[Mary Chan, Kathleen Curry, Christina Houstian]

Author
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The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition history—from our founding in 1929 to the present—is available online. It includes exhibition catalogues, primary documents, installation views, and an index of participating artists.
This exhibition emerged out of a recently completed project to catalogue the Museum's permanent collection of works on paper by American artists, sponsored by a grant from The Henry Luce Foundation, Inc. The selection in these galleries represents a small fraction of over two thousand catalogued works and traces the history of drawing in this country as it unfolded in the twentieth century. Despite widely disparate stylistic developments, these works are unified by certain characteristics: expansiveness, literalness, and the affinity for a distinctly American subject matter.

Early in the century, the conflict between urban realism and European modernist styles defined the search for a uniquely American idiom. In 1895 a group of artists dubbed the Ashcan School emerged, drawing on urban life as a source of inspiration. The journalistic detail and immediacy of observation apparent in William Glackens's *Washington Square* (1913) embodies the group's enthusiasm for the pulse of the American city. Among other artists of the Ashcan School included here are Maurice Prendergast and George Bellows.

The 1913 Armory Show presented the first opportunity for artists in the United States to view the radically modern work of Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Marcel Duchamp. In spite of public derision, the exhibition's effects on American art were profound and irrevocable. The influence of the European avant-garde also marks the work of American artists who spent extended periods of time in Europe, such as Marsden Hartley and Arthur Dove. Hartley's *Birch Grove, Autumn* (1910) clearly reveals his contact with the Expressionism of the Blue Rider group, then active in Germany.

An early advocate of modernism, the photographer Alfred Stieglitz opened three galleries in New York—291 (1905–17), The Intimate Gallery (1925–28), and An American Place (1929)—which provided meeting points and exhibition spaces for Hartley, Dove, John Marin, Charles Demuth, and Georgia O'Keeffe. The strongly individual abstractions of O'Keeffe and Dove find...
inspiration in the American landscape, as in the former's *Evening Star, III* (1917), which bears a monumental spirit despite its modest size.

In the 1920s, America's burgeoning economy spurred the growth of its cities. Bridges, factories, and skyscrapers were subjects of fascination from which a post-World War I urban and industrial identity was forged. For example, Marin's *Lower Manhattan* (1920) is a mechanized transmutation of a bridge in watercolor—a medium that lends itself to the artist's buoyant, notational style. Artists outside metropolitan centers studied the machinery of the Industrial Age as well, as typified by Preston Dickinson's *Grain Elevators, Omaha* (1924). Such specifically American subject matter is a defining feature of Precisionism, the predominant visual idiom of the period. Charles Sheeler's drawings demonstrate the refined aestheticism and gridded framework characteristic of the movement. The realism of Edward Hopper displays the existential uneasiness and economic instability that materialized at the end of the Roaring Twenties. His *Box Factory, Gloucester* (1928) depicts a bleak, barren street in a run-down industrial town.

The unprecedented economic Depression of the 1930s led to the creation of the Works Progress Administration Federal Art Program (WPA/FAP), which supported artists through commissions during this period. The somber climate spawned a group of artists known as the Social Realists, among whom Ben Shahn stands out for his ability to capture the mood of the era.

Stuart Davis, another WPA artist, created works that testify to the continuing influence of the European avant-garde through their reconciliation of Cubism with the American visual vernacular. Like Davis, Jacob Lawrence used expressive color and collage-like patterning in his *Migration* series (1940–41), which narrates African-Americans' quest for a better life in the North.

Due to the political instability of Europe during the 1930s and subsequently during World War II, the immigration of European artists to the U.S. steadily increased. They introduced Surrealism into the American imagination, sparking a gradual transition from figuration to abstraction. Artists working in New York in the 1940s, such as William Baziotes, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko,
embraced automatic drawing as a method of penetrating the subconscious mind and appropriated ritualistic symbols from Native American cultures in their quest for universal imagery. Their responsiveness to the Surrealist vocabulary of dreams stemmed from the desire to break free from the insular provincialism of preceding American art in favor of a vision shaped by the nightmarish reality of world events.

