

# NOW MODERN



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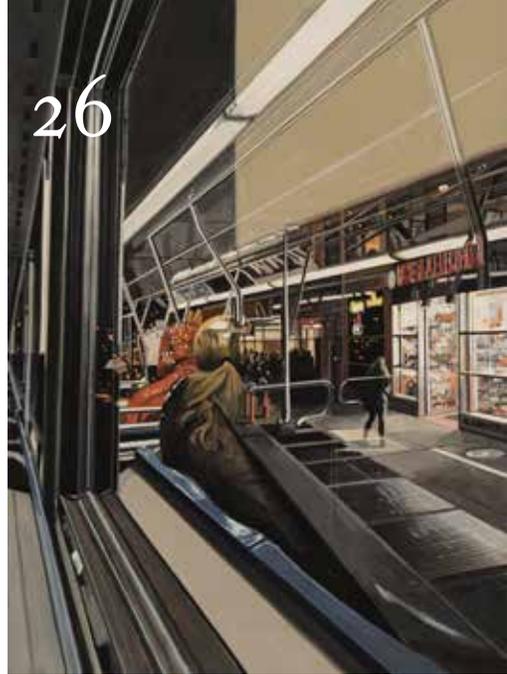
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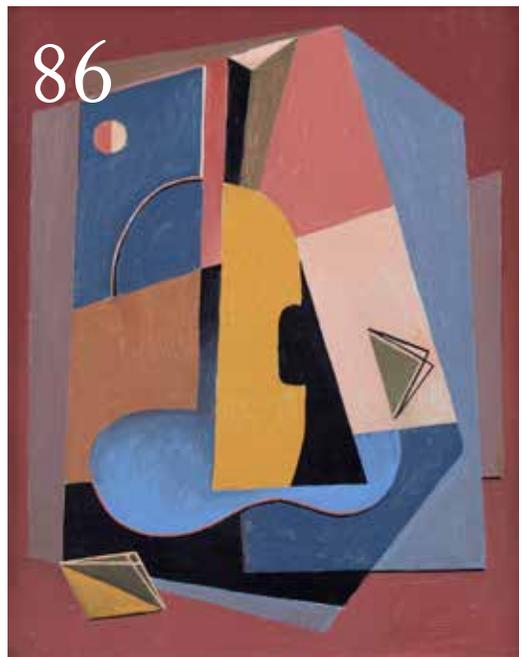
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**ARIELLA BUDICK** has been the New York-based visual arts critic of the *Financial Times* since 2008 and was the art critic at *Newsday* from 2000–2008. She grew up in New York, graduated from Harvard University and received her Ph.D. in art history from the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, with a dissertation entitled *Subject to Scrutiny: Diane Arbus's American Grottesque*.

**STACEY B. EPSTEIN** is a specialist in 20th century American art and holds a Ph.D. in art history from the Graduate Center at CUNY and a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Boston University. She has been curating critical exhibitions in the gallery world since 1990, while also working as an independent scholar, lecturing, and writing for museum publications. Stacey curated the traveling museum retrospective *Alfred Maurer: At the Vanguard of Modernism*; she is the author of the accompanying museum exhibition catalogue, published by the Addison Gallery of American Art in association with Yale University Press.

**JUSTIN DAVIDSON**, the author of *Magnetic City, A Walking Companion to New York*, has been the architecture and classical music critic at *New York* magazine since 2007 and

at *Curbed* (a *New York* website) since 2020. He writes about a broad range of urban, civic, arts, and design issues. He grew up in Rome, graduated from Harvard, and later earned a doctoral degree in music composition at Columbia University. As a classical music and cultural critic at *Newsday*, he won a Pulitzer Prize for criticism in 2002 and was a finalist again in 2020.

**TOM MORRILL** has worked in the New York gallery world for more than ten years and is currently part of the Schoelkopf Gallery team. Tom maintains the onsite inventory and oversees installation planning and execution as well as writing essays and articles for the gallery's various publications. He received his B.F.A. from Rhode Island School of Design and earned an M.F.A. from Hunter College. Tom is also a painter living and working in Brooklyn.

**DR. ROBERTA SMITH FAVIS** is Professor Emerita of Art History at Stetson University, DeLand, Florida, where she taught for many years. In addition to serving as chair of the art department, she acted as curator of Stetson's Vera Bluemner Kouba Collection, an important legacy of artworks by American Modernist Oscar Bluemner (1867–1938) from 2000

to 2017. She received her M.A. and Ph.D. in art history from the University of Pennsylvania and her B.A. in art history from Bryn Mawr College. Favis is author of *Martin Johnson Heade in Florida* and *Oscar Bluemner: A Daughter's Legacy* as well as numerous catalog essays and articles on American art from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century.

**JUSTIN SPRING** is a writer specializing in twentieth-century American art and culture, and the author of many monographs, catalogs, museum publications, and books, including the biographies *Secret Historian: The Life and Times of Samuel Steward, Professor, Tattoo Artist, and Sexual Renegade*, a finalist for the National Book Award, and *Fairfield Porter: A Life in Art*.

**CAROL TROYEN**, Kristin and Roger Servison Curator Emerita of American Paintings at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Yale University, and also earned her Ph.D. from Yale. Her 2007–2008 exhibition of the works of Edward Hopper was seen in Boston, Washington, D.C., and Chicago. She has lectured at museums across the country and in 2011, she served as interim chief curator at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford. She is now an independent scholar.

**CAROL MCD. WALLACE** coauthored *The Official Preppy Handbook* and has written twenty more books and dozens of magazine articles in the areas of humor, social history, parenting, and fiction. Research for her thesis at Columbia University was the basis for her historical novel *Leaving Van Gogh*. A published adaptation of *Ben-Hur*, originally written by her great-great-grandfather Lew Wallace, was an accompaniment to the 2016 film. Most notably, her publication of *To Marry an English Lord* was the inspiration for the television series "Downton Abbey." Her novel about Gilded Age New York City, *Our Kind of People*, is currently available.

**NANCY WEEKLY** is the Burchfield Scholar, Head of Collections and Charles Cary Rumsey Curator at the Burchfield Penney Art Center (BPAC) on the Buffalo State College campus. She has presented numerous lectures, tours, and exhibits at the museum and has published widely on regional art, and especially on the renowned American artist Charles E. Burchfield. Weekly has received numerous awards and recognition, including a certificate of recognition from the President's Council on Equity and Campus Diversity (2015–16), and a Brazilian travel grant from the Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, Brasil (2012).

SUMMER

Richard Estes

Richard Estes' unique ability to synthesize the experience of travel and observation have secured his legacy as one of the leading painters of the 20th century. This exhibition marks Schoelkopf Gallery's first presentation of Richard Estes' work in editions.

Richard Estes, *Holland Hotel*, 1980, screenprint on paper, 44½ × 71¾ inches



FALL

Now Modern

Central to the mission of *Now Modern* is to shine a spotlight on American artists whose work achieved greatness but whose image did not conform to the core Modernist movement. Schoelkopf Gallery's fall exhibition of *Now Modern* will present new works alongside the thoughts of America's leading scholars.

Hugo Robus, *The Winch*, c. 1915–17, oil on canvas, 28 × 34 inches



WINTER

Alive and Quite Amazing: Beauford Delaney and Georgia O'Keeffe

*Alive and Quite Amazing* celebrates the friendship between Georgia O'Keeffe, who by the early 1940s was well established and already the most famous living American painter, and Beauford Delaney, who was a keen observer and contributor to the dialogue between modernism and abstraction before mid-century, but who was less well-known.

Beauford Delaney, *Untitled*, 1960, pastel on paper 17 × 23½ inches



*Now Modern* is a response to frequent requests for deeper insight into the American Modernist scene—those well-known artists who are highly sought after on the international stage, as well as those whose work achieved greatness, but whose image did not conform to the accepted norms of the movement or the moment. The cultural climate today measures beauty, creativity and impact on a different barometer. As you flip through the pages here, you will see many works you immediately recognize, and some which may surprise you. Beauty is a thing you, the beholder, own but it is refreshing to know that the substance and power of art is less beholden to the rigidity of the past.

Our inaugural issue creates a framework for supporting the growing community of those curious about American art. Comprising anecdotes, conversations, and essays by scholars, journalists, and our learned gallery staff, we are operating with the loose editorial principle that if it is interesting to us, it will be interesting to our clients and friends.

We invite you to discover Henrietta Shore's magical natural abstraction, *Envelopment*, and learn how at the time she was pigeonholed as a regional painter but is so much more. Christo's project, *The Gates*, is an utterly timeless work, evocative of a unifying experience and artists like Beauford Delaney, Norman Lewis, and Alice Trumbull Mason are all stunningly creative and important figures. There are signature works explored in this issue like the incredible Georgia O'Keeffe painting of a tree at Bear Lake near Taos, New Mexico, the swirling abstract vortex of O'Keeffe's *Piece of Wood*, and the exuberant celebration of *Expulsion and Nativity* by Bob Thompson.

The current importance of these works would come as no surprise to the pioneering collectors Elizabeth Boeckman and her late husband Duncan. In the 1970s, Duncan and Elizabeth Boeckman were far ahead of their time, collecting work by artists of color, female artists, artists in the American Abstract Artist's group and members of the Transcendental Painting Group. To embark on such a collection today would seem avant-garde, in the 1970s it was prescient. There is a considerable sense of nostalgia for me in presenting these many magnificent works from the Boeckman collection. I first met Elizabeth and Duncan in 1986 at my father's gallery on West 57th Street. The issues that Duncan and Elizabeth saw so clearly at the start of their collecting by artists of all identities who embraced the beauty and peacefulness of nature, manifest again in current dialogues about art and the world.

Private collections are often a crystalline reflection of the collectors themselves—how they think about art and see the world. For the Boeckmans, art collecting has not only been a personal and civic pursuit, but through their gifts they have presented many important museums with not only great works of art and resources, but their inclusive vision. While a great many works from the Boeckman collection are the stars of the individual articles in *Now Modern*, we invite you to visit our website to discover many more.

*Now Modern* is a different approach to presenting the material we adore. Of course, a printed or digital interaction with a work of art is a marvelous thing, but we still believe in the fundamental elements of experiencing art first-hand. Many of the works illustrated here will be on view at our New York gallery in May of this year. We hope you enjoy this inaugural issue, but most of all, we hope you will visit to see the works in person.

Andrew L. Schoelkopf



*“Drawings are very important to us, as they are the story of each project.”—Jeanne-Claude*

# Indelible Impressions

The ephemeral works of Christo and Jeanne-Claude live on in their drawings

BY TOM MORRILL

**CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE** stand with New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg after the unfurling of *The Gates*, Central Park, New York on February 12, 2005

*The Gates* project for Central Park was undoubtedly the most high-profile site-specific project completed by Christo and Jeanne-Claude in their lifetime. Only perhaps the posthumous project unveiled at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris in 2021 comes close. *The Gates* took over twenty-five years to create and cost more than most public monuments meant to last in perpetuity, yet it was on view for a mere 16 days. *The Gates* is one of the most significant cultural events in the history of New York, and remains a monument and metaphor of art’s important role in transforming the experience of our urban environment.

To erect *The Gates*, Christo and Jeanne-Claude rented the grounds of Central Park from the City of New York for three million dollars before a

single fabricated element of the work could even enter the park. Despite all the material, bureaucratic and logistical challenges involved, anyone fortunate enough to have experienced *The Gates* on one of those cold winter days in 2005 encountered a transformative, holistic experience—activating both body and mind. It was the kind of artwork that eluded categorization, largely due to its absorbing nature. Upon arrival, attendees encountered a sea of saffron curtains suspended high above their heads, billowing in every direction connected by uniform thresholds evenly spaced down the winding paths of Central Park. A journey through *The Gates* was much closer to participating in the choreography of a rare ritual than viewing an artwork—as much phenomenological as visual.

OPPOSITE: PHOTO BY SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES  
CREDIT

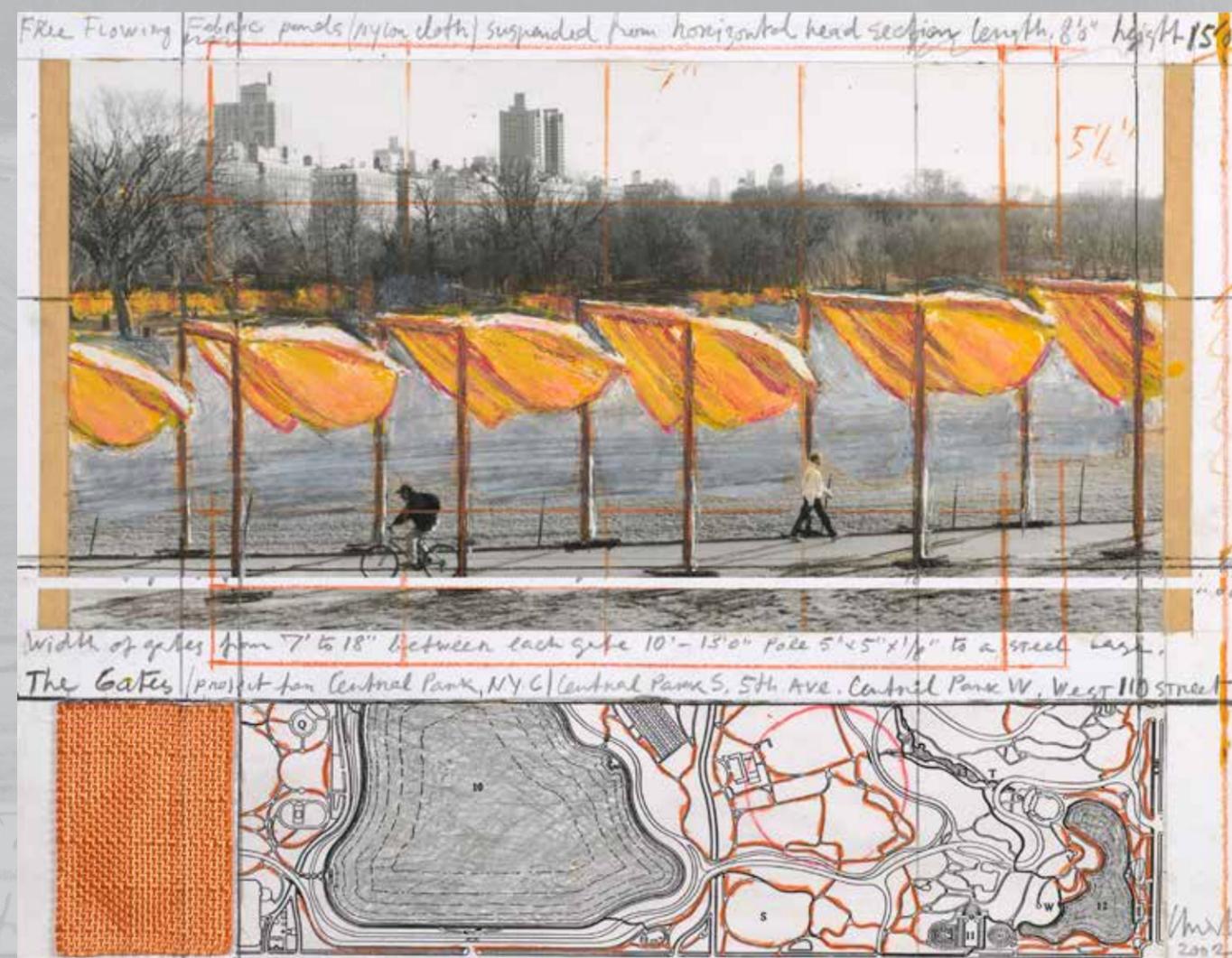


**CHRISTO** in his New York studio, 2004, working on a preparatory drawing for *The Gates*

Christo and Jeanne-Claude staunchly refused financial sponsorship. They funded their site-specific works solely with proceeds collected from the drawings generated during the planning stages. This system afforded them a significant amount of autonomy when pursuing a new idea while creating an accompanying body of stand-alone artworks in the process. *The Gates*, *Project for Central Park*, New York City from 2002 is a rare example in which Christo painted with thick enamel paint on a photograph then collaged a fabric swatch for *The Gates* on top of a sample map layout containing detailed production notes in the margins. The duo's intense focus and attention to detail is evident even in the early stages of the project. These investigations helped Christo and Jeanne-Claude distill a multidimensional experience into a singular, compelling vision capable of galvanizing the necessary support to manifest such a dizzying and surreal concept into a reality.

“Of course my drawings have their own quality separate from the three-dimensional projects; they have the independent dimension of a work of art. I’ve drawn all my life, since I was a little boy. I love to draw and make collages . . . but the beauty, force, and energy of these works come from reality, from the purpose for which they are created. They have a fabulous intimacy, a fabulous story each of these little sketches or big drawing, something deeply related to the particular moment in which I drew them.” —Christo

LEFT: PHOTO BY WOLFGANG VOLZ. © CHRISTO AND JEANNE-CLAUDE FOUNDATION



**CHRISTO**  
*The Gates* (*Project for Central Park, New York City*), 2002, pencil, colored pencil, photograph, map, enamel paint, wax crayon and fabric sample on board, 8½ × 11 inches

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BOECKMAN COLLECTION

Visionary collectors Duncan and Elizabeth Boeckman assembled an extraordinary collection of works from a diverse set of groundbreaking artists



**ALICE TRUMBULL MASON** *Untitled*, c. 1940, oil on Masonite, 22 x 28 inches



**HARRY BERTOIA**  
*Tree*, c. 1950s, brass-melt coated steel, 28 x 10 x 6 inches

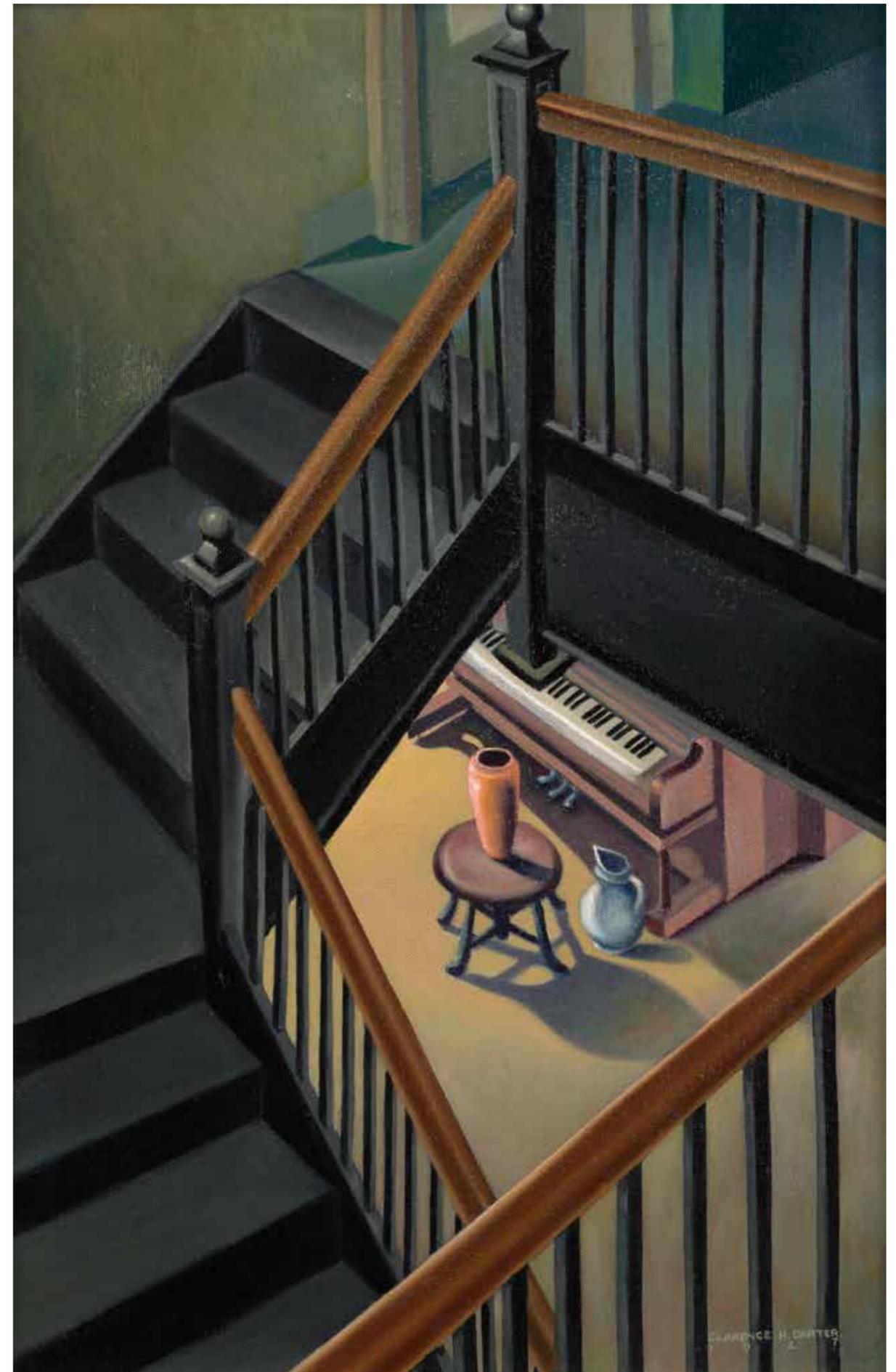
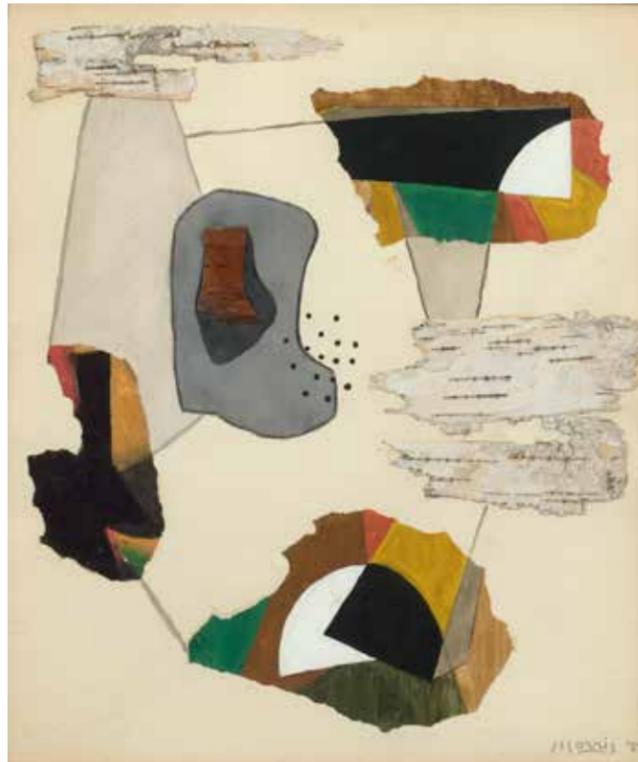
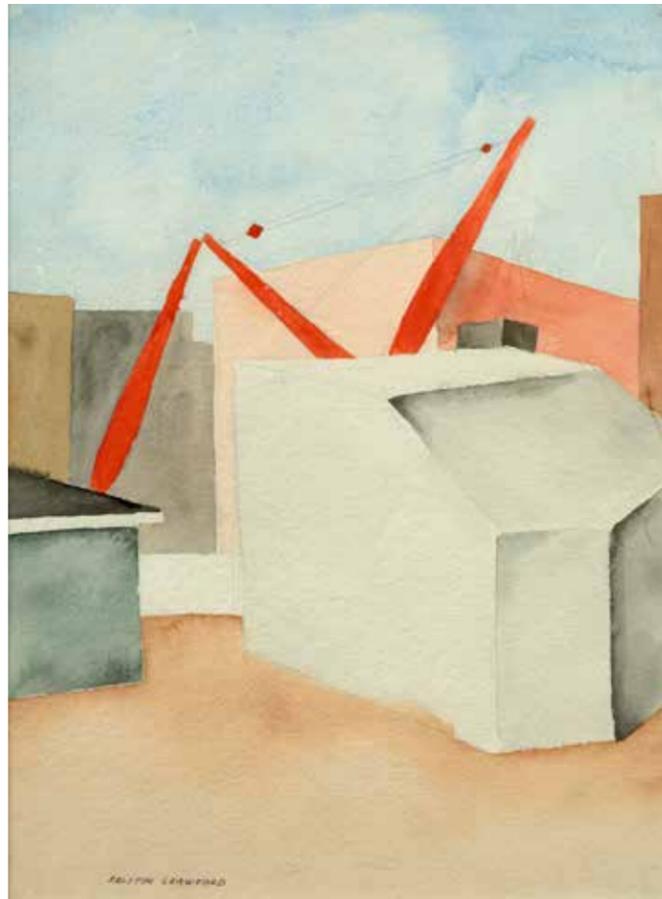
CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT:

