

Growing the Collection: Drawings and Collage, 1960 to Now

December 22, 2018–September 1, 2019

Galleries 315-316

Organizing curator: Dennis Michael Jon

Robert Arneson

American, 1930–1992

Three Generals (Joint Chiefs), 1984

Conté crayon and acrylic on paper

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Robert Arneson began his career as a cartoonist for a California newspaper, but later pursued his passion for painting and ceramics. In time he would become one of the leading ceramicists of his generation. Arneson's artistic approach was unconventional and irreverent, applying his considerable skills as a cartoonist to lampooning daily life and critiquing the excesses and abuses of political and military power. In this drawing from 1984, Arneson depicts three members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, tasked with advising the president of the United States and the civilian government on military matters. Here, they meet and preside over the corpse of a dead soldier who was laid at their feet. The drawing protests the expansion of U.S. militarism around the world during the 1980s under President Ronald Reagan, and the ongoing proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Eddie Arning

American, 1898-1993

Two Men, Tracks and Water Tower, c. 1965

Crayon on green paper

Gift of Jill Bonovitz and Nancy Hellebrand in honor of their mother, Janet Fleisher

2016.121.3

Rudolf Baranik

American (born Lithuania), 1920–1998

Night and Night, c. 1970

From "Napalm Elegies"

Mixed media collage on cardboard

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Rudolf Baranik frequently described his creative practice as "socialist formalism," an approach that paired humanist values with a formalist's concerns with abstraction. *Night and Night* is part of an extended series of semi-abstract paintings and collages called the "Napalm Elegies" (1967–1974), works inspired by a newspaper image of a Vietnamese

child badly burned by napalm. Napalm is a sticky and highly flammable substance used in bombs and flame throwers, and was employed by the U.S. Army against Vietnamese combatants and civilians during the Vietnam War (1955–1975). Executed in a range of white and gray tones on a deep black ground, this and other works in the series relied on the public's sobering understanding of napalm as a horrific weapon and a potent signifier of the anguish felt by many Americans about their country's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Hannelore Baron

American (born Germany), 1926–1987

Untitled, 1981

Mixed media collage on paper

Gift of Mary and Bob Mersky 2015.120.7

Marcos Bontempo

Spanish, born Argentina 1969

Untitled, 2012

Ink and salt on paper

Gift of Bill and Krista Thorburn 2017.94.3

Marcos Bontempo is a self-taught contemporary Spanish artist who is open about his diagnosis of bipolar disorder, a mental health condition that causes extreme shifts in mood, energy, and the ability to think clearly. This pair of drawings is part of his extended “floating figures” series. These drawings feature simple, pictographic compositions that portray polymorphic beings (meaning they take many forms) floating in space. Some resemble humans, others are purely imaginary. Highly abstracted and often dramatic, the floating figures exist in a separate reality, simultaneously conveying psychological turmoil and hopefulness. Though they may recall ancient rituals or indigenous totemic beings, Bontempo has described the figures as pictorial symbols of his own suffering and his quest to come to terms with his illness. “The shapes express the poor reality, the mutilation of an ill body that does not want to be forgotten by God,” he said of his abstracted human forms. “They fall in the void with borrowed souls. ... I do not let them alone in their ordeal.”

Douglas Bourgeois

American, born 1951

Ring Bargain, 2014

Acrylic paint and collage on illustration board

The Plautz Family Endowment 2015.48.3

In this mixed media collage, Douglas Bourgeois presents a tribute to American blues musician, singer, and songwriter Robert Johnson (1911–1938). Here, he presents Johnson as an icon (a representation of a religious subject), worthy of our veneration but haunted by the persistent myth that his talent was dishonorably attained. Though he recorded only 29 songs and died at just 27, Johnson looms large in the pantheon of legendary Mississippi River Delta bluesmen, a result of his guitar prowess and his oft-repeated claim of having learned to play from the Devil himself. This so-called “Legend of the Crossroads” tells of Johnson meeting the Devil while thumbing a ride at a dark and lonely crossroads in rural Mississippi. Feeling despondent, he bargains with the Devil, offering to trade his soul for mastery of the guitar. The tale is retold in Johnson’s blues standard “Crossroads.”
else in theirs.”

