

Milton Avery (American, 1885-1965)

The Fencers, 1944

Oil on canvas

Gift of Emily Hall, Baroness von Romberg, in memory of Maximilian von Romberg, 1949.4

Though the subject matter of fencing recurs in Avery's work, this is the most collage-like and daringly flat version of the motif that he produced. The 1940s saw Avery veering increasingly in the direction of pure abstraction, foregoing all but the most essential means by which to identify his subjects. In this painting the dynamic movements of the fencers' post and riposte are expressed through plunging orthogonal lines, created by what could be mistaken for collaged pieces of cut paper, affixed to the surface of the canvas. Paint is thinly applied in contrasting colors and the brushwork is barely discernible in this minimalist version of concentrated *repartée*.

Milton Avery (American, 1885-1965)

***Beach Riders*, 1941**

Oil on canvas

Gift of Leatrice Luria, Trustee of the Survivor Trust under the Luria Family Trust, established September 18, 1981, 1997.28

The art of Milton Avery is now recognized for its anticipation of the advanced abstraction associated with the likes of Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko, who both acknowledged their indebtedness to his example. Avery famously stood apart from the trends of the New York art world, preferring to develop his own idiosyncratic approach to shape, color, and line. This painting exhibits the deliberate *gaucherie*, high-keyed palette, and studied naiveté typical of Avery, in part inspired by Henri Matisse and the Fauves. The flat figures appear as collaged elements on the surface, while the overt absence of perspective and repeated curvilinear and arrow-shaped notational lines convey the idea of movemented waves and galloping horses, rather than their illusion.

Richmond Barthé (American, 1901-1989)

***Julius*, ca. 1940**

Plaster of paris (painted with a dark wash)

Gift of Ala Story, 00.184

Barthé is celebrated today as one of the most talented sculptors associated with the Harlem Renaissance, as well as a pioneering queer artist. Born in Mississippi, he studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, originally as a painter, but soon discovered his true medium in three dimensions. Politically engaged and acutely aware of the discrimination against Blacks that grew more violently aggressive, especially between the World Wars, Barthé specialized in the representation of the Black body. He was critically acclaimed early in his career, enjoying a one-man show at the Whitney Museum of Art in 1934, and was the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1940 and 1941. Two years later, his bronze, *The Boxer*, was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

When the New York art world shifted towards abstraction following World War II, Barthé increasingly turned to portrait sculpture to support himself. This bust sculpture was commissioned by Barthé's friend and famed photographer, Carl van Vechten. It depicts his housekeeper's nephew. The dark wash is not just a simulation of bronze, but also an attempt to capture the soft sheen of the youth's skin and the pure beauty of childhood.

Richmond Barthé (American, 1901-1989)

***The Lovers*, after 1949**

Bronze with reddish-brown patina

Lent by the Rowe Collection, L.2020.3.3

This is the only sculptural composition featuring a couple produced by the Harlem Renaissance artist Barthé. Generally, his work was composed of single figures and he was known for his depiction of sensual Black bodies, whether homoerotic dancers' bodies or heavily muscled working-class bodies. Barthé moved to Jamaica, seeking to find a haven for the lifestyle that he had long suppressed as a closeted gay, Black artist. However, he soon discovered that Jamaican culture was as homophobic, if not more so, than what he had experienced in Chicago and New York. Suspicion soon spread among the locals because of his use of nude models. Perhaps, this rare depiction of a heterosexual white couple was a means of dispelling such public perception. Sadly, the stress of discrimination brought about Barthé's mental collapse: he received shock therapy at Bellevue Hospital in New York, only returning to his art after a hiatus of several years.

Gifford Beal (American, 1879-1956)

***Landscape*, 1911**

Oil on canvas

Gift of Eloise Johnson Walker in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Kirk, 1962.28

Gifford Beal was a prolific painter and active member of the New York arts community, including acting as the longest running president of the Art Students' League from 1914-1929. The light touch and evocative use of color in this winter landscape showcase the Impressionist influences in Beal's earlier work, inspired by his training with William Merritt Chase, with whom he began studying at the age of twelve. Beal's work subsequently evolved in new directions, moving from hard-edged Realist scenes to vibrant depictions of the theater and circus, and finally to increasingly abstract color and brushwork later in life.

