

DOCENT DATES

December 2

Fabian Leyva-Barragan,
Curatorial Assistant,
Photography and New
Media "Highlights from
SBMA's New Media
Art Collection".

December 16

Charlie Wylie, Curator
of Photography and
New Media "Facing
Forward: Photographs
from the Collection".

January 6, 2021

TBD

January 2021

TBD



Arthur Bowen Davies (1928-1962) began painting in the tonalist tradition of the Hudson River School, absorbed European Modernist art and was the major force behind the collection of European art displayed at the Armory in New York City in 1913—an exhibition which shifted American realistic art into more abstract and expressionistic styles. We see the melding of tonality and expressionism in this work, *Italian Landscape, 1925*, an oil on canvas, which caught the acute curatorial eye of Wright Ludington, a founding force of our museum.

Dear Docents,

As with everything else during the pandemic, it feels odd wishing you Happy Holidays. I have had to remind myself almost daily of all the good things in my life that I will never again take for granted—all of us gathering for our annual Holiday Party comes to mind. We are still planning a *Spring Fling* for when it's safe to gather in 2021. *In the meanwhile*, it's great to see all of you joining our engaging Zoom lectures. It's a far cry from seeing each other in person, but the good "turnout" reflects the ongoing enthusiasm and commitment that keeps us working toward that day when we are once again touring. A big thank you to Patsy and Rachel for continuing to line up interesting speakers.

When it's safe for the Museum to reopen, our Provisional instructors and Evaluation teams will be offering individual coaching to docents. Along with masks and social distancing, we will be retuning to a changed world after almost a year of no touring. Thank you to these teams—in particular Paul Guido—for coming up with a practical way to help us prepare for the new reality of enduring precautions and the old joy of touring visitors in the galleries. Details to follow. I wish each and every one of you safe and happy holidays.

Patty



Patty Santiago,
Docent Council
President

Tiny Prayer, by Micah Bucey

Submitted by Karen Brill

May you remember, even though this feels interminable, this is not forever.

May you give gratitude for all the alternate ways that we have to hold one another, even as their powers pale in comparison to in-person pleasures.

May you reshape your fear of a current lack of freedom into a looking forward to future freedom.

May you send hopes for strength and safety to those whose vocations afford them no option to stay inside.

May you feel the potential of what we can do together if we will all cooperate, commiserate, and commit to protecting the most vulnerable among us.

And may we all simply work from the place we are to get to the place we so desperately want to be. May it be so.

Amen.

From our Membership Chair

Patti Firestone



Happy Holidays!

Art-related Activities Count!

Send your service hours:

Pattie.Firestone@gmail.com



Two Early Groundbreaking American Modernists: From Expressionism to Abstraction by Ricki Morse

Marsden Hartley (1877-1943), one of the first American painters to incorporate European modernist ideas, made paintings that embody the man himself—a wandering, passionate loner, variously described as “big,” “gawky” and “charismatic,”—revealed in aliveness in the landscape. Born in Maine, his mother died when he was eight and the family dispersed, sending him to live with an aunt. He was already making sketches of Maine’s rugged terrain, finding solace in nature which increasingly imbued his work with personal meaning. When he was sixteen his father married Martha Marsden, and the family reunited in Cleveland where he took his step mother’s maiden name as his own, replacing his given name, Edmund. He soon won a scholarship to the Cleveland Institute of Art and with a stipend given him by a board member moved on to the Merritt Chase School of Art New York City, seeing his first Cezanne and absorbing European Modernist art in galleries and museums.

In 1909 Alfred Stieglitz gave Hartley his first one-man show at Gallery 291, mostly dark landscapes influenced by William Glackens (1870-1938) whose moody, expressionistic canvases shared Hartley’s projection of emotion into landscape. The family had moved back to Maine, and after completing his studies at the National Academy of Design in the city, he joined them, working odd jobs and painting, participating in small exhibitions, writing poetry and stories, reading philosophy and fiction, practices he continued throughout his life. A second successful exhibition at Gallery 291 facilitated Hartley’s first trip to Europe. In Paris he was welcomed into the Gertrude Stein circle of modernist artists and writers, and in Berlin became friends with the Blue Rider (Der Blaue Reiter) artists with whom he felt acceptance of his homosexuality for the first time.