Luis Camnitzer

Uruguayan, born Germany 1937

Compounded Error, 1972

Ink and gouache on graph paper

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Louisa Chase

American (born Panama), 1951-2016

Untitled, 1988

Watercolor and ink on paper

Gift of Mary and Bob Mersky 2017.115.4

A pioneering figure of the Neo-Expressionist movement that emerged in the 1970s, Louisa Chase blends dynamic, gestural abstraction with symbolic representation; all visual hallmarks of the movement. In this untitled watercolor, an formless field of gestural marks in black and gray is punctuated with hard-edge shapes in primary colors. The sharp contrast between the unstructured linear elements and the precise geometric configuration is disquieting, suggesting conflict between chaos and order. Art historian Ruth Fine commented on the feeling of anxiety emanating from Chase’s imagery, describing a disjointed world that “reminds us of our fractured experience.” Others have deemed her dream-like imagery as similar to “landscapes of the mind,” works rich in emotional symbolism that function as visual metaphors for the artist’s own state of mind. Like much of her work, Chase’s watercolor is untitled to ensure that viewers come to their own conclusions about the work’s meaning.

Henry Ray Clark

American, 1937–2006

I am Four Eyes from the Planet Called the Red Tornado / I am Blind and I Can See your Future from my Planet, not dated

Ballpoint pen and crayon on paper; diptych

Gift of Dennis Adrian in honor of Mary Cullen and in memory of Roy Cullen

2017.21.14a,b

Self-taught artist Henry Ray Clark developed the creative persona of an extraterrestrial with fantastic powers. Clark's belief was sincere: "I know they are out there," he said, "because I have been there. Every night when I go to bed, I travel in my spaceship going to all of the places I put on these papers." Clark was convicted of a crime and spent years in the Texas prison system, where he turned to drawing as a psychological release from extended periods of confinement and isolation. This ink and crayon diptych exemplifies Clark's fascination with richly detailed pattern and line. Clark said, "They can lock my body up, but they can't lock up my mind. As long as my mind can create something beautiful to look at I am a free man and I will live forever in my art." The interpretation and meaning of the two abstract compositions is elusive and is left to the viewer.

Robert Colescott

American, 1925–2009

Heavenly Host & MLK, 1971

Graphite on paper

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Robert Colescott was an African American artist of Creole descent (mixed European and African ancestry), acclaimed for his expressionist figure paintings and drawings that explored black history and identity. Equally adept at satire and seriousness, Colescott produced narrative scenes that address issues of race, gender, power, and social inequality, often mocking stereotypes with lurid imagery and unnerving situations. Colescott's graphite drawing *Heavenly Host & MLK* imagines God in the guise of a southern plantation owner flanked by white police-uniformed bodyguards. God directs the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., mortally wounded, away from the gates of heaven toward Satan, who wears black-face and sports horns, ready to escort King to hell.

Felipe Jesus Consalvos

American (born Cuba), 1891– c. 1960

The American System, not dated

Collage of found printed images and text, photographs, cigar bands, postage stamps, and pigments on paper

The David and Margaret Christenson Endowment for Art Acquisition 2017.36

A self-taught artist and self-described healer, Felipe Jesus Consalvos earned his living for most of his life as a cigar roller. He was born in Havana, Cuba, and immigrated to Miami

around 1920, eventually settling in Philadelphia. *The American System* exemplifies Consalvos's collage-on-paper work, which is often playful and slyly political in tone. This collage encompasses many of the sociopolitical themes Consalvos is known for, such as race, war, class, and gender, and their relationship to popular culture. Here, Consalvos takes aim at political figures, lampooning German dictator Adolf Hitler as a screaming baby, as well as American presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, who are caricatured as a vaudevillian duo. His obsessive body of work—over 800 surviving collages on paper and unconventional surfaces such as found photographs, musical instruments, and furniture—was discovered in 1980 at a west Philadelphia garage sale.

