



TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

10th Anniversary Edition

Welcome to the Figge Art Museum's Teacher Resource Guide: 10th Anniversary Collection

These cards describe selected works from the permanent collection of the Figge Art Museum. Use them to engage with the artwork, find facts about the artists, and facilitate learning. Resources are provided on each card for additional research.

About the Collection

In 1925, the City of Davenport accepted a gift of 334 works of art from former mayor Charles A. Ficke, which were displayed in the newly created Davenport Municipal Art Gallery, the first municipal art gallery in the country. The city's collection, which is cared for and exhibited by the Figge Art Museum, now numbers nearly 4,000 objects, including priceless works from Ficke's original gift. The 15 works of art discussed in this guide celebrate the 10th anniversary of the opening of the Figge Art Museum through new acquisitions to the collection.

Featured Artists

Peggy Bacon
William Theophilus Brown
Rose Frantzen
Ann Hamilton
William Hawkins
Utagawa Hiroshige
Mauricio Lasansky
Skeet McAuley
Michael Meilahn
Philomé Obin
David Plowden
Alison Saar
Tom Uttech
Kara Walker
Yuriko Yamaguchi



PEGGY BACON
Clams and Clodhoppers, 1933
Drypoint engraving
Museum Purchase, 2014.13

Clams and Clodhoppers



Peggy Bacon (1895-1987) Connecticut-born artist Margaret (Peggy) Frances Bacon had an unconventional childhood. She was educated by private tutors rather than attending school, and studied only subjects that interested her, such as mythology, Latin, Greek, ancient history and ancient geography. As a young girl, her family lived for several years in France and England and spent a year in Bermuda. At the age of fourteen, wealthy family friends paid her tuition at a boarding school, where she learned mathematics. After high school she studied at the Art Students League in New York, where her artistic skills expanded to include printmaking, pastels, and painting. In a heralded career that spanned five decades, Bacon wrote and illustrated many children's books (beginning with her first book at age ten!), short stories and a collection of poems. She was best known for her humorous satirical caricatures of famous and infamous celebrities, a collection of which was published in 1933 (*Off With Their Heads!*).

A product of its time

For thousands of years before settlers arrived in New England, Native Americans harvested clams and oysters from the ocean's bounty, cooking them layered between stones and wet seaweed in pits dug on the beach. This below-ground steam pit cooking was readily adopted by the settlers. Over time, clam bakes became a festive, traditional food-sharing activity, a gathering among families and friends. In *Clams and Clodhoppers*, Peggy Bacon pays homage to her Connecticut roots, using her trademark caricature drawing style to capture a celebration of food, family, friends, and fun.

Take a closer look

Bacon was an accomplished printmaker. She was self-taught in the technique of drypoint printing, the style she used for *Clams and Clodhoppers*. In drypoint, lines are inscribed directly into a copper plate using either diamond-tipped or carbide-tipped steel needles. Burr-edged lines are the result of the metal curling away from the needle during the carving process. Through her skilled drypoint techniques, Bacon has achieved a wide spectrum of line and value, including sharper, barely-burred lines for soft light grays to heavily burred lines for deep, rich black tones. From the sandy, rocky coast to the aprons, coats, hats, and dresses of the crowd, Bacon has created a multi-textured, visually engaging scene of a lively beach banquet.

Did you know?

Clodhoppers are heavy, strong boots often associated with farmers and working class people. Pictured in heavy boots, gingham dresses, and loose-fitting suits while surrounded by family pets, the folks in Peggy Bacon's *Clams and Clodhoppers* look like hard-working, everyday people taking time to enjoy the world they live in with friends and family.

On your own

www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Peggy_Bacon.aspx

www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/drpt/hd_drpt.htm



WILLIAM THEOPHILUS BROWN

Lonely Boat, 1988

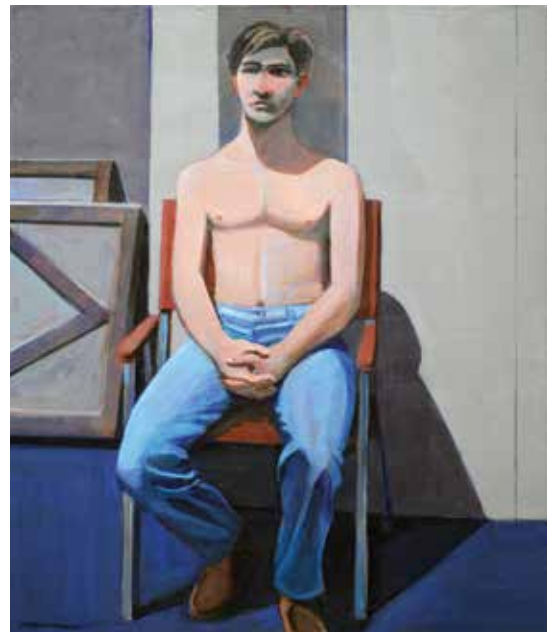
Acrylic on canvas

Promised Gift of the William Brown and Paul Wonner
Foundation Fund of the Social Project Network

Seated Man, 1994

Acrylic on canvas

Promised Gift of the William Brown and Paul Wonner
Foundation Fund of the Social Project Network



Lonely Boat | Seated Man



William Theophilus Brown (1919–2010) William Theophilus Brown was born in Moline, Illinois, and came from a long line of intellectuals who socialized with authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. He studied piano at Yale and graduated in 1941, at which time he was drafted into World War II. Following his discharge, he studied painting at the University of California, Berkeley and moved between the artistic centers of New York City and Paris. During these travels, Brown met a large number of accomplished artists, including Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Alberto Giacometti, and Willem de Kooning. His growing success, as well as his continued relationships with other talented artists, all contributed to Brown becoming recognized as a prominent member of the Bay Area Figurative Movement.

A product of its time

Brown's friend and gallerist, Thomas Reynolds, said of him: "Theophilus Brown was one of those rare artists who was successful at every stage of his career..." In the 1950s, Brown gained national attention when *Life Magazine* featured three of his paintings of football players. This caught the attention of Felix Landau, who owned a Los Angeles gallery and began exhibiting Brown's work. When Brown's art was included in the landmark Bay Area Figurative Painting exhibition at the Oakland Museum, he was set on a lifelong path as a serious artist.

Take a closer look

The Bay Area Figurative Movement consisted of San Francisco Bay Area artists who abandoned working in the predominant style of Abstract Expressionism in favor of combining abstract and figurative painting during the 1950s and 1960s. This re-introduction of figurative subject matter, such as landscapes, still lifes, portraiture, and nudes, diversified the formal concerns of Abstract Expressionism. The tension that developed between abstraction and figuration opened a range of new possibilities, which is notable by the variety of subjects and techniques the artists pursued.