**RALSTON CRAWFORD**  
*Power Shovel*, 1938,  
watercolor, pen and ink on  
paper, 15¾ × 11¾ inches

**JOHN STORRS**  
*Room Thirteen*, 1931, oil on  
wood, 18 × 13½ inches

**GEORGE L. K. MORRIS**  
*Arrangement*, 1937,  
watercolor and collage on  
paper, 13 × 11½ inches

OPPOSITE:  
**CLARENCE CARTER**  
*Stairwell at the Cleveland  
School of Art*, 1927, oil on  
canvas, 24⅞ × 16⅞ inches





# ALL ROADS LEAD TO MAINE

How the critical and financial success of the 1920s led Edward Hopper to Two Lights, Maine—the setting of *Bill Latham's House*

EXCERPTS FROM THE ESSAY BY CAROL TROYEN

**EDWARD HOPPER**  
*Bill Latham's House*, 1927, watercolor  
on paper, 14 × 20 inches



In 1923, Edward Hopper showed six watercolors at the Brooklyn Museum's ground-breaking *Group Exhibition of Water Color Paintings*, and his career began to blossom. The prestigious Frank K.M. Rehn Galleries in New York, the leading dealer for American realist paintings, took him on, publicized his work, and raised his prices. The fanfare accompanying his second solo exhibition at Rehn in February 1927 was triumphant, boosting Hopper's confidence with sales that also boosted his income. By the beginning of the summer, the artist was able to buy his first car, a two-year-old Dodge, and he embarked on a trip up the New England coast, stopping at spots unreachable by public transit, notably the village of Two Lights, which is part of Cape Elizabeth, Maine.

Two Lights never became a painter's mecca. Nearby Portland Head Light (where Hopper also painted) was a more popular artistic destination. But Hopper was attracted to Two Lights: the twin lighthouses that gave the village its name; the coast guard station; the squat, graceless concrete structure that housed the foghorn which he painted three times; and the ordinary clapboard houses belonging to the lighthouse keepers and to the seamen connected with the Cape Elizabeth Lifeboat Station.

William Latham was one of the local mariners, or surfmen, who staffed rescue operations from the lifeboat station. The informal name Hopper used for his portrait of Latham's house—Bill, not William—signals that the two were friendly. Recent studies tend to characterize Hopper as shy or standoffish, but he seems to have befriended a number of the owners of the houses he painted, both in Gloucester and in Maine. These included well-to-do merchants and sea captains but equally often, ordinary working people. Hopper and his wife, Jo, boarded at the Latham's while he worked at Two Lights.

The watercolor is described in the artist's record book as "pine tree in foreground, house set back." While seemingly casual and natural, the composition is carefully, even classically structured, directing the eye in a lyrical zig-zag path into the distance. The tree is, in a way, the artist's surrogate, embracing the view.

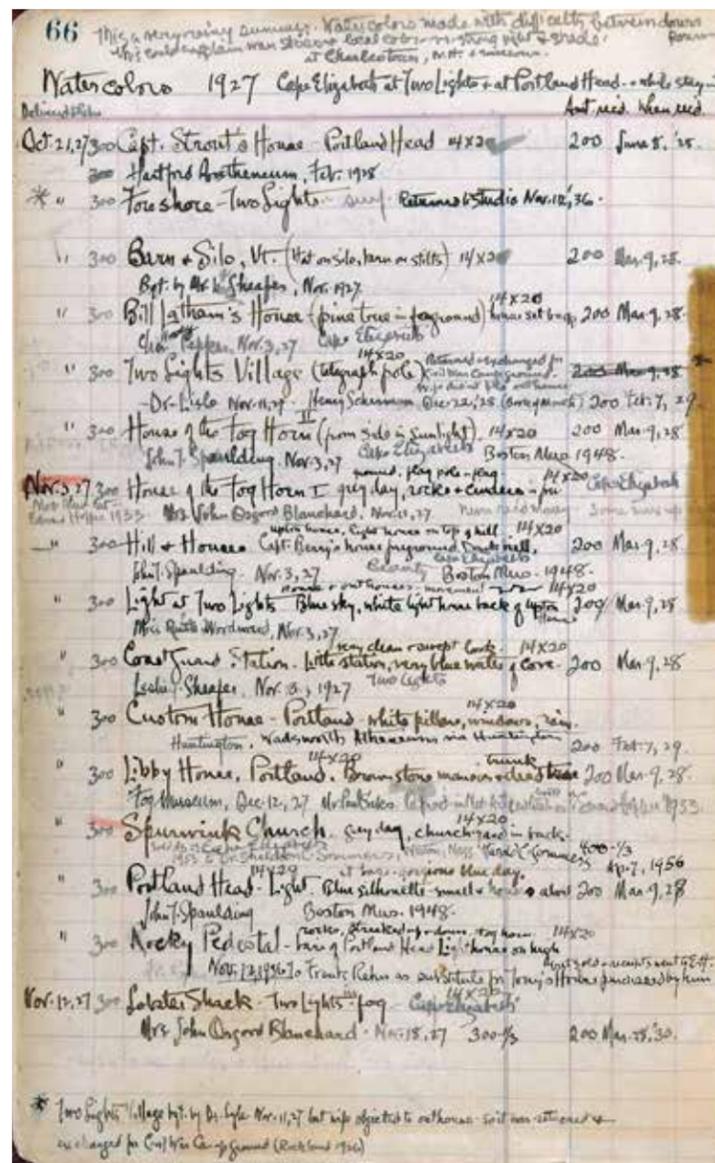
Hopper painted Latham's house as a gathering of geometries—a succession of crisply-edged cubes, rectangles, and triangles, all seen in shadow. The house is plain, even austere; it is silhouetted against a sky that Hopper painted with the soft yellow tints of a hazy summer day. Writing later in Hopper's ledger book, Jo complained, "This a very

**EDWARD HOPPER**  
*House of the Fog Horn*,  
No. 2, 1927, watercolor  
over graphite on paper,  
13 $\frac{7}{8}$  × 19 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches,  
Museum of Fine Arts,  
Boston

TOP: THE SANBORN-HOPPER ARCHIVE AT THE WMAA, FRANCES MUIHALL ACHILLES LIBRARY, GIFT OF THE ARTHYAVER. SANBORN HOPPER COLLECTION TRUST, SERIES: PERSONAL PAPERS, EDWARD HOPPER, PHOTOGRAPHS, BOTTOM: WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART.



**JO AND EDWARD HOPPER**  
LEFT: The artists at Two Lights, Maine,  
1927; BELOW: Edward Hopper's Record  
Book, vol. 1, p. 66. Entry for *Bill  
Latham's House* can be seen on the  
seventh line. Jo's weather notation can  
be seen along the top edge of the page.



rainy summer. Watercolors made with difficulty between downpours. This could explain wan skies and local color."

Hopper delivered *Bill Latham's House* to Frank Rehn in late October 1927, along with other watercolors from that summer's work. All were priced at \$300, \$50 more than Rehn had charged for watercolors earlier that year. The dealer would send a number of recent watercolors to Hopper's show at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut in November 1928, and would feature others in Hopper's third solo exhibition at his gallery in January 1929. But *Bill Latham's House* was not available for those shows. The esteemed Boston watercolorist Charles Hovey Pepper (1864–1950) had already purchased it, just two weeks after it arrived at Rehn's. The two painters' paths had crossed before, most recently in 1926, when Pepper, as the head of the Boston Art Club, included Hopper's work in the club's fall watercolor exhibition. They apparently did not remain in contact after that, although Pepper did keep *Bill Latham's House* for the rest of his life.

This piece is an edited version of an annotated essay by Carol Troyen. For a copy of the essay in its entirety, please contact the gallery at 212-879-8815 or alana@schuelkopfgallery.com.

# CELESTIAL BODIES

A closer look at Oscar Bluemner's hauntingly beautiful "Suns and Moons" series

EXCERPTS FROM THE ESSAY BY DR. ROBERTA SMITH FAVIS



**OSCAR BLUEMNER**  
*Sketch for "Sunset,"* 1925,  
charcoal on paper,  
5¼ × 7½ inches

Back in 1928, Oscar Bluemner's "Suns and Moons" series was part of an eponymous exhibition at Alfred Stieglitz's Intimate Gallery. Although created at a time of tremendous upheaval in Bluemner's life (the tragic death of Bluemner's wife in March, 1926, and his subsequent move to isolated South Braintree, Massachusetts, to join his son, Robert), the series projected a collective sense of hope and redemption. Each piece is a technical tour de force, achieving an intensity of color and a solidity of structure in watercolor that is the antithesis of the delicate and ephemeral qualities usually associated with the medium. The celestial subject matter had deep roots in Bluemner's philosophic and artistic evolution, harkening back to traditions of Northern European Romanticism and incorporating elements of both Western and

Eastern spirituality. Such solar imagery was rooted in the romantic tradition that saw suns and moons as symbols of "God or the universal creative force." Born and trained as an architect in Germany, Bluemner came to the United States in 1892 and continued to pursue an architectural career for the next twenty years. At the beginning of the twentieth century, contact with photographer and gallerist Alfred Stieglitz and his avant-garde artistic circle catalyzed his decision to abandon architecture in favor of painting. A trip back to Europe in 1912 transformed his visual language into a powerfully emotional modernist idiom in which color became the primary vehicle of expression. Stieglitz sponsored Bluemner's first American solo exhibition at 291 (Stieglitz's gallery in Manhattan) in 1915, and his works appeared in the

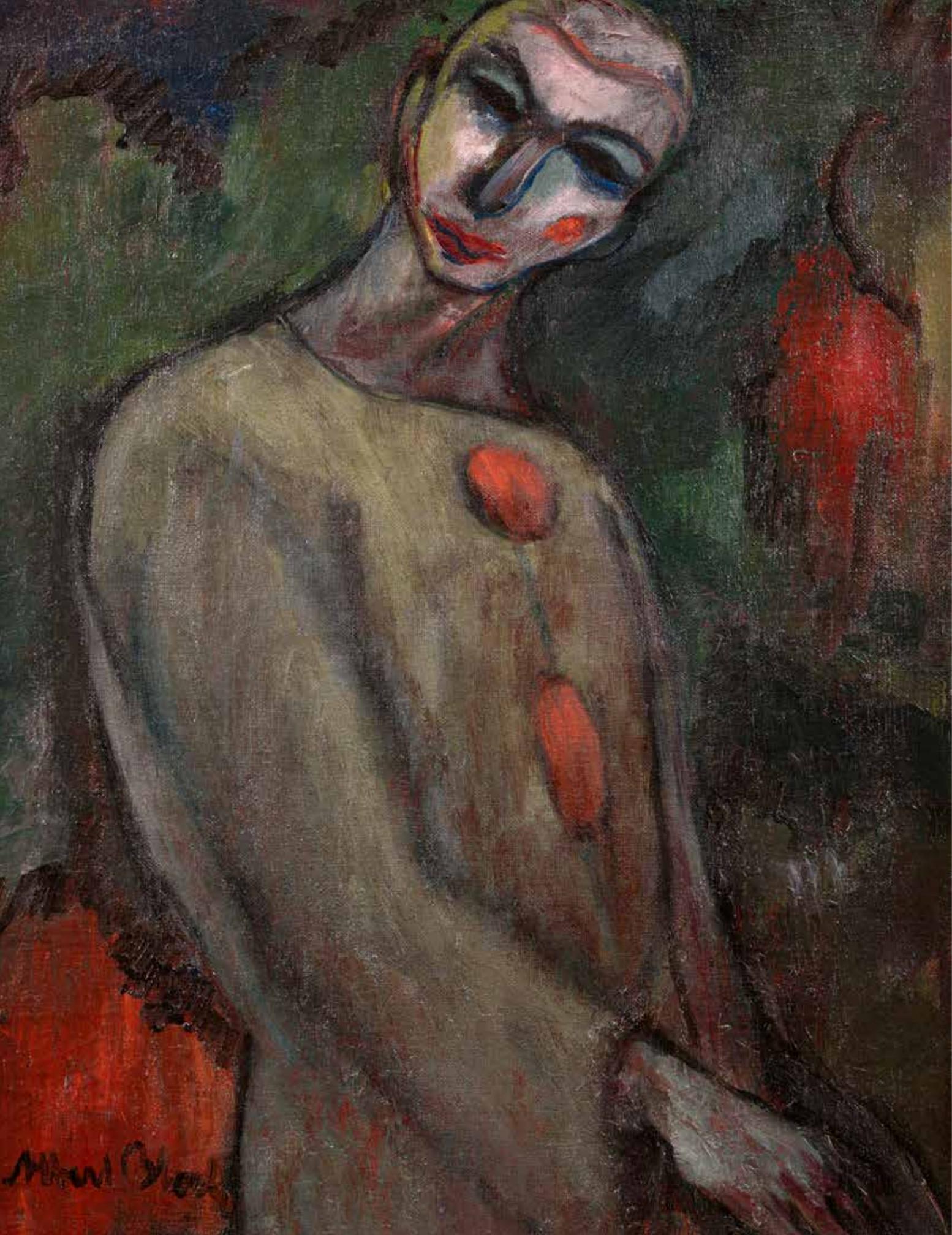


**OSCAR BLUEMNER**  
*Sunset,* 1925, watercolor,  
pastel, and pencil on paper,  
9¼ × 12½ inches

most controversial and ground-breaking modernist exhibitions of the time, including the Armory Show of 1913 and the Forum Exhibition of 1916. The 1925 work *Sunset* sums up the trajectory of Bluemner's artistic development from the time that he decided to turn from architecture to painting. The subject matter, the intersection of a street and railroad crossing in Elizabeth, New Jersey, with factory buildings and a water tank visible in the distance, is typical of the unglamorous scenes that Bluemner favored. For him, these commonplace sights embodied the landscape of the common man. The counterpart created between the angular buildings and the sensuous curves of the two large trees framing the composition is a recurrent theme. Bluemner rarely includes human figures in his artworks, but instead endows buildings and

trees with distinctly anthropomorphic characteristics. Buildings also stand in for the masculine, whereas the trees embody the feminine element. When looking at Bluemner's work, the artist himself recommended: "Look at my work the way you listen to music—look at the space filled with colors and try to feel, do not insist on 'understanding' what seems strange. When you 'FEEL' colors, you will understand the 'WHY' of their forms." This double passion for color and music informs the entire group of "Suns and Moons," and it would continue to infuse all of Bluemner's works in his final years.

This piece is an edited version of an annotated essay by Dr. Roberta Smith Favis. For a copy of the essay in its entirety, please contact the gallery at 212-879-8815 or [alana@schoelkopfgallery.com](mailto:alana@schoelkopfgallery.com).



Albert Bloch was an integral part of the German art scene working alongside Kandinsky and Marc before returning to a more solitary life in the U.S.

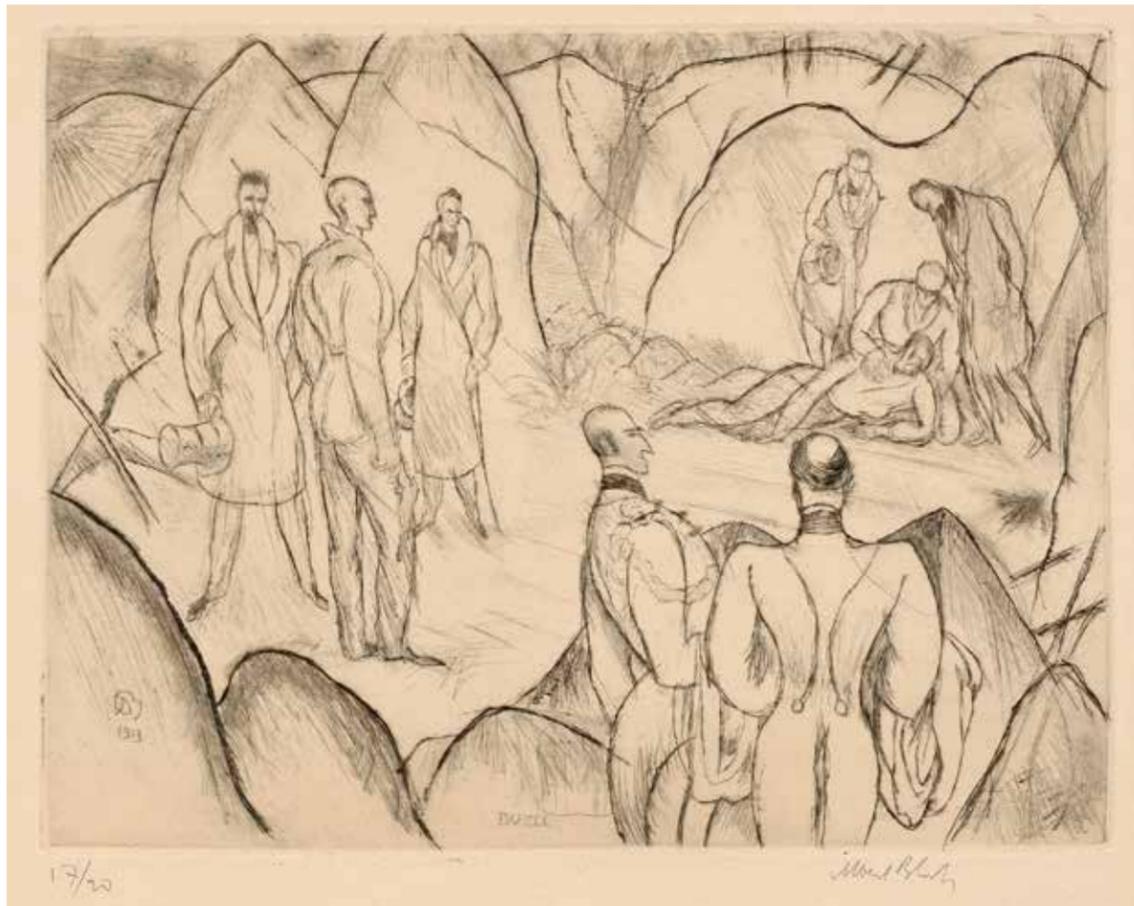
# AN AMERICAN IN MUNICH

BY STACEY B. EPSTEIN

COURTESY ALBERT BLOCH PAPERS, 1873-2014. ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION



OPPOSITE: **ALBERT BLOCH** *Pierrot (Three-Quarter Standing)*, detail, 1911, oil on canvas, 30 $\frac{3}{8}$  × 22 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches ABOVE: The artist in his Munich studio, 1911