Alfred Amadu Conteh

American, born 1975

Kirby, 2017

Conté and acrylic on paper

Lent anonymously; pending Mia acquisition

Thornton Dial

American, 1928–2016

Untitled (Tiger with female figure, bird), 1990

Watercolor and graphite on handmade paper

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Rosana Castrillo Diaz

Spanish, born 1971

Untitled, 2014

Graphite pencil on paper

Gift of Mary and Bob Mersky 2018.104.17

In her drawings, Spanish contemporary artist Rosana Castrillo Diaz reveals a mastery of careful and deliberate observation, belying the apparent simplicity of the work. As she explained of this drawing, “In this body of work, there is a direct connection between memory, emotions, and the physical hand at work. Each mark is a feeling, a chord, each drawing a score witness to a moment in time, a mood, a place. In the silence and introspection engendered, the quietest gesture may very well be the loudest.”

Dominick Di Meo

American, born 1927

A Little Memorial to Julian Griman, 1963

Graphite, black ink wash, acrylic, acrylic wash, and black pen on paper

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Jim Dine

American, born 1935

Untitled (Face), 1959

Oil on cardboard

Gift of Mary and Bob Mersky 2018.104.18

Jim Dine was only 24 when he completed this painting, likely one of the many self-portraits that would come to define his lifelong interest in deeply personal imagery. In 1957, Dine graduated from Ohio University and married Nancy Minto. Two years later, the couple was living in New York City, where Dine taught high school and became acquainted with the younger avant-garde painters who were challenging the seriousness and elitism associated with Abstract Expressionism by introducing ordinary, everyday objects into their paintings. As in this example, Dine's early paintings were characterized by a broadly gestural style that combined bright colors and partially abstracted forms or figures. In later years, Dine would use symbolic objects, like hearts and bathrobes, to explore personal identity, memory, and the body.

Charles Gaines

American, born 1944

Faces: Men and Women, #14 "Charles Hanzlicek," 1978

Ink on paper, photography

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Los Angeles-based artist Charles Gaines is a conceptual artist and educator whose practice includes drawing, photography, musical compositions, sculpture, and installations. For each work, Gaines establishes a set of rules for combining materials from different sources. *Charles Hanzlicek, #14* is part of a series in which Gaines converted an ordinary black-and-white photograph of someone's face—here, the poet Charles Hanzlicek—into a simplified outline that he mapped onto a numbered grid. He then merged this outlined portrait with others from the series to create a layered "universal portrait" of multiple individuals. Viewing this triptych from left to right, the features of the face become less distinguished. The use of numbers on graph paper suggests that the representation of a face is an indisputable fact rather than an artistic interpretation, and shifts the viewer's focus away from the subject to the artist's process. By applying a logical system of numerical ordering onto specific depictions of individuals, Gaines achieves an illogical result partly controlled by chance.

Sam Gilliam

American, born 1933

Untitled, 1971

Watercolor, acrylic, and metallic paint on altered paper

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Sam Gilliam is a leading figure of the Color Field movement that emerged in New York in the 1950s and later flourished in Washington, D.C., where he has lived and worked since 1962. The large color stained canvases that he draped and suspended from walls and ceilings were groundbreaking when first introduced in 1965. For the next decade, Gilliam explored unconventional forms of painting and drawing that featured a third dimension as a way to bridge the gap between painting and sculpture. This watercolor of 1971 is an exceptional example of Gilliam's experimental approach, blending abstract color staining with an intentionally altered paper substrate. The crumbled paper transforms the work from two dimensions to three, adding a distinctive sculptural quality.

David Goldes

American, born 1947

#24 from "Circuit Drawings Touching" series, 2018

Graphite on black gessoed paper, with scorching from 15,000 volt electric current

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Part art, part science, David Goldes' recent series of abstract geometric drawings relies on the conductive properties of graphite as a critical feature of their creation. In this example, Goldes forms the primary composition by applying numerous layers of graphite on paper prepared with a black gesso (diluted plaster) ground. Leaving small gaps between the thick graphite elements, he then applies a 15,000-volt electric current to one side of the drawing. As the electricity reaches a gap, the current arcs and scorches or even burns the paper, leaving distinctive marks that add an intriguing element of chance to the drawing process.