Abstract Expressionism became the first internationally acclaimed American art movement. Its acceptance by the public and the mythic stature assigned to the artists associated with it contributed to shifting the focal point for the creation and discussion of new art from Paris to New York. During the immediate postwar years, the Abstract Expressionists personified the American ideal of individualism, each establishing a highly idiomatic style. Pollock and Rothko sought to transmit the experience of the picture as a whole: in Pollock’s Untitled (c. 1950) through the charged energy of his gestures—the black configurations on white paper negating the space read between figure and ground—and in Rothko’s Untitled (1968) through the emotional pull of intense, pure color. The Dutch-born Willem de Kooning remained more closely tied to Cubist notions of pictorial structure, as seen in Seated Woman (1952), part of a series of drawings that were cut up and recombined to create a collaged, disjointed effect evoking the fracture of urban life. Many of the Abstract Expressionists’ drawings served as studies for their monumental paintings. For example, the swift, thick, linear brushstrokes on telephone book pages in Franz Kline’s Untitled II (c. 1950–52) would be translated into sweeping arm movements over a large-scale canvas.

As early as the mid-1950s, artists began to reject the heroic aspirations of the Abstract Expressionists. Strongly influenced by the Duchampian example of composer John Cage and the performances called Happenings, the new generation ushered in the next decade’s challenging stance toward the very nature of a work of art. For their subject matter, Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns both turned to found objects and images from the everyday environment, a practice that reached its pinnacle with Pop art. Roy Lichtenstein’s comic-book-style Brushstrokes (1966–68) subverts the grandiose notion of the painter asserting himself through each gesture. Andy Warhol’s Roll of Bills (1962) communicates a detachment indicative of a mechanized, consumer-oriented society.

Another aspect of the art of the 1960s reacted against painterly illusionism, reducing art to minimal characteristics, as exemplified in Frank Stella’s resolute...
geometry. In Sol Lewitt's wall drawings the conception of a work of art takes precedence over the finished product, since they were expressly designed to be executed with or by assistants and subsequently destroyed. Increasingly during this time, artworks began to document concepts for larger projects, as evident in Bruce Nauman's Storage Capsule for the Right Rear Quarter of My Body (1966), Eva Hesse's Repetition Nineteen I (1967–68), and Claes Oldenburg's Dropped Cup of Coffee (1967).

The significance of scale has become a critical element of work on paper since the 1970s. Whether working on a large single sheet or using manifold sheets joined together, as in Elizabeth Murray's Popeye (1982), artists have increasingly turned to drawing as a primary conceptual medium, producing drawings as autonomous works of art.

A resurgence of figuration has informed much contemporary art, foreshadowed by the cartoonlike style adopted by Philip Guston in the 1970s (seen here in two works from 1980) and also represented in sketchbooks by Tom Otterness (1983–84) and in the untitled 1984 watercolor of a female nude by David Salle. Reacting against the self-referentiality of Minimalism and abstraction, many artists in the 1980s and 1990s have reincorporated subject matter—political commentary, caricature, parody, allegory—into their art. Adapting the idioms of graffiti and cartoons, the drawings of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Richard Prince share a charged, graphic edginess.

The development of contemporary abstraction has been parallel to the reemergence of the representational. Robert Morris's Blind Time III (1985) (executed by the artist while he was blindfolded), Brice Marden's meditative Rain (1991), and Pat Steir's Untitled (Water) (1984) comment on the process of drawing and its traditional illusory function, unencumbered by narrative.

Through the immediacy of drawing, this exhibition presents the range and depth of the stylistic inventions that contributed to the evolution of a particularly American aesthetic.
A Century of American Drawing from the collection
May 23—September 17, 1996

All drawings are from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art. All works are on paper unless otherwise indicated.

