ABOUT THE ART

Art from Europe and America, 1850-1950

Gallery 14
QUESTIONS?
Contact us at acklandlearn@unc.edu

ACKLAND ART MUSEUM
The University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill
101 S. Columbia Street
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
Phone: 919-966-5736

MUSEUM HOURS
Wed - Sat 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday 1 - 5p.m.
Closed Mondays & Tuesdays.
Closed July 4th, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve,
Christmas Day, & New Year’s Day.
About About the Art

The Ackland’s About the Art guides offer information about every work of art from the Museum’s collection that is on view in galleries 2, 3, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17. All of these galleries are marked on the Gallery Map available at the desk in the Lobby. In the bottom right corner of the label beside each object, there is an open book symbol with a number. You can find the same symbol and number on the top of the corresponding page in About the Art.

Within each entry, you can find the following information:

• At the top of the page, you’ll see a thumbnail image, the title of the object, who made it and with what materials, and where and when it was made

• Next, you’ll see bullet points with information or observations about the object (more or fewer, depending on how much we know about the object so far). There is no standard formula for what kinds of information appears, but you will often find comments on historical context, style, and materials.

• In keeping with the Ackland’s tagline, “Look Close, Think Far,” the first bullet point will often highlight something visible in the work of art itself.

• You will find names, phrases, and concepts that could be good internet search terms for those who want to learn more

• When specialized terms are used, you’ll see a definition, helpful contextual information, or language suitable for an internet search.

• Whenever we know the artist’s name, there will be some details about the artist’s life, often under the heading “About the Artist,” but sometimes as one of the bullet points.

For those visitors who want to engage further with an object, we also suggest other resources to investigate on our website: ackland.org/education/learning-resources.

The authors of About the Art include Ackland curators and educators who use a variety of sources. They consult museum records, art historical research, comments from outside specialists, and more.

About Gallery 14: Art from Europe and America, 1850-1950

This gallery and Gallery 17 feature art from Europe and America made during the one hundred years between the mid-nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth. Here the works are organized chronologically, so that the earlier works are at one end and the later works at the other, allowing visitors to track an increasing tendency toward abstract styles. In two display cases along the gallery’s main axis, changing installations of prints, drawings, and photographs from the Ackland’s collection complement the visual and thematic qualities of the paintings and sculpture.
Auguste Rodin
French, 1840 – 1917
Head of Balzac, 1897
bronze
Ackland Fund, 63.27.1

About the Art

- Nothing is subtle about this small head of the French author Honoré de Balzac. The profile view shows a protruding brow, nose, and mouth, and the hair falls in heavy masses.

- Auguste Rodin made this sculpture as part of a major commission for a monument to Balzac. He began working on the commission in 1891 and spent seven more years on it. Neither the head nor the body of Rodin’s sculpture conformed to critical or public expectations for a commemorative monument, including a realistic portrait likeness. Consequently, another artist ultimately got the commission.

About the Artist

1840: Born November 12 in Paris, France
1854: Began training as an artist
1871-76: Worked in Belgium
1876: Traveled to Italy
1880: Worked for the Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory; received the commission for one of his most famous works, monumental bronze doors called The Gates of Hell
1882: Met sculptor Camille Claudel, who became Rodin’s pupil, lover, and trusted studio assistant. Claudel is believed to have created whole and partial figures for The Gates of Hell
1896: His nude sculpture of the French author Victor Hugo created a scandal
1897: Made the Ackland’s Head of Balzac
1898: Exhibited his monument to Balzac and created another scandal
1917: Died November 17 in Meudon, France
Edgar Degas
French, 1834 – 1917
Spanish Dance, c. 1885, cast 1921
bronze
Ackland Fund, 74.21.1

About the Art

- The Spanish Dance retains the uneven surface of the wax model that Edgar Degas sculpted first, before the figure was cast in bronze. The surface absorbs and reflects light, suggesting the movements of the muscles in the dancer’s limbs.