Marsden Hartley, American,
Portrait of a German Officer, 1914.
Oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum
of Art, NYC

Drawn to the heraldic symbols and militaristic stance of the German officers, these became the subjects of many paintings, and it was here that he fell in love with a young officer, the cousin of an artist friend, moved to Berlin and in 1915 mounted a gallery show to critical acclaim. However, the war was escalating. The object of his affection, Karl von Freyburg, was killed in World War I, immortalized by Hartley as “KvF” in the Met’s painting. Hartley returned to New York City in mourning, where his latest work, shown at Stieglitz’s 291 Gallery, was seen as pro-German, by some even anti-American. Again finding solace in his nomadic urge, he retreated to Bermuda for the winter, painting and writing poetry. Throughout travel back to Maine and Taos, New Mexico, he continued to write—conversational essays on artists and writers, particularly Emerson, Thoreau, and Wordsworth. These were published in 1921, *Adventures in the Arts*, and in 1923, *Twenty-Five Poems*.

Hartley continued his wandering—to Berlin in the 1930s, painting in Italy, France, and Mexico, and back to southern Germany for the last time, where he painted our *Alpspitz-Mittenwald Road*, an iconic Marsden Hartley. It could have



Alfred Stieglitz, *Marsden Hartley*, 1916, platinum print,
National Gallery of Art,
Washington, DC, Stieglitz Collection



Marsden Hartley, 1877-1943, *Alpspitz—Mittenwald Road, Winter, 1933-34*, SBMA. Sterling Morton Collection

been painted by no other. We feel the certainty of his brush strokes, the clarity of his personal vision, the incorporation of modernism with the geometric fragmentation of the image, the flattening and reconstruction of the landscape, the expressionistic distortion of color and light. He said, "I want to paint the livingness of appearances." And it is that very livingness that grabs us—the muscularity, the sense of portraiture, the essence of the mountain, its power projecting toward us out of the clouds.

During the last ten years of his life, he lived for a while in Nova Scotia with a fisherman's family, occasionally visited New York City and Cleveland, but spent most of his time painting in Maine, the Atlantic Coast filling his canvases as living creatures. He died at 66 in Addison, Maine, (Cape Split Beach), near the place of his birth. "I am not a 'book of the month' artist and do not paint pretty pictures; but when I am no longer here my name will register forever in the history of American Art and so that's something too." — Marsden Hartley

John Marin (1870-1953)

To move from Marsden Hartley to John Marin requires retuning our eyes to line and implied movement, to the quiet of empty space, to the lyricism of watercolor. John Marin is considered one of the first American abstract artists, yet toward the end of his life he painted the ocean off Maine with expressionistic passion. But there is little doubt that the line is the core of Marin's work, heralded by his early pursuit of a career in architecture and the childhood practice of carrying a sketch pad, which was soon filled with rough line drawings of the buildings, bridges and structures he had passed in New York, his "home city." He was born in New Jersey and raised there by aunts after his mother's death shortly after his birth. He aspired to become an architect and always thought of his growing pile of sketch books as "notes" about what he'd seen on his walks. He attended Stevens Institute of Technology in pursuit of a degree in architecture, but failed to engage with the work. From age 19 to 22 he attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia and then the Art Students League in New York City. In 1905, like many art students of the day, he traveled to Europe, first to Paris, where he exhibited his work at the Salon, beginning five years of travel on the continent—Netherlands, Belgium, England and Italy—viewing modern art in all its evolving forms. All the while he was developing a watercolor technique, layering thin washes of color with strong linear elements suggesting movement or density or mass. These very techniques became the basis of his abstract work in oils, handled much as he had the watercolor. In the meanwhile, Edward Steichen, the famous American photographer and curator, had seen Marin's work at the Paris Salon and told his friend Alfred Stieglitz about Marin, who upon returning to New York was offered a show at Gallery 291 in 1909. The relationship between Stieglitz and Marin lasted 40 years until Stieglitz death, providing annual gallery shows, publications, support for Marin's freedom to paint and travel.