Lonnie Holley

American, born 1950

Gathering of Colors, 2018

Cut-paper collage and acrylic paint on museum board

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Lonnie Holley's monumental cut-paper collage *Gathering of Colors* reflects the artist's lifelong penchant for salvaging discarded objects and materials fused with history and memory to form compelling expressions of the human condition. For this project, Holley used leftover proofs from a recent printmaking collaboration with Paulson Fontaine Press in Berkeley, California, cutting and reconstituting the highly abstracted figurative imagery into a novel composition. As an African American man who grew up in Jim Crow-era Alabama, Hollie has experienced overt and covert racial discrimination. These experiences, combined with an impoverished childhood, have driven his self-taught creative prowess as a singer, musician, and visual artist. "My thing as an artist, I am not

doing anything but still ringing that Liberty Bell, ding, ding, ding, on the shorelines of independence,” he once explained. “Isn’t that beautiful? Can you hear the bell I’m ringing? And will you come running?”

Nicole Eisenman

American, born France 1965

Falls, 2017

Sepia ink on gessoed paper

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Frederick Hammersley

American, 1919–2009

Up & Down with a Stick, 1969

Computer-generated drawing on paper

Gift of the Frederick Hammersley Foundation 2017.151.4

In 1969, while teaching at the University of New Mexico, Frederick Hammersley began a year-long experiment of making abstract drawings with the aid of a room-sized mainframe computer and line printers. At the time, computer-generated art was still in its infancy, and his efforts were groundbreaking and favorably received by critics and peers. The university’s computing department assisted Hammersley by programing the department’s massive computer to compose images from modified text and numerical elements. Simple and disarmingly playful, Hammersley’s computer drawings were part of a wave of postwar creative experimentation with emergent technology.

Frederick Hammersley

American, 1919–2009

Busy Lion to Jelly Center, 1969

Computer-generated drawing on paper

Gift of the Frederick Hammersley Foundation 2017.151.3

Jenny Holzer

American, born 1950

President’s Surveillance Program, 2016

Graphite and watercolor on vellum

Gift of Mary and Bob Mersky 2017.115.2

President’s Surveillance Program is part of Jenny Holzer’s long-running “Redaction” series of paintings, drawings, and prints. By modifying previously redacted (censored) U.S. government documents to emphasize their suppressed content, Holzer highlights

the extremes of sanctioned secrecy and surveillance. Here, she enlarged the original document and reproduced it on vellum (treated animal skin, also known as parchment), a reference to the parchment on which the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights were written. In so doing, she exposes the irony that constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of speech, press, and protest are often the first casualties of government abuse. Holzer has rendered the censor's redactions with broad, gestural strokes, in a brilliant shade of red, implying blood and emphasizing that redaction is the work of human hands and minds. The effect is a powerful suggestion that the cost of rising government secrecy is the loss of personal freedom.

Ray Johnson

American, 1927–1995

Hat with Red Eyes, 1966

Collage of found paper mounted on cardboard

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Once described as “New York’s most famous unknown artist,” Ray Johnson is now seen as a seminal figure of the Pop art and Neo-Dada movements, which emerged in the 1950s and 1960s as critiques of popular culture and mass media. His conceptually innovative collages and correspondence art challenged the art world’s commercial and critical establishment. Johnson’s work often incorporated text-based elements, found objects and images, or collaboratively produced “mail art,” which relied on the U.S. Postal Service to propagate ideas and enlist participants. *Hat with Red Eyes* pays homage to modernist poet Marianne Moore (1887–1972). The two innovators had briefly shared a correspondence, and with characteristic wit and economy, Johnson uses Moore’s iconic black tricorne hat as a symbol for the poet and her creative brilliance. The collage is one of several portrayals of Moore that Johnson completed during the 1960s.



Marianne Moore, about 1960.

Kim Jones

American, born 1944

Untitled, 1997–2013

Wood, paper, pencil, ink, acrylic, nylon, staples, metal, and twine; bound volume
Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Begun in 1997 and revised in 2013, this mixed-media assemblage is actually an elaborately bound artist's book featuring detailed war drawings, a theme that Kim Jones has explored since childhood. These map-like compositions record imaginary armed conflicts, often set in cities. The drawings' diagrammatic motifs represent the progression of battling forces, yet their game-like character contradicts the horrific reality of modern warfare. Eccentric and mysterious, Jones' book was designed to challenge the viewer's imagination, and encourage us to rely on personal associations and individual interpretation to create meaning.