Arthur Bowen Davies (American, 1862-1928)

***Italian Landscape*, ca. 1925**

Oil on canvas

Gift of Wright S. Ludington, 1956.15

History has not been kind to Davies, despite the fact that he was considered one of the most influential progressive artists in New York and instrumental to the organization of the legendary Armory show in 1913, in which Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* made its debut. Stylistically, Davies alternated between a soft realism in his early landscapes and a Symbolist inflected, dream-like figuration, reminiscent of the classically informed pastorals of Puvis de Chavannes. This painting comes from a group of works that he produced while convalescing in Florence, which he frequented to relax after having been diagnosed with a heart condition in the early 1920s. It was a gift from our founder, Wright Ludington, who was known for his support of cutting-edge contemporary art.

Stuart Davis (American, 1892-1964)

***Yellow Hills*, 1919**

Oil on canvas

Gift of Heyward Cutting, 1980.73

After his epiphany at the 1913 Armory exhibition, where Davis saw works by Cézanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Matisse, he wrote the following: "I resolved that I definitely had to become a "modern artist." It took an awful long time. I soon came to look at color more objectively so that I could paint a green tree red without batting an eye ... but the ability to think about positional relationships objectively in terms of what they were, instead of what they represented, took many years." While Davis's technique would continue to morph over the course of his career, this painting is an excellent example of the lessons he gleaned from Van Gogh as applied to the Pennsylvania landscape. Paint is so thickly laid on that the impasto casts shadows and the high color palette responds less to descriptive ends than to the artist's emotional response to the motif. Clearly, the darker palette and urban realism of the Ashcan School to which he had earlier subscribed no longer held sway. Davis would go on to take a leadership role in American modernism, developing his own deadpan version of Cubist-inspired abstraction, often impelled by the design aesthetics of collage.

Alice Carr de Creeft (American, 1899-1996)

***Maternity*, 1932**

Rose coral

Gift of the Artist, 1958.38

The year that Carr carved this relief, she had newly become a mother. In the 1930s, she and her husband, José de Creeft, also a sculptor, split their time between New York, France, and Spain. These flattened, generously proportioned bodies, which seem to emerge from the rock as if of their own accord, exemplify the studied primitivism achievable through the direct-carve technique that Carr and her husband espoused. Following her divorce from de Creeft, Carr continued to practice as a sculptor, specialized in the representation of animals. She is perhaps best known for her life-size bronze portrait of the triple-crown winner, Secretariat.

José de Creeft (Spanish, 1884-1982)

***Head of a Woman*, before 1945**

Marble

Gift of Mrs. John D. Graham, 1958.11

A leading advocate of the direct carving technique, European émigré José de Creeft had a major impact on modernist sculpture in the United States. *Head of a Woman* demonstrates De Creeft's command of the hands-on approach which he shared with hundreds of students beginning in the 1930s and 1940s. In this work, the rough texture of chiseled hair sets off the polished finish and clean lines of the figure's face, demonstrating the high contrast which direct carving bestowed on modernist form. The simplified contour of the angular profile is characteristic of the way in which De Creeft effectively synthesized non-Western inspiration and modernist innovation.

Arthur Garfield Dove (American, 1880-1946)
***Hound (Hound that came with the House)*, 1934**
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Foster, 1995.13

After a trip to Paris and the South of France, where he fell under the spell of Matisse and Picasso, Dove returned to the States, developing one of the most radically abstract modes of painting of all American artists in his generation. Overtly non-representational, his use of arbitrary colors and simplified forms expressed his belief in the interpenetration of objects and environments. This whimsical painting was done after his return to Seneca County, New York to settle his family's estate in 1933. The interlocking, flattened forms which barely suggest the canine specified by the title are typical of his lyrical sense of the essential shapes that form the totality of nature. Dove's success as a leader of progressive art is attested by the fact that the collector and art historian Duncan Phillips had him on a retainer so as to have first dibs on any newly exhibited works.

Marsden Hartley (American, 1877-1943)

***Still Life*, ca. 1929-1930**

Oil on cardboard

Gift of Wright S. Ludington, 1950.3

Marsden Hartley was an active participant in the New York avant-garde associated with Alfred Stieglitz's legendary Gallery 291, credited with introducing American audiences to European Modernism. In emulation of the French artist, Paul Cézanne, he embraced still life as a means of pictorial investigation, developing his own geometric distillation of form. In this work, for example, Hartley fuses the table top and background into interlocking Cubist-like shards of color. Hartley often encoded his still-life compositions with personal meaning, referencing the most intimate parts of his life, including his grief at the loss of the man he loved to combat during World War I.