These two images contain the subtle and illusive pressures on display in Marin's drawings and watercolors, which provide the basis for his later work in oils. *Brooklyn Bridge #6 (Swaying)*, 1913, captures the pow-

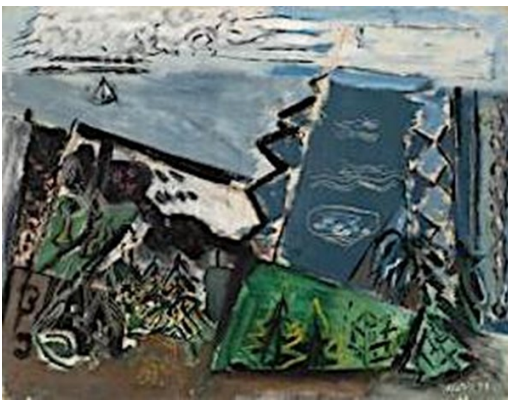


Alfred Stieglitz, *John Marin*, 1921, palladium print, National Gallery of Art, D.C.



John Marin, *Brooklyn Bridge #6 (Swaying)*, 1913, etching, published by A. Stieglitz, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

bought a summer house on the coast In Addison, Maine (Cape Split), to share with their newly born son, a respite from the art world of NYC where Marin was increasingly regarded as the most important American modernist of the time, and was seen by some as the father of American Abstract Expressionism. *Composition, Cape Split, Maine, No. 3* is a superb example of Marin's evolving abstractionist painting, never completely releasing the view to abstraction, always retaining representational reference. Viewed from a cliff above the beach, the jagged rocks along the shore become a linear design, capturing the harsh beauty of the scene in naturalistic monochromatic tones, given scale by the tiny



John Marin, *Cape Split, Maine, No. 3*, 1933, oil on canvas, SBMA

years gifting them to appropriate libraries and museums.

"What I attempt to do in my own work," Marin wrote, "is to put down objects—a kind of mind picture in suspended motion so that when one of my pictures is called abstract, it is only because I leave it to the imagination to supply whether what I have painted is a gull, or a ship, or a person. Let the onlooker supply anything he wishes."

erful slow movements of the steel structure against the tiny figure of the man in overcoat on the bridge, all moving within the elaborate design and massive bulk of the bridge. In *Downtown, New York*, 1923, freely applied lines of charcoal contrast with the soft pastels and the soaring mass of the buildings to focus the complexities of the scene, the movement of the bridge, the monumentality of the buildings. Marin leaves it to us to find our way, not offering the orienting figure as he moves into increased abstraction. Though primarily abstract, *Downtown, New York*, has an expressionistic quality as we stare up at the soaring buildings, monuments to the power of the city, perhaps remembered from a young boy's point of view.

Marin spent his first summer in Maine in 1914 with his new wife, Marie, and its rocky coast became a favorite subject. Later he and Marie



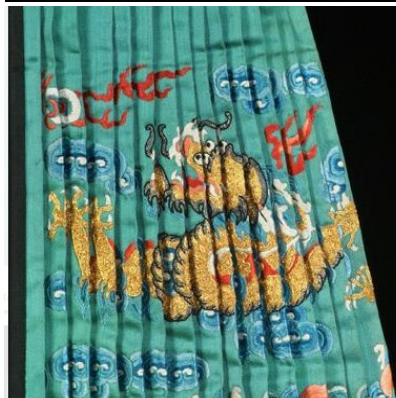
John Marin, *Downtown, New York*, 1923, watercolor on paper, Tate London.

sail boat in the bay. Marin often set up his easel on the porch and spent the summer months sketching and painting the scene, always with the abandon of a sketch, and a commitment to the power of the line.