- Degas’ body of work includes over 600 representations of dancing figures — paintings, drawings, and sculpted models. He made wax and mixed media statuettes of dancers as a way of studying their movement, often applying soft wax over a cork frame.

- During his career, Degas exhibited only one sculpture — Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen. It was on view for less than one month and then remained in the artist’s apartment until his death thirty-six years later. Art dealer Ambroise Vollard recalls the artist’s hesitation to show his sculptures or have them cast in bronze: “It’s a tremendous responsibility to leave anything behind in bronze — this medium is for eternity.”

About the Artist

1834: Born July 19 in Paris, France
1855-56: Attended the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris
1865: Exhibited at the official Salon in Paris
1870: Began taking an interest in dance and opera
1874: Participated in the First Impressionist Exhibition
1881: Showed Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen at the Sixth Impressionist Exhibition
 c. 1885: Modeled the Ackland’s Spanish Dance
1917: Died September 26 in Paris
Gustave Courbet  
French, 1819 – 1877  
*Roe Deer in the Snow*, 1868  
oil on canvas  
Ackland Fund, 62.1.1  
Conservation treatment for this painting, completed in 2008, was made possible by the generous support of Carol McNeel.

**About the Art**

- Gustave Courbet was an avid hunter and painted works like this one for patrons who shared his interests. The vantage point is that of a hunter watching animals in the distance; only the female deer has noticed. Courbet described a similar scene in a letter from 1866: “a splendid landscape of profound solitude, done deep in the valleys of my part of the world.”

- This landscape was probably executed quickly, using methods that challenged the conventions of academic painting. Courbet used a palette knife (a spatula-like instrument usually used to mix paint) to apply thick paint directly to the canvas, simulating the rough texture of the landscape.

- Courbet came from a farming family in the Franche-Comté, a region on the Swiss border of France. He spent much of his time in Paris, but continued to portray rural scenes, offering Parisian viewers realistic and unidealized views of life in the provinces.

**About the Artist**

1819: Born June 10 in Ornans, France  
1839: Moved to Paris, France  
1849: Exhibited for the first time at the Salon in Paris  
1855: Independently exhibited work that was rejected from the World’s Fair in Paris  
1868: Painted the Ackland’s *Roe Deer in the Snow*  
1871: Named curator of Fine Arts under the revolutionary government, the Paris Commune  
1871: Charged with the destruction of the Vendôme column in Paris and jailed  
1873: Retried and ordered to pay for the cost of re-erecting the Column; moved to Switzerland to live in exile  
1877: Died December 31 at La Tour-de-Peilz, near Vevey, Switzerland
Camille Pissarro
French, 1830 – 1903
The Banks of the Oise, Near Pontoise, 1876
oil on canvas
Ackland Fund, 65.28.1

About the Art

• Camille Pissarro painted with a technique commonly used by Impressionist artists. If you look closely at the sky, for example, you can see that he placed brush strokes of unmixed colors side by side rather than blending them together into a unified tone.

• This landscape is related to an 1876 series that Pissarro painted of the Oise River near his home in Pontoise, France. The Oise was open to traffic and industry, as is evident in the imagery in this painting. Masts of sailing barges and the smokestack of a steam-powered tug echo the tall chimney of the factory in the distance.

• Industrial development along the Oise began in the 1870s. Here, Pissarro balances urban and rural subject matter, showing industry as part of a peaceful summer landscape.

About the Artist

1830: Born July 10 in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Danish Virgin Islands
1856: Attended private classes at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, France
1859: Attended the Académie Suisse, an art school in Paris
1874: Helped organize the first Impressionist Exhibition
1875–86: Exhibited at all eight of the Impressionist exhibitions
1876: Painted the Ackland’s Banks of the Oise
1903: Died November 13 in Paris
About the Art

- Émile Bernard used similar colors to associate the woman’s face with the clouds, her head covering with the sky, and her clothing with the sea. He contrasted this color scheme with the reds, green, and browns of the land between the woman and the sea.