Did you know?

Brown's artistic talent was apparent from an early age—when Brown was eleven, his father (inventor and chief designer at the John Deere Company) submitted one of his artworks in a regional contest that was judged by Grant Wood. Wood gave Brown's portrait third place, and presented the award himself. Brown recalled, "He [Wood] was amazed to see this kid walking up the aisle...I remember him leaning and reaching down from the stage, and me reaching up to receive the prize, and we shook hands. It was a really great moment in my life."

On your own

www.thomasreynolds.com/WTB_b.html

www.sfgate.com/art/article/Figurative-painter-Theophilus-Brown-dies-3210688.php

<https://lamodern.com/tag/william-theophilus-brown-painter>



ROSE FRANTZEN

With engineering assistance from Chuck Morris and audio compositions by John Frantzen

Portrait of Maquoketa: The Dimensional View, 2005-2012

Oil on multiple panels with audio, 2005-2013

Museum purchase with funds contributed by: Judy Kern and Kent Whealy; James and Marcia Borel; Andrew and Debi Butler; Mark and Deborah Schwiebert; The Henry Family Foundation; Amir and Lisa Arbisser; The Beaux Arts Fund Committee; Frances Emerson and Robert McClurg; J. Hunt and Diane Harris II; Chris and Mary Rayburn; Susan Quail; Barney and Sandra Barnhill; Don Doucette and Lynn Drazinski; James Havercamp; Delia and Dave Meier; Jim and Michelle Russell; Mark and Dana Wilkinson; Tara Barney; Cynthia Carlson; John and Kay Hall; Kay Runge; Rick and Nancy Seidler; and the Figge Art Museum Acquisitions Fund., 2015.1

Portrait of Maquoketa: The Dimensional View



Rose Frantzen (b. 1965) Rose Frantzen spent her childhood immersed in the folds of the small farming town of Maquoketa, Iowa; it is here that her passion for nature, art, and the human spirit blossomed. Frantzen moved from this serene, rural setting to study oil painting at Chicago's American Academy of Art from 1983-1986, after which she joined the Palette and Chisel Academy (under the mentorship of Richard Schmid) and then the Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts. It wasn't until 1991 that Frantzen returned to her Maquoketa roots to share a new perspective and love for all who touch this rich community. Frantzen's work has been exhibited in numerous galleries and museums, such as the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, the Butler Institute of American Art, and the Denver Historical Museum, and is part of the permanent collections of the Dubuque Museum of Art and the Figge Art Museum.

A product of its time

In 2005, Frantzen's inspiration for *Portrait of Maquoketa: The Dimensional View* stemmed from an unexpected experience while standing in line at her local grocer. Who were these individuals alongside her? The local school teacher, the neighbor down the street, even those unnoticed were all part of the human spirit that formed her small Midwestern town. Frantzen captured that essence over the course of the next year by painting 180 portraits from an array of locals who voluntarily came forth to sit for 4-5 hours at a time in order to reveal not only their faces, but also their inner-selves through spirited conversation. The portraits were placed on a series of 34 vertical panels that formed a dancing mosaic of a close-knit community. In 2012, with engineering assistance from her husband, Chuck Morris, and audio composition by her brother, John Frantzen, the artist added a panoramic landscape of her hometown on the backside of each panel. This gives the viewer a true impression of people's connection to their Midwestern town of Maquoketa.

Take a closer look

Frantzen used this project to perfect her skill of *alla-prima* painting. Difficult to master, this wet-into-wet technique demands that the artist works quickly, applying color layers, to complete a painting in one sitting. Frantzen applied this complicated technique to portraiture. Throughout history, portraiture has been a way of expressing one's high social status. Frantzen broke from this tradition by painting an unbiased representation of her community without regard to age or economic limitations.

Did you know?

One of the unexpected outcomes of *Portrait of Maquoketa: The Dimensional View* was how willing townspeople were to share their personal stories with Frantzen. In some cases, the stories were so compelling that Frantzen asked for volunteers to come back for a formally-recorded interview. These recordings would become yet another fascinating layer to the collective story of Maquoketa.

On your own

<http://oldcityhallgallery.com/index.html>

<https://vimeo.com/78127876>

Portrait of Maquoketa by Rose Frantzen



ANN HAMILTON

Cordova, 1987

C-Print

Gift of Tim J. and Kimberly B. Montgomery, 2015.3

Cordova



Ann Hamilton (b. 1956) Ann Hamilton is a prominent visual artist best known for her large-scale multi-media installations. She did her BFA studies in textile design at the University of Kansas in 1979 before moving on to earn her MFA in sculpture at Yale University in 1985. She was born in Ohio and, after spending time on both coasts, moved back to live and work in Columbus. Her artwork is incredibly varied and includes video, textiles, and photography. Some common threads that move throughout her work reflect her interest in language, time, and accumulation.

A product of its time

In *Cordova*, Hamilton might be referencing Joseph Beuys' *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965), in which the artist, whose face was coated in honey and gold leaf, walked around a gallery interpreting art to a dead hare cradled in his arms. In this photograph, the artist has chosen a different artistic convention. Instead of gold leaf she used marble statuary, and instead of a dead hare she is communicating to a dead deer.

Take a closer look

The human head is not a statue but the head of the artist herself that has been coated with make-up or plaster to look like statuary. The deer's head, too, has been separated from its body and inverted. Both seemingly floating heads carry with them a tradition, be it hunting trophies or statuary. Each is also intended to provide an illusion of what is real, suggesting the passing of time or even death. Note the use of fruit, a common symbol of mortality, or memento mori. The line is a recurring theme for Hamilton, who uses pencil lines and threads to represent human speech as well as the simplest form of something that can accumulate. Like a string telephone, each head is fixed in its position and can only see one fruit and part of the strand, suggesting a communication breakdown. The artwork presents stand-ins for real life objects to create a viewing experience about the artificiality and fragility of communication.

Did you know?

Ann Hamilton was chosen to represent the US. at the Venice Biennale in 1999. Her artwork, entitled *myein*, made language visible by cascading red powder down walls embossed with braille, in order to address the history of slavery in the US.