Kim Jones

American, born 1944

War Drawing Jacket, 1982–2011

Cotton and synthetic US naval jacket, with wood, acrylic, and ink
Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Kim Jones began making war drawings when still a child. These richly detailed, map-like drawings remain one of the mainstays of his creative practice. In this extraordinary example, Jones produces a hybrid artwork—part found object, part drawing. Using a vintage U.S. naval jacket as a starting point, he incorporates various wooden sticks and layers of plaster that serve as a surface for his imaginary battle drawings. A veteran of the Vietnam War (1955–75), Jones emphasizes the game-like structure of warfare, but one in which winners and losers are often difficult to determine.

Samuel Levi Jones

American, born 1987

Agent Orange, 2017

Deconstructed books mounted on canvas

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Jeff Keen

British, 1923–2012

Babyjelly & Fragmentz, 1965

Newsprint, correction fluid, ink, and dry transfer on paper collage

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Filmmaker and visual artist Jeff Keen produced films, paintings, drawings, artist's books, concrete poems (whose words form an image related to the poem's subject), and collages that pushed the boundaries of postwar art (1945–80). Active in the British counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, Keen drew on diverse cultural and art-historical sources for his eccentric, multi-media practice. His *Babyjelly & Fragmentz* collage is rooted in this distinctive approach of generating meaning through juxtapositions of found and created elements, and includes fragmented and altered texts, comic book characters, and images from popular publications and advertising. As in his films, the images of violence and destruction are s a social-political critique of U.S. consumerism.

Linda Kramer

American, born 1937

Redhead, 1966

Graphite, colored pencil, pastel, and marker on paper

Gift of Linda Lewis Kramer 2016.61.2

Throughout her career Linda Kramer has maintained a strong feminist stance in her politics and art, including co-founding a feminist cooperative gallery in Chicago in 1973. In the late 1960s, she began a series of drawings addressing the objectification of women in U.S. society, and made *Redhead* in response to a visit to the Playboy Club in Chicago. She and some friends were there for a party, and she was appalled by patrons' dehumanizing and objectifying treatment of the club's so-called "Bunnies," cocktail waitresses who were required to wear skin-tight leotards, bunny ears, and bunny tails.

Patrick Lee

American, born 1969

Loyalty and Trust, 2018

Graphite on paper

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Los Angeles-based Patrick Lee creates highly finished, exquisitely detailed figure drawings that challenge contemporary standards of masculinity and beauty in the U.S. *Loyalty and Trust* is part of a series of portraits featuring men who project an ultra-masculine or macho persona. Lee finds his models for these portraits on the streets of Los Angeles—construction workers, gang members, people experiencing homelessness. After gaining their trust, he photographs them on the spot, and later draws from these photos.

His work is often described as revealing, through empathy and understanding, the vulnerable and emotional sides of people whose appearance and attitude may appear threatening to some. But it is left to us to make what we will of these men. Lee doesn't share their names, and it's unclear whether he keeps in touch to show them a finished portrait or to share profits from the sale of their likenesses. Can we empathize with these figures? Can we see a little of ourselves in them? Or are they once again stereotypical "types" without names or context to help us toward a deeper understanding?

Michael Mazur

American, 1935–2009

Gloria #4, 1979

Pastel on paper

Gift of Donald McNeil and Emily Galusha 2017.125

Michael Mazur had a traditional art training in life drawing (drawing from a human model) and figurative painting. This influenced his focus on narrative themes and the figure during the 1960s and 1970s, an approach that ran counter to the dominant art movements then of Pop, minimalism, and conceptual art, in which the human body was largely absent. In this nude portrait from 1979, Mazur demonstrates his impressive observational skills and expertise in expressive drawing. Using bold color, strong contrasts of light and dark, and an ambiguous pictorial space, he gives his composition a mysterious, dreamlike aura. At the same time, he depicts his model with an unforgiving realism that captures her distinctive physical characteristics and facial expression. Mazur's well-honed ability to harmonize form and content lies at the heart of his creative practice.