- She is wearing a traditional French Celtic headdress called a coiffe, the style of which would have been specific to her village.

- In a bill of sale dated 1901 Bernard noted this painting’s date and title and a description indicating that he painted it in the coastal village of Raguénez, in Brittany, on the rugged western coast of France. It depicts: “the sea, a heap of kelp, some oak trees, the head of a peasant woman in the foreground.”

- Kelp was harvested in some areas for use as fertilizer, fuel, and even fodder for animals. The prominent placement of the kelp in the painting almost makes it seem like the subject.

About the Artist

1868: Born April 28 in Lille, France
1886: Visited Normandy and Brittany, France; met fellow artists Paul Gauguin and Vincent van Gogh
1888: Worked in Pont-Aven in Brittany
1889: Exhibited paintings at the World’s Fair in Paris, France
1892: Painted the Ackland’s The Wave; organized the first French retrospective of the work of Van Gogh
1893: Travelled to Italy and then to Egypt, where he lived until 1903
1904: Returned to France
1941: Died April 15 in Paris
About the Art

- Certain landscape features in this painting by Jean Metzinger are readily recognizable, like trees, a field, a haystack, a building, and mountains. But they look less like an illusionistic view of receding space and more like a two-dimensional pattern of colors and lines. For example, Metzinger repeated the arc of a tree branch extending across the sky with the curve of the mountain.

- In an interview from about 1908, Metzinger stated, “instead of copying Nature we create a milieu of our own, wherein our sentiment can work itself out through a juxtaposition of colors.”

- In the same year he painted this landscape, Metzinger and the well-known post-Impressionist painter Paul Cézanne exhibited works in the same exhibition. Metzinger’s painting shows some similarities with Cézanne’s style, for example, in patches of color juxtaposed rather than blended, and in the use of dark outlines.

About the Artist

1883: Born June 24 in Nantes, France
1900: Studied at the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Nantes
1903: Sent three pictures to be exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris, France; moved to Paris
1904: Painted the Ackland’s Landscape
1906: Elected to a post on the hanging committee of the Salon des Indépendants
1912: Co-wrote a book about Cubism with the painter Albert Gleizes
1915-16: Served as a stretcher-bearer in World War I
1956: Died November 3 in Paris, France
Robert Henri  
American, 1865 – 1929  
**Sylvester, 1914**  
oil on canvas  
32 x 26 in. (81.2 x 66.0 cm)  
Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Art Acquisition Endowment Fund, 2017.2, L2023.2.4

### About the Art

- The ten-year-old boy depicted in this portrait is newsboy Sylvester Cunningham Smith, and this portrait is one of twenty-five extant paintings that Henri made in California during summer 1914. While Henri produced few portraits of African Americans during his career, he painted Sylvester three times that year.

- Sylvester sits before a brightly colored, abstract background. This is a departure from Henri’s dark backgrounds that he employed in earlier works.

- Henri had much experience in painting portraits of children; he wrote in his treatise *The Art Spirit* (1923) that “If you paint children you must have no patronizing attitude towards them.”

### About the Artist

1865: Born Henry Robert Cozad on June 24 in Cincinnati, Ohio  
1882: Changed his name to Robert Earl Henri after his father was involved in a fatal shooting and relocated the family from Nebraska to Colorado  
1886: Enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia  
1908: Helped organize the influential exhibition *The Eight* in New York  
1914: Painted *Sylvester*  
1915: Began teaching at the Art Students League of New York, where he remained until 1927  
1929: Died July 12, in New York, New York
About the Art

- In *Tree Forms* Arthur Dove transforms tree trunks and leaves into swelling, biomorphic curves and jagged lines that vibrate with energy. Through compositional cropping and a close-up angle — two techniques popular in photography of the time — Dove challenged the conventions of traditional landscape painting.

- Inside the serrated boundaries of the leaf-like forms, Dove applied delicate, feathery brush marks that surround bands of green and brown hues. The combination of the colors with their irregular edges creates an effect of reverberation.