On your own

www.annhamiltonstudio.com

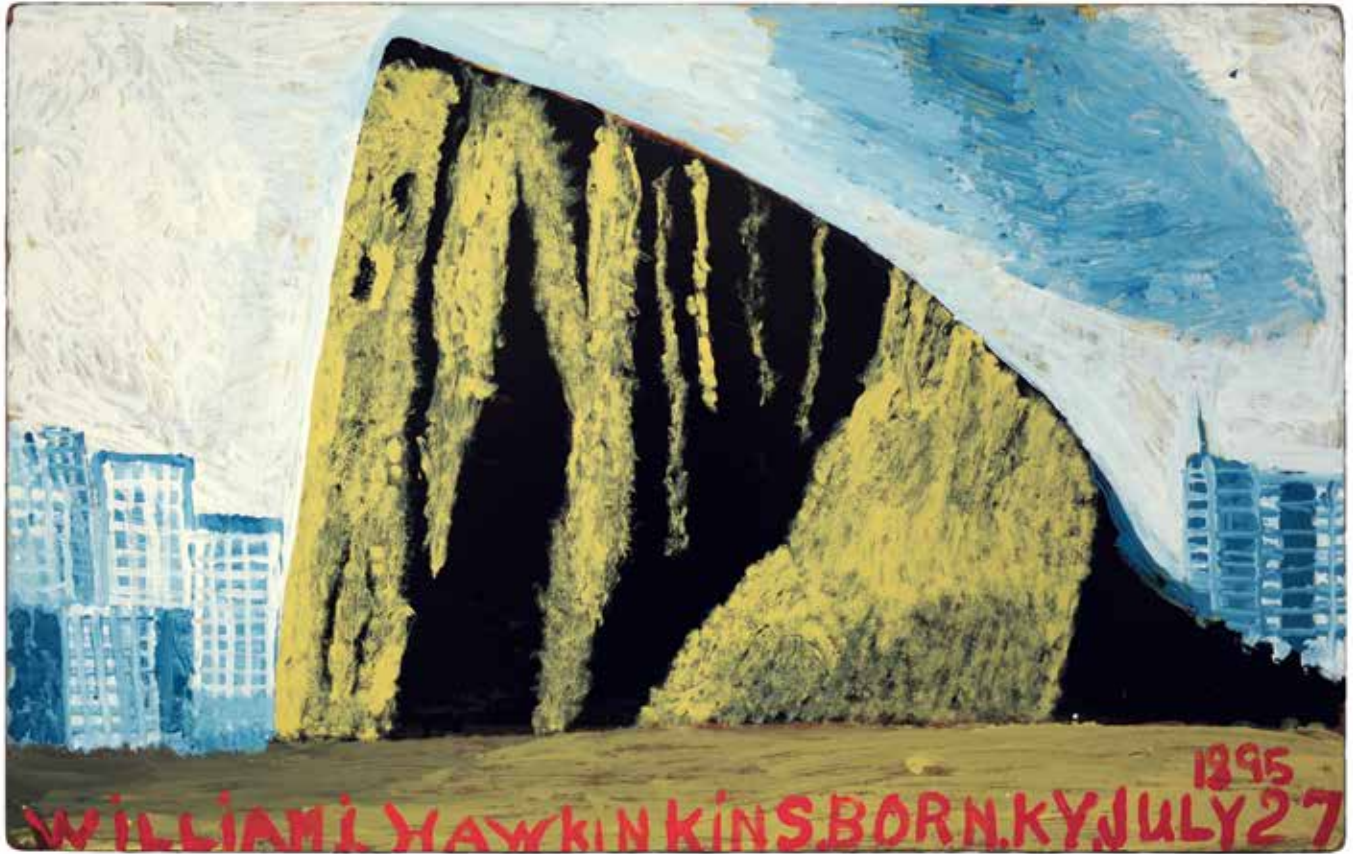
www.pbs.org/art21/artists/ann-hamilton

www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artists/bios/580

<http://hyperallergic.com/61982/a-playground-for-the-soul-lost-in-ann-hamiltons-world>

<http://foconow.com/2012/08/11/brilliant-return-interview-with-ann-hamilton>

www.nytimes.com/1999/05/30/arts/art-architecture-representing-america-in-a-language-of-her-own.html



WILLIAM HAWKINS

Prudential, NYC, 1985

Enamel on Masonite

Gift of Thomas Kahl Figge, 2015.9

Prudential, NYC



William Hawkins (1895–1990) Born in Kentucky, William Hawkins grew up on his grandmother’s prosperous farm. He served in France during World War I and then moved to Columbus, Ohio in his early twenties. With only a third-grade education and a stock of practical knowledge, this self-taught artist began making and selling art in the 1930s. He often held several jobs at one time, which ranged from truck driver to horse-breaker to plumber. Hawkins began focusing on his art making in the 1970s and kept working until shortly before his death at the age of 94. The work of this self-taught American artist can be found in numerous museum collections, including the American Folk Art Museum, the High Museum of Art, the National Gallery, the Columbus Museum of Art, the Akron Art Museum, and the Figge Art Museum.

A product of its time

Like many Folk artists, William Hawkins used the materials he had at hand. He often incorporated found objects into his pieces, such as scavenged boards and leftover paint, and would work with a single brush until it was worn out. In the early 1980s, Hawkins was befriended by neighboring artist Lee Garrett. Garrett entered one of Hawkins’ paintings in the amateur division of the 1982 Ohio State Fair, and it ended up winning first prize. With Garrett’s assistance, Hawkins obtained better art materials and access to a New York gallery. Hawkins’ unique style often integrated advertisements, logos, and symbols from popular culture into his artworks.

Take a closer look

With *Prudential*, one is immediately drawn to the central figure of the iconic Rock of Gibraltar used in popular Prudential insurance advertisements. This easily-recognized symbol is given a new perspective with Hawkins’ choice of energetic, expressive brushstrokes with the clear color and sheen of enamel paint. Hawkins’ signature is boldly displayed along the lower edge of this painting. He signed nearly every work like this, with a broad margin at the bottom, proclaiming “William L. Hawkins. Born. KY. July 27 1895” because he was proud of his abilities and made sure people always knew his age and place of birth.

Did you know?

William Hawkins cited his mixed ancestry (a combination of African American, European, and American Indian) as one reason for his talent. Hawkins was never shy about his artistic ability and was known as a popular neighborhood fixture. He had a huge incentive to create work that would sell in order to support himself, many of his 20 children, and sometimes even his grandchildren. Although not a part of this painting, Hawkins often added gaily-patterned frames to his works to make them more attractive, cheaper to hang, and easier to sell.