Anne Minich

American, born 1934

Hungry Jesus, 1978

Graphite and colored pencil on rag board

Gift of funds from Robert and Frances Coulbom Kohler 2018.87

Head thrown back, arms tightly wrapped around his body, naked from the waist down, the artist Juan Gonzalez posed for his friend Anne Minich. Is he laughing or hollering in

despair? Angry or singing? Minich's careful attention to details in both the figure and the elaborate background manage to evade a clear reading, leaving it open to the viewer to read Gonzalez's body language.

Gladys Nilsson

American, born 1940

Soap Bubble Set, 1977

Watercolor on handmade paper

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

Gladys Nilsson was an original member of the 1960s-era Hairy Who artist collective, and found inspiration for her outlandish narratives in comic books, *Mad* magazine, the cartoons of R. Crumb, and early "zine" culture (artist-published magazines). *Soap Bubble Set* is characteristic of her watercolors (her primary medium), which feature whimsical scenes populated by cartoon-like figures. Nilsson herself is the main character of this work, holding a large soap bubble in each hand. On her shoulder is the much smaller figure of Jim Nutt, her husband and fellow Hairy Who artist, who holds several paintbrushes as an attribute of his profession. Tentacle-like arms and legs reach out and make contact with other characters, creating a web of intermingled forms. The setting, as in much of her work, is ambiguous and spatially shallow, with minimal perspective and no indications of time of day or light sources. This focuses attention on the characters themselves and their lively interactions, leaving it to the viewer to extract meaning.

Giulia Dall'Olio

Italian, born 1983

g17][73d, 2018

From the "Suspension" series

Charcoal on paper

The John E. Andrus III Endowment Fund 2018.82

Giulia Dall'Olio takes inspiration from natural forms and the spaces between them. Sometimes, as in the enigmatically titled *g 17][73 d*, she divorces the forms from their surroundings. This drawing presents a tree—or perhaps the ghost of one. The image is as much erased as it is drawn. Much of the drawing's weight lies in the dark voids between the leaves and branches. The artist has further removed us from immediate contact with the subject by smearing the image so that it seems to melt, run like paint, or stand behind wet glass. The symmetry of this particular study gives it somewhat the appearance of an atomic mushroom cloud. Perhaps that is not far-fetched, for in distancing us from the material physicality of the tree, Dall'Olio has brought our attention to the phenomenal life force within it.

Roxy Paine

American, born 1966

Study No. 1 for “New Amalgam,” 2016

Black ink on paper

The Richard Lewis Hillstrom Fund 2018.79.1

Roxy Paine’s interdisciplinary artistic practice explores the intersection of nature and technology, posing existential questions about the growing conflict between natural and human-made environments. This ink drawing is a study for a stainless-steel sculpture, *New Amalgam* (2017), part of his long-running “Dendroid” series of artificially engineered treelike forms that mimic nature but retain an industrial aesthetic. At first, the drawing appears to depict a simple leafless tree, but, as its title suggests, the “tree” is actually a combination of various dissimilar branches, each having distinct physical characteristics and growth habits. While it displays a certain sublime beauty, this fictive tree illustrates the contradiction between natural and artificial structures, revealing the artist’s ambivalent feelings about tampering with nature.

Chloe Piene

American, born 1972

Wax Quintuplet, 2008

Charcoal on vellum paper

Gift of Mary and Bob Mersky 2017.5.1-5

According to Chloe Piene, her figurative drawings are part depiction and part emotional catharsis, essentially self-referential investigations of the body’s physical and erotic nature. Delicate and brutal, investigative and fantastic, her drawings feature spindly, agitated lines that describe highly abstracted figures set in undefined space. In these works fragmentary figures show only portions of the head and nude torso. This suite of drawings is related to Piene’s sculptural busts rendered in wax or putty-like modeling clay. Many are *memento mori* (reminders of death) featuring fragmentary, often skeletal forms that suggest decay and the fleeting nature of life.