- Dove was part of Alfred Stieglitz’s pioneering circle of modern American artists. Between 1912 and 1946, he had annual one-man exhibitions at Stieglitz’s galleries in New York City. *Tree Forms* does not appear in any records for those shows, but an inscription on the back of the painting in Stieglitz’s hand reads: “Tree Forms — 1932/Arthur G. Dove.” This painting is still in the original frame that the artist selected for it.

About the Artist

1880: Born August 2 in Canandaigua, New York
1903: Moved to New York, New York to work as a freelance illustrator
1907-09: Lived in France
1912: Participated in first of 34 annual one-man exhibitions at Alfred Stieglitz’s 291 gallery in New York
1924: Married painter Helen Torr
1932: Painted the Ackland’s *Tree Forms*
1933: Moved back to his childhood farm in Geneva, New York
1938: Returned to Long Island, New York, settling in an abandoned post office
1946: Died November 23 in Huntington, New York
Hale Aspacio Woodruff
American, 1900 – 1980
Landscape (Mississippi, Soil Erosion), c. 1944
oil on canvas
Ackland Fund, 2013.6

About the Art

• In July 1943, Hale Woodruff received a fellowship of $2,400 from the Julius Rosenwald Foundation “to pursue individual creativity in art.” He traveled through Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi documenting social and environmental issues in the rural South, such as the landscape with eroded soil seen here.

• In addition to showing soil erosion, Woodruff shows decaying vegetation. He paints some trees with leaves, such as those on the painting’s right side, a bare trunk in the back, and a fallen tree at the bottom of the canvas, blending in with the color of the earth around it.

• Two other works of art by Woodruff depict similar landscapes: one of those is a pastel in the collection of the North Carolina Central University Art Museum in Durham, North Carolina, and the other is a painting in the Mississippi Museum of Art in Jackson.

About the Artist

1900: Born August 26 in Cairo, Illinois
1931: In Paris, France, worked with American artist Henry Ossawa Tanner
1931–45: Taught at Atlanta University in Georgia
1936: In Mexico City, Mexico, studied with Diego Rivera
1943: Received a Julius Rosenwald Foundation fellowship
c. 1944: Painted the Ackland’s Landscape
1945–68: Taught at the Harlem Community Art Center, directed by sculptor Augusts Savage, and at New York University in New York, New York
1980: Died September 6 in New York

Chat with this work of art using ARTBOT. Instructions available in the Museum lobby.
Archibald John Motley Jr.  
American, 1891 – 1981  
**Mending Socks,** 1924  
oil on canvas  
43 7/8 x 40 in. (111.4 x 101.6 cm)  
Burton Emmett Collection, 58.1.2801

### About the Art

- *Mending Socks* portrays the artist’s grandmother, Emily Motley, who lived with the artist’s family in Chicago.

- The oval portrait at the upper left was a gift to Mrs. Motley from the woman who owned her when she was enslaved, given upon her emancipation.

- In a 1978 oral history interview, Archibald Motley said about *Mending Socks*, “I think it’s one of the best things I’ve done as far as portraiture is concerned.”

### About the Artist

1891: Born October 7 in New Orleans, Louisiana  
1894: His family moved to Chicago, where he spent the majority of his life  
1918: Graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago  
1924: Painted *Mending Socks*  
1927: *Mending Socks* was voted the most popular painting at the Newark Museum in New Jersey  
1929: Awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship  
1980: Received an honorary doctorate of fine arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago  
Archibald John Motley Jr.
American, 1891 – 1981
Between Acts, 1935
oil on canvas
39 ½ x 32 in. (100.3 x 81.3 cm)
Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Art Acquisition Endowment Fund, 2009.1, L2023.2.3

About the Art

- The people in this backstage dressing room made their livelihoods performing in front of audiences. Archibald Motley, however, composed the scene so that none of them actually engage with the painting’s viewers. In fact, the only one in the painting who does is the subject of the portrait on the wall.