When Alfred Stieglitz died in 1946, Marin joined his widow, Georgia O'Keeffe, in settling the extensive Stieglitz collections in New York, honoring the significance of their long relationship to his development as an artist. The death the next year of Marie, his constant companion and champion, left Marin saddened. He continued painting in Cape Split, where he died at 83. His son, John Jr. devoted his life to curating his father's papers, works of art and writing, through the

A Little Mohr Conversation

Ralph E. Hays, 2008



“Turquoise Skirt” mid-19th c, Qing dynasty (1644-1911)
Turquoise silk satin weave, applied satin borders and bindings, cotton waistband, embroidery including gold-wrapped thread.



In 1989, Mary V. and Ralph E. Hays donated 150 beautifully preserved Chinese textiles dating from the late Ming through Qing dynasties (17th through 20th centuries), taking the Museum’s Asian holdings to a new level, redefining the collection, said Curator Susan Tai. Also on the curatorial staff was Merrily Peebles, who had worked with the couple for years. With help from Susan Tai, I met with Merrily, who arranged my contact with Ralph. He was 87 at the time, a widower living up north. This interview was conducted over two phone conversations.

Lori: Mr. Hays, why textiles? How did you find your way to this art form?

Mr. Hays: I was a soldier in the Air Corps stationed in Oakland in 1942. One day I went into Chinatown and of course, I wanted to buy something. I didn’t have much money so I bought these covers. I sent one to Mary—we weren’t married yet—and one to my mom.

Lori: What about these fabrics was so appealing?

Mr. Hays: [Laughing] I could afford them! Textiles weren’t considered art by some people...can you imagine? But the craftsmanship, the images, they were gorgeous.

Lori: Was that the beginning of your attachment to textiles?

Mr. Hays: No, that came early in my life. Both my mother and Mary’s were Victorian and liked to sew. We’d been around fabrics all our lives. My mother loved these thin exotic Persian fabrics...I still use one to cover my computer. I guess that’s

where I first learned to appreciate decorated silk.

Lori: Chinatown, 1942, donation, 1989. What about the 47 years between?

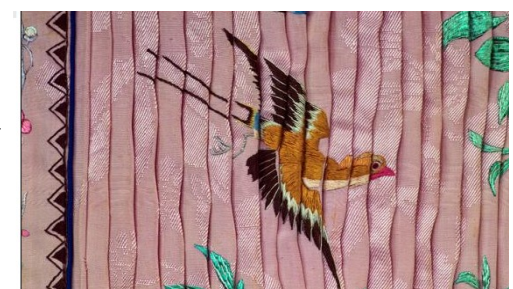
Mr. Hays: After we married and moved to D.C. I worked for the Dept. of Transportation and Mary was a librarian at the Library of Congress. The east coast at that time was a big textile center because textiles from China were brought into eastern ports by whalers in the late 1800s after China was open to trade. I guess it was around 1949 that we began going to auctions, which is where we bought most of our Chinese pieces.

Lori: How did you go about forming the collection?

Mr. Hays: We didn’t know we were forming a collection! We had been collecting...you know, just for fun since the mid-1940s and we were accumulating more and more stuff. It was probably in the mid-1950s that it dawned on us—‘My God, we have a collection!’



Chair Cover, (detail) 18th c., yellow silk satin weave.



Skirt with “fishnet” pleats. 19th c. Pink silk weave damask, twill patterning, embroidery

Lori: Did this epiphany change your approach?

Mr. Hays: Yes. Both Mary and I are historians...of course we didn't make our living that way, but that's what we loved. It occurred to us that these textiles captured history through clothing. We wanted to represent various aspects of each piece – the style, technique, imagery. For example, the skirts. If we couldn't get a piece in good condition, we'd get the one available and hope to upgrade later. They were rare so we bought what we could get.

Lori: This sounds like the perfect mix of history and textiles.

Mr. Hays: It really was. In Chinese textiles, the images all meant something; it was a common language that everyone knew. The decorations, the symbols on court dress, for example, are mostly about nature and good wishes...long life and all that. The Chinese were limited in what they could depict because of the Manchu. But even so, the textiles express the values of that time, the culture.

