

This guide is designed for visitors viewing the Hofstra University Museum's exhibition *American Perspectives: 1907-1992*. Curated by Eleanor Rait, the Museum's curator of collections, the exhibition features 36 Hofstra University Museum works of art. Created over an 85-year time span, the exhibition exemplifies the predominant art movements of the 20th century.

This guide will invite you to look carefully and thoughtfully, and to learn about the Modernist Art period and beyond. The exhibition is arranged chronologically to give visitors a broad historical overview of the major art movements. As you walk through this exhibition, you will find paintings, prints and photographs on the walls, complemented with sculptures on pedestals.

1910s and 1920s: Early Modernism

To discover the roots of early modernism, we must first look back to the end of the 1880s and 1890s in Europe. The heart of the art world was in Paris, and artists depicted landscapes and intimate scenes of everyday life using natural light, rapid brushwork and a brightly colored palette. This movement took the name Impressionism because artists such as Edgar Degas, Claude Monet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir were attempting to capture the subjective impression of light in a scene.

Many American artists traveled to Europe to attend exhibitions, visit museums and work in artist's studios for training in these avant-garde techniques and developments. By the turn of the century, Fauvism was the new movement on the scene, growing out of Post-Impressionism. André Derain and Henri Matisse championed strong and brash colors with spontaneous applications of paint.



Jane Peterson (1876-1965)
The Lagoon, Venice, ca. 1920
Oil on canvas
32 x 32 in.
Gift of Martin Horowitz
HU72.1

This painting by Jane Peterson is a classic example of what was happening in the art world at this time. Born in Illinois, she went to New York City in 1895 to study art at the Pratt Institute. She then went abroad to Paris, Madrid and London where she was part of an influential art entourage that included Childe Hassam, Maurice Prendergast, John Singer Sargent and Louis Comfort Tiffany. Peterson is recognized as a painter of distinction, best known for her beach scenes, waterscapes and floral subjects. This large canvas attributed to the 1920s, intermingles both Impressionist and Fauvist influences, as seen in the bold color combinations she chose to emphasize the beauty of nature. In 1925, *The New York Times* called Peterson one of the foremost female painters in New York.

GLOSSARY

The artwork in this exhibition includes a variety of paintings, prints, photographs and sculpture. We have included this list to help explain some of the different mechanical processes and techniques the artists have employed.

Aquatint: a form of etching with acid on a plate partially covered with varnish that produces a print somewhat resembling a watercolor.

Gelatin silver print: a photographic process using suspension of silver salts in gelatin which is coated onto acetate film or fiber-based or resin coated paper and allowed to dry. These materials remain stable for months and years unlike the "wet plate" materials that preceded them.

Gouache: an opaque water-based paint, most commonly used for illustrations.

Lithograph: made by marking a flat surface (usually a polished stone) with a greasy pencil, which repels water. The artist seals the unmarked areas by coating the surface with a water-based seal, which is repelled by the grease pencil marks. The printer then rolls oil-based ink over the surface. The ink only sticks to the grease marked areas. When the printer places a paper over the surface and applies pressure with a press, the ink is transferred to the paper.

Silkscreen: made with a piece of fine silk stretched inside a frame. The artist blocks the holes in the fabric on some areas with a coating or film. The artist then places a paper under the screen and pulls a squeegee of ink over the screen forcing ink through the unblocked areas onto the paper below. Silkscreen prints, unlike other prints, are not reversed. Color areas are often even and flat.

Tempera: a type of paint that consists of dry color or pigment, a glutinous substance, (such as egg yolk, casein, or gum), and water.

We hope you have enjoyed this special exhibition. To learn more, we suggest the following resources about Modern Art:

WEB RESOURCES

www.artnet.com
www.artencyclopedia.com
www.foundationcenter.org (Joan Mitchell Foundation)
www.warhol.org (Andy Warhol Museum)

RESOURCES

Dempsey, Amy, *Art in the Modern Era: A Guide to Styles, Schools & Movements*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002.

Foster, Hal and Rosalind Krauss, Yves-Alain Bois, Benjamin Buchloh, *Art Since 1900*, 2 vols. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004.

Hughes, Robert, *American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America*, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, 1997.