- Beyond the door stands a Black man Motley has depicted in a caricatured manner, holding a cigar between thick red lips. His top hat, cane, white gloves, and too-short pants mark him as a minstrel performer.

- Motley includes a mirror directly opposite the space where the painting’s viewers stand, but the mirror reflects only the woman posed before it. The absence of any other reflection in the mirror excludes viewers from the backstage setting and casts them as voyeurs, unseen by the performers.

About the Artist

1891: Born October 7 in New Orleans, Louisiana
1894: His family moved to Chicago, where he spent the majority of his life
1918: Graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago
1933: Assigned to work for the easel division of the Public Works of Art Project
1935: Painted Between Acts
1929: Awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship
1980: Received an honorary doctorate of fine arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Lyonel Feininger
German, active in Germany and America, 1871 – 1956
Denstedt, 1917
oil on canvas
34 3/8 x 46 5/8 in. (87.3 x 118.4 cm)
Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Collection, 1988.27, L2023.2.1

About the Art

- Denstedt is a suburb of the German city Weimar, which Feininger began visiting in 1913.
- Feininger uses the principles of cubism to flatten and fragment Denstedt’s architectural features like staircases, fortifying walls, and Gothic towers.
- The acid-like yellows, oranges, and greens of the painting cast the features of this medieval town with an unnatural sense of menace and likely reflect the wartime tensions that its citizenry was experiencing as a result of World War I.

About the Artist

1871: Born July 17 in New York, New York
1888: Moved to Berlin to study with Ernst Hancke
1894: Began his career as a cartoonist
1909: Joined the artist group known as the Berliner Sezession
1917: Painted Denstedt
1919: Became the first faculty appointment at Bauhaus
1937: Returned to America after the Nazi Party declared his work “degenerate”
1956: Died January 13 in New York, New York
Rose Piper
American, 1917 – 2005
*Slow Down Freight Train*, 1946–47
oil on canvas
Ackland Fund, 91.8

About the Art

- The male figure in Rose Piper’s painting combines elements of abstraction and realism. Although his proportions are exaggerated and his skin is several shades of green, Piper took care to make his fingers gripping the train car, his facial features, and the texture of his hair more realistic.

- *Slow Down Freight Train* is one of a series of fourteen paintings related to African American folk and blues music. Its inspiration is Trixie Smith’s recording of Freight Train Blues, a song about the Great Migration (1913–46), when many Black people moved from the rural South to the urban industrial North in search of economic opportunity and escape from the Jim Crow South. In Piper's painting a man grieves, perhaps for his loved ones, his community, or a way of life left behind.

- In a 1990 letter to former Ackland director Charles Millard, Piper said that her painting is: “a woman’s plea for the train to slow down so that she might go along with her man.” The scene, then, is depicted from the woman’s vantage point (whether that woman is the painter or an imagined viewer) as she watches the man climb aboard the train.

About the Artist

1917: Born in the Bronx, New York
1940: BA from Hunter College with an art major and geometry minor
1943–46: Studied at the Art Students League, New York, New York
1946–47: Painted the Ackland’s *Slow Down, Freight Train*; won two consecutive fellowships from the Rosenwald Foundation
1947: First one-woman show, in New York at the Roko Gallery
1948: Won first prize in Atlanta University’s Annual Exhibition for Contemporary Negro Artists
1989: Solo show in New York, at the Phelps Stokes Fund
2005: Died in Connecticut

Listen to music related to this artwork with the Look & Listen Gallery Soundtrack. Visit [www.ackland.org/listen](http://www.ackland.org/listen) to access the playlist.
Albert Gleizes
French, 1881 – 1953

Composition, 1921
oil on panel
Ackland Fund, 69.27.1

Conservation treatment for this painting, completed in 1991, was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

About the Art

• In Composition, Albert Gleizes portrays a seated figure by layering a series of geometric, interlocking shapes to suggest a face, hair, and arms. This layering, together with the arrangement of verticals, horizontals, and diagonals, conveys an impression of the figure moving in space.