Lori: How did you go about establishing authenticity?

Mr. Hays: Mary was the brains of the operation. Since she was a librarian, she did all the research. We would spend hours in the Textile Library at the Metropolitan Museum and also at the Chicago Art Institute. Then I did all the documentation on where we got it, any stories we knew associated with it, how much it cost. Of course, the prices then were quite different from what they are now. In today's market, we could not duplicate this collection in either quality or cost. It's expensive!

Lori: Did you buy mostly at auctions?

Mr. Hays: Mostly. But there were other unexpected places where we got pieces, like the Peacock Feather robe. That robe is nearly unique and even to us, back then, we knew it was a real find even though it needed repair.

Lori: I sense a story here...

Mr. Hays: Yes, and it's a good one. We were living in San Francisco and had become known in the area as collectors, scholars. We could date and repair things, so people sought us out when they needed information of some sort before selling a piece. Well, one day this gentleman comes to the door and he has a robe that had been brought back from China by a missionary. The Japanese...they had invaded China...and caught this missionary trying to leave and threw him in prison. But one of his servants saved the robes by rolling them up and hiding them behind a wall in the house. He got out of prison and managed to get out with all three robes. The man who came to our door said the missionary needed money and wanted to know how to repair the robe. We talked about it with him, and he left. The next day he called and asked if we wanted to buy it!

Lori: Wow! So you repaired that extraordinary piece?

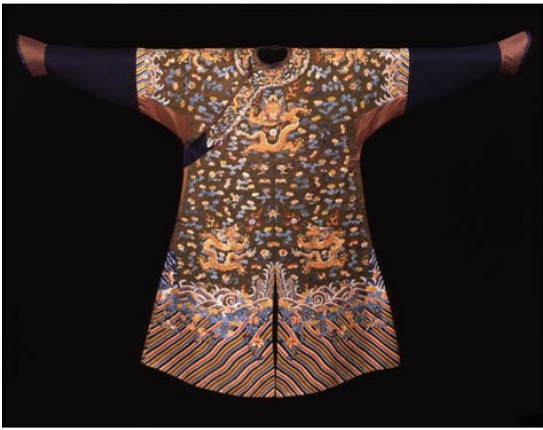
Mr. Hays: Yes! Mary actually did that one. The robe was so delicate and Mary had heard that human hair is one of the



Dancer's Skirt.
Qing dynasty. Orange silk weave damask with twill patterning, appliqued borders and bindings, woven ribbons, cotton waistband, embroidery with gold-wrapped thread.



18th c, Qing dynasty. White silk satin weave and cotton waistband, satin stitch embroidery and painted design



Man's Dragon Robe (jifu) with Peacock Feather Embroidery, late 18th to early 19th century.

strongest fibers that exist. She had long hair, so she took some long strands and used them as thread. She had to be very careful because the technique was to knot the strand of hair at the needle rather than at the end, then do the first few stitches to couch down. Very difficult.

Lori: That's an extraordinary history! Were there other great finds?

Mr. Hays: The skirts were a great find. Some of these were formal, worn only on the highest occasion by Chinese women. They were patterned after Manchu court imagery and when the Manchu fell, the Chinese wanted to get rid of these...they couldn't afford to be seen with them after the revolution...so they destroyed many of them. Some made it onto the market. But there were very few. Chinese looters often sold these to military people. Lots of diplomats ended up giving them to charity. Well, when we lived in D.C. in the '60s, Mary volunteered for a Catholic charity in Georgetown. That's where she got her favorite skirt – the green pleated one with the gold. The silk is fantastic! Some that we got were in bad condition, but since they were hard to find, they were very special so we got them anyway.

Lori: You got that glorious skirt from what was essentially a thrift shop?