On your own

<https://vimeo.com/62503468>

www.fleisher-ollmangallery.com/artists.php?id=40&page=2

www.riccomaresca.com/portfolio/william-hawkins-folk-art



UTAGAWA HIROSHIGE

Inside Kameido Tenjin Shrine (No. 65 Kameido Tenjin keidai), from the series One Hundred Famous Views of Edo (Meisho Edo hyakkei), 1856 (7th month), 1856

Polychrome woodblock print; ink and color on paper

Gift of Carolyn Getz Bartholomew in memory of her great-aunt, Mary Ainsworth (1867-1950), noted Quad City collector of Japanese wood-block prints, 2014.6.1

Inside Kameido Tenjin Shrine



Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858) Utagawa Hiroshige, also known as Ando Hiroshige, was a Japanese landscape woodblock artist. He was born in Edo, Japan, which is modern day Tokyo. Hiroshige was fond of sketching as a child and had artistic career ambitions, but when he was twelve years old both of his parents died and he took over his father's post as a fire warden. The work hours allowed Hiroshige some free time and he dedicated this time to studying under the woodblock artist Toyohiro. Hiroshige was officially adopted into the Utagawa School of woodblock print artists in 1812 and given the name Utagawa Hiroshige. He continued to serve as a fire-watchman until 1823, at which time he was able to transfer the position to his son and fully devote himself to art.

A product of its time

Hiroshige's early career shows evidence of his classical training in the Utagawa School, which was the most popular and famous woodblock print school during the 19th century. Its founding artist, Toyoharu, embraced the Western style of deep perspective and applied it to traditional Japanese forms and subject matter, such as kabuki actors, beautiful women, mythic parodies, and warriors. These were created for book illustrations, actor prints, and other common forms of publication. It wasn't until around 1830 that Hiroshige began to break from this tradition and develop what would become his artistic forte: landscapes.

Take a closer look

Hiroshige is considered to be one of the last great ukiyo-e masters of the color woodblock print (ukiyo-e translates to "pictures of the floating world"). He captured the essence of a scene and translated it into a balanced composition. This, as well as his ability to reduce a landscape or scene to a few simple, highly decorative elements, was eventually recognized by Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists in Europe. Most notably, Hiroshige is known for his scenes of snow and rain—so much so that he is called "The artist of rain, snow and mist."

Did you know?

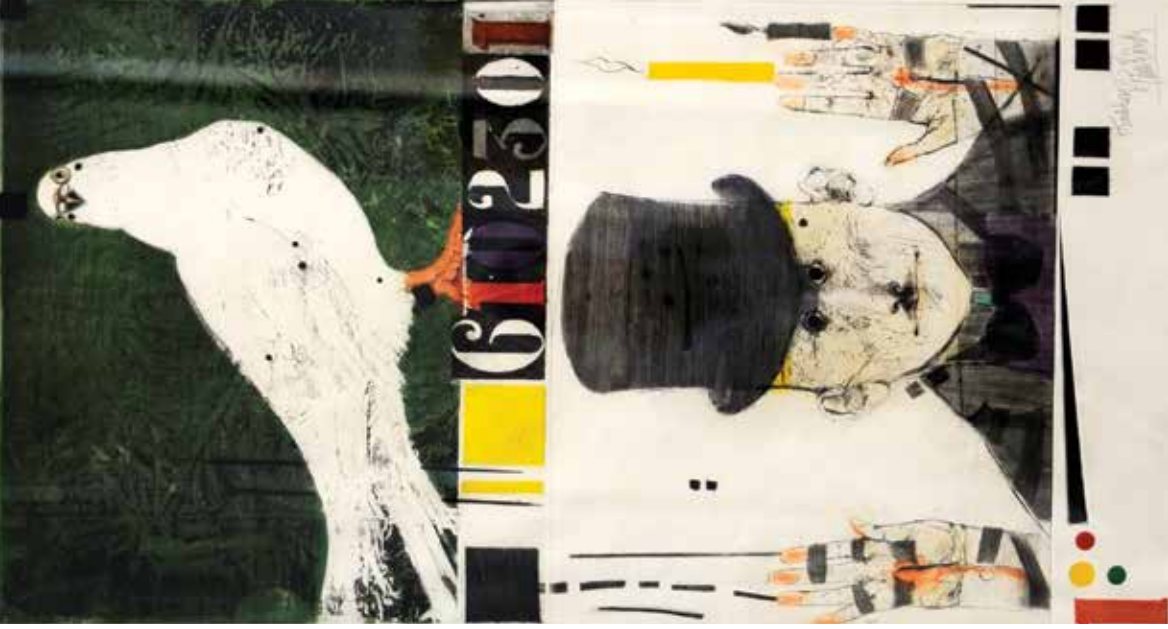
This artwork is part of Hiroshige's last great landscape series before his death and is considered among the top works he created. It's estimated that he created more than 5,000 prints and that upwards of 10,000 copies have been made from his woodblocks. The scholar Edward F. Strange best described Hiroshige's career: "Outside his own little circle of friends and customers Hiroshige was a man of small importance in Japan. The cultured classes knew him not; and it is only since his work has begun to gain its great and growing reputation in Europe and America, that he is beginning to be appreciated in his own country."

On your own

www.hiroshige.org.uk

<http://ukiyo-e.org>

www.artelino.com/articles/hiroshige.asp



MAURICIO LASANSKY

Kaddish #1, 1976

Edition of 70

Intaglio: etching, engraving,
soft ground, aquatint, electric
stippler, scraping and burnishing
Gift of The Alice and Richard
Bowers Family, 2015.16.1

Kaddish #2, 1976

Edition of 70

Intaglio: etching, engraving,
soft ground, aquatint, electric
stippler, scraping and burnishing
Gift of The Alice and Richard
Bowers Family, 2015.16.2



Kaddish #1 | Kaddish #2



Mauricio Lasansky (1914–2012) Mauricio Lasansky is considered to be one of the “Fathers of 20th Century American Printmaking.” Born in Argentina in 1914, Lasansky marked the beginning of his career at age 22 when he became director of the Free Fine Arts School, Villa Maria, Cordoba, Argentina. He moved to America in 1943 on a Guggenheim Fellowship to study at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and went on to receive four more of these prestigious awards in his lifetime. While in New York, he joined fellow artists of the era at the New York Atelier 17 workshop, established by Stanley William Hayter, which allowed him the opportunity to experiment with the intaglio techniques of printmaking. In 1945, he established the print department in the School of Art and Art History at the University of Iowa. To this day, it serves as a model for other university printmaking departments. Lasansky held six honorary Doctorates of Art degrees and an array of awards and special prizes. His works are found in hundreds of public collections and virtually every major museum in the United States.

A product of its time

Kaddish #1 and *Kaddish #2* are works from a series of eight intaglio prints Lasansky created between 1976–1978. *Kaddish* is the mourners’ prayer of the Jews, seeking peace and everlasting happiness for the deceased as well as for those in mourning. They followed ten years after Lasansky’s unveiling of *The Nazi Drawings*, which capture his heightened repulsion toward the atrocities of the Holocaust. The *Kaddish* prints were intended to bring a sense of peace and completion to the aftermath of an abhorrent era, offering hope and mortality to those who survive.