• The wood surface on which Gleizes painted Composition is plywood and over time it warped. Since attempting to flatten the panel would have damaged the painted surface, the Museum instead had a cradle built to support the curved surface.

• Gleizes came from an artistic family. His father Sylvan Gleizes was a successful fabric designer and amateur painter. His maternal uncle, Léon Commerre, was painter who had won the French artists’ academy’s Rome Prize in 1875. Another uncle, Robert Gleizes, was an art collector and dealer.

About the Artist

1881: Born December 8 in Paris, France
1902: First exhibited at the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Paris
1903: First exhibited at the Salon d’Automne in Paris
1911: Exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris
1912: Co-wrote Du Cubisme with Jean Metzinger
1921: Painted the Ackland’s Composition
1939: Moved to St. Remy-de-Provence, France
1953: Died June 23 in Avignon, France
Amédée Ozenfant
French, 1886 – 1966
*Sisteron*, between 1919 and 1928
oil on canvas
The William A. Whitaker Foundation Art Fund, 72.29.1

**About the Art**

- Amédée Ozenfant stripped away details, transforming Sisteron into the essence of a town in the south of France rather than portraying the specific place. Flat geometric planes, painted using tints and shades of burnt sienna and set against a muted blue sky, emphasize the mass of the architectural forms.

- Between 1918 and 1928, the artist made a number of paintings of Sisteron, town with pre-Roman origins, constructed in a narrow gap between two mountain ranges. Scholars have found it difficult to place these paintings in chronological order, hence the exact date of the Ackland’s painting is not known.

**About the Artist**

1886: Born April 15 in Saint-Quentin, Aisne, in northern France
1905: Travelled to Paris, France, and studied at the Académie de la Palette
1910-13: Lived in Russia, where he married artist Zina de Klingberg
1913: Returned to Paris; worked at the propaganda department during World War I
1919-28: Painted the Ackland’s *Sisteron*
1920-25: With Le Corbusier, became director and owner of a journal, L’Esprit nouveau
1939: Moved to New York, New York and became the head of the Ozenfant School of Fine Arts
1944: Became an American citizen
1953: Renaturalized as a French citizen
1966: Died May 4 in Cannes, France
Niles Spencer  
American, 1893 – 1952  
Farm Buildings, 1922-26  
oil on canvas  
Burton Emmett Collection, 58.1.244  
Conservation treatment for this painting, completed in 1997, was made possible by a grant from the Pforzheimer Foundation.

About the Art

- To create a rough texture in the grass at the bottom of the picture and in the trees, Niles Spencer glued sand to the canvas.

- During a trip to Paris, Spencer became interested in Cubism, but after a while he returned to painting New England landscapes. Farm Buildings shows his new style, in which he portrayed recognizable subjects, with flattened, geometric shapes. He wanted to reveal the beauty of rural and urban structures — grime, noise, harshness and all — without nostalgia or sentimentality.

- A stamp on the back of the canvas suggests that Spencer bought it while he was in Paris and brought it back to the United States, where he painted Farm Buildings.

About the Artist

1893: Born May 16 in Pawtucket, Rhode Island  
1913-15: Studied at the Rhode Island School of Design  
1915-17: Studied at the Ferrer School in New York, New York  
1921: Traveled abroad, visiting Paris, the northern coast of France, and England  
1922-26: Painted the Ackland’s Farm Buildings  
1923–30: Painted at the artists’ colony in Provincetown, Massachusetts  
1937: Won a National Mural Competition for the Post Office in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania  
1952: Died May 15 in Dingmans Ferry, Pennsylvania
attributed to the Teague Family
American, North Carolina, Randolph and Moore Counties, 20th century
Grave Marker for James R. Teague, 1938
salt-glazed stoneware
Gift of Charles G. Zug, III, 84.42.1

About the Art

• To make salt glazes, potters throw salt into a kiln that has reached a very high temperature. The heat changes the solid salt into a gas that surrounds the stoneware pots. The sodium from the salt melts the silica (glass) in the clay body to make a pebbly surface and sometimes drips along the sides of a vessel. The surface may be shades of gray, green, or brown.

