encouraged

her to pursue creating work based on the subjects she knew. As a result, her focus turned to black subjects and women and became a life-long passion.

In 1946, Catlett traveled to Mexico to study and came to understand the importance of art’s ability to combat the rampant exploitation of working-class people. *Cabeza Indigena* or “Indigenous Head” in Spanish, demonstrates Catlett’s mastery of rendering three-dimensional subjects in a two-dimensional media. The print also recalls the artist’s *Black Woman* series from the late 1940s, also created during the artist’s time in Mexico that featured Black heroines and regular everyday women. Here, Catlett turns her focus to the women of Mexico, revealing the beauty and humanity that is found in those women.

**Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts;
Gift of Marion and Conrad Hilberry, 2014.117**

CATHERINE HINKLE
Born 1926, St. Joseph, MI
Died 1974, Kalamazoo, MI

Untitled, ca. 1950
oil on canvas

During the 1950s, Catherine Hinkle exhibited her work in both regional and national exhibitions and received increasingly prominent recognition in the Midwest. She developed a strong body of work—richly colored, multilayered canvases in a square format, with wide white frames that were constructed by her father. Although produced at the same time that Abstract Expressionism was emerging in New York, her abstract paintings exhibit an ordered, architectural structure that underscores her Bauhaus-based training. Hinkle never achieved national recognition and after marrying her husband, Richard Koppe, Hinkle scaled back her art-making to assist him with his artistic career. After Koppe's death in 1973, Hinkle moved back to Kalamazoo to be close to family and she began cataloging her husband's work. Unfortunately, Hinkle died just a year later at the age of 48.

**Bequest from the Estate of
Marilyn Hinkle and Tish Loveless, T17.4**

LOIS MAILOU JONES
Born 1905, Boston, MA
Died 1998, Washington, D.C.

Untitled (Still Life), ca. 1950
oil on board



Lois Mailou Jones was born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts. She spent years studying art and design, first at Boston's High School of Practical Arts and then at the Boston Museum School of Fine Arts, where she was the only Black student. A few years after graduating, she was recruited to teach at Howard University, where she remained for nearly fifty years and taught artists like Elizabeth Catlett and Alma Thomas. During her first sabbatical, she traveled to Paris and the time there was transformative. She was finding her own artistic style among the influences of European artists like Cézanne. Without the racial biases found in Boston, Jones for the first time felt empowered as an artist. She recalled, "I was shackle-free and I forgot I was a person of color. I was accepted as an artist." In Paris, she also made a lasting friendship with Céline Tabary. Together Jones and Tabary—a White woman—would circumvent systemic racial biases present in the art world by Tabary submitting Jones's work as her own, resulting in Jones's work winning many awards and accolades.

While Jones always maintained an admiration for the European greats, influences of the African and African American experience are prevalent in her art. In the 1940s, Jones spent time traveling to New York and befriending many icons from the Harlem Renaissance. In the early 1950s, she married Louis Vergniaud Pierre-Noël, a Haitian artist, and began traveling to Haiti annually and incorporating a brighter color palette and Haitian symbolism into her work.

**Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Jim Bridenstine Acquisition Fund purchase,
2021.37**

RUTH BERNHARD

Born 1905, Berlin, Germany

Died 2006, San Francisco, CA

Classic Torso with Hands, 1951

gelatin silver print



Ruth Bernhard is best known for her work as a fine art and commercial photographer and for her black and white photographs of the human form, particularly the female nude. Bernhard's work focuses on the sensual and emotional aspects of the human body and demonstrates a mastery of the use of light and shadow. She also created many portraits of artists and celebrities that were published in many popular magazines and books. Through her work, Bernhard, like Imogen Cunningham (also featured in this presentation), helped to elevate photography as a fine art in the West Coast arts scene and had a significant impact on the medium's technical advances in the United States.

Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Art Auction Fund purchase, 1996/7.6

HELEN FRANKENTHALER

Born 1928, New York, NY

Died 2011, Darien, CT

Seven Types of Ambiguity, 1957

oil on canvas



Helen Frankenthaler was one of the leading artists of the second-generation Abstract Expressionists in New York. This second generation focuses more on overall color composition than the expressive brushstrokes and splatters of first-generation artists like Jackson Pollock. The women of this group, which included Helen Frankenthaler, Joan Mitchell, and Grace Hartigan, received strong recognition alongside their male counterparts.

Her 1952 painting *Mountains and Sea* was one of the first works to demonstrate her technique for thinning paint and pouring it on unprimed, raw canvases. This staining technique is credited with innovating post-war art in the U.S. by progressing Color Field painting (a style in which color is applied in expressive large areas that might surround the viewer) and Lyrical Abstraction (countered minimalism with expressive, loose painting and occasional imagery).

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas, 2015.11

NINON LACEY
Born 1923, Keene, NH
Died 2022, Hamden, CT

Winter Wood, ca. 1945-1961
woodcut



Ninon Lacey's artwork focuses on judiciously rendered flowers, grasses, and trees, most often inspired by her immediate surroundings. Known for her limited color palette of black, white, and grey, she worked in pen and ink and as a printmaker.

Lacey studied at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston alongside her husband Bernard Chaet, and close friend (and fellow artist) Barbara Swan. Chaet is well-known for his association with the Boston Expressionists and his 40-year career as a Professor of Painting at Yale University. In 1994, he was named a National Academician by the National Academy of Design. Despite access to the leading artist of her era who worked in a variety of styles, Lacey remained faithful to the clarity and purity of her work, which is also

represented in the collections of the National Gallery of Art and the Cape Ann Museum.

Collection of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts; Director's Fund Purchase, 1960/1.407.1-.3

PERLE FINE
Born 1905, Boston, MA
Died 1988, East Hampton, NY

The Sea's Throat, 1954
oil on canvas



Perle Fine began her studies at the Boston School of Practical Arts to learn illustration and graphic design. She soon moved to New York City where she became a major Expressionist painter of the postwar era. Fine was one of the first women to be admitted to the Artist's Club in 1950 (along with Mary Abbott and Elaine de Kooning).

Active in the modern art scene from the 1930s until her death in 1988, Fine's creativity explored several abstract styles and ideas, but always emphasized her ability to produce a certain harmony on canvas. Her work accentuated the beauty of rhythmic variations and the subtle nuances of color, line, shape, and space. Fine's artwork during the 1940s and 50s touched upon various mediums and abstract styles with organic shapes and forms that seem to float - either painted or collaged over a single colored background. She worked in oil, gouache, etching, and collage, using materials such as paper, newsprint, and even sand. These works are usually bold in color and unique in format: strategically balanced yet daring in arrangement. In 1974, she was bestowed the Arts and Letters Award for Excellence by the American Academy of Arts and Letters and received an Artist Fellowship by the National Endowment for the Arts.

The John and Susan Horseman Collection, Courtesy of the Horseman Foundation

FLORENCE ROSEN

Born 1907, Chicago, IL

Died 1976, North Muskegon, MI

Untitled, 1959

oil on canvas



Florence Flaxman Rosen was born June 20, 1907 in Chicago. She was the youngest of four children. She was educated at the Sterrit School for Girls and developed an interest for art at a young age. She attended an art school after her secondary schooling. Florence met Leo Rosen in her early 20's and moved to Muskegon, MI after she married and she raised her two children in Muskegon. In her late 40's, she resumed her interest in art, inspired by Gerrald Mast and John Goodyear who were artists affiliated with Muskegon Community College. Although reserved and quiet in her demeanor, her paintings had a vibrancy and boldness that was unusual for a female artist at that time. As her work with oils and acrylics progressed, she exhibited at various west Michigan art shows. Then governor, George Romney, wanted an art work by a Michigan artist in his office and a Florence Rosen painting was selected and it hung on the wall behind his desk. Her abstract impressionist paintings continued to evolved right up until her passing in 1976.

Collection of the Muskegon Museum of Art; Gift of Leo Rosen