A

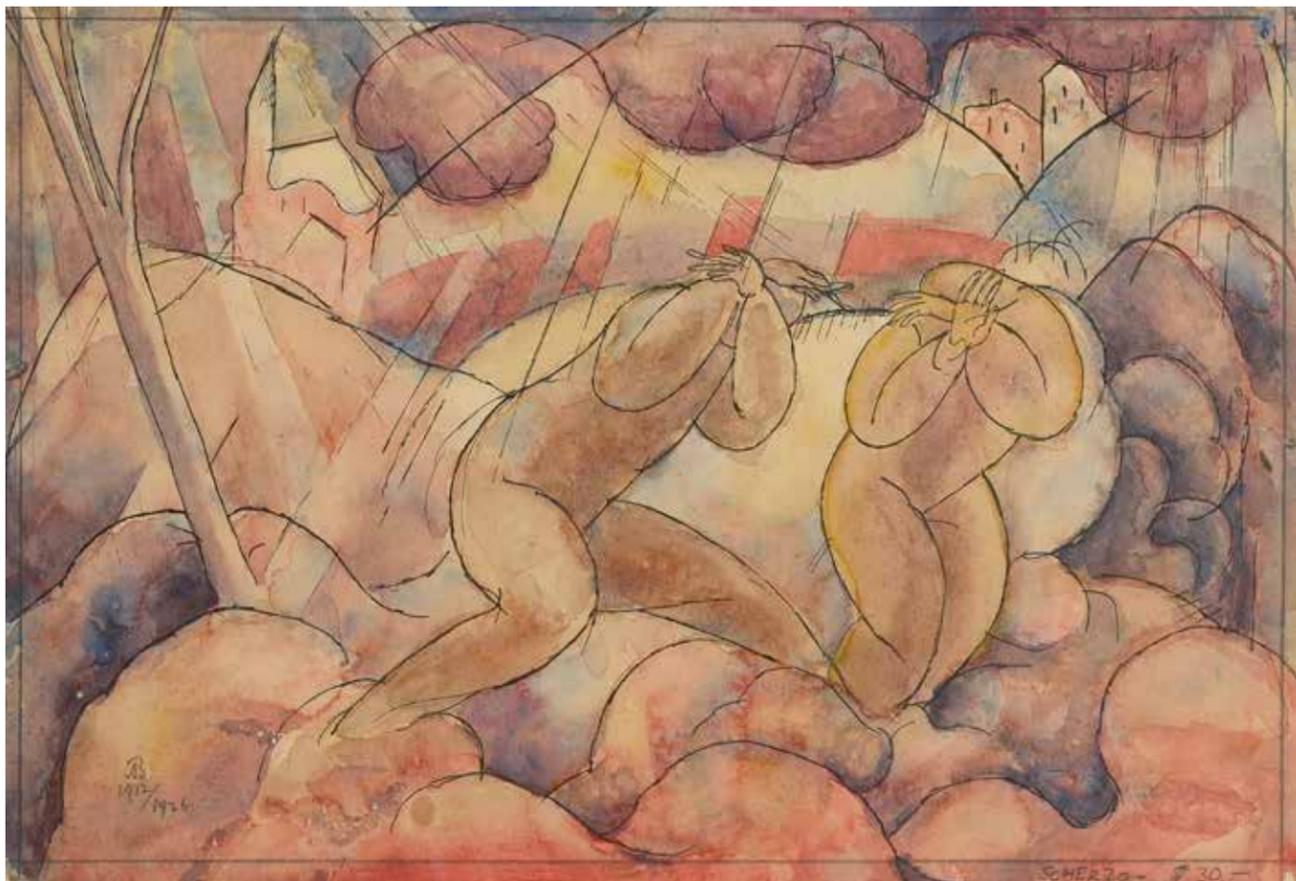
lbert Bloch gave visual form to the emotional, intellectual and spiritual substance of contemporary life in Germany and America in the first decades of the 20th century. His work resonates with a deep and abiding reverence for the concept of “humanity” in all its beguiling incarnations. From parodies to melancholy meditations—from the theatrical to the scriptural—from expressionist figures to visionary landscapes, Bloch was supremely gifted at capturing the fragility and spirituality of the modern world in flux.

Bloch was of German descent and living in a thriving German American community in St. Louis, Missouri before venturing abroad in 1909 to spend his formative years overseas. He bucked the Francocentric trend among American artists and expatriated to Germany, then a hub of progressive cultural and artistic abundance.

**ALBERT BLOCH**

ABOVE: *Duell (Duel)*, 1913, drypoint, 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches (image), 14<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 22 inches (sheet), edition of 20  
 OPPOSITE: *Nacht IV*, detail, 1913, ink on paper, 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches





**ALBERT BLOCH**  
*Scherzo*, 1912/1926,  
 ink, graphite, and  
 watercolor on paper,  
 7¾ × 11½ inches

During Bloch's Munich period from 1909–21, he was an integral part of the German art scene and established a successful career exhibiting in pioneering exhibitions with leading avant-garde artists and friends including Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc. Bloch enjoyed the distinction of having been the only American artist exhibiting in The Blue Rider Group's first show in 1911. He achieved considerable acclaim for his soulful and innovative expressionist work.

Bloch returned to the United States in 1921 (first to Missouri then Kansas where he held a teaching position at the University for over 30 years) and retreated from the limelight, deliberately choosing a more reclusive path, teaching and painting in comparative isolation. Bloch's visionary art continued to evolve in deeply meaningful ways as he built upon the critical ideas and aesthetics that formed the foundation of his pioneering German work.

Throughout his career Bloch charted a course often comprised of paradoxes. He could be witty but also caustic. He could juggle exaltation and grief in tandem; he could navigate the subtle nuances between something sinister and something wistful; he could bring us to the edge of darkness and yet lead us to find the sublime beauty in that exact moment.

Bloch's exquisitely crafted drawings and prints as well as his paintings offer poetic perspective on a world mysteriously suspended in a realm between reality and imagination. These transformative works are charged with polarities that usher the familiar into a new metaphysical, meditative and spiritual space. This imagery is richly layered with meaning and allusions that recontextualize seemingly obvious subject matter. Mortals are recast in metaphorical terms in the guise of Pierrots, clowns, harlequins and carnival figures.



**ALBERT BLOCH**  
 ABOVE: *Blaue Schlucht*  
 (*Blue Ravine*), 1939,  
 watercolor and graphite on  
 paper, 15¾ × 19½ inches  
 RIGHT: The artist in his  
 Lawrence, Kansas studio, 1932



Haunting, apocalyptic and visionary landscapes and religious-themed compositions are cleverly refigured and reimagined to introduce otherworldly realms.

These works are inspired by nature but only fully crystallize in the artist's imagination to take their ultimate poetic form. They offer a lens through which to understand Bloch as an artist-philosopher whose evocative imagery exposed a 20th century world often trapped in historical periods of turmoil.

Regardless of location, Munich or Lawrence, Kansas, the spirit of Bloch's art lay in its remarkable ability to unveil and illuminate the humanity that lurks beneath the surface of subjects, people, places and objects.

For more information about Albert Bloch, please contact the gallery at 212-879-8815 or [alana@schuelkopfgallery.com](mailto:alana@schuelkopfgallery.com).

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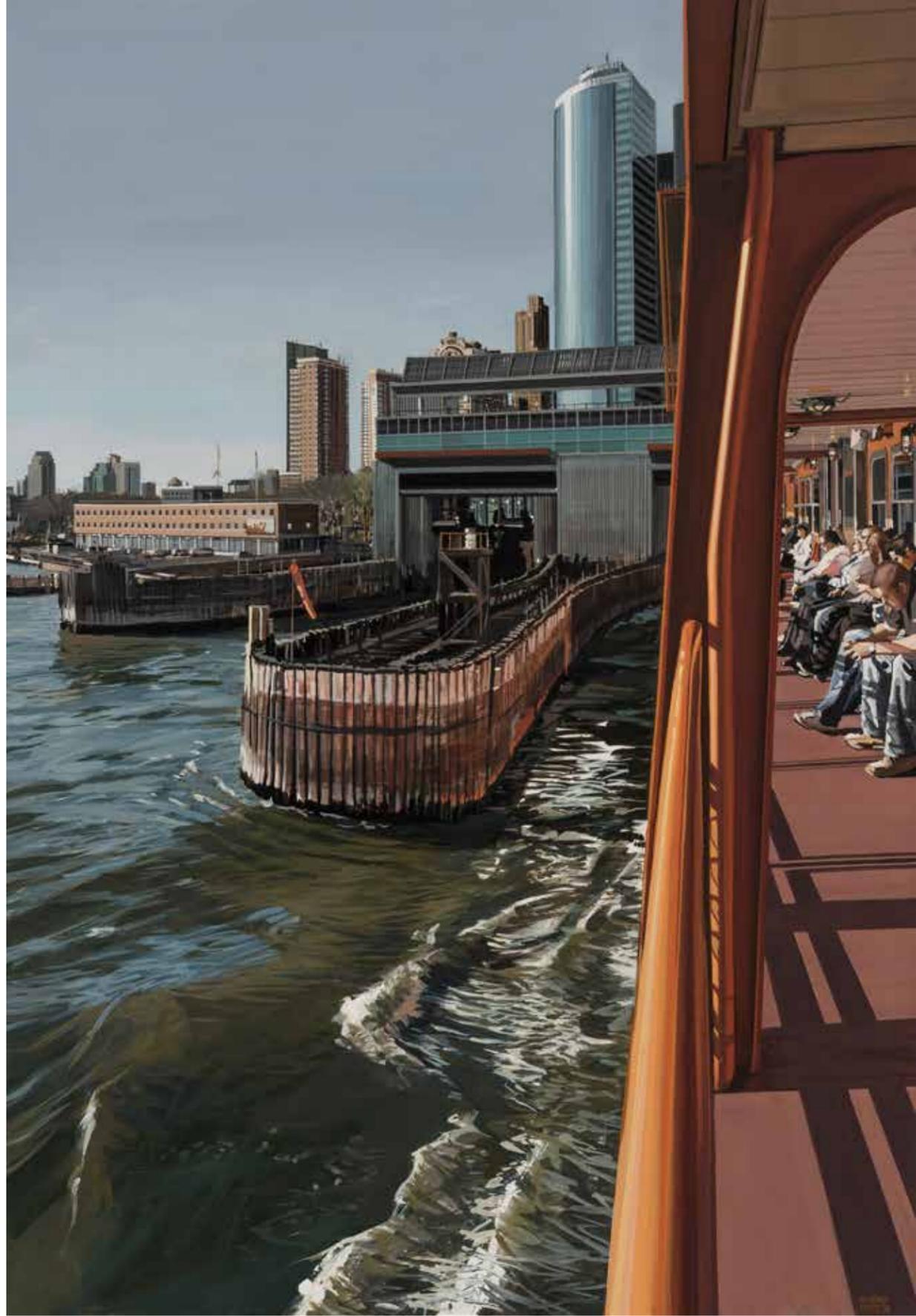
# Richard Estes

AT THE NEWPORT STREET GALLERY, LONDON



INSTALLATION VIEWS, RICHARD ESTES: VOYAGES, NEWPORT STREET GALLERY, PHOTO COURTESY HENI LONDON / SCIENCE (UK) LTD.

Presented at Damien Hirst's Newport Street Gallery in London from September through December of 2021, *Richard Estes: Voyages* was the first major exhibition of the renowned photorealist American painter's iconic work in the United Kingdom. The show, curated by Andrew Heyward, included over forty-five paintings made over the last thirty years. While Estes is best known for his much-loved paintings of New York, the London show provided an intimate and joyful vision of the artist's many voyages around the world. Trips to Europe, Asia, Africa and Antarctica were captured on the canvas. "I am extremely honored to be chosen by Damien Hirst to exhibit at his gallery," remarked Estes, who is ninety, while also expressing regret about his inability to travel to London due to the pandemic. "I've loved his work since I was shown it when I was thirteen by my art teacher in high school, Mr. Wood," said Hirst of Estes. "While trends and movements come and go, Richard has stayed true to his vision and singular approach to painting for more than fifty years and I find this unwavering commitment to be a true inspiration."



**RICHARD ESTES** *Staten Island Ferry Docking Manhattan*, 2008, oil on panel, 23 $\frac{1}{8}$  × 16 inches    OPPOSITE: *Crosstown Bus*, 2018, oil on panel, 19 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 14 $\frac{1}{8}$  inches





*“I’ve loved his work since I was shown it when I was thirteen . . .”* —Damien Hirst

**RICHARD ESTES**

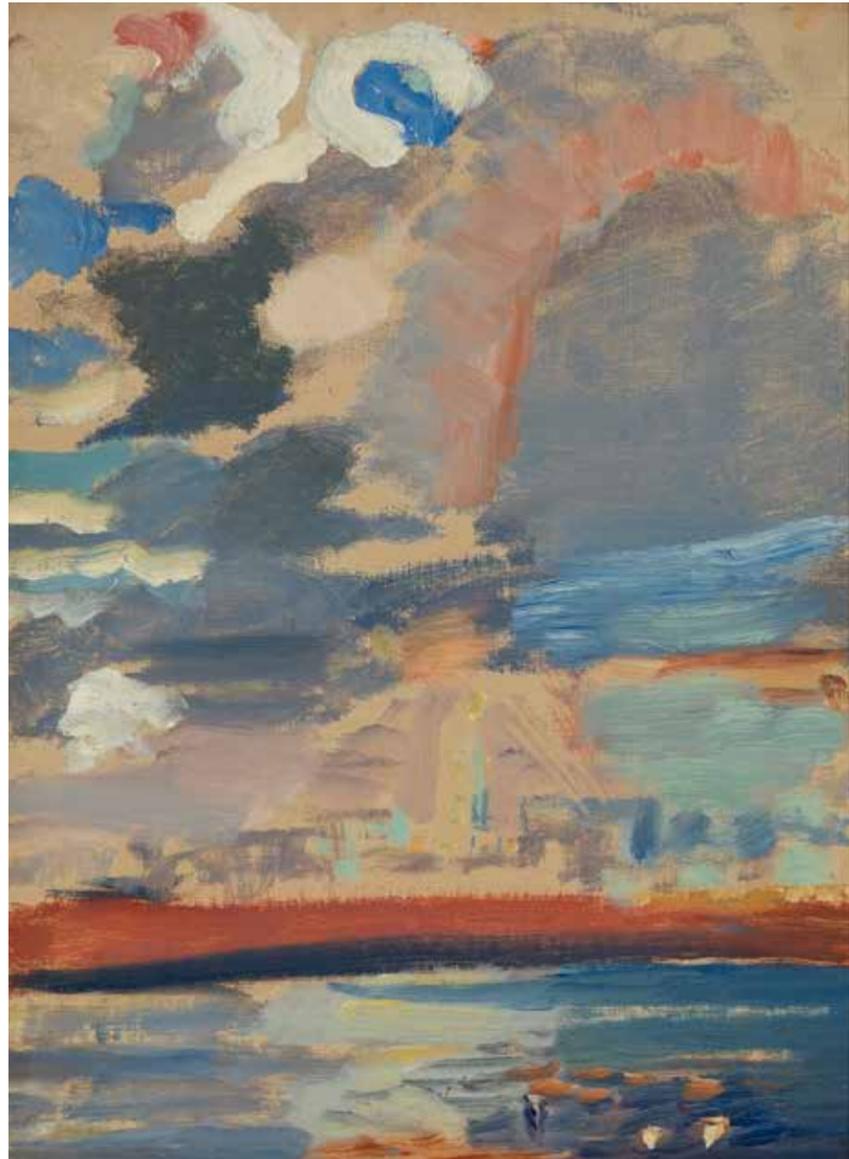
OPPOSITE: *View in Nepal*, 2010,  
oil on canvas, 32 × 43 inches

ABOVE: *Accademia, Venice*,  
1980, oil on canvas, 23¾ × 54  
inches, private collection

FOLLOWING SPREAD:  
*Sand Beach II*, detail, 2010,  
oil on board, 15 × 22½ inches,  
private collection



# A Diverse Set of American Modernist Works



**JOHN MARIN**

*Weehawken Sequence*, by 1916, oil on canvasboard, 12 × 9 inches

Marin produced a sequence of oils while working in Weehawken, New Jersey. Their full mastery of post-impressionist color and their prescient application of painterly gesture help place them as some of the earliest examples of advanced abstraction in America. Marin would have been first to point out that each work was drawn from life and maintains a tether to the practice of observation, but the daring with which they are executed pushes them far beyond Marin's contemporaries.



**E. AMBROSE WEBSTER**

*Greenwich Village in Geometry*, 1929, oil on canvas, 45 $\frac{3}{4}$  × 32 inches

*Greenwich Village in Geometry* exemplifies Ambrose Webster's large-scale masterworks of the 1920s. Interpreted by one critic as a metaphor of the artist's view of the American scene, this complex and colorful composition brilliantly conveys Webster's unique modern vision, in which the artist applies vibrant hues and a mathematical system of proportion to design a dynamic world of his own creation.



**N.C. WYETH**  
*Wash Day on the Maine Coast*, 1934, oil on canvas, 48½ × 52 inches

*Wash Day on the Maine Coast* is among N.C. Wyeth's earliest major paintings of Maine, a beloved location for the entire Wyeth family of artists. Bright, peaceful, and categorically sublime, the work epitomizes a reverence for the tranquil landscape of Maine, and

its unusual, perfectly square size suggests a particular significance, as in this format, the painting could not have conformed to the vertical shape of standard paper size, as the artist's well-known book illustrations often did.

**ANDREW WYETH**  
*Eight Bells*, 1939, watercolor on paper, 17½ × 29¾ inches

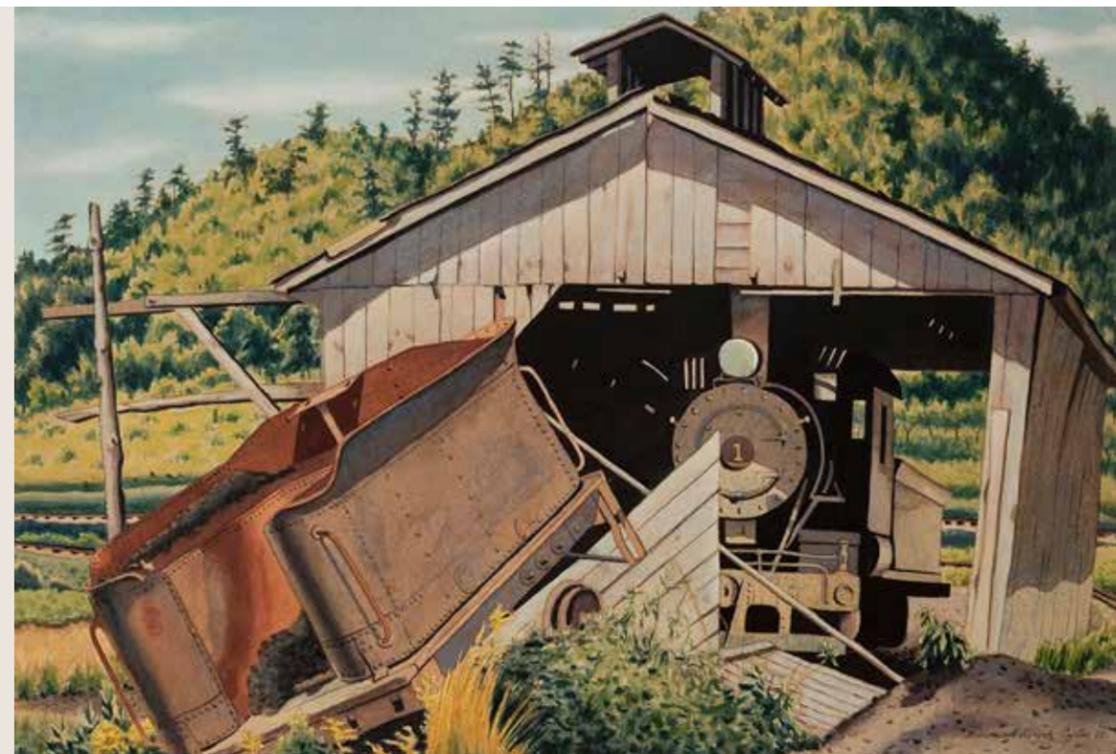
At just 22 years old, Andrew Wyeth painted *Eight Bells*, an energetic work which shows the artist's early brilliance in watercolor—a tenet that was solidified just two years earlier, when an exhibition of Wyeth's Maine watercolors at the Macbeth Gallery sold

out completely. *Eight Bells* depicts the Wyeth family summer home in Port Clyde, Maine, named after Winslow Homer's iconic painting of the same name. Wyeth gave *Eight Bells* to his parents as a Christmas gift in 1939.



**CLARENCE CARTER**  
*Triplet Creek Special*, 1932, watercolor and gouache on paper, 14¾ × 22 inches

Carter's early work consisted of large architectural paintings and symbolic landscapes that depicted the rural American scene, celebrating scenes of industry courting decay with clean lines and clear forms. The present work is an extraordinary early example, possessing both sharp-edged realism as well as a semi-surreal treatment of the scene, reminiscent of Edward Hopper or Charles Burchfield. When the work was exhibited in 1932, the *Cleveland Sunday News* opined that these "works done this summer along the Ohio River" were "probably the best things Carter has ever done thus far."



“A little dream idea of a line drawing. I shall later paint on canvas . . .” —Manierre Dawson, 1918

**MANIERRE DAWSON**

*Prognostic (Right Panel of Triptych)*, 1910, oil on canvas, 24½ × 20 inches

Manierre Dawson’s *Prognostic* was created as the right panel of a triptych that remained separate until they were exhibited together in a retrospective exhibition of the artist’s work in 1976. The triptych belongs to a series of seven paintings from early 1910 that are considered among the earliest examples of abstraction in America. The subject of *Prognostic* can be read as a mountain landscape with elements of water and sky while some see high-rise buildings in the gridded lines. The image can also be interpreted as an engineer’s drawing board.



**HUGO ROBUS**

*The Winch*, c. 1915–17, oil on canvas, 28 × 34 inches

*The Winch* is one of Robus’ most significant paintings, from a series of perhaps a dozen canvases created between 1915 and 1917 when Robus returned from Europe and settled in New York. While in Europe, the young artist attended the exhibition of the Italian futurists at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in Paris which influenced his later work. The brash group of painters drafted a manifesto in 1909 decrying history and announcing a rebellious path forward, unifying musical, technological, and other influences in brilliantly hued images.