• The inscription on the top of this grave marker lists the name of the person buried (James R. Teague), his birth and death dates, and his exact age when he died: 54 years, 5 months, and 24 days. It was originally placed in the cemetery of the Union Grove Church in Randolph County, North Carolina.

• Durable, inexpensive stoneware grave markers were once common in certain regions of the Southeast. Over time, however, they were bound to suffer from accidental damage or vandalism, and few survive today. This one was stolen from its original site and eventually turned up with an art dealer. When the donor (a specialist in North Carolina pottery) found it, he immediately offered it to the Union Grove Church, but the church declined to take it back.
About the Art

- Set against a blood-red sky, two riders on horseback cross the wind-swept landscape. Shapes and rounded elements echo throughout the composition.

- Wassily Kandinsky’s print belongs to a series of fifty-six woodcut prints that he made between 1907 and 1912 for his book of thirty-eight poems called Klänge, or Sounds, published in Munich in 1913.

- Though his poems were not meant to be descriptive, the patterning and repetition of his words parallel many of the representational and abstract images in the book. For example, his poem Seeing includes:

  From every corner came a humming./ FatBrown got stuck—it seemed for all eternity./ It seemed. It seemed./ You must open your arms wider./ Wider. Wider.

- Kandinsky conceived Klänge as a “musical” publication. He was deeply interested in the relationship between art and music and sought to evoke the sensation of sound in his paintings and prints.

About the Artist

1866: Born December 4 in Moscow, Russia
1885-1895: Studied law and economics at the University of Moscow
1896: Moved to Munich, Germany, to study painting
1902: Made his first woodcuts
1911: Joined an artists group called the Blaue Reiter (Blue Rider)
1913: Created the Ackland’s print and published his autobiographical writings called Reminiscences
1914: Returned to Russia during World War I
1933: Emigrated to France and settled in Neuilly-sur-Seine near Paris
1937: Had numerous artworks confiscated by the Nazis and shown in the Degenerate Art exhibition in Munich
1944: Died December 13 in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France
About the Art

- On an autumn day, a lone heron sits along the bank of a pond in quiet solitude. Distant clouds perched above the horizon line peak through the tangled branches and remaining foliage of a crooked tree. The general mood of the scene is one of peaceful contemplation.

- Before traveling to the Mediterranean in 1871, Appian found views for his landscape compositions close to his home in Lyon, located in the southeast of France. The site depicted here is a pond in Rossillon, a town some fifty miles east of Lyon and characterized by its dense forests.

- The medium of etching, a printmaking technique first used in the fifteenth century, experienced a resurgence in popularity among French artists during the 1860s. The etching process’s versatility and expressive potential offered artists an alternative to the more commercial printmaking methods common at the time.

- To make this etching, Appian would have covered a metal plate with a malleable acid-resistant ground layer and used a needle to incise lines through the ground, exposing the metal beneath. Then, he immersed the plate in acid to etch the exposed areas of his design. Afterward, the plate would have been cleaned, inked, and printed.

About the Artist

1818: Born August 28 in Lyon, France
1849: Began using the first name Adolphe, though his given name was Jacques-Barthélémy
1851: Decided to leave his career as a musician and become an artist full time
1863: Joined the Société des Aquafortistes (Society of Etchers)
1867: Created the Ackland’s print
1868: Won a gold medal at the Paris Salon
1871: Traveled to the French and Italian Riviera to depict landscape views
1898: Died April 29 in Lyon, France
About the Art

• Against a streaky blue background, rounded forms composed of various earth tones hover in space. Their organic, abstract shapes appear slightly recognizable, yet unidentifiable at the same time. Is that a black dog in the upper right corner?