Take a closer look

Etching, engraving, burnishing, soft-ground, and aquatint are some of the many techniques combined with precisely aligned multiple-plate prints to create a single image. Lasansky includes a number of motifs, like a white dove for the traditional symbol of peace and a sequence of numbers referencing the Nazi camps and the victimization of over six million Jews. *Kaddish #1* includes a life-size self-portrait, unlike the others in the series, with palms raised to reveal the stigmata that invoke a feeling of persecution and crucifixion. The profiled skull seen in *Kaddish #2* reinforces Lasansky’s message that among us are survivors and victims of every kind.

Did you know?

Up to the age of fourteen, Lasansky was interested in music. It wasn’t until he experienced a slight hearing impairment, which turned out to be temporary, that he changed his course of study to sculpture. Because his father was a printer of banknote engravings, he became familiar with the printmaking field; this influence greatly shaped the artist he became over the course of his life.

On your own

www.lasanskyart.com

www.youtube.com/watch?v=n8VmsgC53nA

www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/prnt/hd_prnt.htm



SKEET MCAULEY

Navajo Tribal School Near Goulding, Utah, 1985

Chromogenic print

Gift of Andrew and Elizabeth Wallace in honor of the
Figgie Art Museum's 10th Anniversary, 2015.6

Navajo Tribal School Near Goulding, Utah



Skeet McAuley (b. 1951) Photographer Skeet McAuley was born in Monahans, Texas, in 1951. He attended Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas, earning his BA in 1976. Two years later he received his MFA from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. By 1980, McAuley was showing his photographs professionally. To date, he has exhibited domestically and internationally in over thirty one-man shows and well over eighty group exhibitions. McAuley, a photographer, videographer, educator, and professional artist, has received numerous accolades. He was awarded two National Endowment for the Arts Individual Artists Fellowships, one in 1984 and the second in 1986. In 1988 he received a Polaroid Artist Support Grant: Polaroid Corporation.

A product of its time

From 1981-1989 McAuley concentrated his efforts on location photography, focusing on Native American cultures. His pictures of Southwest American Indian life on a Navajo reservation are a study of the conflicts inherent in blending contemporary life with traditional Native American cultural values. The modern athletic track, the central image in this photograph, juxtaposed with the backdrop of ancient desert and monument rocks creates a visual irony. The context of building a confined, structured running space in the middle of open ageless desert illustrates the incongruity of imposing “civilized” order to the natural order.

Take a closer look

McAuley describes his art as showing the relationship between the natural environment and consumer-driven cultures. His images are filled with visual clues that express the paradox of such a relationship. In *Navajo Tribal School Near Goulding, Utah*, the verdant grass expanse that fills the center of the athletic track mocks the dry brown desert in which it is located. The modern school amenity set in the vast empty desert space is a distortion of the indigenous natural order.

Did you know?

The Southwest American Indian series of photographs McAuley produced between 1981-1989 was published in the 1989 book, *Sign Language: Contemporary Southwest Native America*. McAuley's art images extend well beyond his interest in Southwest Native America, including photographic series of golf courses, bonsai trees, landscapes, Suiseki Stones, and studio works. The relationship between consumer-driven culture and nature is an ongoing theme in all of his art.

On your own

<http://skeetmcauley.net>

www.bing.com/images/search?q=artist+skeet+mcauley&qpvt=artist+skeet+mcauley&qpvt=artist+skeet+mcauley&FORM=IGRE



MICHAEL MEILAHN

NICK NEBEL

Corn Zone, 2007

Installation: Blown glass, polyester rope and (three) video projections with sound
Anonymous Gift in Honor of Thomas Gildehaus, Figge Art Museum Supporter
and Member, Board of Trustees 2003-2009 and Board President, 2005-2009,
2009.3a-bb

Corn Zone



Michael Meilahn and Nick Nebel (Meilahn b. 1945, Nebel b. 1939)

Midwest artist Michael Meilahn was raised in Wisconsin on a family farm. Although he discovered his interest in art while in high school, he started college in the agriculture program at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. He later decided the business side of farming didn't interest him and switched his studies to art. In 1966, Meilahn learned how to blow glass and he was hooked; he went on to study abroad at glass studios in Germany and The Netherlands. On his return from Europe he took a hiatus from school and spent a year in South America working as a Peace Corps volunteer. After the Peace Corps, Meilahn resumed his college classes, earning his BS in 1971 followed by his MS in art from Illinois State University three years later. Meilahn currently balances art and agriculture by farming corn and other cash crops in the spring/summer and creating glass art during fall/winter.

A product of its time

Meilahn's brilliantly colored, sparkling glass corn cobs are a feast for the eyes and represent an iconic universal foodstuff. The organic blown-glass forms that pierce the cobs are metaphors for the genetically altered seeds developed to grow disease-resistant corn and increase crop productivity. The giant size of the cobs promotes contemplation of the creative process Meilahn uses to create such large glass sculptures as well as what effects bio-engineering may have on agriculture.

Take a closer look

Artist Nick Nebel created the audio/video background environment that completes Meilahn's installation. The immersive experience depicts verdant cornfields and succulent ears of corn amid the sounds of birds chirping and the wind rustling through the crops. This suggests a warm, peaceful scene of prosperity and plenty. Yet the harsh sounds of shattering glass heard throughout the video remind us of the fragile balance of life and our environment.

Did you know?

Glass is an amorphous solid. It is rigid like a solid but it has a randomized molecular structure similar to a liquid. This noncrystalline molecular arrangement, also found in gels and plastics, makes it easy for light waves to pass through, thus giving glass its transparent qualities. A common form of glass called soda lime is used to make light bulbs, bottles, window panes and other ubiquitous everyday items. Soda lime glass is made by combining measured amounts of silica, sodium dioxide and lime in a batch. Other ingredients may also be added that give each batch the desired artistic or commercial properties required. The furnace in which the batch is heated reaches temperatures upwards of 2000 degrees Fahrenheit!

On your own

www.michaelmeilahn.com

www.youtube.com/watch?v=8q9zm11vmx0

<http://entertainment.howstuffworks.com/arts/artwork/glassblowing2.htm>



PHILOMÉ OBIN

Self-portrait, circa 1980

Oil and graphite on Masonite

Gift; Dedicated in Memory of George S. Nader, 2014.1

Self-portrait



PHILOMÉ OBIN (1892-1986) Philomé Obin is one of the best known Haitian artists to date. He was born into a large family near the Haitian city of Cap-Haïtien in 1892 and worked many jobs until he became recognized for his artistry. Despite having little-to-no formal education, Obin demonstrated an aptitude for painting and was one of the first self-taught artists to approach the Centre d'Art (which remains an important creative center today). The Centre immediately acknowledged his talent, sending Obin on a new trajectory in his artistic career. He went on to found and direct a satellite branch of the Centre in Cap-Haïtien and grew to be considered the “father of the ‘Cap-Haïtien Style’” of painting.