**DWINELL GRANT**

*Black Circle*, 1939, oil on pressed wood, 23½ × 17½ inches

A member of the American Abstract Artists group, Dwinell Grant created new means of visual expression based on balance and rhythm and an interest in Gestalt psychology. In the late 1930s, Grant began experimenting with film including the silent animated production *Contrathemis* (1941). Early vestiges of the artist’s interests in filmmaking are evident in *Black Circle*, a work of rigorous tempo and converging planes of color. He is regarded as a pioneer in the field of art film and his innovative approach left a lasting influence on decades of experimental filmmakers.





“The artist has a great responsibility not only to use himself honestly and know his medium profoundly, but to realize that he must communicate unique experiences so that they become unquestionably possible for the viewer, which are not dependent upon inappropriate rationales, but emerge in symbols clearly of his own time, and basic to the aesthetics of future times.” —Norman Lewis, c. 1950

**NORMAN LEWIS**  
*Untitled, 1978*, oil on paper,  
10 × 26 inches

*Untitled, 1978* is one of the most beautiful and gentle works in Lewis' *Seachange* series. The rolling waves of iridescent blue pigment are silhouetted against the dark

sky of striking green. The composition seems to suggest the flattening of waves and Lewis' return to the theme of beauty. The long panoramic format is unusual and striking, drawing the viewers' attention to the rhythmic pattern of repeating rolling waves.

Fred W. McDarrah, *Bob Thompson*  
*Relaxing in his Studio, 6 Rivington*  
*Street, New York, November 30, 1963,*  
detail, 1963, gelatin silver print



PHOTO COURTESY THE STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM, GIFT OF THE ARTIST, 2001.274 © ESTATE OF FRED W. MCDARRAH

# DIVINE DEFIANCE

BOB THOMPSON  
DEFIED LABELS AND BUCKED  
TRENDS DURING HIS SHORT BUT  
PROLIFIC CAREER CREATING OVER  
1,000 PAINTINGS BY THE TIME OF  
HIS DEATH AT AGE 29

A CONVERSATION WITH ARIELLA BUDICK AND JUSTIN DAVIDSON

Bob Thompson was born in Louisville, KY, in 1937 and lived a brief, searingly intense life. He moved to New York in 1958 and started traveling to Europe, producing over 1,000 paintings before he died in Rome at 29. Critics Justin Davidson and Ariella Budick discuss what should have been his early period but turned out to be his final surge.

**JUSTIN DAVIDSON:** I have a question for you. The minute you look at a big Bob Thompson painting, with its complicated groupings of figures in lush habitats, you immediately see it as a riff on the grand European tradition. Even if you don't recognize that, say, his 1964 *Expulsion and Nativity* is a reinterpretation of Masaccio combined with Piero della Francesca, you sense that it's a reinterpretation of *something*.

**ARIELLA BUDICK:** That was a question?

**JD:** That was preamble. Here's the question: Why was a young, hip Black American painter in the early 1960s repurposing works from the distant past?

**AB:** I think European art history had a personal meaning for him as well as a larger cultural resonance.

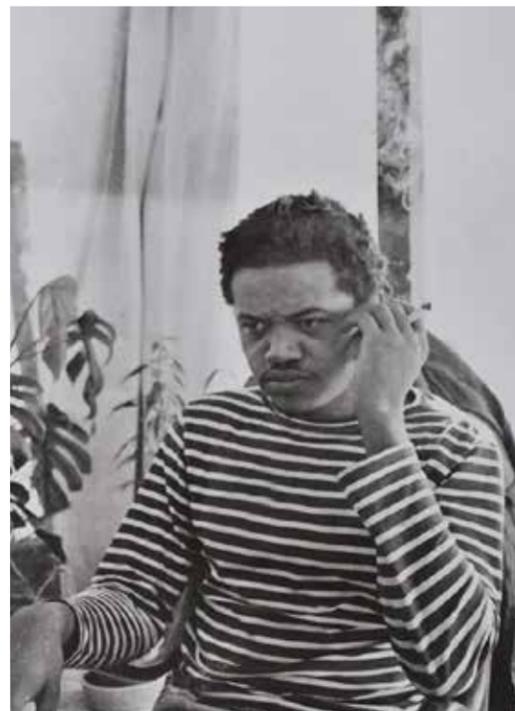
**JD:** Start with his personal response.

**AB:** I see him pursuing an integrationist ideal. He was laying claim to a history that dominated American institutions but that had always excluded people like himself. It was his way of saying: *This is mine, too*. He was hardly the first to make that statement. Other artists—Romare Bearden, for example—had also gone to Europe and asserted their right to its heritage by giving it a Black twist.

**JD:** Do you get the sense that Thompson felt he was coming to European painting as an outsider? Or that he was defensive about that? To me, his appropriations seem loud and bold and irreverent. What's the statement he's making here?

**AB:** One of defiance, but also openness. He didn't want to be confined to painting the Black experience or the narrative territory that Jacob Lawrence had staked out in the 1930s. There was pressure on him, especially as the 1960s wore on, to veer toward explicitly Black political subjects. His friend the poet LeRoi Jones, who later changed his name to Amiri Baraka, was brutal about him, especially in his poem "5 Themes for

**BOB THOMPSON**  
in Ibiza, 1963



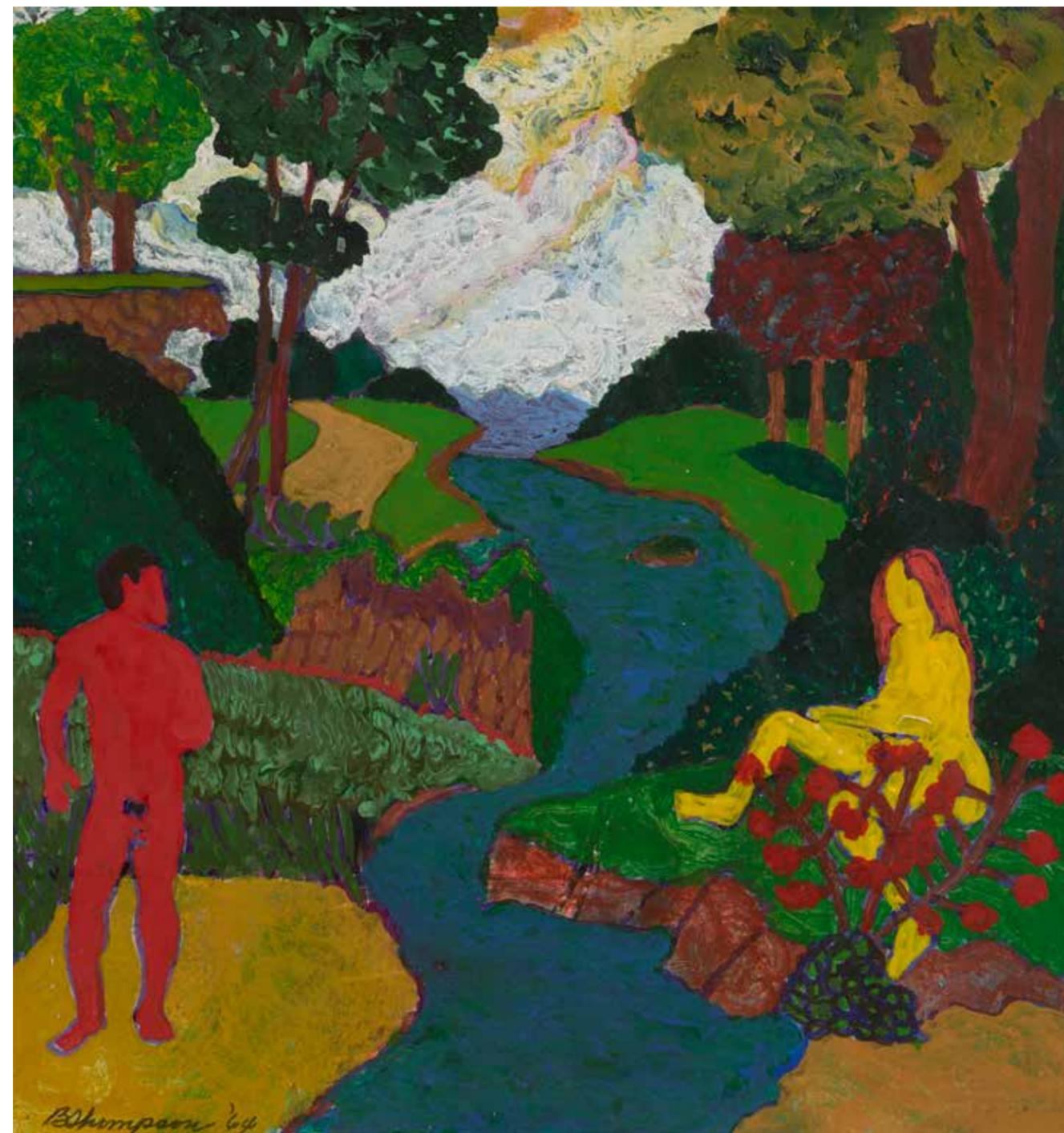
Robert Thompson." The message, as Thompson restated it, was: "Get your head out of that dead, stale cave of Italians, and be a spade."

**JD:** Jones was effectively accusing him of betrayal.

**AB:** Absolutely. But then Thompson was a renegade in other ways as well. He embraced figuration at a time when most artists were still stuck on abstraction, and he was looking back at the stylistic innovations of Matisse, Gauguin, Milton Avery, the Fauves. This was considered retrograde in the postwar years when Americans had a kind of triumphalist attitude towards their own special destiny. But Thompson makes the old-fashioned look advanced.

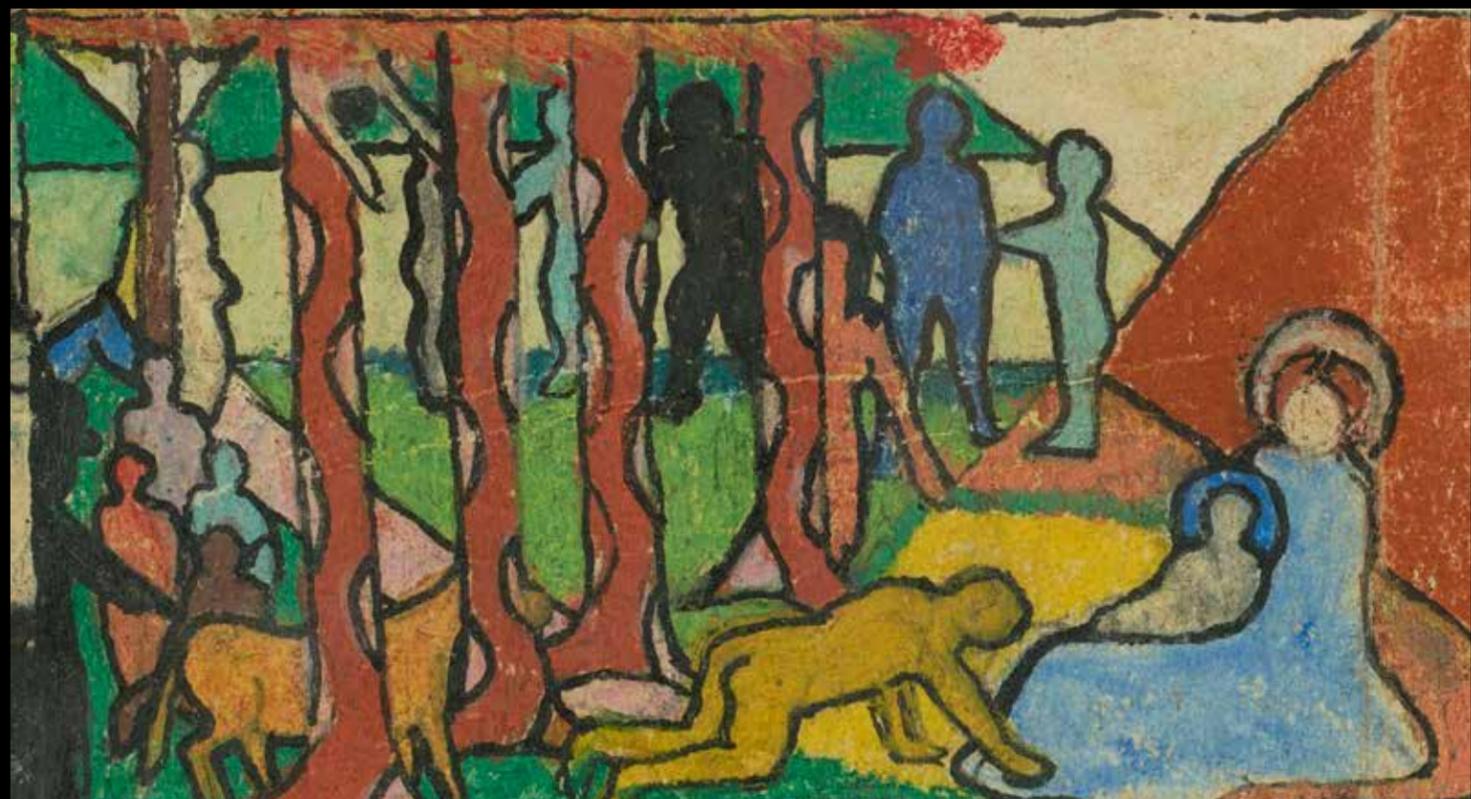
**JD:** He was *audaciously* retrograde.

**AB:** And this is where we get to the cultural resonance part. Thompson belonged to a wave of artists who felt that originality for its own sake was *used up*. It was a dead end. He had a complaint: "Now you can't do anything. You can't draw a new form. The form has already been drawn." But he had a solution, too: "I work with these things that are already there." A lot of artists felt that way. In 1957, Picasso returned to



**BOB THOMPSON**  
*Untitled*, 1964, acrylic on paper, 10¾ × 10¼ inches, private collection

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**BOB THOMPSON**  
*Untitled*, c. 1963, mixed media  
on paper, 2½ × 23 inches.  
Details of the center left panel  
and center right two panels  
are shown above.



**BOB THOMPSON** (left) with friends, enjoying jazz at Slugs, New York, 1964, in a photograph by Raymond Ross

Velázquez's *Las Meninas* and gave it his personal stamp. The important thing was to make it yours.

**JD:** The urge to reinterpret became increasingly powerful in the 1960s, and not just in painting. The Beatles were reviving English music hall and vaudeville tunes. In architecture, Robert Venturi started recombining fragments of classicism as a protest against modernism. A few years later, the Italian composer Luciano Berio glued a couple dozen musical quotations onto the armature of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 as a foundation for his own *Sinfonia*. So, Thompson pioneered a trend that outlasted him—when artists in a variety of disciplines are trying to figure out the future by rummaging through all the old stuff in the attic.

**AB:** That's true, although different artists do that with different purposes in mind. You could say that Thompson anticipated the post-modern use of appropriation and prepared the way for artists like Kehinde Wiley, or Richard Prince, or Louise Lawler.

**JD:** I like that idea.

**AB:** There's an important difference, though. Wiley & Co. have a critical agenda. They're deconstructing attitudes, undermining canons, and attacking complacent institutions. I don't sense the same purpose in Thompson. He's more like Warhol and Lichtenstein, who grab ideas out of the zeitgeist—

**JD:** Which can include relics from the past!

**AB:** —and then improvise on them to produce something fresh. Piero was his version of the comic strip, Goya his Campbell's soup can.

**JD:** I'm never quite sure what "improvisation" means in the context of painting. Do you just mean embroidering on a pre-existing structure?

**AB:** Well, in Thompson's case, I mean that he takes the bones of old master paintings and the flesh of post-Impressionism, then lays a whole new skin on top.

**JD:** So, he's not awed by them, right? He's not trying to emulate the brushstroke, or the mood, or technique, or even the iconographic details. The past is an object to be recycled and renovated, like a building that has outlived its original use. Or, to make another analogy, you might say it's his 12-bar blues: the scaffolding for a plastic creation.

**AB:** Ah, yes: let's talk about Thompson's relationship to music, which I'm not sure I really get.

**JD:** Well, he was deeply immersed in the jazz world. He hung out with a lot of musicians, spent many evenings at the Five Spot, and of course painted *Garden of Music*, which is a group portrait of some of the major jazz figures of the late 50s and early 60s.

**AB:** How does that translate into his style? I've read critics who see that experience as an integral part of his technique. The curator Robert Cozzolino wrote: "So much of Thompson's work emanates sound: music, flowing through the figures like notes arrayed on a score, pitches and rhythms, call and response." Can you explain what that means?

**JD:** It helps to look at that specific period in jazz and the triumvirate of musicians he was attracted to: Nina Simone, John Coltrane, and Ornette Coleman. They represent different strains of his sensibility. He got to know Simone just as she was becoming an outspoken activist and her music acquired a stamp of anger. Her big hit in 1964 was "Mississippi Goddam," which was famously banned from the radio. The next year, Thompson painted his *Homage to Nina Simone*.

**AB:** I see that as a simultaneous homage to Matisse and Poussin, a *fête galante* with a strong whiff of *Luxe, calme, et volupté*.

**JD:** Yeah, an oddly pastoral and relaxed scene for a tribute to a musician who sang about the tensions of the day. But Simone wasn't a punk rocker: she filtered her anger through incredibly sophisticated musicianship. Let's give a listen to "Mississippi Goddam."

**AB:** Wow, there's so much Kurt Weill in that.

**JD:** She starts out with a boogie-woogie piano, then uses her voice to overlay jagged syncopations and rhythmic fluidity, so that it sounds cheery and snarling at the same time. The whole thing pivots from Gershwin to Weill. And all those references are very knowing and deliberate, as they are in Thompson.

**AB:** It's such an angry song. Do you see that same rage in the painting?

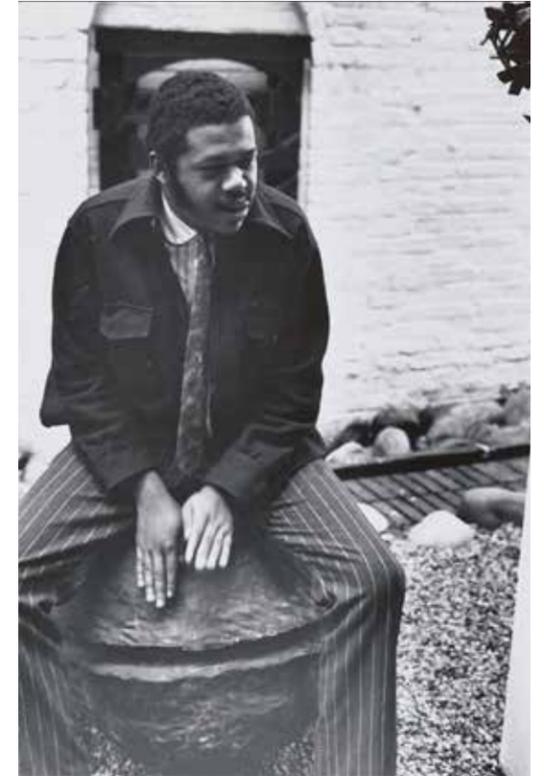
**JD:** I suspect that what especially appealed to Thompson was jazz's ability to merge deep personal expression and wild pain with a high level of craft and avant-garde ambition. That was the apex of the genre's reputation for being distinctly American in spirit and European in its harmonic and rhythmic complexity. Jazz was everything Thompson aspired to: authentically Black yet open to whites, refined yet popular.

**AB:** I'm glad you brought up the issue of technique. There's a tendency to talk about jazz—and music in general—in purely emotional terms, to downplay its structural or intellectual sides. That's true for Thompson, too—the energy in his paintings is so strong that it's easy to forget about the care he put into surface, texture, and brushstroke. You can be rapturous and methodical at the same time.

**JD:** Which brings us to Coltrane. He's one of the main figures in *Garden of Music* and in the mid-sixties, he's propelling jazz onto a new plane of spiritual intensity and expressive ambition. In late 1964, he records *A Love Supreme*, which is a four-part credo in musical form. Coltrane chants the title over and over again, but his real voice is his saxophone, and it's unmistakably personal: dark, agile, tragic, raw. I imagine Thompson felt competitive with that achievement—that he wanted to translate a similar spiritual impulse, intricate organization, and virtuosity onto canvas.

**AB:** How does Ornette Coleman fit into his jazz trinity?

**JD:** Coleman was developing the concept of group improvisation, the idea that spontaneity, conversation, and exuberance could all be woven into one tapestry by a group of like-minded musicians with spectacular chops. One of Thompson's close friends was Charlie Haden, the bassist in Coleman's group who radically reinterpreted the role of his instrument, turning himself from a background plunker into co-soloist. Coleman's band scrambled traditional hierarchies: the rhythm



**BOB THOMPSON** in the garden of Martha Jackson Gallery

section and the horns all jostle together. Everything rushes up to the surface plane of the music.

**AB:** I can see that approach in Thompson, too: the clustered figures and bright interlocking colors, especially in monumental works like *Bird Party*. There, the landscape pushes forward and all the figures are so frenetic that the composition doesn't guide the eye to a specific focal point but lets your attention scoot around and land wherever it wants to.

**JD:** The viewer participates in telling the story. And these are big and complicated stories, on big, busy canvases.

**AB:** He had a lot of confidence, didn't he? Thompson fused the religious drive of the Italian fresco painters with the social aspirations of Mexican muralists into grand declarations of his own ambition. He was only in his 20s! But in his mind, he was equal to anyone who came before, from Giotto to Picasso.

**JD:** He was in such a hurry, churning out hundreds of paintings a year, as if he knew he was going to run out of time. Was it confidence that kept him going, or insecurity?