Chloe Piene, *Corpus Brevis*, 2011

Richard Pousette-Dart

American, 1916–1992

Circle of Multifarious Precisions, 1979

Acrylic, graphite, and gesso on handmade paper

Gift of Mary and Bob Mersky 2018.104.20

In the mid-1940s, Richard Pousette-Dart made a note to himself: “Mine is an abstract vision fired by mystic shapes not by description.” Even in childhood he was familiar with so-called primitive art and had a desire to move beyond waking experience. Along with his older artist peers Jackson Pollock and Adolph Gottlieb, he investigated the potential of Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung’s psychoanalytic theories, especially the collective unconscious and universal symbols. Here, Pousette-Dart presents a simple, monochromatic geometric form symbolizing the infinite, one intended to elicit visual and spiritual contemplation on the part of the viewer. Pousette-Dart described the artist-art-beholder nexus, declaring: “Great art leaves half of the creation to the onlooker, gives the key to a creative experience, [and] draws the spectator into infinite mysteries.”

Peri Schwartz

American, born 1951

Self-portrait in Black Sweater II, 1988

Charcoal and pastel on paper

The Plautz Family Endowment 2018.84.1

New York artist Peri Schwartz is a painter, draftswoman, and printmaker. Self-portraiture is a central theme in her work. She takes up the subject across media, usually working in a monochrome palette. In this body of work spanning some 30 years, she examines her face, her body—clothed and nude—her hands, her setting, her hair, her clothes, to distill the forms into a geometry of lines and shapes. Her works sit on the border between

realism and abstraction. She approaches her figurative work with the same spatial rigor that informs her still lifes and studio interiors, drawing from life, searching for shapes, lines, spatial interactions and harmonies to structure the composition and create an underlying logic in its appearance.

John Synder

American, born 1956

Niagara Falls, 1993

Oil and glitter on paper

Gift of Donald McNeil and Emily Galusha in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Minneapolis Institute of Art 2015.64.2

John Snyder's bird's-eye view of a moonlit Niagara Falls is at once familiar and eerily enigmatic. Painted from memory in a limited color range of blacks, grays, and whites, the river landscape is devoid of built structures and human activity, as if the scene visualized the primordial ancestor of today's falls. Snyder's painting functions much like a religious icon, but instead of a holy entity, it features the venerated scenic wonder familiar to generations of tourists and newlyweds. Drawing on the visual language of folk art, Snyder formulated his landscape in a boldly graphic style that simplifies form and distorts pictorial perspective. This visual treatment, together with the landscape's kitschy glitter border, further emphasizes the artwork's emblematic function as a traveler's memento.

Mitchell Squire

American, born 1958

Smoke 1, 2013

From "Smoke" series

Graphite, salvaged law enforcement paper targets shot through, in artist-made painted plywood enclosure

Gift of funds from Mary and Bob Mersky 2017.80.2

Mitchell Squire is acclaimed for engaging material culture, architecture, and visual art to examine current and historical social and political issues. This assemblage, part of a body of work Squire began in 2013, addresses present-day police shootings of African Americans, and their aftermath. These assemblages are composed of paper targets riddled with bullet holes, salvaged by Squire from an Iowa police academy. Squire dusted this example with graphite powder to alter its evocative potential. Thick layers of the torn and perforated targets, with shot patterns resembling highly abstracted human figures, are presented with the reverse side facing outward, so the viewer stands in the line of fire. The effect is twofold. As an abstraction of color, form, and texture, independent of any meaning, the torn paper is visually appealing. But once its nature and source become known, myriad associations and meanings take hold. The artist acknowledges this paradox and suggests these responses can coexist. Squire's assemblages move beyond

mere materiality to offer a poignant and sobering portrait of the complex relationships among gun violence, racial discrimination, and personal and national tragedies.

May Stevens

American, born 1924

Malcolm X (el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz), 1965

Brush and black ink on parchment paper

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

One of two known versions, May Stevens' poignant portrait of a deceased Malcolm X was drawn from memory after the artist attended the public wake for the Muslim minister and human rights activist, who was assassinated in New York in 1965 by rival political activists. The parchment paper Stevens used for the portrait cockled (a kind of wrinkling caused by moisture) with the application of the water-based ink, focusing attention on the subject's face and accentuating the visual power of the image.