A product of its time

It took a while for Obin to gain popularity as an artist in Haiti. He veered away from French influences in art, which dominated the day, and because of this he received criticism for painting common street scenes and his visions of Haitian history. The majority of his works from the 1920s and 1930s were created on cardboard or other inexpensive boards; few people purchased these and many have been lost. He did paint large-scale murals in shops and churches, which included themes like the Last Supper and the Crucifixion of Christ. Obin was a devout Baptist and avoided Vodou (a religion more commonly connected with Haitian art).

Take a closer look

The Centre d'Art encouraged self-taught artists to develop a style unique to Haiti by providing them with resources and promoting their work to the outside world. Obin's *Self-portrait* features the trademark Haitian style of bright, bold colors, simple forms, and flat, distorted perspective. Haitian art is often called “primitive” and “naïve,” terms that falsely suggest a lack of sophistication in style and content.

Did you know?

Obin might have remained an unknown artist if it weren't for Dewitt Peters opening the Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince in 1944. Peters was an American painter who came to teach English in Haiti and realized that the country was filled with talented artists such as Obin. Peters used his own money and then received help from the Haitian and US governments to open the Centre, which continues to provide studio space, tuition, and materials for Haitian artists.

On your own

www.chigoha.com/artist-galleries/philome-obin

<https://sites.google.com/site/haitianartsociety/home>



DAVID PLOWDEN

Statue of Liberty, Caven Point Road, Jersey City, New Jersey, 1967

Archival inkjet print

Gift of David and Sandra Plowden, 2014.9.113

Statue of Liberty, Caven Point Road



David Plowden (b. 1932) David Plowden has spent more than 50 years recording and capturing the true American scene through the camera lens. Plowden studied at The Putney School in Putney, Vermont, and graduated from Yale University with a BA in economics in 1955. His career began with the Great Northern Railway before he pursued his interest in photography through private study with Minor White and Nathan Lyons, and as an assistant to O. Winston Link and George Meluso. Plowden moved to the Midwest where he began teaching at the Illinois Institute of Technology–Institute of Design, followed by the University of Iowa, University of Baltimore and Grand Valley State University. Vast in subject matter, Plowden’s works can be seen among numerous collections like the Smithsonian Institute, Library of Congress, Art Institute of Chicago, Humanities Iowa, and the Figge Art Museum.

A product of its time

Plowden has a passion for preserving the American timeline before it becomes obsolete and overlooked. When this photograph was taken in 1967, America was approaching a turning point in Vietnam and popular culture was becoming increasingly liberal. With this in mind, Plowden’s *Statue of Liberty* is seen from an industrialized vantage point in Jersey City, New Jersey. Separated from the sensationalism of New York City, the viewer is forced to see a new reality of the definition of freedom. The graceful icon is abruptly juxtaposed by the entanglement of telephone wires supported by a row of uncompromising stanchions, creating a visible diagonal barrier in a forgotten wasteland. Plowden’s contrast between the romanticism of liberty and the crudeness of the surrounding landscape reveals his perspective of historical truth.

Take a closer look

Plowden incorporates simple elements that some might consider mundane in order to create a sense of irony within this image. At first glance, the viewer is presented with heaps of discarded rubble, drawing a likeness to an abandoned junkyard. Yet the minuscule hand-painted “No Dumping” sign hovering over the refuse highlights a disregard for order. The hardened steel structures silhouetted on the horizon are softened by the delicate foliage of surrounding overgrown weeds. The disparities among these elements give Plowden the ability to capture the discord of the era and offer the viewer to draw his or her own conclusions.

Did you know?

Plowden’s love of the Midwestern landscape was sparked in 1952 when he was invited to ride on the rear of a mail train traveling from Chicago to San Francisco. For the first time, he experienced the sights, smells and feel of America’s heartland. This has greatly shaped his artistic career.

On your own

www.davidplowden.com

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-11-02/features/ct-prj-1104-david-plowden-20121102_1_queensboro-bridge-steam-trains-kids-love

<http://iowapublicradio.org/post/photographing-heartland#stream/0>



ALISON SAAR
Cotton Eater II, 2014
Woodcut
Museum Purchase, 2015.15

Cotton Eater II



Alison Saar (b. 1956) Born and raised in the Los Angeles area, Alison Saar has art in her blood. Her parents, Betye Saar, a well-known African American artist, and Richard Saar, an art conservationist, inspired her to become a sculptor. Saar earned her BA from Scripps College in 1978 and her MFA from the Otis Art Institute in 1981. As a mixed-race woman, Saar focuses her artwork on issues of identity and spirituality. Inspired by various cultural mythologies, she uses a wide array of materials to construct her own storytelling devices that deal with the most human of subject matter: fertility, parenthood, and birthing, as well as political issues of racial and gender identity and equality.

A product of its time

Alison Saar created *Cotton Eater II* during a time in the United States where the poor and working classes felt marginalized by extreme wealth and corporate influence, as evidenced by the Occupy Wall Street movement that began in 2011 and a lingering criticism of the government's response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Nine years later, at the time this print was made, the Lower Ninth Ward (a predominately black New Orleans neighborhood) had still not recovered from the devastation.

Take a closer look

Inspired by the Greek myth of the Lotus-Eaters that appears in Homer's *The Odyssey* and perhaps Vincent Van Gogh's painting, *The Potato Eaters*, Saar depicts a poor, African American woman eating cotton. *Cotton Eater II* also references the slave labor in the cotton fields of the old South. The eating of the cotton, as alluded to by Van Gogh, is a pacification of the poor—a distraction or bone for them to chew on. The Lotus-Eaters in *The Odyssey* eat themselves into a narcotic trance of apathy. Saar cleverly combines these meanings to comment on the contemporary status of people of color in the US.

Did you know?

In high school, Alison Saar assisted her father in some of his restoration work. Restoring artifacts from different cultures like Chinese frescoes, Egyptian mummies, and pre-Columbian and African art enabled Saar to learn about the properties of various materials, techniques, and aesthetics.

Alison Saar's solo exhibition, *Still...*, traveled from the Otis College of Art and Design (2012) to the Figge Art Museum (2013) and beyond. *Still...* was on display at the Figge from February 9–April 14, 2013.