Jean-Michel Basquiat
1960–1988
Untitled (1981)
Oilstick, 40 x 60" (101.6 x 152.4 cm)
Fractional gift of Sheldon H. Solow

William Baziotes
1912–1963
The Prisoner (c. 1942)
Gouache and pen and ink, 14 x 11 ¾" (35.6 x 29 cm)
The Joan and Lester Avnet Fund

George Bellows
1882–1925
Under the Elevated (c. 1908–12)
Watercolor, brush and ink, and pencil, 5 ¾ x 9" (14.5 x 22.7 cm)
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

Peter Blume
Born Russia, 1906–1992
To U.S.A. 1911
Study for Parade (Waterfront, Manhattan) 1929
Gouache and varnish on cardboard, 20¼ x 14" (51.4 x 35.6 cm)
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

Louise Bourgeois
Born France, 1911
To U.S.A. 1938
Untitled (1989)
Ink, charcoal, and colored crayon on burnt paper, 8 ½ x 11" (21.6 x 28 cm)
Gift of Agnes Gund and Maria-Gaetana Matisse

Charles Burchfield
1893–1967
The Night Wind 1918
Watercolor, gouache, and pencil, 21 ¼ x 21 ¼" (54.4 x 55.5 cm)
Gift of A. Conger Goodyear

Ralph Crawford
Born Canada, 1906–1978
To U.S.A. 1910
Sanford Tanks (1939)
Watercolor, pen and ink, and pencil, 12 x 16" (30.6 x 40.6 cm)
Acquired with matching funds from George M. Jaffin and the National Endowment for the Arts

Stuart Davis
1892–1964
New York Waterfront (1936)
Gouache, 12 x 15 ½" (30.6 x 40.5 cm)
Given anonymously

Charles Demuth
1883–1935
Vaudeville Musicians 1917
Watercolor and pencil, 13 x 8" (33 x 20.3 cm)
Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund

Acrobats 1919
Watercolor and pencil, 13 x 7 ¾" (33.2 x 20.3 cm)
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

William Glackens
1870–1938
Washington Square (1913)
Charcoal, pencil, colored pencil, gouache, and watercolor, 29 ½ x 22 ½" (73.9 x 56.2 cm)
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

Robert Gober
Born 1954
Untitled (1985)
Pencil, 14 x 17" (35.5 x 43 cm)
Gift of Barbara G. Pine

Jasper Johns
Jubilee (1960)
The Joan and Lester Avnet Collection

Richard Diebenkorn
1922–1993
Untitled (Ocean Park) 1977
Watercolor, synthetic polymer paint, gouache, watercolor, and pencil on cut-and-pasted paper, 18 ½ x 33" (47.4 x 84 cm)
Purchase

Arthur G. Dove
1880–1946
Abstraction Untitled (c. 1917–20)
Charcoal, 20 ½ x 17 ¼" (52 x 43.2 cm)
Given anonymously

Sam Francis
1923–1994
Worked in France, 1950–1960
Untitled (1958)
Watercolor, 27 x 40 ¼" (68.6 x 102 cm)
Gift of Udo M. Reinach Estate

Preston Dickinson
1891–1930
Grain Elevators, Omaha (1924)
Brush and pen and ink, charcoal, pencil, and pastel, 20 ½ x 14" (50.8 x 35.6 cm)
The Joan and Lester Avnet Collection
Arshile Gorky
(Vosdanig Manoog Adoian)
Born Armenia, 1904–1948
To U.S.A. 1920
Untitled (Écorché) (1932)
Pencil, 24 3/4 x 19 3/4" (62.8 x 48.5 cm)
Purchased with funds given by
Leon D. Black

Adolph Gottlieb
1903–1974
Ashes of Phoenix (1948)
Gouache and pencil,
18 x 23 3/4" (45.7 x 60.3 cm)
Purchased with funds given by
Leon D. Black