May Stevens

American, born 1924

All-y, all-y in free, 1996

Collage of torn newspaper clippings, photocopies, broken green glass bottle, human hair, cigarette butts, matches, with cigarette holes and singe marks, mounted to mat board

Private collection, promised gift to Mia

May Stevens' collage of found materials is a highly personal memorial to Elisa Izquierdo, the 6-year old girl who was beaten to death by her drug-addicted mother in 1995. One of the most highly publicized cases of child abuse in New York City history, the tragic and horrific murder highlighted the city's bureaucratic ineptitude and deeply affected even the most street-hardened police officers and other public officials. Elisa's relatives, neighbors, and teachers had repeatedly warned child welfare officials that the girl was in imminent danger, but social service agencies and judicial officials continued to support maternal custody. In the wake of the public outcry surrounding Elisa's murder, state and municipal legislation instituted reforms of some aspects of the social welfare system, including secrecy rules concerning allegations of past child abuse. The title Stevens chose for this collage is derived from the children's game hide-and-seek, used at game's end to call the players from their hiding places. Evoking childhood innocence, the refrain stands in stark contrast to Elisa Izquierdo's brief life and violent death.

Ray Yoshida

American, 1930–2009

HMM, 1999

Collage of color-printed newsprint on paper

Gift of Karen Lennox Gallery, Chicago 2017.19

Throughout his career, Chicago-based Ray Yoshida was fascinated by metamorphosis and transformation. He was an important teacher and mentor to his students and friends who admired him as much for his work as for his perspective as a collector of American folk art. In the late 1960s he produced paintings and collages based on “specimens” extracted from comic books and trade catalogues. These cropped details from larger compositions evolve their own suggestive formal analogies and echoes. Yoshida created this work later in his career, when his compositions became more open, free, and mysterious. It is a tour-de-force of his eccentric stylization, revealing Yoshida’s wit, superb design intelligence, and transformative way of seeing. The text bubbles declare just four expressions: OOF! / UMM-HMM / ? / HMM.

William T. Wiley

American, born 1937

Untitled, 1962

Oil on paper

Gift of Thomas Lyon Owens in honor of Dennis Michael Jon 2018.118

This untitled oil on paper by William Wiley is most likely a preliminary study for a series of three large-scale oil paintings of 1961-62 titled “Columbus Rerouted.” Created when Wiley was completing his MFA degree at the California School of Fine Art in San Francisco, the series of paintings resulted from Wiley’s personal musings about Columbus Avenue, a major urban thoroughfare then undergoing reconstruction, which had forced him to find an alternate route to school. He began to consider what would have happened if the Italian explorer Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) had been similarly rerouted during his voyage to the New World (Western Hemisphere) and had not landed on Hispaniola, present-day Haiti. Like the larger works in the series, this oil features Wiley’s characteristic blend of abstraction and representation, and includes such recognizable elements as a spoked wheel, a battle shield (?), a lightning bolt (a motif also reminiscent of a road surveyor’s staff), and a white triangle resembling the sails of a ship. In the end, Wiley’s imagery is something of a puzzle, a personal vocabulary of enigmatic symbols that is open to subjective interpretation.

Francisco Zúñiga

Mexican (born Costa Rica), 1912–1998

Mujer con los Brazos Alzados (Woman with Arms Raised), 1975

Black chalk heightened with white pastel on light tan paper

Given in memory of Janet L. Pederson 2018.121

Best known as a figurative sculptor, Francisco Zúñiga was also an accomplished painter and draftsman whose subjects reveal a lifelong fascination with Latin American peoples and cultures, especially rural working class women. The anonymous individual portrayed here is shown barefooted, informally posed, and wearing a huipil, traditional clothing that is emblematic of the simple dignity of indigenous Mexican women. Though certainly romanticized, the depiction also functions as a political statement, one in which the sitter's modest attire, unidealized body type, and confident bearing symbolize pride in Mexico's rich and diverse history.