Marsden Hartley (American, 1877-1943)

***Alpspitz-Mittenwald Road*, ca. winter 1933-1934**

Oil on paper board

Gift of Mrs. Sterling Morton to the Preston Morton Collection, 1960.61

This is one of a series of paintings produced by Hartley during the most fecund periods of his late career. A highly experimental artist, who traveled extensively in France and Germany, Hartley brought all the avant-garde lessons of the previous twenty years to bear, achieving a truly original pictorial idiom. Like Cézanne and his mountain in the South of France, Hartley strove to capture the specific character of the mountains he studied in the Swiss Alps. The simplification of forms, calligraphic contouring, and overall unfinish attest to Hartley's allegiance to a rigorous modernism that is as much indebted to German Expressionism as it is to the legacy of Cézanne and his emulators, including the Swiss Symbolist, Ferdinand Hodler.

Robert Henri (American, 1865-1929)

Derricks on the North River, 1902

Oil on canvas

Museum purchase for the Preston Morton Collection, with funds provided by the Chalifoux Fund, 1977.45

After his training in Europe in the 1890s, Robert Henri returned to the United States in 1900, where he began teaching at the New York School of Art. This painting of oil derricks on the Hudson demonstrates his enduring interest in portraying the gritty reality of industrial life. Using a strong compositional diagonal, Henri emphasizes the machines which dwarf the human laborers in the foreground. At the same time, his loose brushstrokes and earthy palette depict sky, water, land, and figures as if formed from the same muddy substance. Henri would go on to play foundational roles in the American avant-garde groups "The Eight" and the Ashcan School, which pushed back against prescriptive artistic norms to promote new forms of urban realism.

Robert Henri (American, 1865-1929)

14th of July - Boulevard St. Michel, ca. 1898

Oil on canvas

Gift of Merloyd Ludington Lawrence and Nicholas Saltus Ludington, 1993.2

This nocturnal scene depicts a crowd gathered in the Latin Quarter of Paris for Bastille Day celebrations, the figures abstracted and illuminated only by the optical effect of fireworks blossoming overhead. Henri spent several formative years in Europe, where he was particularly inspired by the dark palettes and gestural brushwork of Manet, Velázquez, and Frans Hals. Henri first studied in Paris at the Académie Julian from 1888-1891, a popular alternative to the official École des Beaux-Arts for foreign (and women) artists. He then returned to Europe from 1895-1900, the period in which this canvas was painted, exhibiting at the Paris *Salons* in 1896 and 1897.

Malvina Hoffman (American, 1885-1966)

***Les Orientales*, 1914**

Bronze

Gift of Mrs. George M. Newell, 1946.5.2

A double portrait of the acclaimed *Ballets Russes* dancers Anna Pavlova and Laurent Novikoff, this sculpture shows the duo in a ballet first staged in 1913, which the young Philadelphian Malvina Hoffman would have seen in London. While in the actual ballet the dancers would have been clad in elaborately exotic costumes designed by Léon Bakst, the artist chooses to show the pair nude. As such, they have become timeless, suspended forever in a passionate and erotically-charged moment.

Leon Kroll (American, 1884-1974)

***Beach Scene*, ca. 1937**

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Christian Title, 1992.12.3

Leon Kroll is best known for his figurative paintings, particularly of the female nude. This beach scene allows the artist to explore his interest in the human body through the monumental, writhing figures of beach-goers. Exploiting color for dramatic effect, the unnaturally bright swimsuits, umbrellas, and beach towels create a jarring contrast with the menacing clouds and rough waves. The figures battling the wind suggest an almost primordial conflict between man and nature. Kroll's stylized forms could draw inspiration from Picasso's classicized depictions of bathers in the 1920s or 1930s, featuring increasingly simplified geometric forms.