On your own

www.lalouver.com/html/artist.cfm?tArtist_id=263

www.phylliskindgallery.com/artists/as/index.html

www.artinamericamagazine.com/reviews/alison-saar-

artweek.la/issue/september-2-2013/article/alison-saar-slough



TOM UTTECH

Kisibakwad, 2014

Oil on linen in hand painted frame

Gift in honor of Budge, Ed and Peter Gierke, 2014.18

Kisibakwad



Tom Uttech (b. 1942) Tom Uttech grew up near Wisconsin's North Woods and was fascinated with nature from an early age. After earning an MFA in painting from the University of Cincinnati in 1967, he joined the art faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and taught for almost three decades. He currently lives in Saukville, Wisconsin, where he paints in his converted-barn studio. His deep love and respect for nature continues to inspire his pursuits of naturalist and ecological initiatives. Uttech's work can be found in the collections of many art museums.

A product of its time

Uttech experimented early with Abstract Expressionism, Pop art, and other movements that were popular during the 1960s. He then developed his signature compositions of realistic representation and imaginative invention focused on the forests, wetlands and creatures of his beloved North Woods. His landscapes may hold traces of specific locations but are meant to express the feelings generated by nature. When asked in an interview about his first art experience, Uttech responded, "That [it] was a view of a red-winged blackbird flying across a field in June where my grandparents lived. His wings were extended with these black and yellow epaulets against a green field. That scene burned in my brain. My art experience goes back so far I can't place where it started. My mother told me I always had crayons in my hands..."

Take a closer look

Kisibakwad is representative of Uttech's body of work. The more time one spends looking at this work, the more one sees. This painting's densely packed structure swarms with life as forest creatures peek out from the rocky, tree-filled landscape. A second look affords the viewer details such as the ghost-like form of the wolf and the wings of birds weaving through the composition. The gloaming light emerges from the interlocking branches and a glimpse of a lake can be seen in the distance. Viewers may experience the magic of an unspoiled wilderness acknowledged by the fearless gazes of the forest inhabitants who are owned by no man. Uttech's carved, painted frame expands the picture plane beyond the canvas.

Did you know?

Uttech shows respect for the Native American cultures that inhabited North America by using Ojibwa words and phrases for his titles. *Kisibakwad* is loosely translated as "there is a sound produced by the rubbing of two trees against one another, when they are agitated by the wind."

On your own

www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOfNUB1Uhcs

<http://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/online/birds/artists/uttech>

Magnetic North: The Landscapes of Tom Uttech, Margaret Andera with essay by Lucy R. Lippard



KARA WALKER

Emancipation Approximation, 1999-2000

From the Screen Print portfolio of 27 prints in cloth box

Gift of Brent Sikkema, 2015.2

Emancipation Approximation



Kara Walker (b. 1969) Born in Stockton, California, Kara Walker moved to Atlanta, Georgia, at the age of 13. Her family settled in Stone Mountain, a previous stronghold of the Ku Klux Klan, just twenty years after the end of segregation. This new location would later inform her artistic practice. Walker knew she wanted to be an artist at age 3 while working with her father, Larry Walker, in his art studio. After earning her BFA at the Atlanta College of Art (1991) and her MFA at the Rhode Island School of Design (1994), she became one of the youngest people to win a prestigious MacArthur Foundation “genius” grant in 1997. She is best known for her silhouetted figures that address issues of race, gender, power, and sexuality both historically and today.

A product of its time

Kara Walker uses many languages of the past to create contemporary artwork. She uses the silhouette, a cut-paper tradition popularized in the US in the mid 18th century, as well as figures that harken back to the Antebellum South. She brings her artwork to the present day through its subject matter of power struggles, racial stereotypes, sex, and violence. In a time in the US that is post-segregation, post-civil rights, and politically correct with a black president, some might think the subject matter isn't relevant. Yet, we are also in a time where police forces all over the US are under scrutiny for racial profiling. The themes of her artwork directly reflect the cultural disparities prevalent in today's world.

Take a closer look

The *Emancipation Approximation* is a suite of 27 serigraphs, or screenprints. The name refers to the Emancipation Proclamation that Abraham Lincoln issued in 1863 declaring “all persons held as slaves” within rebellious states “are, and henceforward shall be free.” By changing the word from proclamation (proclaim—announce officially) to approximation (approximate—close to the actual), Walker suggests a continuing oppression that lingers on even to this day.

Did you know?

Kara Walker was asked by the nonprofit Creative Time to create a public art project in an old Domino Sugar factory in Brooklyn, New York. Walker created a giant, sugar-coated sphinx-like woman, entitled *A Subtlety or the Marvelous Sugar Baby*, in response to the history of sugar, including the refinement and the use of slavery. It also makes references to the objectification of the female body, specifically the African American female body.