Mr. Hays: [Chuckling] Yes, that one we did! Now the white one with embroidery and watercolors, I bought that for Mary. But we found another great piece in that same shop. Back then you could find things like that once in a while if you knew what you were looking for. Not anymore. But one afternoon...this was in 1960... we saw this beautiful valence with young boys on it, which turned out to be The 100 Children Valence. Even before we knew exactly what it was, we knew we had something good. We couldn't wait to get out of the store and go research it! That was probably our best find.

Lori: Were there any you let slip away?

Mr. Hays: Almost! And it ended up being one of our favorites! We were leaving for Europe and I had drained our bank account for the trip. At the last minute, we got a call from the Asian Art Museum in S.F. about a woman with a robe in Marin County. We almost didn't go...we had no money to buy anything. But we drove to Marin, saying we wouldn't be silly about it...if it was expensive, we'd walk away. So this woman opens the door and we come in and see this fantastic yellow robe, the empress dowager dress...*Manchu Woman's Robe*...and Mary and I just looked at each other. It was a showstopper! [Laughing] luckily, the woman didn't ask us how much we thought it was worth. She had a price on it of \$100-\$150...something like that. Just unbelievable! Of course we found a way to buy it.



(Bad screen shot) Bed Valence with 100-Boy Design (detail) (Qing dynasty, 1820-1840. Blue-green silk with silk embroidery including couched gold-wrapped threads.

Lori: Did you exhibit these pieces in your home?

Mr. Hays: We displayed some, yes. And we used some too. Back then we did what we wanted with them. I remember we used one golden dragon robe as a canopy [groans].

Lori: Had you been thinking about the future of the collection?

Mr. Hays: We had. Since the mid-1940s, we had been collecting both Chinese and Japanese textiles. But over the years Mary became more interested in Buddhist fabrics and those were mostly in our Japanese

pieces. So by the end of the '80s we were ready to do something with our Chinese collection.

Lori: Which brings us to your long association with Merrily Peebles.

Mr. Hays: We got to know Merrily in the '80s when she was Curator of Exhibitions at the Museum...I think that was her title. In 1986 Mills College in Oakland was doing a show on fukusa...ornamental Japanese pieces of fabric...that was coming to Santa Barbara and Merrily was working on that. Well, through her research she found out that we had a big collection of these fukusa and she wanted to borrow them. So she came up to San Francisco and that's when she found out we also had Chinese textiles and, of course, she has a tremendous background in textiles. We came to know Merrily very well over the years and had great respect for her. She's still a good friend.

We wanted our Chinese collection to go to a museum that was committed to caring for it, which is not easy because textiles are a lot of trouble. They require careful handling and take up a lot of room. Santa Barbara was the right museum.

Lori: How fortunate for us! Mr. Hays, thank you for talking with me, and for sharing these wonderful stories! They really add a whole other dimension. I hope when you come down for the exhibition [Everyday Luxuries] you go on a docent tour. I'm certain you would hear some of your fabulous stories.



Manchu Woman's Robe with Narcissus, Bamboo, Lingzhi Mushroom and Shou (Longevity) Character, late 19th c., Qing dynasty. yellow silk slit-tapestry weave, matching decorations on cuffs and border bands .



Pair of Temple Banners. 18th-early 20th century. Qing dynasty (1644-1911). Silk satin, brocades, damask and wooden supports. overall (each): 81 1/2 x 14 in



Remembering Queenie



Queenie Scheuwater

Photo by Doug McElwain



“Queenie had one of the keenest minds ever...a veritable steel trap for information with a passion for research. She had a deep knowledge of Asian art, but always wanted to learn more. One of her proudest accomplishments was training the docent class at LACMA, many of whom have now been touring for 25 years. Queenie's association with both LACMA and SBMA enriched her life in countless ways. She loved to recount a trip to India during which she was able to explain the intricate Hindu paintings to rather startled fellow travelers. Queenie really did enjoy working with other docents, helping make their tours better. I know I have benefited from our many, many luncheons thrashing out new ways to bring that passion for art to our visitors. She really was an asset to the Museum, and a treasured friend to me. I already miss her deeply.”

Gwen Baker