Yasuo Kuniyoshi (American, 1893-1953)
Weather Vane and Objects on a Sofa, 1933
Oil on canvas
Gift of Wright S. Ludington, 1942.30

Though he lived and worked in the United States, Kuniyoshi was never allowed to become an American citizen due to the prevalent xenophobia between the World Wars, which culminated with the Japanese internment camps in 1942. His art, by his own description, was an attempt to fuse his experiences in the West with the Eastern sources of his native Japan, which he left as a teenager, barely seventeen years old. One of the most sophisticated avant-garde artists practicing in New York, Kuniyoshi synthesized European modernism with his highly personalized lexicon of motifs. This painting, done after a revelatory trip to Paris, amounts to a symbolic statement of his artistic evolution. On the uptilted sofa — likely sourced from his many trips to antique shops and flea markets in upstate New York — we are presented with a reproductive print after a famous painting by the Spanish artist, Goya, a copy of the major art periodical in Paris, *Cahier d'art*, a concave face mold used to create sculptural replicas, a folk art weathervane in the shape of a galloping horse, several pears and what look to be the globular shapes of (perhaps, Japanese) eggplants. The flatness of the composition and hard-edged, independent modeling of each object recalls the early work of Miró, while there is a Chagall-like sensation of objects floating in an anonymous space, as if in a dream.

Rico Lebrun (American, b. Italy, 1900-1964)

***Self Portrait*, ca. 1940**

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Girard Van B. Hale, 1950.5.1

The resemblance of this confident self-portrait to Blue Period self-portraits by Picasso is not accidental. By the time he recorded his features in this canvas, Lebrun was a leading modernist in the Los Angeles area, known for the sophistication and ambition of his art. Years spent in Italy studying Renaissance mural paintings, combined with artistic alliances not only with Picasso, but a whole host of European leaders of the avant-garde, meant that Lebrun was uniquely positioned to advocate for public art of the highest modernist ideals. Impelled by the human tragedy of the Holocaust, Lebrun took on commissioned murals that treated universal themes of suffering, often mobilizing timeworn Christian subjects articulated through Picasso-esque distortions of the human figure. Twice recognized with the distinction of a Guggenheim fellowship, Lebrun was also designated artist-in-residence by SBMA director, Donald Bear. At the end of his career, which was cut short by cancer, Lebrun held a faculty position at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Paulanship (American, 1885-1966)

***Flight of Night*, 1916**

Bronze

Gift of Mrs. George M. Newell, 1946.5.1

This seemingly weightless figure is a first-rate example of Manship's refined technique. The figure is likely a personification, and perhaps even identifiable as Artemis, the goddess of the moon who was chased away by her twin brother, Apollo, god of the sun. Manship was an admirer of ancient art, especially Egyptian, Archaic Greek, and Etruscan. In this piece, traces of all of these sources can be detected, as filtered through a distinctly modern, Art Deco sense of design. One of the finest works of the artist's early maturity, this sculpture is one from an edition of twenty, and can also be found in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian, and the National Gallery of Art.

John Marin (American, 1870-1953)

Composition, Cape Split, Maine, No. 3, 1933

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mrs. Sterling Morton to the Preston Morton Collection, 1960.71

One of a group of artists promoted by Alfred Stieglitz, John Marin was a central figure in the New York avant-garde who sought to capture a distinctly “American” sense of place, using a Fauvist palette and Cubist fracturing of planes in his interpretation of the New England landscape.

This painting was inspired by a remote point of land east of Mount Desert Island, Maine, which Marin first visited in 1933. The following year, he purchased an oceanside summer home on the island. The dramatic Maine coastline, with its craggy rocks, stormy seas and evergreen forests, is condensed into a series of shifting Cubist planes, rendered with various thicknesses of paint. The diamond and zigzag shapes may have been inspired by the Native American crafts that he admired in the home of famed New Mexican arts patron Mabel Dodge Luhan, who hosted the painter during his 1929 stay in Taos.

Maurice Brazil Prendergast (American, 1858-1924)

***Summer in the Park*, ca. 1905-1907**

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Sterling Morton, 1959.52

The brilliant colors and expressive swipes of paint in this canvas capture the energy of figures in motion on a summer's day. Prendergast was known for his lively scenes of crowds at the park or the beach, executed in watercolor, oil paint, or monotype prints. In this painting, the ground tone of the canvas is visible underneath his loosely brushed paint strokes, a method reminiscent of Prendergast's watercolor technique, where he deliberately used the white of the page to create highlights. This technique contrasts with his later work, where he turned to a much thicker, impasto paint application, sometimes even painting on top of previous artworks to create mosaic-like textural surfaces.