Thank you for visiting the Hofstra University Museum. For information about upcoming programs and exhibitions, contact:

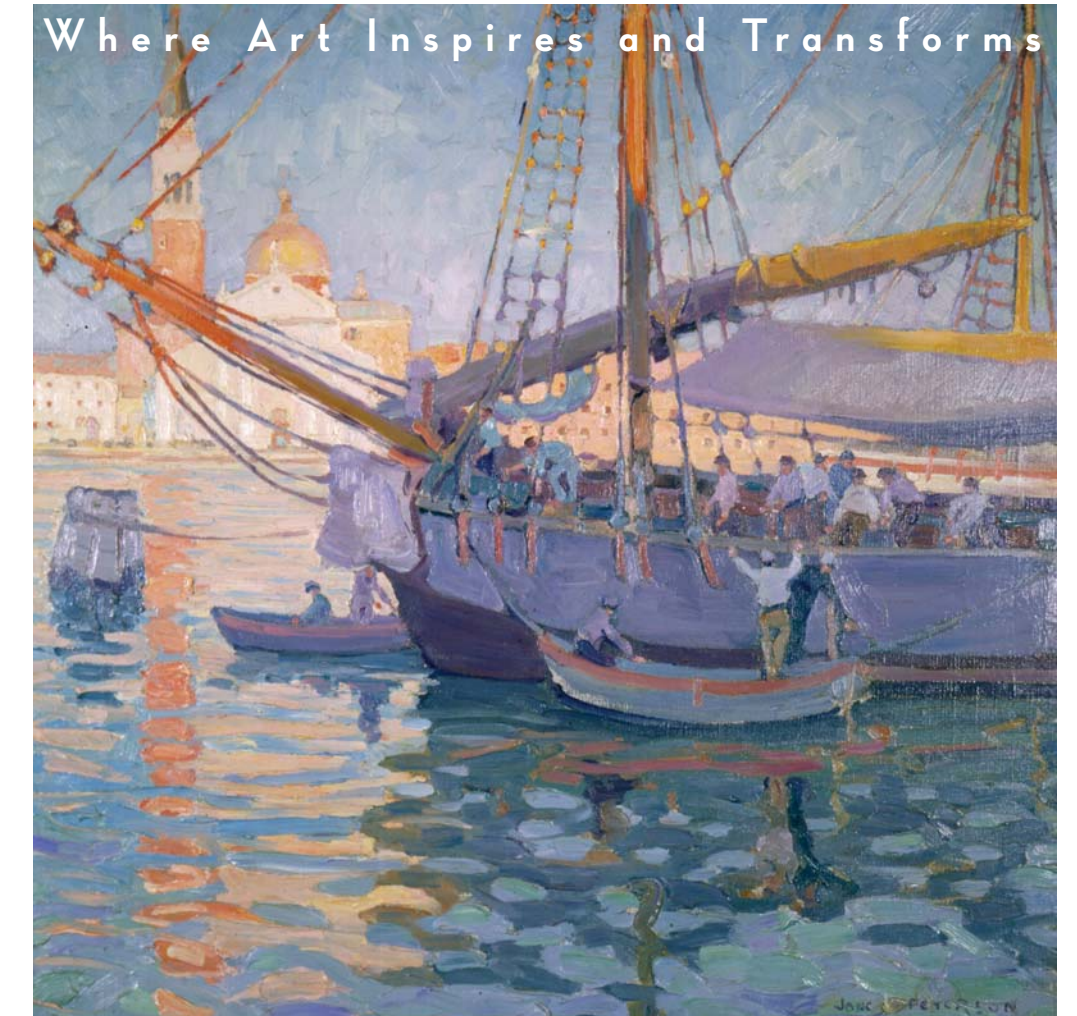
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HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

Gallery Guide



American Perspectives: 1907-1992
September 4 - December 14, 2007 • Emily Lowe Gallery

1930s and 1940s: The American Scene

In the 1930s and early 1940s, the term "American Scene Painting" referred to a popular style during the Great Depression, which was seen as an attempt to define a uniquely American style of art. Artists were associated with two main schools: rural Regionalism, or urban and political Social Realism. Regionalism refers to the work of rural artists mostly from the Midwest who came to prominence at this time.

Compare and contrast the two lithographs exhibited here that were created in the same year.



Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1975)
Night Firing (Tobacco Firing), 1943
Lithograph
8 3/4 x 13 1/8 in.
Gift of Edwin Marks
HU77.158

Benton was an artist from Missouri who trained at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Académie Julian in Paris. After he returned to New York in 1912 and established his own studio, Benton became increasingly critical of the modernism he had seen in Europe, and turned to mural paintings associated with a rural and small town vernacular or vocabulary. Benton became an acclaimed regionalist painter along with John Steuart Curry and Grant Wood. This lithograph, created during World War II, resonates with the waning of the regionalist movement.



Louis Lozowick (1892-1973)
Power (June), 1943-1944
Lithograph
9 7/8 x 15 3/4 in.
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Daniel Mason
HU77.109

Lozowick was born in Russia and immigrated to America as a 14-year-old. He was a highly regarded artist in New York who is best known for architectural interpretations which reflect the urbanization and mechanization he saw in America at the time. He glorified the modern city as a place of order, speed, efficiency and cleanliness. Lozowick is identified with Precisionism, a movement in which objects are rendered realistically with an emphasis on geometric form. Notice the cubes, squares and cylinders in this lithograph.