**AB:** Confidence *and* insecurity. And drugs. Lots of drugs.

**BOB THOMPSON**

*Expulsion and Nativity*, oil  
on canvas, 62½ × 87 inches

**JD:** I was going to ask you about that. Heroin was a big part of his social scene and the artistic culture he was immersed in. Obviously, in the end it destroyed him. But before that, do you see the drugs as an inspirational engine?

**AB:** Yes, and that's another thing that makes Thompson very much a man of his moment and also ahead of his time. The colors are so immediate and recognizably his, so visceral. Look at that joyful palette: scarlet, indigo, yellow, purple, lime. It's like his mind is exploding in rainbow hues. That's one way he made his sources feel so . . . *happening*, so *now*. He presaged the brightness of pop art and, even more, the electricity of psychedelia.

**JD:** There's something tragic about that joy, though.

**AB:** Agreed. The subjects can be quite dark, with plenty of monsters, dragons, and demonic birds.

**JD:** It's also that his moment passed quickly, and not just because he died young. Society moved on, too. Thompson lived in the East Village, which was one of the most integrated places in the country. It was a node where all people came together in a collective artistic enterprise. The rise of Black Power and the conservative backlash, the Vietnam War, and the assassinations of King and Malcolm X all ripped that atmosphere apart.

**AB:** I've always wondered if that's one reason he never quite achieved the status he deserved—or would have, had he lived another few decades. He was both prophetic and backward-looking in a way that brought him a brief bout of stardom but later made him too easy to forget. Bob Thompson loved art history, but art history is still catching up to Bob Thompson.

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Justin Davidson is the classical music and architecture critic of *New York* magazine and *Curbed* and the author of *Magnetic City: A Walking Companion to New York*. Ariella Budick is the New York-based art critic of the *Financial Times*. They are married (to each other).



# BEING BURCHFIELD

Charles Burchfield's romantic and fantastic watercolors reflect profound respect for nature's energy, beauty, and sounds

EXCERPTS FROM NANCY WEEKLY ON CHARLES BURCHFIELD



Installation view of *Charles E. Burchfield: Inexhaustible* at Menconi + Schoelkopf, February 22–April 2, 2021



**CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD** c. mid-1920s

Charles Ephraim Burchfield was born on April 9, 1893 in Ashtabula Harbor, Ohio. His mother, Alice Thomas Murphy, was a teacher at the time of her marriage and Charles was the fifth of six children so one can imagine the tragic upheaval when his father died at the age of thirty-eight. Charles was just five when his mother and five siblings relocated to her hometown of Salem, Ohio, where two of her brothers pooled funds for a small home so the family could stay together. He wandered in the nearby woods, unconsciously processing his grief while imagining both fairy-tale-like wonder and threatening gloom among the flowers, trees, wildlife, and shadows.

A model student, Burchfield was the high school class valedictorian. To earn money to go to art school, he worked at the W. H. Mullins Company fabricating automobile parts until he contracted typhoid fever. After recuperating, he returned to Mullins, working as a clerk in the accounting department before attending the Cleveland School of Art.

In Cleveland, Burchfield visited galleries exhibiting modernist work of Marsden Hartley and

William Sommer, and in 1914, when he worked as a guard at the Hatch Galleries, he “was overwhelmed” by Chinese scroll painting. The long landscape compositions became inspirational as “a vision” that he “thought . . . was entirely original with me . . . to execute, in a continuous form, the transitions or sequences of weather events in a day, or several days or seasons.” He called them “all day sketches.”

In 1915 he produced hundreds of sketches—both details and compilations in narrow bands on a single sheet. He commented, “Thus began a day with sunrise over misty valleys, clouds at mid-morning, early afternoon thunderstorms, a dramatic sunset, then moonrise behind still dripping trees.” Burchfield graduated from the Cleveland School of Art in 1916, lauded for his ingenious design abilities and was awarded a scholarship to attend the National Academy of Design in New York, but he dropped out immediately.

In 1917, his self-proclaimed “Golden Year,” Burchfield developed a personal language of symbols for emotions and sounds that he used to animate his artwork, imbuing abstract qualities of early modernism, anthropomorphism, and synesthesia. By depicting childhood joy and fears with these “Conventions for Abstract Thoughts” and audio-cryptograms in surreal paintings, he interpreted nature symbolically in a way that captured the attention of, among others, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., who would eventually give him a show at the Museum of Modern Art.

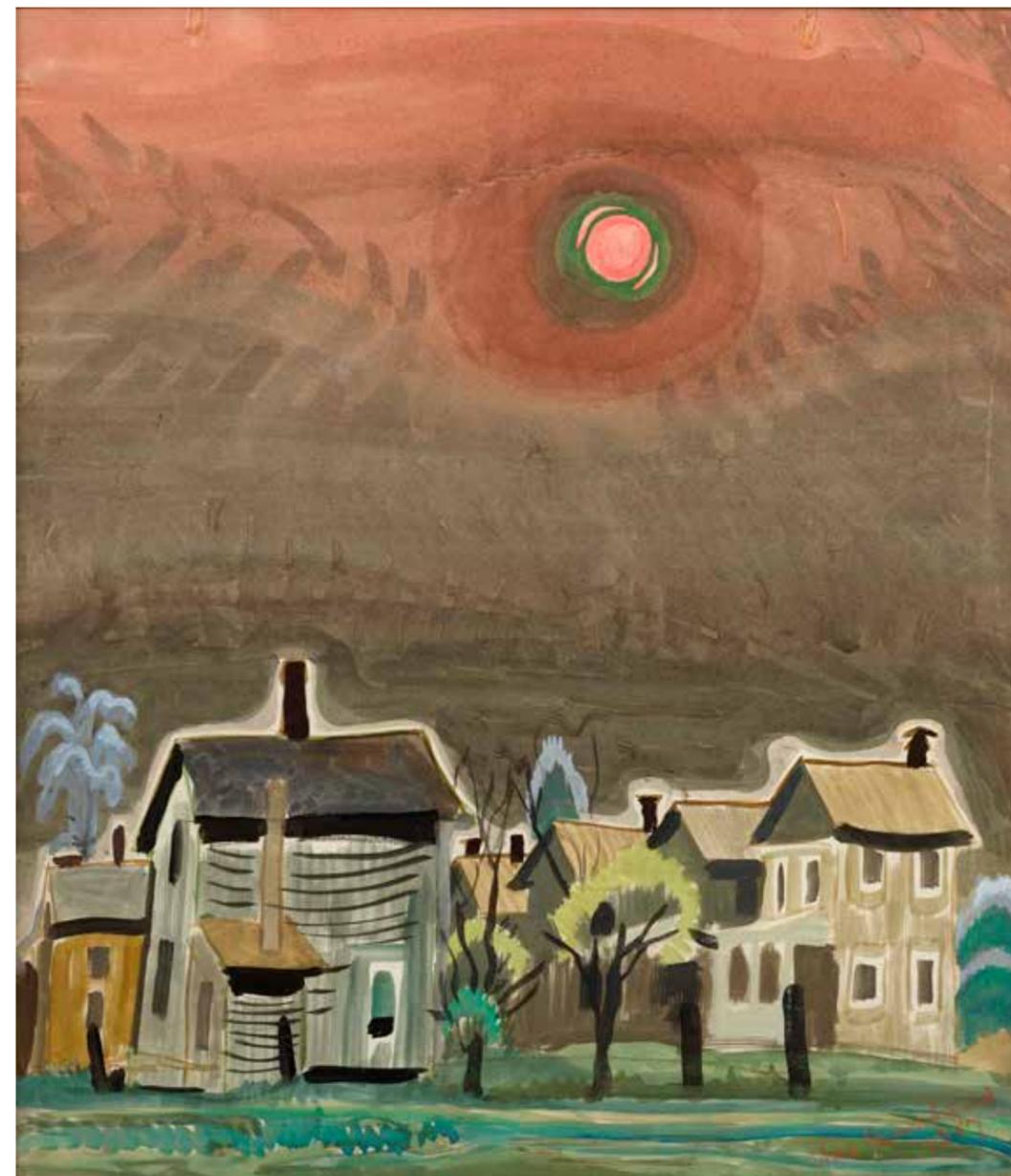
All the magic and fantasy imbued in the 1917 to early 1918 works ended abruptly after Burchfield served in the U.S. Army. He never left the U.S., excelled as a camouflage artist, and received an honorable discharge; but ultimately his spirit was broken. Back in Ohio, as post-war depression gripped the country, his 1919 works turned mostly



BURCHFIELD PENNEY ART CENTER, BUFFALO, NEW YORK, CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD ARCHIVES, GIFT OF DAVID RICHTER AND PEGGY RICHTER HAUG, 2020 ALL WORKS HEREIN ARE REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION OF THE CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD FOUNDATION

**CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD**

*End of Fifth Street (at Hawley Ave), Salem, Ohio, 1917, watercolor and gouache on paper laid down on board, 22 × 18 inches*



grim in depictions of caves and abandoned coal mines. Unfortunately, he destroyed his experimental 1919 paintings—life from the perspective of birds—which decades later he regretted and recreated from memory in 1963, putting both dates on the paintings.

In his early works, Burchfield reflected small town experiences both nostalgically and critically, exposing narrow-mindedness and industrialization with its suffocating pollution. In 1920, he culled “raw” subject matter from Ohio towns of East Liverpool, Wellsville, Steubenville, and Irondale.

His spare, modernist compositions of buildings, industrial sites, mines, and coke factories painted

with gouache during the early 1920s were soon replaced with more realistic works in a lighter palette and larger scale. Arthur B. Davies gave him a lesson in using oil tempera, but he found it cumbersome and quickly abandoned it. He aspired to have his watercolors included in more exhibitions as the equivalent of oil paintings, the dilemma being that watercolors were classified as drawings in many museums.

The year 1921 marks when he fell in love with Bertha Kenreich while working on her father’s farm in Greenford, Ohio. He moved to Buffalo and secured a job designing wallpapers and cretonnes for the M. H. Birge & Sons Company,



ABOVE:  
**SALLY BURCHFIELD**  
*Dad on Bluff*, 1941, gelatin  
silver print, no. 533,  
3 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 2 $\frac{5}{8}$  inches, Burchfield  
Penney Art Center, Buffalo,  
New York, Charles E.  
Burchfield Archives, Gift  
of Wendy Warner, 2006

LEFT:  
**CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD**  
*Ancient Maples in August*,  
1957, watercolor, charcoal  
and crayon on joined  
paper laid down on board,  
17 x 22 inches

“An artist must paint not what he sees in nature, but what is there.  
To do so he must invent symbols, which, if properly used, make his  
work seem even more real than what is in front of him.”

—Charles E. Burchfield, statement in *Contemporary American Painting and Sculpture*, 1961



**CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD** is pictured in his Gardenville studio, 1942, and appears to be working on an early version of *Sunlight Behind Two Pines* (1957, watercolor, 34 × 48 inches). *Blackbirds in the Snow* (1941–45, watercolor, 20 × 29½ inches) is partially visible in the background.

and they married the following year. The responsibilities of his position—rising to top designer—and a burgeoning family of five children did not leave much time for painting. But as administrative duties became oppressive, he sought escape. Collector and educator Edward Wales Root introduced him to Frank K.M. Rehn, who offered representation in 1929 that he accepted.

This newfound freedom jump-started his career. He took a more romantic approach to his subjects, replacing social commentary with a reflective admiration for scenes in humble neighborhoods. In the Rehn stable, his colleagues included Edward Hopper, Morris Kantor, Reginald Marsh, Henry Varnum Poor, and Bradley Walker Tomlin, among others.

In 1930—the same year his new gallerist, Rehn, presented the first solo exhibition of his new work, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., gave him the Museum of Modern Art’s first one-person exhibition, *Charles Burchfield: Early Watercolors 1916–1918*.

The sudden, unexpected deaths of his sister Frances and his mother within nine days of each other in the summer of 1933 plunged him into months of grief, but he emerged with a renewed vigor. His national recognition accelerated and in December 1936, *Life* magazine declared him one of the country’s ten greatest painters in its article, “Burchfield’s America.”

Looking at a large cache of early works, he yearned to recapture the enthusiasm and creativity of his youth; so, in 1943, at the age of fifty, he emboldened himself to paint anew, feeling he had

nothing to lose by pursuing his own desires rather than considering the wartime dearth of sales. He returned to ideas begun in early fantasy scenes literally expanding small paintings from 1917 and 1918 by remounting them on board, adding paper strips around them, and painting in layers, as an oil painter would, to join the images into stunning, dreamlike, transcendental landscapes.

John I.H. Baur organized one of the most significant exhibitions of Burchfield’s career for the Whitney Museum of American Art, which toured nationally to six museums in 1956–57. Disappointingly, beginning in 1955, serious health problems plagued Burchfield, severely impacting his energy and ability to paint outdoors. After a series of interventions and medications, he reemerged in 1959, having finished many paintings that were started years earlier and creating new ones based on ideas hatched in his studio.

During the 1960s, Burchfield created the largest, most compelling paintings of his life, with an

abundance of ideas stimulating his imagination. Competing seasons and their transitions occupy compositions simultaneously, foretelling the future. These were the culmination of his 1915 “all day sketches” that now flamboyantly contrast fluctuating elements of weather conditions, radiant sounds, shifting light levels, and animated plants and wildlife. They surge with transcendent, mystical knowledge. He wanted the viewer to see and hear and smell each scene and be transported to his unique way of understanding life and our relationship to nature.

Being both humorous and cryptic, he told one of his closest friends and an ardent collector, Dr. Theodor W. Braasch, “I am often asked by people ‘Just what is your style of painting?’ I baffle them by saying ‘I hope it is strictly Burchfieldian.’”

This piece is an edited version of an annotated essay by Nancy Weekly. For a copy of the essay in its entirety, please contact the gallery at 212-879-8815 or [alana@schoelkopfgallery.com](mailto:alana@schoelkopfgallery.com).

**CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD**  
seated at his easel,  
October 1966  
FOLLOWING SPREAD:  
*Autumn to Winter*, detail,  
1964–66, watercolor on  
joined paper mounted  
on board, 50 × 75 inches,  
private collection

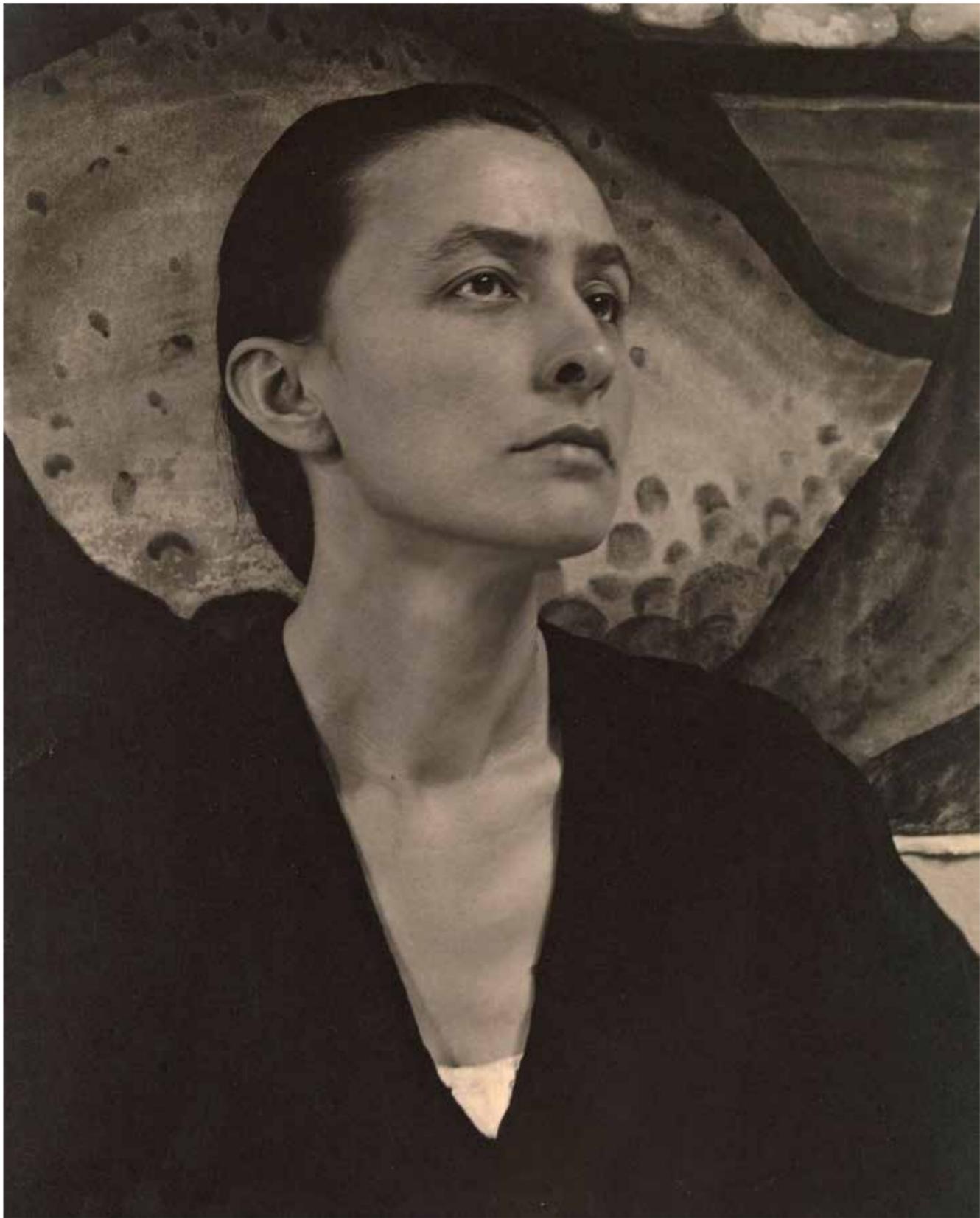


PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID HARE. BURCHFIELD PENNEY ART CENTER, BUFFALO, NEW YORK. CHARLES E. BURCHFIELD ARCHIVES, GIFT OF THE LOWER LAKES HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 1989, A1989.138

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COURTESY CREDIT



**ALFRED STIEGLITZ**  
*Georgia O'Keeffe*, 1918,  
platinum-palladium print

OPPOSITE:  
**GEORGIA O'KEEFFE**  
*Dead Tree Bear Lake Taos*, 1929,  
oil on canvas, 32 × 17 inches

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK, USA ©BRIDGEMAN IMAGES



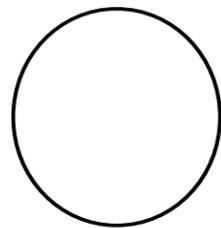
# Georgia O'Keeffe

EXCERPTS FROM THE ESSAY BY CAROL TROYEN

*New Mexico's "wonderful emptiness" transformed her life and career*

**GEORGIA O'KEEFFE**

RIGHT: *Untitled (Dead Tree Bear Lake Taos)*, 1929, graphite on paper, 10<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, 2006.5.112; BELOW: Rebecca Strand and Georgia O'Keeffe at Los Gallos, Taos, New Mexico, 1929. The "Pink House" is behind them.



In April 27, 1929, Georgia O'Keeffe boarded a train in New York, heading for what would turn out to be a four month stay in the southwest. It was her first visit there in more than a decade, and the longest time she had spent away from her husband, the master photographer and arts impresario Alfred Stieglitz, since their marriage in 1924. Her traveling companion was the fledgling painter Rebecca Strand, married to the brilliant young photographer and Stieglitz protégé Paul Strand. Both women were looking to refresh their visions and to achieve a greater measure of artistic independence. By this time, O'Keeffe's career was well established. She had already had many solo shows at Stieglitz's galleries; her first museum retrospective had been held at the Brooklyn Museum in 1927. Her works were selling well, including her images of New York skyscrapers and the enlarged flowers that would become a signature subject. But summers at the Stieglitz family compound at Lake George had begun to feel claustrophobic and she found it increasingly difficult to work; Stieglitz wrote Strand of her "inner yearn for big spaces." Intended simply as a break from her usual summer pattern, O'Keeffe's trip to the southwest in the summer of 1929 would turn out to be an adventure of a lifetime, transforming her life and her career.

O'Keeffe's and Rebecca Strand's destination was New Mexico, where they stayed at Los Gallos, an artists' colony just north of Taos frequented by avant-garde painters, musicians, and writers and presided over by art patron Mabel Dodge Luhan. O'Keeffe and Strand were assigned the "Pink House," which O'Keeffe called "quite perfect—the finest studio I ever had." The atmosphere at Los Gallos was noisy, lively, and intense;



hostess and guests were high strung and given to self-dramatization. Marsden Hartley, who had been Luhan's guest some years earlier, quipped, "Taos is just another way to spell chaos." Among other visitors to the compound that summer were Harlem Renaissance writer Alain Locke; caricaturist Miguel Covarrubias; O'Keeffe's old friend from New York, John Marin; and the young



Ansel Adams, who shared her sense of the spiritual quality of the landscape. Despite the comings and goings of "bold-faced names," O'Keeffe had a highly productive season, a portent of what New Mexico would mean for her in the future.

Bear Lake, the site of several paintings O'Keeffe made over the next two summers, is twelve miles northeast of Taos and about a mile from Wheeler Peak, the highest point in New Mexico. Like Taos, Bear Lake itself is at a high elevation—more than 11,000 feet above sea level—an altitude that Luhan said explained O'Keeffe's increased creativity since arriving in Taos ("emotions are heightened and the different senses know a new swift life. It was so with Georgia O'Keeffe when she came to Taos"). A more likely cause was the wild, ascetic beauty of the landscape, which O'Keeffe later described as "my [kind of] country; terrible winds and a wonderful emptiness." The lake

is on Pueblo land, an ancient sacred site for the Taos Pueblo community. In preparation for *Dead Tree Bear Lake Taos*, she made at least two pencil sketches, presumably at the site. One is an outline drawing of the lower part of the tree, emphasizing its twisted branches; the other is a smaller compositional sketch that shows most of the central tree and the pines that flank it. But neither drawing anticipates the highly unconventional format and viewpoint of the final painting, or its eerie, mystical power.