• Charles Alston largely depicted the human figure in his work, but during the late 1940s and 1950s, he experimented with abstraction. Artists who impacted his work included Amedeo Modigliani (Italian, 1884–1920), Henry Moore (British, 1898–1986), and Hans Arp (French, 1886–1966).

• In a 1968 interview, Alston described his interest in diverse modes of expression. He said,

  “…I do a series of abstract paintings concurrently with a series of figurative paintings. I’ll do very realistic things...and very far out avant-garde things. And I don’t stay too long with one of them...I want to explore different and new unknown territory…”

• In 1998, the Wilson Special Collections Library at UNC-Chapel Hill acquired a large quantity of Alston’s archival records from the 1930s to 1990s, including correspondence and photographs. In 2009, nearly fifty artworks by him were transferred to the Ackland Art Museum.

About the Artist

1907: Born November 28 in Charlotte, North Carolina
1929: Attended Columbia University and obtained a Master of Fine Arts degree in 1931
1934: Established the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Harlem Art Workshop
1936: Became the first African American supervisor of the WPA Federal Art Project
1940s: Likely created the Ackland’s artwork
1942: Served in the United States Army until 1944
1950: Became the first African American instructor at the Art Students League
1973: Hired as full professor at City College of New York
1977: Died April 27 in New York City
About the Art

- In this striking self-portrait, Kollwitz depicts herself in profile with her hand raised to her cheek. Her closed eyes suggest a moment of deep contemplation.

- Parallel gouges cut from the woodblock, which reveal the white of the paper, boldly contrast with the broad areas of black ink that indicate the artist's form and background, resulting in a highly expressive image.

- The over one hundred self-portraits Kollwitz made over the course of her career are among her most compelling works. They provide insight into the stages of her life, her working methods over time, and her self-reflective nature. She mentioned working on this woodcut in a journal entry from May 14, 1924.

- In earlier impressions of this print, the composition extended at the bottom to include both of Kollwitz's arms and a surface, perhaps a table, on which she rested her other hand. By reducing the image by nearly half, the artist placed greater emphasis on her face and its emotional potency.

About the Artist

1867: Born Käthe Schmidt on July 8 in Königsberg, Germany (now Kaliningrad, Russia)
1886: Enrolled in a painting class at the Berlin Academy for Women Artists
1888: Enrolled at the Academy for Women Artists in Munich
1891: Married Dr. Karl Kollwitz and moved to Berlin
1899: Participated in the first exhibition of the Berliner Secession, an avant-garde artists’ group
1905: Exhibited thirteen works at the annual Salon des Indépendants in Paris, France
1912: Had her first solo exhibition in the USA in the New York Public Library Print Room
1924: Created the Ackland's print
1940s: Experienced great success in the USA, but found it difficult to exhibit in Germany due to World War II
1945: Died April 22 in Moritzburg, near Dresden, Germany
William E. Artis, American, 1914 - 1977
Head of a Boy, c. 1935
low-fired clay
Charles and Isabel Eaton Trust
2019.32

About the Art

• Mostly known for more stylized, sleeker portrait heads produced later in his career, the artist here has given the surface of the sensitively rendered head an expressive, obviously hand-worked treatment. The edge of a modeling tool has been used to incise the eyebrows and the hairline.

• The noted art historian and critic David Driskell wrote that William Artis “has not attempted to solve problems with his art but has seen beyond those obstacles often binding the human spirit. He has encountered through his art the meaning of a universal world” (1971).

• The base of this sculpture was probably made by the artist himself.

About the Artist

1914: Born February 2 in Washington, North Carolina
1927: Moved to New York, New York
1930s: Studied privately with Augusta Savage and at the Art Students League with Robert Laurent, both major sculptors in the Harlem Renaissance
1935: Made the Ackland’s Head of a Boy
1947: Awarded a Rosenwald fellowship to study with Ivan Mestrovic at Syracuse University in New York
1954-1965: Taught at Nebraska state Teachers College
1966-1975: Taught at Mankato State College, Minnesota
1971: Retrospective exhibition at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee
1977: Died April 3 in Northport, New York