Late 1940s and 1950s: Abstract Expressionism

In the years following World War II, American artists were working hard to push the envelope and challenge accepted art practices and perspectives. Artists began inventing a purely American kind of art in which they expressed themselves through the use of form and color in a new abstract, nonrealistic and nonfigurative style. Action Painting stressed the physical action involved in painting and was practiced by Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline. The intense excitement, explosive energy and even violence of the works were startling and newsworthy.

Joan Mitchell is considered to be part of the second generation of Abstract Expressionists. Mitchell was a Chicago native and she received her B.F.A. and M.F.A. from the Art Institute of Chicago. In the early 1950s, she studied in New York with Willem de Kooning, who became her friend and mentor. She also studied abroad and lived in France permanently in the house formerly occupied by Claude Monet. Mitchell is best known for her lavish layers of colors and her broad curvilinear strokes to the canvas. This painting exemplifies the Abstract Expressionist style in her use of color, form and nonrepresentational imagery.



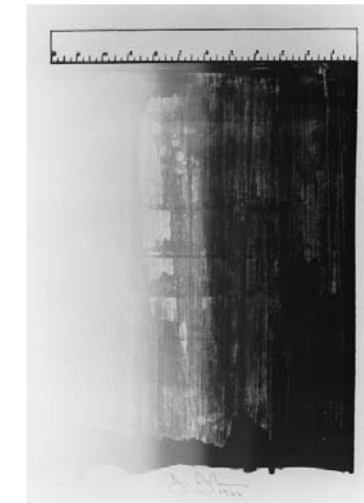
Joan Mitchell (1925-1992)
Metro, 1961
Oil on canvas
20 1/4 x 17 1/4 in.
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Milton Gardner
HU80.15

1960s and 1970s: Pop Art

Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg and Larry Rivers are considered the bridge between Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art. These artists mixed materials and media in a spirit of humor and irreverence for tradition.

Jasper Johns, a major 20th century artist, worked with familiar visual elements such as flags, targets, numbers and maps. By using these symbols, Johns wanted viewers to look again as if seeing them for the first time. He focused on the surface of the canvas by exploring the color and texture of the paint and often added real objects to his artwork.

In this lithograph, Johns used an actual ruler and scraped the paint vertically to create the image.



Jasper Johns (born 1930)
Ruler, 1966
Lithograph
28 x 20 in.
Gift of Dr. Joseph Singer
HU70.134

Be sure to also notice the following two works:

- Larry Rivers, *Jack of Spades*, 1960
- Robert Rauschenberg, *Stunt Man 1*, 1962

Awareness of mass culture through the rise of movies, advertising and graphic design, and the attempt to make art derived from it, brought forth the birth of Pop Art. Artists such as Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol embraced the culture of American consumerism. Their art was expansive and inclusive, and incorporated non-art materials in new ways. Critics were disturbed by the use of slick and shiny commercial art techniques and the lack of social commentary or political critique.

Roy Lichtenstein often included comic book characters or familiar advertisements in his work as a way to reach out to his audience. His works feature thick outlines and bold colors. Benday dots were Lichtenstein's trademark, a printing process which combines two or more different small, colored dots to create a third color. He was one of the more controversial artists of the 1960s, and in 1964, *Life* magazine published an article about Lichtenstein titled *Is He the Worst Artist in America?* Respect did indeed come later; by 1995 he was awarded the National Medal of Arts by President Clinton.



Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997)
Untitled from the portfolio For Meyer Shapiro, 1974
Lithograph and serigraph
32 1/2 x 24 in.
Gift of Edwin Marks
HU77.150

1980s and 1990s: Contemporary Art

Contemporary art refers to new forms of artistic expression from 1975 to the present. It seeks to deconstruct accepted imagery, past labels and categories, with a special focus on gender, ethnicity and sexual and feminist identities that were previously marginalized. Contemporary art explores the emergence and proliferation of late 20th century technology. Artists have embraced a full range of electronic media such as computer software, video, Internet, animation, robotics, information technology, sound, performance art and many others.

An important art movement of this time was Super Realism (also called Photo Realism), in which painters created canvases in a style closely resembling photographs. While at times the subject matter can have a strong emotional impact, it often does not conjure any particular interest. The true subject of photo realist work is the way in which we interpret images in order to create an internal representation of the scene depicted. Many of these paintings copy photographs with vigilant attention, careful craftsmanship and a scientific approach. As second generation interpretations of images with an overwhelming intensity of detail, the works have a distinctly artificial quality. The leading members of the movement are Richard Estes for his street scenes, and Chuck Close for his enormous portraits.

The artist used photo-derived images and developed his own technique of airbrush painting using thousands of dots and colors. First he painted his entire canvas green, then brown, and then purple, and used the layers to separate warm colors from cool colors.



Don Eddy (born 1944)
Dreamreader's Table V, 1990
Acrylic on canvas
49 7/8 x 49 7/8 in.
Gift of Louis K. and Susan Pear Meisel
HU97.11