On your own

www.pbs.org/art21/artists/kara-walker

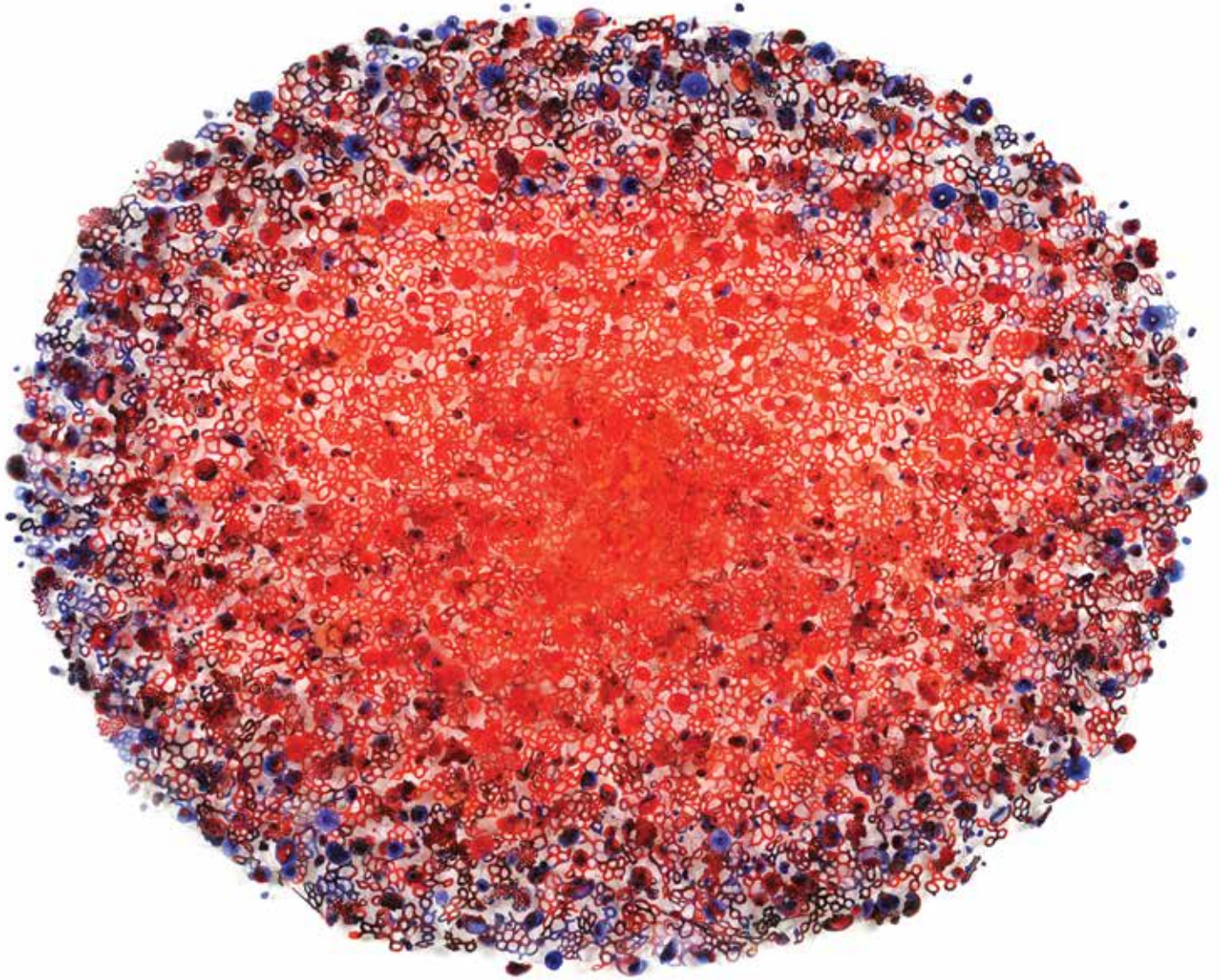
www.wsj.com/articles/kara-walkers-thought-provoking-art-1415238221

<http://bombmagazine.org/article/2904/kara-walker>

www.complex.com/style/2014/05/kara-walker-interview

www.cmoa.org/CollectionDetail.aspx?item=1004147&retPrompt=Back+to+Results&retUrl=CollectionSearch.aspx%3Fsrch%3DWalker%252c%2BKara

<http://creativetime.org/projects/karawalker>



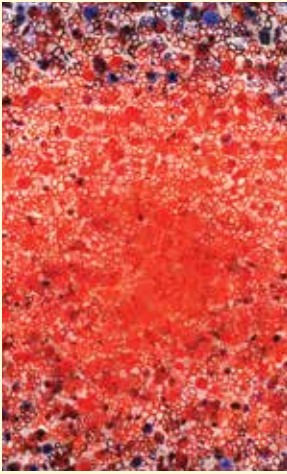
YURIKO YAMAGUCHI

Fire & Water, 2014

Hand cast and pigmented resin, steel wire

Museum Purchase, 2015.14

Fire & Water



Yuriko Yamaguchi (b. 1948) Born in Osaka, Japan, Yuriko Yamaguchi immigrated to the United States with her family in 1971. She graduate with a BA from the University of California, Berkeley in 1975, studied at Princeton University, and finished an MFA at the University of Maryland, College Park in 1979. Yamaguchi has received many honors for her work including the Jentel Artist Residency Award, the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center Artist Residency, the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award, the Joan Mitchell Foundation Award and a National Endowment for the Arts Visual Arts Fellowship. Her art can be found in numerous museum collections, including the Museum of Modern Art (Kamakura and Hayama, Japan), the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Figge Art Museum.

A product of its time

As an “ecophilosopher,” Yuriko Yamaguchi seeks to find the “hidden connections between everything,” from nature to technology. She began experimenting with sculpture during her graduate studies in Maryland under Minimalist sculptor and painter Anne Truitt. Yamaguchi credits the work of German-born artist Eva Hesse with her shift into sculpture. Hesse celebrated the process of creation and used pliable materials to create abstract forms. Yamaguchi responded to this style by shying away from rigid materials like stone. She became committed to exploring the possibilities of her medium, stating, “I believe that art is inseparable from scientific, philosophical, social, economic and political realities.” She engages those realities in *Fire & Water*, where she responds to global warming.

Take a closer look

Yamaguchi values the precarious balance between opposite forces and how we exist within this system. In *Fire & Water*, she intentionally mixes underwater life with terrestrial life in an effort to emphasize their connections in nature. Yamaguchi used steel wire with wax and rubber molds of many objects, including pieces of coral reef and seeds that she gathered from the woods near her home. The red and blue resin elements of the artwork seem to glow from within. While the forms resemble bubbles and water, the color takes on a glowing warmth like fire, creating a collision of opposites reminiscent of how polar ice cap melt and global warming cause catastrophic storms and hurricanes.

Did you know?

Yuriko Yamaguchi is a philosopher, constantly exploring the interconnectedness of humans and nature with themes that include growth, change, and vulnerability. Yamaguchi is fascinated by the paradox of how humans struggle with ‘individual free will in a terminally interdependent world.’ She says, “Creative energy, in a way, is like rain that comes down from the sky when the accumulated humidity can no longer remain suspended and drops to the earth.”

On your own

<http://yurikoyamaguchiart.com>

Catalogue (Figge Art Museum) *Yuriko Yamaguchi: Interconnected in Art, Nature, Science and Technology*

Want to learn more?

Book a Guided Tour

Schedule a guided tour for your group or classroom.

Contact Heather Aaronson at 563.326.7804 x2045 or haaronson@figgeartmuseum.org.

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The Big Picture outreach educators Laura Dunn and Brian Allen can visit your classroom with curriculum-based art programs.

Contact Laura at 563.326.7804 x2047 or ldunn@figgeartmuseum.org.

Contact Brian at 563.326.7804 x2005 or ballen@figgeartmuseum.org.

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Attend a workshop, lecture, art talk or performance.

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Check out our Blog

You can find our blog, Figge Pudding, at www.figgeartmuseum.org/blog

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Whether you're a novice or practicing artist, refine your skills and develop new techniques in a Figge studio class at www.figgeartmuseum.org/Education/Classes.aspx.

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Become a member or join our volunteer program. Information is available on www.figgeartmuseum.org or by calling the museum.

Membership • Contact Amy Martens at 563.326.7804 x2007 or amartens@figgeartmuseum.org.

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Teacher Resources

View these documents online at [www.figgeartmuseum.org/Education/Teacher Resources](http://www.figgeartmuseum.org/Education/Teacher%20Resources).



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