Depicting the pale shaft of a dead pine, *Dead Tree Bear Lake Taos* is nearly twice as tall as it is wide, a radically elongated shape that O'Keeffe had used for several earlier pictures (among them *Corn, Dark, No. 1*, 1924, Metropolitan Museum of Art), but never to such dramatic effect. Presumably she chose such an unusual canvas shape to underscore the tree's astonishing, seemingly infinite,

**GEORGIA O'KEEFFE**  
*Hill, Stream and Moon*,  
1916–17, watercolor on  
paper, 8<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 11<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches

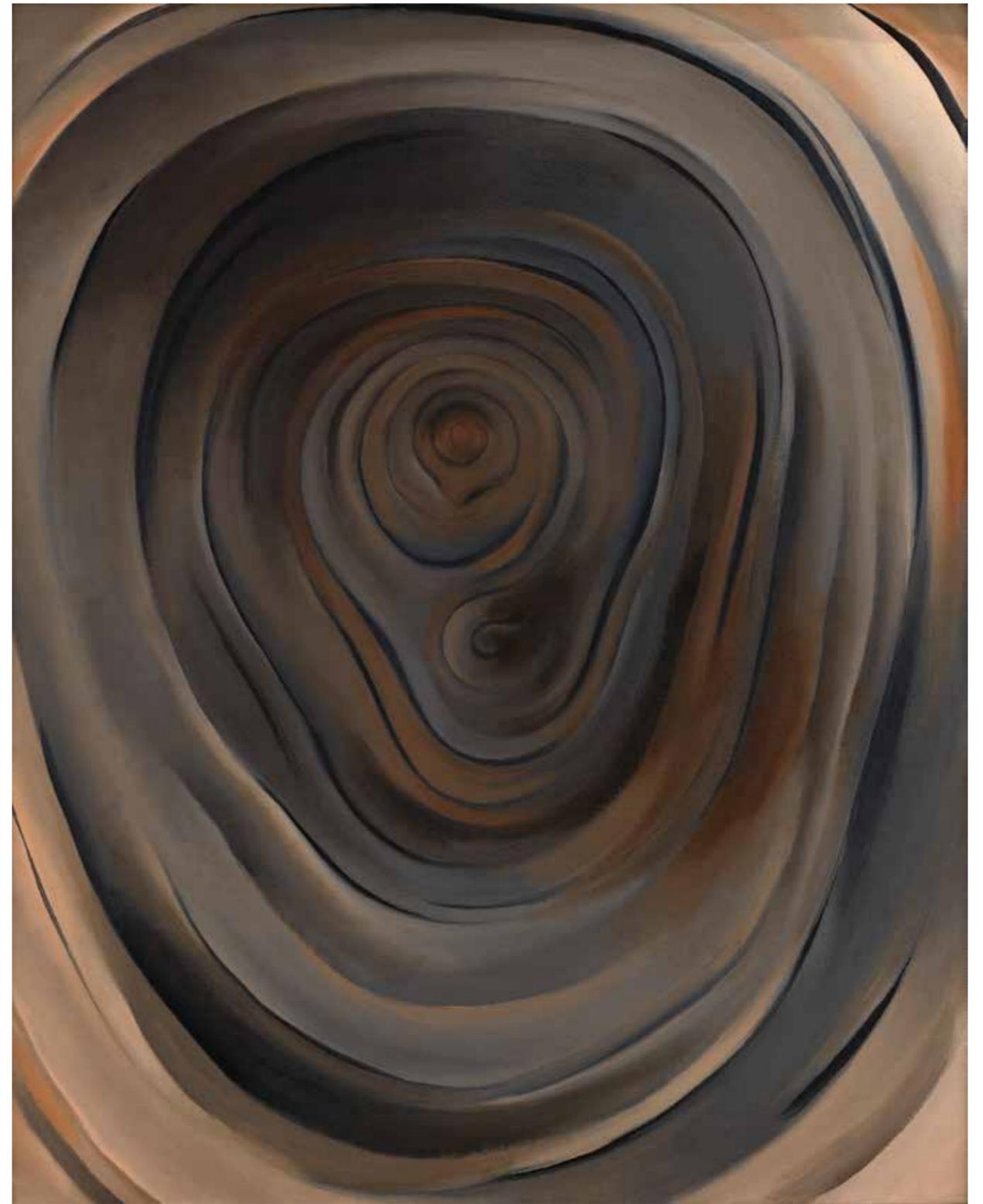


**GEORGIA O'KEEFFE**  
*The Lawrence Tree*, 1929,  
 oil on canvas, 31 × 40  
 inches, Wadsworth  
 Atheneum Museum of  
 Art, Hartford, CT

verticality. The point of view she chose is equally radical. The tree is centralized and immediate. The viewer feels as though they were standing directly before it, head thrown back in order to look straight up the trunk. That trunk twists and turns and climbs beyond their field of vision, as though piercing the heavens. In choosing this striking structure, O'Keeffe likely drew upon the compositional principles of Alfred Wesley Dow on the one hand, and on Stieglitz's photographic experiments on the other. She had long admired Dow's writings on art, and in the early nineteen-teens went to Columbia University's

Teachers College to study with him. Dow's own paintings and prints in this long, narrow shape reflect, in turn, Japanese pillar prints of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, their exaggeratedly tall shapes serving to flatten the picture space, intensify the composition, and create a dynamic verticality—all qualities O'Keeffe exploits here. O'Keeffe and Stieglitz had long been stimulated by one another's work and, especially during their long summers at the Stieglitz family compound at Lake George in the 1920s, often passed artistic ideas back and forth. The worm's eye view here rephrases a vantage point Alfred Stieglitz used

WADSWORTH ATHENEUM MUSEUM OF ART, HARTFORD, CT. THE ELIA GALLUP SUMNER AND MARY CATLIN SUMNER COLLECTION FUND, 1981.23 PHOTO © ALLEN PHILLIPS/WADSWORTH ATHENEUM



**GEORGIA O'KEEFFE**  
*A Piece of Wood II / From  
 Knot of Wood*, 1942, oil on  
 canvas, 24¾ × 19¾ inches,  
 private collection



**GEORGIA O'KEEFFE**  
*Rancho Church, No. II, NM*, 1929, oil on canvas, 24½ × 36½ inches, The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

in a number of his famous “Equivalent” photographs, with his camera pointed straight up at the sky. For O’Keeffe, it was a way to emphasize the monumental vitality of the tree, even in death; the smallness of the viewer who has come upon it; and the privilege of being in its presence.

Surrounded by living trees and with stars and the night sky all around, O’Keeffe’s pine appears heroic, majestic, and ghostly, and—with its bare branches evoking arms and the twisted fingers of old age—strangely human. The image is both awe-inspiring and unsettling, mournful in its evocation of mortality, yet inviting admiration and sympathy. It describes the special communion O’Keeffe felt with natural forms—“I wish people were all trees and I think I could enjoy them then,”

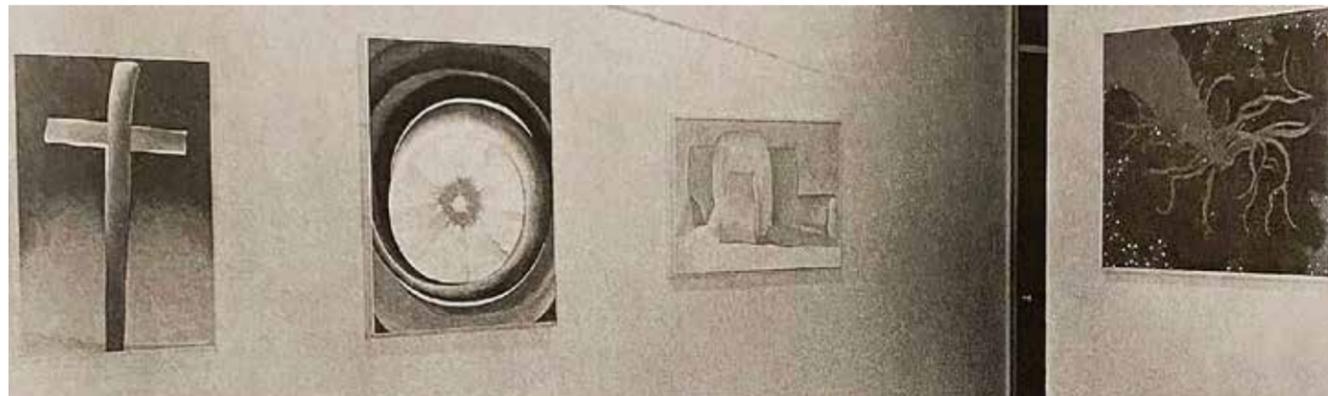
she said—and the pleasure of being alone in such an enchanted landscape. For O’Keeffe, *Dead Tree Bear Lake Taos* represented a new vision, and critics noticed.

First exhibited at Alfred Stieglitz’s An American Place gallery in February and March 1930, *Dead Tree Bear Lake Taos* was part of a show that marked the public debut of her New Mexico work. Although such major paintings as *Farmhouse Window and Door* (1929; Museum of Modern Art) from Lake George were also included, it was the New Mexico pictures that captured critics’ attention. The critic for *Art News* celebrated the show for revealing “the real Taos and the real O’Keeffe.” Edwin Alden Jewell, reviewing the show for the *New York Times*, called it “the most

THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION, WASHINGTON, DC. ACQUIRED 1930. © THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION



**GEORGIA O'KEEFFE**  
*After a Walk Back of Mabel's*, 1929, oil on canvas, 40 × 30 inches, private collection



*“I wish people were all trees and I think I could enjoy them then . . .”* —Georgia O’Keeffe



OPPOSITE TOP:  
**GEORGIA O’KEEFFE**  
exhibition at An American  
Place, installation view  
showing *Grey Cross with  
Blue; At the Rodeo, New  
Mexico; Ranchos Church,  
Taos; The Lawrence Tree*

OPPOSITE BOTTOM:  
**GEORGIA O’KEEFFE**  
exhibition at An American  
Place, installation view  
showing *Ranchos Church  
No. 1; Radiator Bldg—  
Night, New York; After  
a Walk Back of Mabel’s;  
Black Cross*

exciting O’Keeffe show this writer has ever seen” and “one of the really major events of the season.” He began his commentary by alluding to the way O’Keeffe’s work had been transformed by her time in Taos: “Something was happening to Georgia O’Keeffe last year.” He noted that in the exhibition she introduced whole new themes: crosses, local architecture, desert flowers, and towering trees, subjects that would engage her for the rest of her career. The show featured works that became some of her best-known pictures, among them *Black Cross* (Art Institute of Chicago), *Ranchos Church II* (Phillips Collection), and, in addition to *Dead Tree Bear Lake Taos*, another homage to a great tree, *The Lawrence Tree* (Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art). Praising these pictures, Jewell reflected on the new, more poetic, balance O’Keeffe had achieved between realism and abstraction, a balance he found almost spiritual: “Objective and subjective have reconsummated their mystic marriage, enlarging the scope without betraying that most precious of the artist’s gifts: sensitiveness to forms unglimped and to voices unheard.”

While O’Keeffe acknowledged how Taos had altered her art and her world view—“I realize I must be different than when I came out . . . I

feel terribly alive”—and later noted that 1929 was “one of my best painting years,” she offered no analysis of the change. However, her friend the critic Henry McBride offered a blunt diagnosis. Responding to the pictures from that first Taos summer, he explained, “Georgia O’Keeffe went to Taos, New Mexico, to visit Mabel Dodge and spent most of the summer down there. Naturally something would come from such a contact as that. But not what you would think. Religion came of it. Georgia O’Keeffe got religion.” McBride was referring specifically to the paintings of Penitente crosses but he found spirituality in all the southwestern works. In his review of O’Keeffe’s exhibition at An American Place the following year (which may also have included *Dead Tree Bear Lake Taos*), he praised the Taos paintings’ “elegant shapes, charged with solemn mystery.” In *Dead Tree Bear Lake Taos*, an ordinary object takes on a strange yet touching resonance and becomes a symbol of both solitude and connection. It is a work that expresses the transformation of O’Keeffe’s art during that rich, magical summer.

This piece is an edited version of an annotated essay by Carol Troyen. For a copy of the essay in its entirety, please contact the gallery at 212-879-8815 or [alana@schoelkopfgallery.com](mailto:alana@schoelkopfgallery.com).

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# HER MOMENT IN THE SUN

Despite the famous friendships and favorable comparisons, Henrietta Shore was not widely recognized, until now

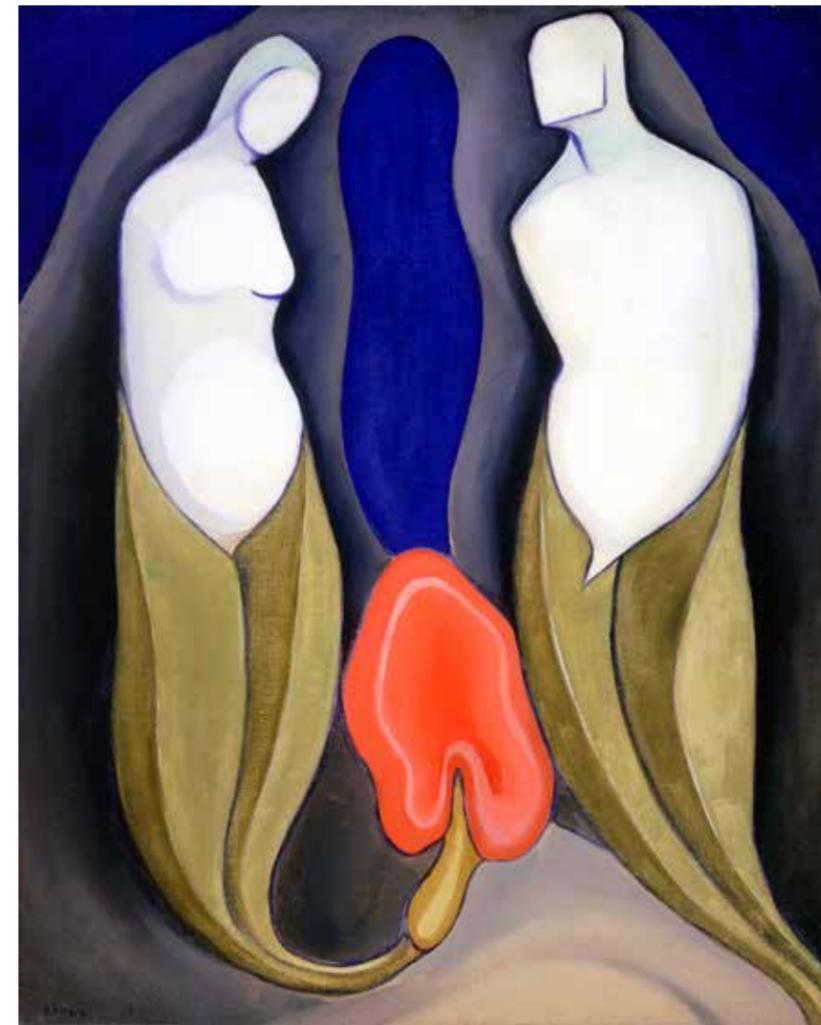
EXCERPTS FROM THE ESSAY BY CAROL M.C.D. WALLACE

OPPOSITE: PUBLISHED IN *TOURING TOPICS*, DECEMBER, 1929; P. 9, COLLECTION OF NICHOLAS AND ANDRÉE HOLINRAKE, TORONTO; RIGHT: GIFT OF JAMES AND LINDA RIES (M.88.125), © LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART/LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, USA

## HENRIETTA SHORE

RIGHT: *Life*, c. 1921, oil on canvas, 31½ × 26 inches, collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art

OPPOSITE: Henrietta Shore painting a *Cypress Root*, *Carmel*



A

s a young woman, the painter Henrietta Shore (1880–1963) had the good fortune of knowing exactly what she wanted to do with her life—and she possessed the talent that made fulfilling her artistic ambitions possible. Shore was stubborn, and all she ever wanted was to make art. For a young lady in late 19th-century Toronto, Canada, painting and drawing would have been “accomplishments” that demonstrated upper-class refinement. They might also, theoretically, help her attract a suitable husband. But Shore had little interest in attracting a man for any purpose other than teaching her how to paint.

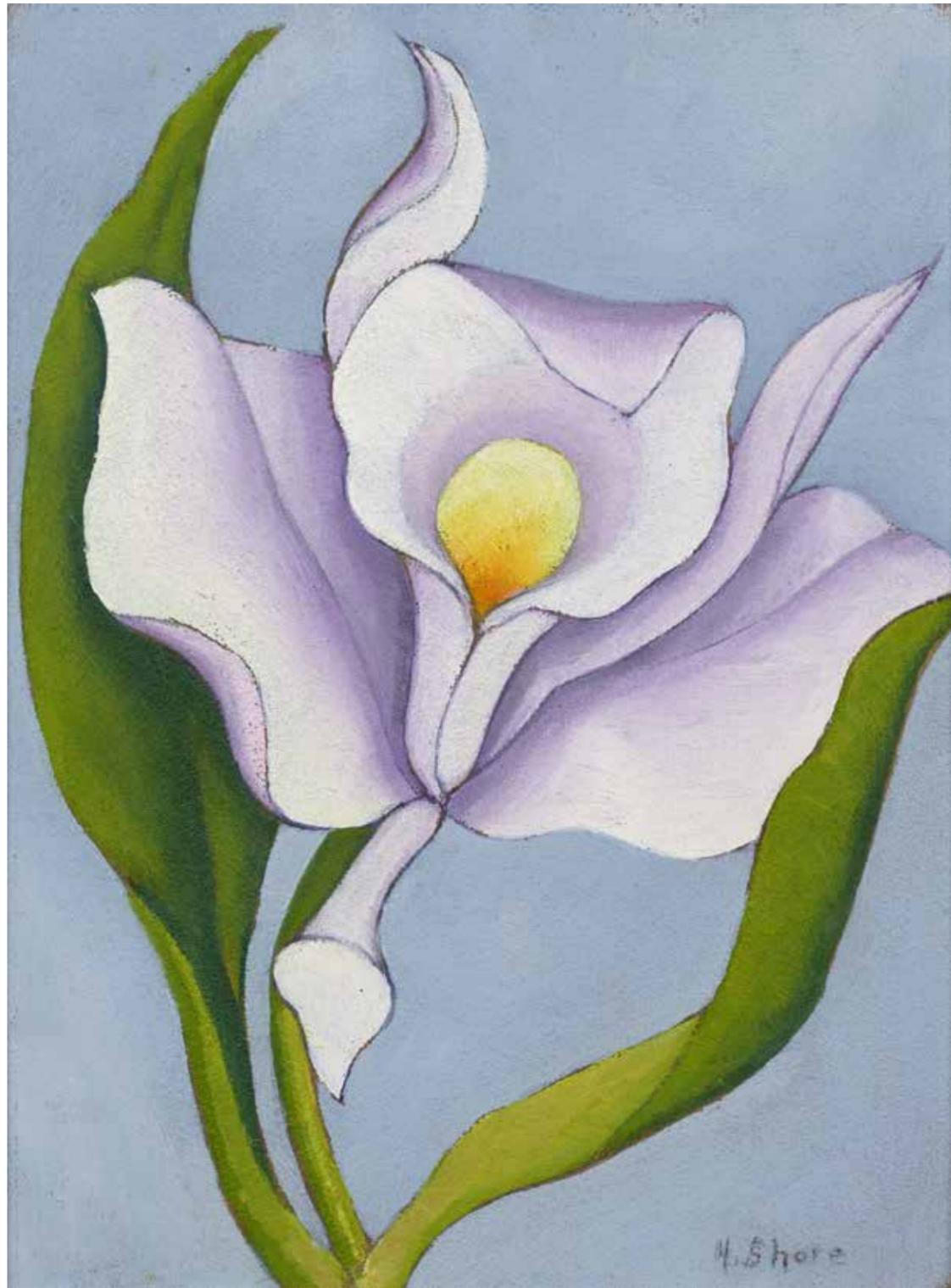
Her earliest training came at St. Margaret’s College in Toronto when she was 18, followed by studies with William Merritt Chase and Robert Henri at the New York School of Art.

