

Object of the Month, April 2011

Collage IX: Landscape by George Morrison



IDENTIFICATION:

Name: Collage IX: Landscape

Artist: George Morrison (1919 – 2000)

Date: 1974

Classification: Sculpture/ Wood

Accession # 75.24

Located in G258

CONTEXT:

Collage, from the French word 'coller', to glue, is a work of art made by the assemblage of different forms. The term was coined by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso in about 1912. At that time they were developing the art form known as Cubism and more specifically 'Synthetic Cubism' where they created objects by joining smaller elements together (eg. Picasso's Glass and Bottle of Suze, 1912). At times these collages could be composed in three dimensions by combining wood scraps (eg. Picasso's Mandolin and Clarinet, 1913).

There are however earlier precedents. Paper was invented in China around 200 years BCE and pieces could be combined. Japan glued paper together in 10th c. CE calligraphy. Gold leaf and gemstones were applied to religious sculptures in medieval Europe in the 13th c.

But collage as we now think of it is usually associated with Modern Art at the beginnings of the 20th c.

Assemblage collage was created by Jean Dubuffet in the 1950's when he created a series of collages using butterfly wings. This artform was further advanced by Louise Nevelson who created sculpture by assembling pieces of

found wood objects (we have a few Nevelson objects at the MIA and the Walker has many).

ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY:

Born near Grand Marais, MN, George Morrison is Native American Anishinabe (Objibwe). He graduated from Grand Marais High School and the Minneapolis School of Art (now Minneapolis College of Art and Design). He then moved to NYC and attended the Art Students League. In NY he belonged to a circle of Abstract Expressionist painters. He studied in Europe for a year with a Fulbright Scholarship and taught extensively at several art institutes and universities throughout the US. He was an assistant professor at the Rhode Island School of Design from 1963 – 1970 and later became faculty at the Studio Arts department at the University of Minnesota.

His work employs a wide array of media and techniques, but center on the natural world. His objects often involve the horizon, which he regarded as a reference point to the universe. He drew inspiration from Nature, especially from the rugged shores, rocks, driftwood, and plant life of our own Lake Superior North Shore and the Atlantic coast at Provincetown, Massachusetts. Nature is often abstracted. In all media he had a strong focus on texture, loving, as he said, “the magical surface of a painting, the marks the painter makes.”

He calls his Collage IX a ‘relief painting’, a technique that he developed in the 1960’s, where he paints with wood instead of oil. He celebrates the texture and odd shapes of the weathered wood, as he said “It was a made surface”.

Morrison’s collage differs from 20th century assemblage which emphasize accidental or incongruous pieces placed together. In Morrison’s work the pieces are placed with control and composition.

We have 32 pieces of Morrison’s work at MIA. Only Churinga, 91.21, G260, is also currently on view. A two-story collage can be seen at the LaSalle Plaza building (8th St. and LaSalle on the LaSalle side of the building). Also, a mosaic, ‘Tableau: A Native American Mosaic’ is on display in front of the Hennepin County Library. He was also featured in the Jacqueline Kennedy Sculpture Garden at the White House and numerous prominent museums throughout the US and abroad.

OBJECT:

large wood collage, 5 x 14 feet

created from scraps of found driftwood and lumber

largely abstract, but some objects, either real or imagined, can be found

strong horizon in upper 1/3

sun

chair

person in chair?

KEY QUESTIONS:

What do you see going on here?

What images can you find?

What image does the piece as a whole evoke?

How does this object make you feel?

TOUR POSSIBILITIES:

American art

Native American Art

Sculpture

Abstract art

Modern art

Landscape art

REFERENCES:

Minneapolis Institute of Arts Bulletin

Stockstad

artsconnected.org

Wikipedia

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