John D. Graham
(Ivan Dombrowski)
Born Ukraine, 1881–1961
To U.S.A. 1920
Sketchbook 1938–42
Ink, colored crayon, blue ball-
point pen, and cut-and-taped
paper, each page 9 1/2 x 7"
(24.1 x 17.8 cm)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Kahn

Edward Hopper
1882–1967
Box Factory, Gloucester (1928)
Watercolor and pencil,
13 3/8 x 19 7/8" (35.2 x 50.5 cm)
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

Jasper Johns
Born 1930
Jubilee (1960)
Graphite wash, stencil, and
pencil, 31 1/2 x 25 3/8"
(79.7 x 63.6 cm)
The Joan and Lester Avnet
Collection

Franz Kline
1910–1962
Untitled, II (c. 1950–52)
Brush and ink and tempera on
cut-and-pasted telephone book
pages, 11 x 9" (28.1 x 23 cm)
Purchase

Willem de Kooning
Born the Netherlands, 1904
To U.S.A. 1926
Seated Woman (1952)
Pastel, pencil, and oil on two
hinged sheets, overall
12 3/8 x 9 1/2" (30.8 x 24.2 cm)
The Lauder Foundation Fund

Lee Krasner
1908–1984
Seated Nude 1940
Charcoal, 25 x 18 3/4" (63.5 x 48 cm)
Gift of Constance B. Cartwright

Marsden Hartley
1877–1943
Birch Grove, Autumn (1910)
Oil on cardboard, 12 3/8 x 12 1/4"
(30.6 x 30.6 cm)
Lee Simonson Bequest

Judy Chicago
1939–
The Dinner Party (1979–80)
Mixed media installation, overall
9 1/2 x 85 1/2" (24.2 x 217.2 cm)
Gift of The Judy Chicago Foundation

Eva Hesse
Born Germany, 1936–1970
To U.S.A. 1939
Repetition Nineteen I 1967–68
Gouache, watercolor, and pencil,
11 3/4 x 14 5/8" (29.4 x 37.8 cm)
Gift of the Eva Hesse Estate

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Lee Krasner
1908–1984
Seated Nude 1940
Charcoal, 25 x 18 3/4" (63.5 x 48 cm)
Gift of Constance B. Cartwright
John Marin
1870–1953
In Paris 1905–10
Lower Manhattan 1920
Watercolor and charcoal, 21 ¼ x 26 ¾" (55.4 x 68 cm)
The Philip L. Goodwin Collection

Reginald Marsh
1898–1954
H. Dummeyer Bar & Grill (n.d.)
Watercolor, 14 ½ x 21"
(37.8 x 53.1 cm)
Dorothy Williams Garrett Bequest in memory of her husband Garet Garrett

Robert Morris
Born 1931
Blind Time III 1985
Graphite, 38 x 50" (96.5 x 127 cm)
Acquired with matching funds from Michael Blankfort and the National Endowment for the Arts and purchase (by exchange)

Elizabeth Murray
Born 1940
Popeye (1982)
Pastel on cut-and-pasted paper, 76 ¼ x 37 ½" (193.8 x 95.8 cm)
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller (by exchange)

Bruce Nauman
Born 1941
Storage Capsule for the Right Rear Quarter of My Body 1966
Watercolor and graphite, 38 x 24 ¾" (95.5 x 63 cm)
Gift of Alexis Gregory and purchase

Fist in Mouth 1990
Watercolor, pencil, and collage, 20 ¼ x 23 ¾" (50.6 x 59.3 cm)
Purchased with funds given by Edward R. Broida

Barnett Newman
1905–1970
Untitled (1948)
Brush and ink, 24 x 18"
(61 x 45.8 cm)
Gift of the Committee on Drawings in honor of Richard E. Oldenburg

Isamu Noguchi
1904–1988
Worked in U.S.A., Japan, and Italy
Metamorphosis 1946
Pencil on cut-and-pasted graph paper on black construction paper, 21 ¾ x 29 ½" (55 x 75.3 cm)
Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund

Georgia O'Keeffe
1887–1986
Train at Night in the Desert (1916)
Watercolor and pencil, 11 ¾ x 8 ½" (30.3 x 22.5 cm)
Acquired with matching funds from the Committee on Drawings and the National Endowment for the Arts

Evening Star, III (1917)
Watercolor, 8 ¾ x 11 ½"
(22.7 x 30.4 cm)
Mr. and Mrs. Donald B. Straus Fund

Eagle Claw and Bean Necklace (1934)
Charcoal, 19 x 25 ½" (48.5 x 63.9 cm)
Given anonymously (by exchange)

Claes Oldenburg
Born Sweden 1922.
To U.S.A. 1936
Dropped Cup of Coffee: Preliminary Study for “Image of the Buddha Preaching” by Frank O'Hara 1967
Pencil, crayon, and wash, 30 ⅞ x 22 ¾" (76.5 x 56.4 cm)
Gift of the artist

Tom Otterness
Born 1952
The European Notebook 1983
Spiral sketchbook with twenty-four pen-and-brown-ink drawings (recto and verso), each 6 ¾ x 4 ¼" (15.9 x 11.1 cm)
Gift of the artist

Jackson Pollock
1912–1956
Untitled (c. 1933–39)
Pencil, colored pencil, and colored crayon, 13 ¾ x 9 ¼" (35 x 25 cm)
Gift of Lee Krasner in memory of Jackson Pollock

Untitled 1945
Pastel, gouache, and pen and ink, 30 ½ x 22 ¾" (77.7 x 56.9 cm)
Blanchette Rockefeller Fund

Untitled (c. 1950)
Ink, 18 ½ x 24 ¾" (47.9 x 63.1 cm)
The Joan and Lester Avnet Fund

Maurice Prendergast
Born Newfoundland, 1859–1924
The East River 1901
Watercolor and pencil, 13 ¾ x 19 ¼" (35 x 50.2 cm)
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

Richard Prince
Born 1949
Untitled 1984 and 1990
Silkscreen, graphite, and spray paint, 40 x 26" (101.5 x 66 cm)
Gift of the Robert Lehman Foundation, Inc.

Robert Rauschenberg
Born 1925
Quiz 1958
Transfer drawing, gouache, crayon, and pencil, 22 ½ x 29" (58.2 x 73.6 cm)
Gift of Mrs. Iola S. Haverstick
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist Name</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James Rosenquist</td>
<td>Born 1933. <em>Fahrenheit 1982° 1982</em>. Ink and pencil on plastic sheet, 33 1/4 x 71 1/8&quot; (84.4 x 182.1 cm). Gift of The Lauder Foundation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan Russell</td>
<td>1886–1953. <em>Three Apples (1910)</em>. Oil on cardboard, 9 3/4 x 12 7/16&quot; (24.6 x 32.5 cm). Given anonymously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Salle</td>
<td>Born 1952. Untitled 1964. Watercolor and pencil, 17 7/8 x 23 3/4&quot; (45.5 x 60.5 cm). Gift of Carol O. Selle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portrait of Myself When Young</td>
<td>1943. Tempera on cardboard, 20 x 27 3/8&quot; (50.8 x 70.8 cm). Purchase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat Steir</td>
<td>Born 1940. <em>Section from Eight Untitled Sections (Water) (1984)</em>. Pencil and colored pencil, 10 1/2 x 19 3/8&quot; (25.6 x 48 cm). Gift of the artist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Stella</td>
<td>Born 1936. Untitled 1965. Felt-tipped pen and colored ink on graph paper, 17 x 21 1/2&quot; (43.4 x 55.8 cm). Gift of the artist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Thek</td>
<td>1933–1988. Untitled (Green Potato) (c. 1974). Synthetic polymer paint and gesso on newspaper, 22 1/4 x 33&quot; (56.7 x 83.8 cm). Purchase through the Vincent d’Aquila and Harry Soviak Bequest.</td>
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