Kay Sage (American, 1898-1963)

***Second Song*, 1943**

Oil on canvas

Gift of the Estate of Kay Sage Tanguy, 1964.32

Sage developed her own distinctive brand of surrealism after meeting the French artist Yves Tanguy, whom she brought back with her to the States upon the outbreak of World War II. They eventually settled in Connecticut, where they lived and worked for the remainder of their lives. Like Tanguy, Sage sought to achieve a dream-like effect through hallucinatory, airless landscapes, devoid of human inhabitants but populated by unsettling draped figures, whose humanity cannot be ascertained. Though overshadowed by her more famous husband, Sage was determined to be taken on her own terms, and in retrospect, it is now evident that Sage was as influential for Tanguy's later work as he was in her early development. The muted palette and nearly invisible brushwork are a constant feature of Sage's work, lending her images the illusion of having materialized without human agency.

Everett Shinn (American, 1876-1953)

***The Seine, Right Bank*, ca. 1905**

Oil on canvas

Bequest of Margaret Mallory, 1998.50.60

A key member of “The Eight” and the Ashcan School, Shinn’s work helped promote both groups’ goals of depicting the realities of urban life. This moody Parisian scene showcases his attention to the inner workings of daily life in the city, focusing on the industrial boats and buildings at the river’s edge rather than the famous architectural highlights of the Seine. Shinn first traveled to Paris with his wife in 1901, a trip that would prove to be transformative in shifting his attention towards innovative theater and performance scenes, inspired by French artists such as Manet and Degas.

John Sloan (American, 1871-1951)

City from the Palisades, 1908

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mrs. Sterling Morton to the Preston Morton Collection, 1960.82

An acolyte of Robert Henri, Sloan produced gritty pictures of the pulsing life he witnessed in New York, consistent with the urban realism of the Ashcan school. However, he was also a devoted landscape painter, as this early example attests. In the summer of 1908, Sloan visited friends in Coytesville, NJ, across the Hudson River. He immediately set to painting what he described as “an apron of ground” from the top of the Palisades, “looking through an opening among the trees at a glimpse of New York City to the south.” The gestural brushwork and summary description caused this painting to be rejected by the conservative jury of the National Academy of Design. But its rejection, along with other works produced by Henri and his followers, resulted in the establishment of alternative exhibitions, such as the 1908 show of “The Eight” and the 1913 Armory Show.

Florine Stettheimer (American, 1871-1944)

Journey to the Sun, ca. 1927

Oil on canvas

Gift of the Estate of Ettie Stettheimer, 1958.15

The unforgettable and always original Florine Stettheimer recently enjoyed the attention of a retrospective exhibition at the Jewish Museum in New York; a fitting repetition of the same honor that her close friend, Marcel Duchamp, helped to organize at the Museum of Modern Art right after her death at the age of 73. Interestingly, although she continued to paint throughout her lifetime, she chose never to exhibit her work in public after its tepid reception in a solo show held at Knoedler Gallery in 1916. Instead, her paintings were bestowed upon friends and family as gifts, or made for her own personal pleasure alone. That is likely the case in the instance of this flower picture, which may be one of the series that she produced upon the occasion of her birthday. She called these pictures “eyegays,” a reference to their visual rather than olfactory interest, as in the small bouquets of flowers known as nosegays. The fantastical ascent of these fading flowers, powered by angels’ wings and led by a dragonfly is typical of Stettheimer’s whimsy, as is the faux naïveté of its childlike execution. Famously, Stettheimer was named by Andy Warhol as his favorite artist — a choice one well understands given their shared understated sophistication.

Ray Stanford Strong (American, 1905-2006)

Rainy Day Under the EI, 1926-1927

Oil on canvas mounted on board

Museum purchase with funds provided by Robert and Marlene Veloz, 1995.4.3

Best known for his later work as a muralist and California landscape painter, Strong initially studied with Frank DuMond at The Art Students League in New York City in the 1920s. This work demonstrates Strong's use of DuMond's nine-value gray scale, a method used to create light and shadow by combining gray values with pure colors. Strong's interest in the Ashcan School's style of journalistic realism and urban subjects is also evident in this dynamic city scene. His canvas captures a snapshot of everyday street life under the EI, an elevated railway connecting the boroughs of New York, which ran from the late 19th century until its replacement by the modern subway system in the 1950s.