In her twenties, Shore traveled to Europe to visit museums and to attend the Heatherley School of Fine Art in London, famous for graduates such

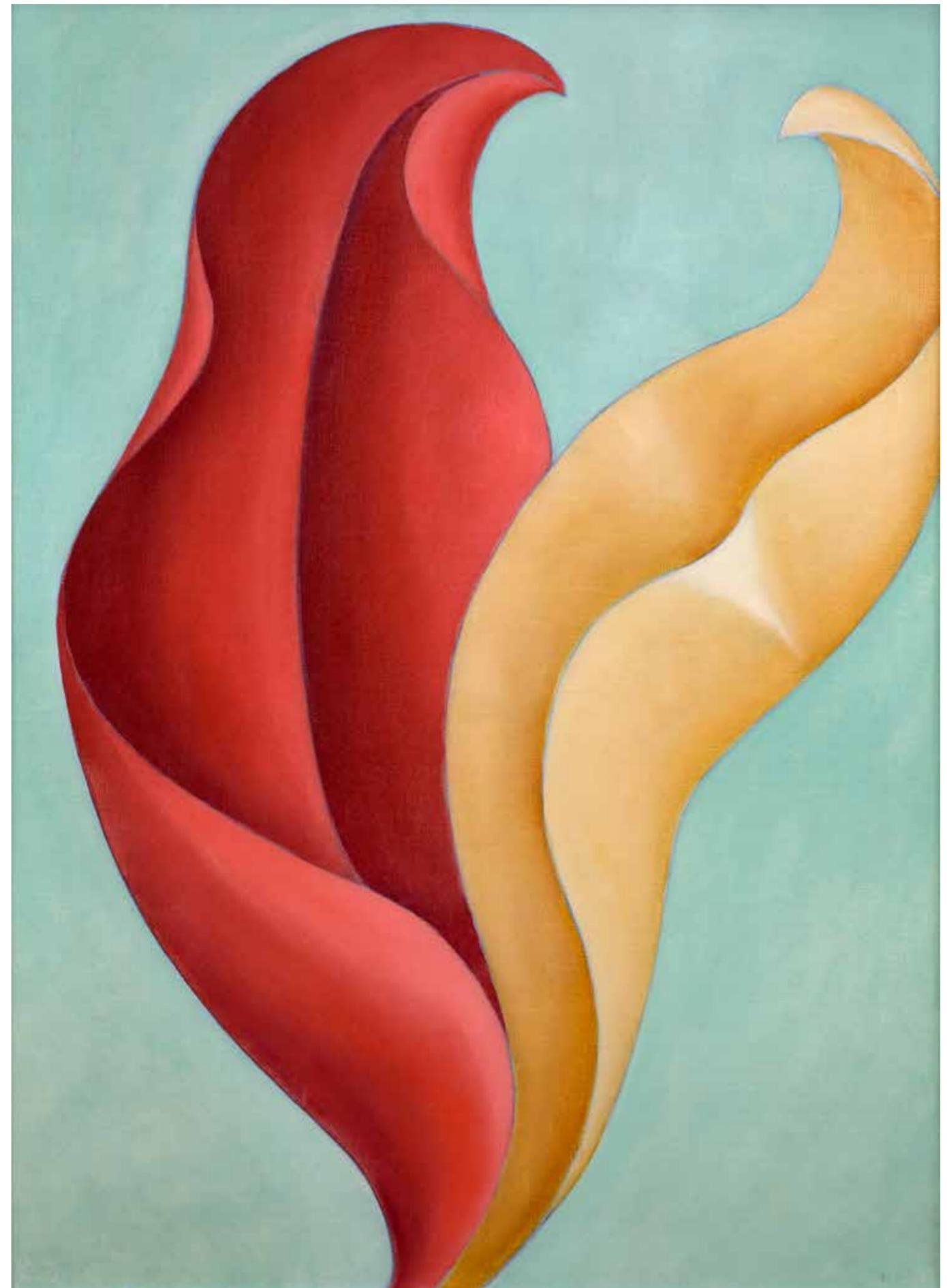
as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Walter Sickert. It may be somewhere in Europe that Shore took to using a very large palette and a long mahl stick to steady her brush hand—classical methods to create modern images.

But if her technique was initially formed by traditional European instruction, Shore would find her artistic home in Southern California, with its copious sunlight, novel subjects, and social diversity.

Shore’s work is understandably compared to that of her near-contemporary Georgia O’Keeffe. They shared not only an eager focus on the natural world, but also a similar level of abstraction in how they portrayed it, right down to the sometimes-sexualized emphasis on their portrayal of plant life in particular. The tight cropping, thin application of paint, and sense of monumental stillness are similar. But O’Keeffe’s enduring renown owes a great deal to her canny sense of self-promotion (not to mention her marriage to Alfred Stieglitz),



**HENRIETTA SHORE**  
*White Orchid*, c. 1925,  
oil on board, 8 x 6 inches,  
private collection  
OPPOSITE: *Envelopment*,  
1921, oil on canvas,  
38 x 28 inches, private  
collection





while Henrietta Shore never cared particularly about the sale of her art.

Yet despite her lack of interest in fame, her work was widely recognized in the late 1920s: she had a one-person show at the Fine Arts Gallery in San Diego and a retrospective at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1927, as well as exhibitions in New York and Paris.

Painting had been not only her livelihood, but her way of being in the world. She made ends meet with financial help from her banker brothers as well as painting sales until the economy collapsed. Shore had no gift for self-promotion. Indeed, she seems from the available sources to have been a prickly, difficult personality, short on self-awareness and utterly lacking in humor.

All the same, she was able to attract and keep certain friends who had the patience to humor her and who valued her talent and generosity. We know this with certainty from the journals of Edward Weston. They met in 1927 and, according to his journal, when he first saw her work, he “stopped short in my tracks silently amazed.” Shore painted Weston’s portrait a month later, listening as he read to her from his daybooks. Theirs was a fertile artistic friendship. The nautilus shell famously photographed by Weston belonged to Shore. He later wrote (using the nickname he gave her), “I was awakened to shells by the painting of Henry. . . .

Henry’s influence, or stimulation I see not just in shell subject matter, it is in all my late work.”

Shore moved to Carmel, California in 1930, attracted there by a nascent gallery culture as well as by the low cost of living. In addition, the rocky coastal landscape turned out to be an endlessly rewarding subject. Best of all was the relationship that she and Weston fell into, neighbors and fellow artists portraying the same subjects in different but related ways. It was Weston who first took Shore to Point Lobos, now a State Marine Reserve in California, which offered both artists a stunning array of subjects.

The thirties were paradoxical years for Shore. Retrospectives of her work were held at the Palace of the Legion of Honor and the M.H. de Young Museum in San Francisco, as well as shows in New York and Paris in 1939. Yet her sales dwindled, and she was forced to sell some of her cherished Weston photographs merely to survive. Her measured approach to abstraction fell out of fashion and self-promotion was unthinkable to her. All Henrietta Shore ever cared about was making art, which she continued to do until the 1950s when, as her mental health failed, she was committed to an asylum.

This piece is an edited version of an annotated essay by Carol McD. Wallace. For a copy of the essay in its entirety, please contact the gallery at 212-879-8815 or [alana@schoelkopfgallery.com](mailto:alana@schoelkopfgallery.com).

TOP LEFT: Installation of *Envelopment* in the 1923 exhibition, *Catalogue of Exhibition of Paintings by Henrietta Shore*, at the Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts

TOP RIGHT: **EDWARD WESTON** *Nautilus*, 1927, gelatin silver print

RIGHT: © CHRISTIE'S IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN IMAGES. ARTWORK © 2022 CENTER FOR CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY, ARIZONA BOARD OF REGENTS / ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK

**HENRIETTA SHORE**  
*Point Sur Lighthouse*, c. 1930,  
oil on canvas on Masonite,  
24½ × 29¼ inches, private  
collection

“Art is the tool by which creative instinct in man is brought into being. It is only normal that one should possess an urgent passion to create. Creation, on the part of man, is an understanding so deep, a knowledge so transcendental, that one has a freshly awakened vision so vital, so pungent, that one has power to seek and express clearly that which has always existed, that which is already known.” —Henrietta Shore, 1933



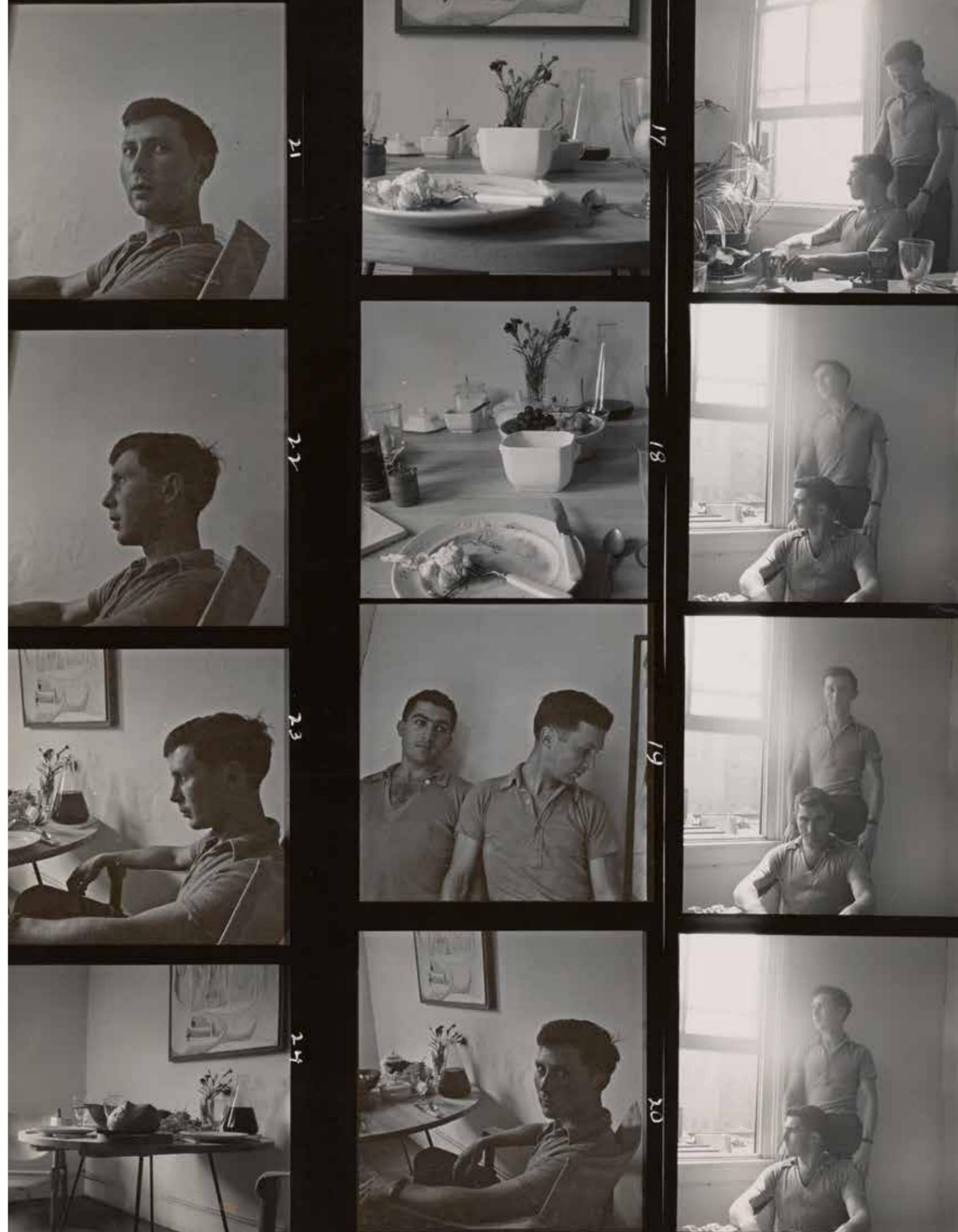
# George Tooker and Friends

In this excerpt from *American Art* published in 2011, author Justin Spring sat for lunch with George Tooker nine years before his passing at 90 years old. Over a delightful meal at his Vermont home, a lively and insightful conversation on life, loss, love and art ensued.

BY JUSTIN SPRING



GEORGE TOOKER c. 1980s OPPOSITE: Tooker with William Christopher, c. 1950s



LEFT AND OPPOSITE: GEORGE TOOKER PAPERS, CIRCA 1851-2010, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Jared French, Monroe Wheeler, Paul Cadmus and George Tooker on Fire Island, 1945



G

George Tooker has had a quietly successful career as a representational painter over a half century that has not been particularly kind to representational painting. Working slowly in the privacy of his Vermont home, he completes only one or two paintings per year. Now in his early eighties, he continues to create jewel-like works in his chosen medium of egg tempera, which he began using in the mid-1940s.

Though Tooker studied primarily with the American Scene painter Reginald Marsh, he is best known today as one of three painters—the others being Paul Cadmus and Jared French—whose careers were promoted by Lincoln Kirstein, the influential collector and impresario, as symbolic realists. Their work consists of dreamlike imagery, often charged with eroticism, which addresses the troubled relation of society and the self. The group, for the most part overlooked during the heyday of abstract expressionism, is today receiving renewed consideration. Of the three painters, Tooker is the artist whose subject matter is the

least erotic; gently androgynous, it focuses more on inner, meditative, and, ultimately, spiritual issues. His work is remarkable for its consistency of execution, technical brilliance, and vivid, immediately recognizable imagery. [. . .]

**JUSTIN SPRING:** You began studying at the Art Students League in New York City with Reginald Marsh from 1943 to 1945.

**GEORGE TOOKER:** Yes. I'd seen an exhibition of Reg's work at Andover, and he was teaching at the League, and I'd always wanted to go study at the League. After a year of studying with him, I became his class monitor. Reg and I got to be good friends—I was very fond of him. [I also studied with] Kenneth Hayes Miller and Harry Sternberg—both of them taught at the League. And for a while I took night classes at Parsons with Jacques Maroger, the inventor of Maroger's medium. Reg recommended him. For a while Reg used Maroger's medium—but the work he created using that medium was really not his best!

COURTESY WILLIAM CHRISTOPHER PAPERS, CIRCA 1920S-CIRCA 1973. ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION



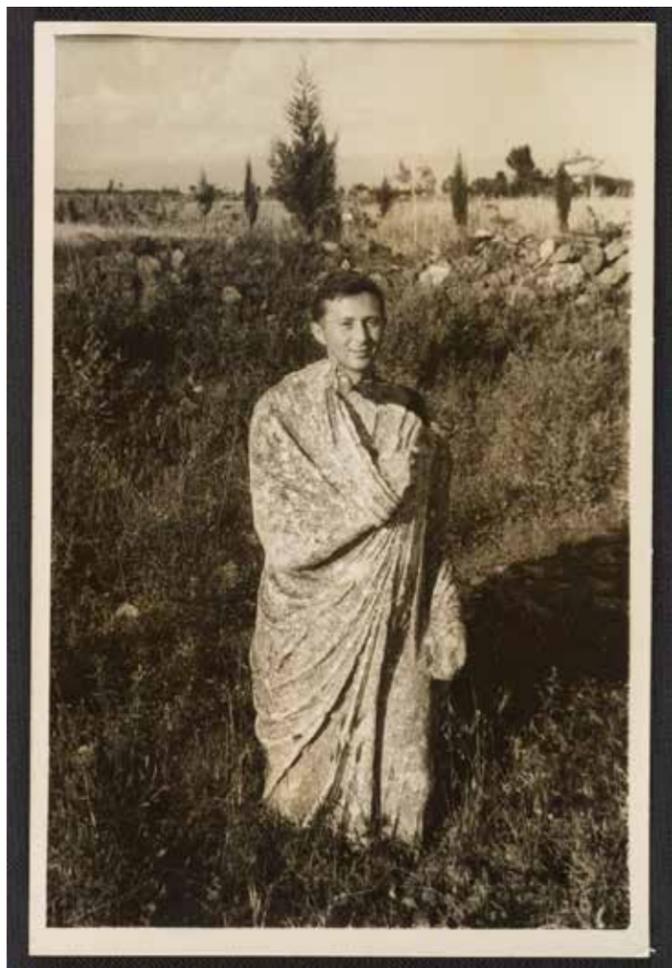
## *Jukebox*, 1953

BY SUSAN JOHNSON

George Tooker purchased a brownstone in Brooklyn Heights in 1953, and *Jukebox* portrays the local dance hall setting where Italian and Hispanic immigrants socialized in the neighborhood. Described by art historian Thomas Garver in his 2002 monograph as “one of Tooker’s most successful pictures,” this intimately scaled scene portrays the surreal subject for which he is best-known. In contrast to the romanticized view of American culture evoked by the Regionalist painters of the time, Tooker focuses on underlying social issues at play. The individual’s sense of alienation can be seen in the vacant gaze of the women despite the swags of festive streamers and colorful glow of the jukebox. The seated figure’s face appears mask-like, hovering above her body. They are at a dance but not dancing. *Jukebox* was originally owned by Lincoln Kirstein, Tooker’s most important patron and supporter.

### GEORGE TOOKER

*Jukebox*, 1953, egg tempera on gesso panel, 21 × 14 inches



GEORGE TOOKER in Rome, Italy, c. 1948

**JS:** Another name that you've mentioned is Edward Hopper. When did you first meet?

**GT:** I used to see him at the Whitney openings with his wife, Jo. I can't remember when we first met. I did see him at Jerry and Margaret's [Jared and Margaret French] in Provincetown [Massachusetts]—the summer of 1947 we went over to Truro to see them at their home. And I remember going to his studio on Washington Square as well. Whitney openings used to be all artists now there are no artists! I used to see [Theodoros] Stamos, [Irene] Rice Pereira, Loren MacIver, and many others. And Hopper was almost always there. This would have been at the old Whitney, down on Eighth Street.

**JS:** What did you think of him?

**GT:** Hopper was generous with other artists. I remember he once said about de Kooning, "He's the best of those bright boys." Meaning the abstract painters. It was sort of a put down, but a compliment as well, and it indicated to me that he was looking, really looking, at the painting.

**JS:** Did you enjoy speaking with Hopper?

**GT:** Well, it was always both Hopper and his wife, Jo, who had a little birdlike presence, and was always, always talking. So, you'd be trying to talk with Edward, and he was this great looming presence, not saying much of anything, and all the time Jo was talking a mile a minute. It was really quite a challenge. But she was obviously very important to him. They were always together. [. . .]

**JS:** The subtle passage of light is a defining element of your paintings—you're a painter of light. Which painters do you feel you've learned from most about light?

**GT:** The Italian Renaissance masters, and also de La Tour, and Zurbarán. Also [Jusepe de] Ribera. . . . Bill Christopher and I were both very fond of his Bacchus, a funny, middle-aged fat man. But yes, light is very important to me. It's a way of organizing a picture.

[. . .]

GEORGE TOOKER PAPERS, CIRCA 1851-2010, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION



GEORGE TOOKER  
*White Curtain*, 1951, tempera  
on panel, 18 × 13¾ inches,  
private collection

**GEORGE TOOKER**

*Subway*, 1950, tempera on composition board, 18½ x 36½ inches, Whitney Museum of American Art



**JS:** So, at the League it was really Reginald Marsh who was your strongest mentor?

**GT:** Yes, I wanted to be just like him. We got along very well. The problem was that Reg worked quickly, with real bravado, and I simply couldn't do that. It was only when Paul Cadmus stepped in and encouraged me to slow down that I actually came into my own.

**JS:** Both Reginald Marsh and Paul Cadmus worked in egg tempera, which has remained your medium of choice.

**GT:** Yes.

**JS:** Paul wrote a beautiful appreciation of you in those early days. You met him through Marsh's class at the Art Students League in 1944, along with the artist Bridget Bate Chisholm.

**GT:** Yes. Paul and Bridget were friends, and I think I fell in love with both of them.

That's a drawing of Bridget Bate over there on that wall, done by Paul at the time. She really was

very glamorous. And beside it there's a little sketch of Paul, not a finished drawing by any means.

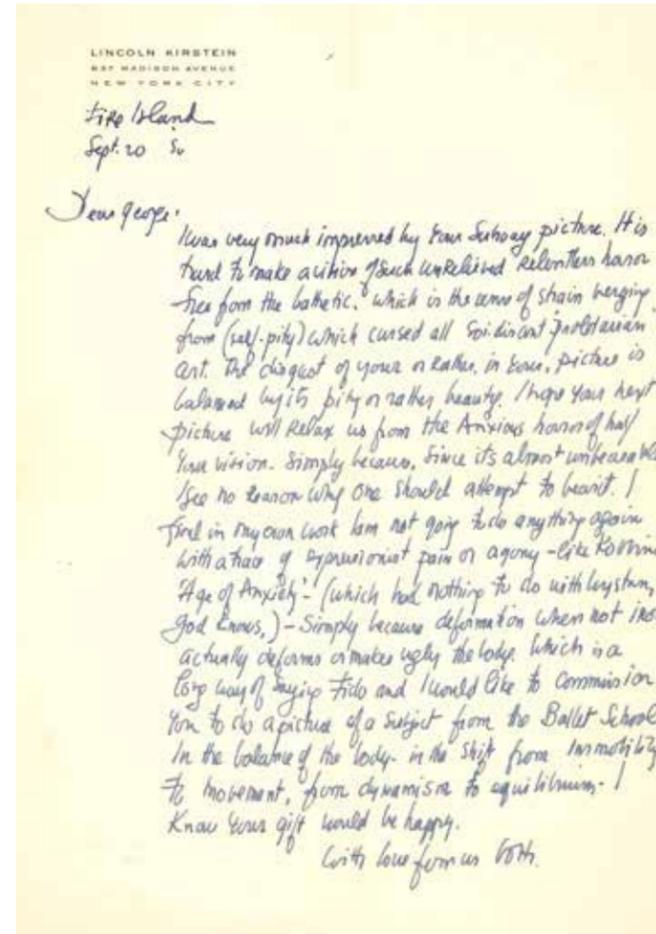
**JS:** What do you do with your drawings? We haven't seen many of them.

**GT:** I keep them. I haven't done that many finished drawings, just preparatory ones. I gave a lot of them to Jock Reynolds at Andover [at the Addison Gallery of American Art] for their collection. So, they're there as a study collection. I don't consider them finished work and I didn't want them sold as finished work . . . They're pretty grubby, scratchy. But if they have any interest for students that's fine with me.

**JS:** Classicism is a term often used to describe both Paul's work and your own. Is it a term you like?

**GT:** Oh, no. I don't feel I'm very classic. (Laughs).

**JS:** But I wonder if the sort of figuration you do has any relation to the classicist period of, say, Picasso? The stillness and monumentality of many of your figures suggests a connection.



LEFT: Lincoln Kirstein letter to George Tooker, September 20, 1950, expressing his thoughts on Tooker's recently completed painting, *Subway*. BELOW: Lincoln Kirstein and his wife, Fidelma Cadmus, with their dog on Fire Island, 1952



**GT:** Well, yes, I suppose I do feel drawn to Picasso's classicist paintings—I've always known them and liked them. But some of that may come out of Jerry's [Jared French] work as well.

**JS:** What about the terms symbolic realism, or magic realism? Do these seem like good ones to you?

**GT:** Oh, I hate those terms. Paul disliked them, too.

**JS:** Metaphysical painting?

**GT:** To call it metaphysical painting is no more accurate. Lincoln [Kirstein] may have been responsible for the making up of those names. I think he was.

**JS:** He seems to have done a lot to promote your work.

**GT:** Yes. He collected it and promoted it.

**JS:** Were you friends?

**GT:** Yes, but he could be very, very difficult. But I really only knew him through Paul. I liked Paul's sister Fidelma very much—she was married to

Lincoln—but Lincoln was difficult. Fidelma was charming. She was very much Lincoln's wife at home, but visiting Paul she would be very much herself. Very free and open.

**JS:** Lincoln ended up breaking with many of his friends. How did you manage with him over the years?

**GT:** Well, I did better than most, but then one day I called, and he picked up the phone and said, "George Tooker, you're nothing but self-indulgent!" and put down the phone. And that was it. I never called again.

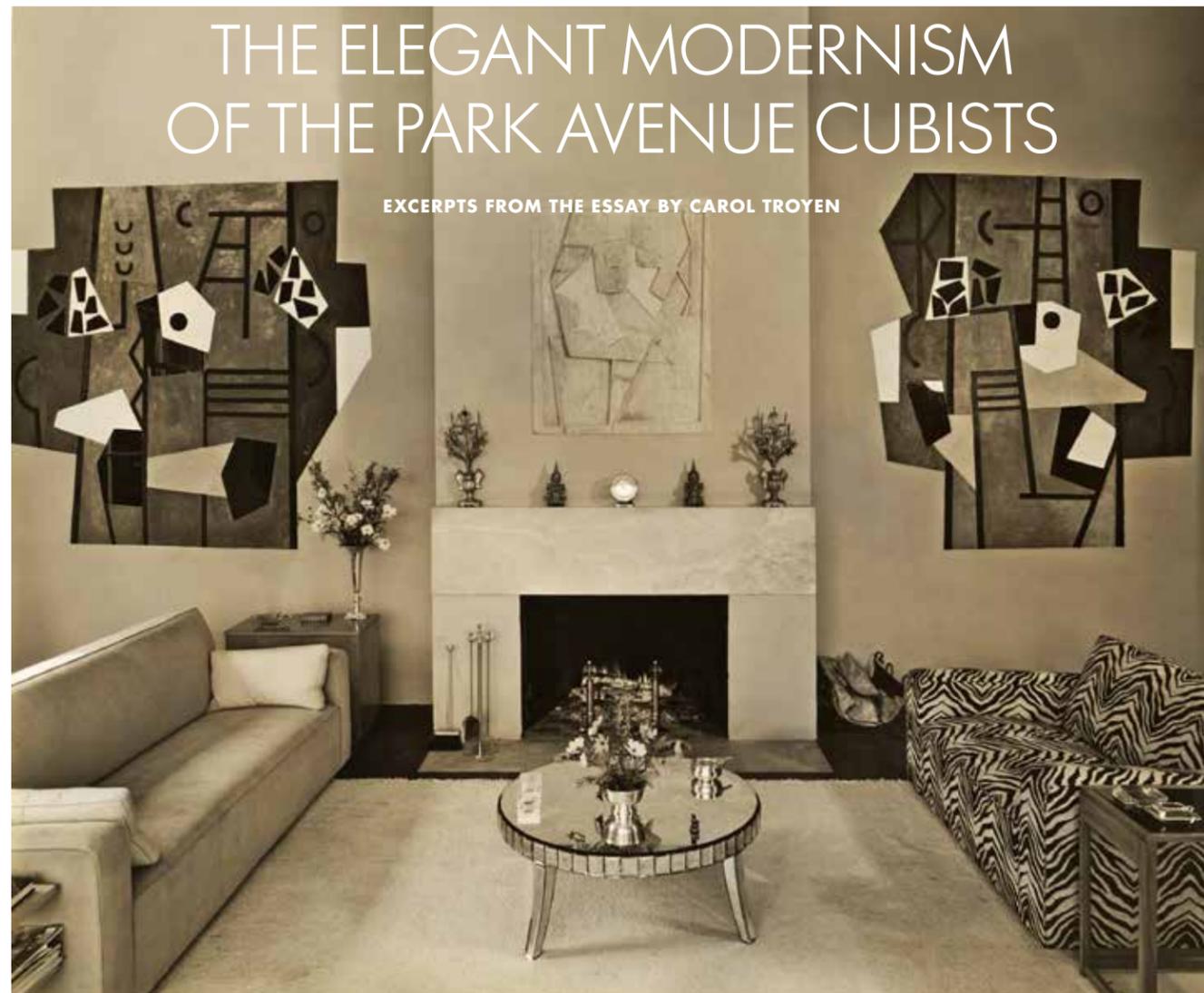
[. . .]

Spring, Justin, and George Tooker. "An Interview with George Tooker." *American Art*, vol. 16, no. 1, [University of Chicago Press, Smithsonian American Art Museum], 2002, pp. 61–81, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3109396>. The full interview is available at: <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/eprint/AMART+TOOKER+INTERVIEW/full>

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LEFT: GEORGE TOOKER PAPERS, CIRCA 1851/2010, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.; RIGHT: NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY DIGITAL COLLECTIONS

# "TO FEEL THE ABSTRACT"



COURTESY FRELINGHUYSEN MORRIS HOUSE AND STUDIO, LENOX, MASSACHUSETTS



OPPOSITE: Frelinghuysen Morris House interior, c. 1940 **ALBERT E. GALLATIN** *Untitled*, 1944, oil on canvas laid down on Masonite, 20 × 16 inches, private collection

W

riting in *Creative Art* early in 1930, critic and bon vivant Henry McBride described a dinner party he attended—presumably one like those on the Park Avenue Cubists’ social calendars—in which he found himself seated next to a matron “with a clearly chiseled face and grim lines to the lips.” She opened their conversation with the request, “Do tell me about modern art. I so want to know.”

Her question was prompted by exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, which had opened a few months before, in particular *Painting in Paris*, which included works by Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall, Georges Braque, and Henri Matisse. McBride patiently defended modernism against charges of ugliness and vulgarity; he then stated: “There are other attributes to modern art but the ability to feel the abstract is the real test.” Although realism—especially Regionalism—had become the dominant American style, by mid-decade the Park Avenue Cubists (George L.K. Morris, Suzy Frelinghuysen, Albert E. Gallatin, and Charles Green Shaw) had emerged as leaders of the abstractionist opposition and vigorous defenders of McBride’s proposition.



CHARLES GREEN SHAW c. 1945

For those artists, abstraction was not only the way forward, but also a critical component of the great art of the past. In Morris’s view, cubism was the highpoint of a long-standing, international, classical tradition: “There is nothing new,” he maintained, “about the quality that we have come to call abstract. . . . In great works of the past there has always been a dual achievement—the plastic, or structural, on the one hand, and the literary (or subject) on the other.” When “the veil of subject-matter had been pierced and discarded, the works of all periods began to speak through a universal abstract tongue.”

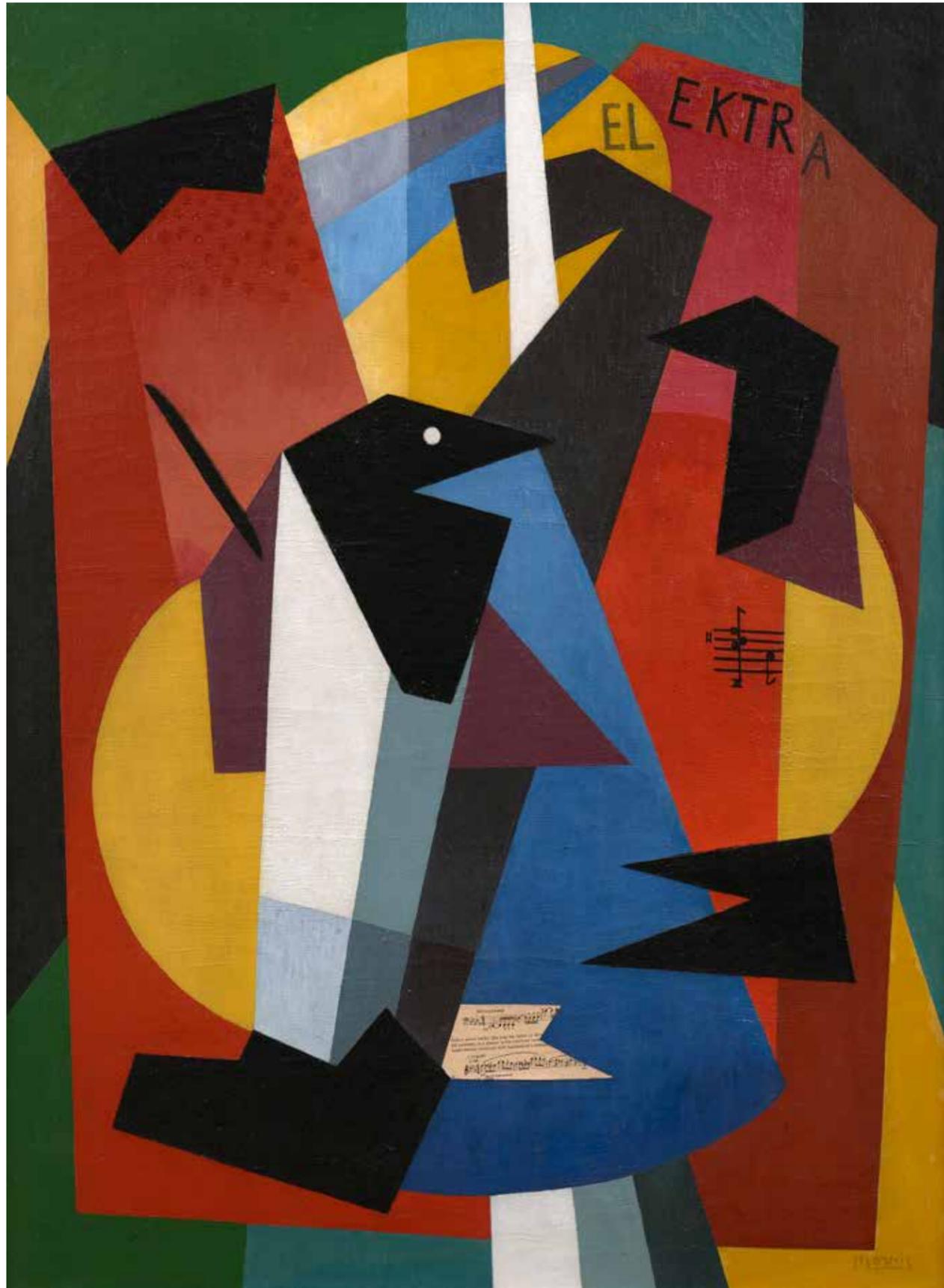
The artists soon styled as the “Park Avenue Cubists” came into their own during the 1935–36 art season. They had recently returned from Paris, where they visited the studios of Picasso, Braque, Fernand Léger, Hans Arp, and Jean Hélion. Shaw’s exhibition at the Gallery of Living Art—he was the first artist to be given a solo show at that cutting-edge institution—was coming to a triumphant conclusion, while plans were underway for Morris’s solo exhibition to open there in November. Earlier that fall, in September 1935, a retrospective of the work of Léger opened at the Museum of Modern Art, financed in part by Morris, who selected the works and contributed a catalogue essay; he and Gallatin were among the lenders. Subsequently, Morris and Shaw were invited to join MoMA’s Advisory Committee; at about the same time they helped found the American Abstract Artists group, whose goal was to foster appreciation of abstraction. Morris and Shaw participated in a group show organized by Gallatin at the Reinhardt Gallery that spring. Meanwhile, Gallatin, who had set aside his painting career to focus on his gallery and collection, had resumed painting, while Frelinghuysen, who had married Morris in January 1935, also began to experiment with abstraction. A waggish reporter had already dubbed these painters “Park Avenue



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:  
**ALBERT E. GALLATIN**  
*Still Life on Table*, 1940,  
 oil on canvas, 9 × 12 inches  
 Sargent Colliers,  
*A. E. Gallatin in Bar  
 Harbor*, undated photo  
*Still Life with Jug*, 1944, oil  
 on canvas, 16 × 20 inches,  
 private collection



CHARLES GREEN SHAW PAPERS, 1833–1979, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION. © THE ESTATE OF CHARLES GREEN SHAW, COURTESY D. WIGMORE FINE ART, INC. OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF AMY WOLF FINE ART, NEW YORK. © ESTATE OF ALBERT GALLATIN



GEORGE L. K. MORRIS *Elektra*, c. 1937, oil on canvas, 40 × 30 inches, private collection



GEORGE L. K. MORRIS *Route 22*, 1947, oil on canvas, 31 × 25 inches, private collection



SUZY FRELINGHUYSEN in her Lenox studio c. 1944



GEORGE L. K. MORRIS in his Lenox studio c. 1939

Artists”; they soon would be known as the “Park Avenue Cubists.”

The nickname alluded to both their swanky addresses and their pedigrees. All were independently wealthy. Morris was descended from a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Gallatin from a Secretary of the Treasury who served under both Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Frelinghuysen’s ancestors included a Secretary of State and a U.S. Senator; Shaw was an heir to the Woolworth fortune. All were educated at elite schools and were socially prominent; none had to worry about making a living from their art, and generously supported those who needed to.

In January 1936, Shaw and Morris attended a meeting of the group that became the American Abstract Artists (AAA). Held in sculptor Ibram Lassaw’s studio, the gathering was remarkably diverse. It included men and women, and immigrant and native-born artists (among them Josef Albers, Ilya Bolotowsky, Burgoyne Diller, Arshile Gorky, and Alice Mason) working in a variety of abstract styles: geometric, biomorphic, neoplasticist. Their goal was to promote abstract art in all its varieties. The AAA held their inaugural

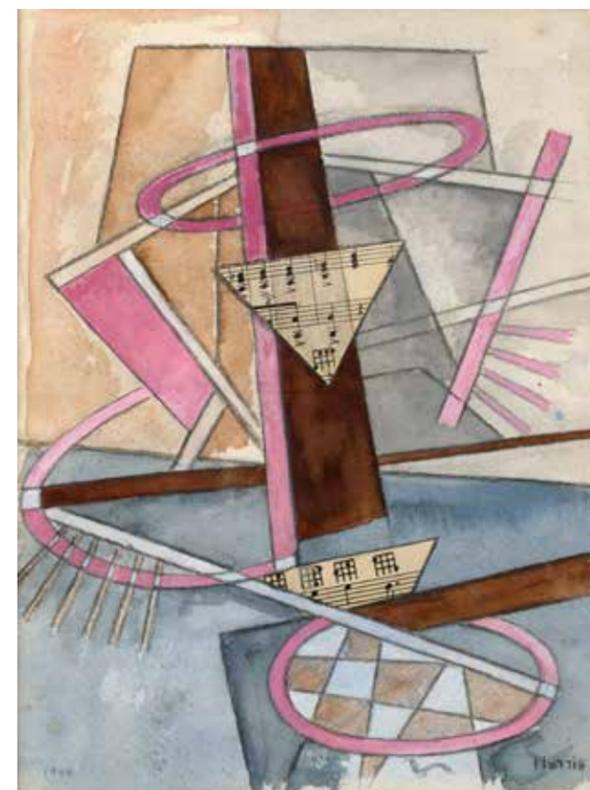
exhibition in April 1937 at Squibb Gallery in New York. They advertised the show as “the first large and comprehensive demonstration of the contemporary American revolt against literary subject paintings that have come to dominate the official and governmental art-revivals.”

In other words, the AAA was formed not only to encourage fellowship among like-minded artists, but also to counter the prevailing taste for realism in America.

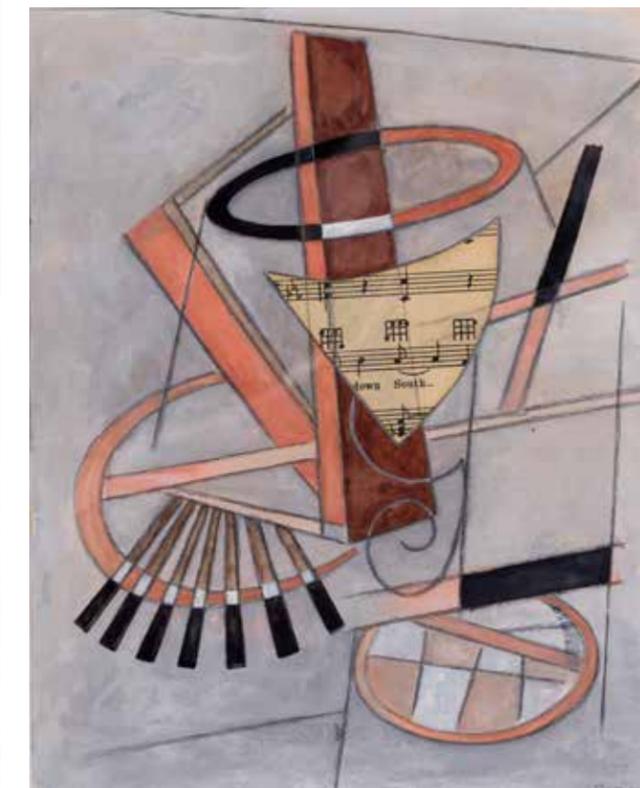
Morris’s dedication to order, to formal elegance, and to making art both modern and timeless were the principles that guided him and the other Park Avenue Cubists throughout their careers. In an essay he wrote at the end of his life, Morris summarized the group’s ambitions, and in fact their ambitions for all of art: “The hour is overdue for a refinement of sensibility in our vulgar modern world: perhaps, against the pressures of contemporary life, the artist can again concentrate on the creation of the beautiful object, which after all, has been through the centuries an ultimate aim of esthetic effort.”

This piece is an edited version of an annotated essay by Carol Troyen. For a copy of the essay in its entirety, please contact the gallery at 212-879-8815 or [alana@schoelkopfgallery.com](mailto:alana@schoelkopfgallery.com).

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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:  
**GEORGE L. K. MORRIS**  
*Bank in Depression*, 1933, oil and collage on canvas, 24 × 20 inches  
*Down South*, 1948, watercolor, gouache, pencil, and collage on paper, 11 × 9 inches  
*Composition*, 1949, watercolor, pencil, and collage on paper, 11½ × 9 inches



# SPIRAL GROUP

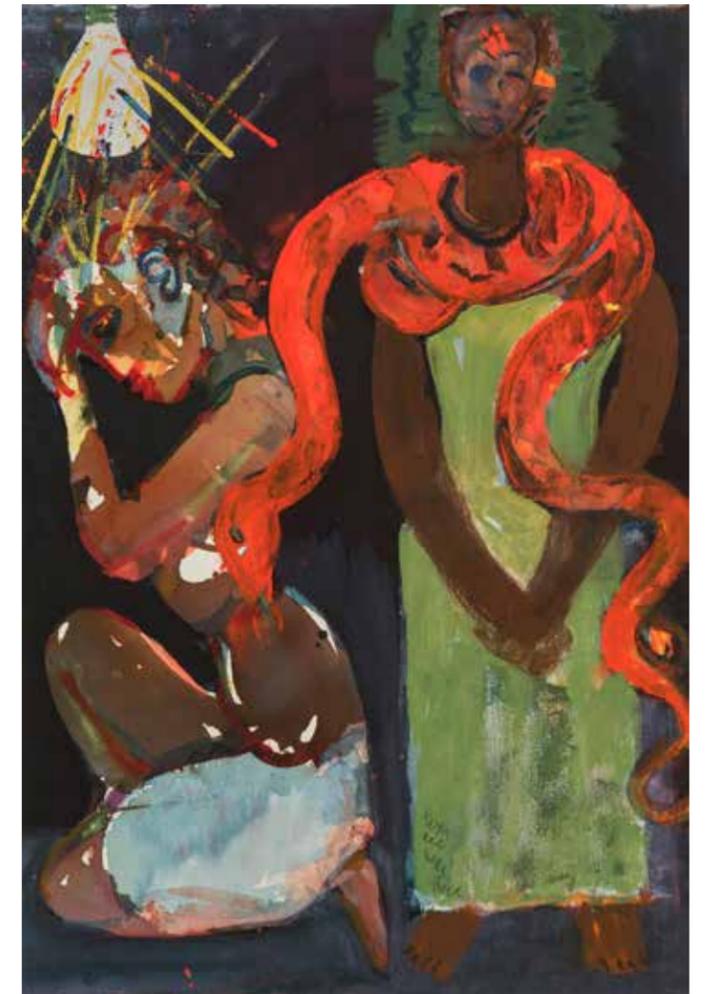
NORMAN LEWIS &  
ROMARE BEARDEN

Spiral was a group established on July 5, 1963 whose goal was to unite African American artists and give them a forum to discuss art and politics with likeminded individuals. Founding members included Norman Lewis, Romare Bearden, Felrath Hines and Hale Woodruff. Spiral artists were diverse in their techniques, styles, and attitudes towards art. The movement lasted through 1965.



OPPOSITE:  
**NORMAN LEWIS**  
*Untitled*, 1964, oil on  
paper, 19 × 24 inches

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT:  
**ROMARE BEARDEN**  
*Cattle of the Sun God*, 1977,  
mixed-media collage on  
board, 12 × 14½ inches  
*Marriage of the Viper*  
(From the *Rituals of the Obeah*  
Series), 1984, watercolor on  
paper, 30½ × 20¾ inches  
*Guitar Executive*, 1979,  
collage and mixed media  
on board, 9 × 6 inches



“That harsh shot of yellow in that modern road sign is why I did this picture. Some people said that if I took the sign out, they’d buy the painting. Why would I do that? I love that mesmerizing sign. I’ve almost gone over that corner and crashed, and the thing made me recall those dangerous moments. Take it out? Hell, no.”

— Andrew Wyeth to Thomas Hoving