

# EXHIBITION TEXTS

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# AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

Stories from the American Folk Art Museum Collection

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# AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

## Stories from the American Folk Art Museum Collection

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### **America is a nation of stories.**

Everyone has a story to tell—a life lived as a witness to and participant in events both private and shared. The stories that we tell as individuals are single strands in a grander narrative. Together, they build a consensus around the principles of a nation, maintaining a delicate balance between the one and the many, and the fulfillment of self and being better citizens. The exhibition *American Perspectives* captures the power of storytelling through artworks that express the dualities of artist and subject to reveal a simple truth: As much as we like to mythologize, America is not monolithic; the ideal and the reality diverge. The artists in this exhibition have led vastly different lives, but they are all united as Americans. In this era of unrelenting uniformity and conventionalizing through mass means of commercialization, communication, transportation, technology, and media, it is the very diversity of experience, heritage, perspective, and place that revitalizes, renews, and strengthens. Democracy's promise is to welcome and direct that diversity toward an implicit and collective understanding of "the way things are." That is America.

### **Each life is a series of experiences; they make us who we are.**

These become the stories that we use to invoke truths, assert authenticity, and appeal to our better natures through the precious values of the deep culture that we share. The artworks in this exhibition are organized into four sections: Founders, Travelers, Philosophers, and Seekers. They remind us that there are beginnings, dreams, achievements, and disappointments, and that many of the issues that trouble us today—anti-immigration, political turmoil, economic uncertainty, and loss of personal liberties—were also concerns in the past. They remind us that there is loneliness and heartbreak, but also family and love. They hold in common the truths that act as the ballast against which we judge our actions, our successes or failures, our power or impotence. Their stories lend coherence to our own experience. In this, the art functions as testifier to and revision of the choices that we, and others, have made. It grants the power to transcend.

**Stacy C. Hollander**

*Exhibition Curator*

# 1

CHRISTIAN STRENGE (1757–1828)

## *Liebesbrief*, c. 1790

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In 1776, Hessian-born Johann Christian Strenge was one among twelve hundred men who either were conscripted or enlisted in the 5th company of the Grenadier Regiment, led by Colonel Johann Gottlieb von Rall, to fight for the British during the American Revolution. The troops arrived in New York in August; by December, the majority had been taken captive in the pivotal Battle at Trenton, when General George Washington's Continental Army crossed the Delaware River to make a surprise attack in the early morning hours of December 26. The Hessian soldiers were marched to Philadelphia where they were paraded through the streets before being interned in camps in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Strenge gained his freedom in 1777, and rejoined his regiment. After the war ended in 1783, he did not return to Europe with his regiment but instead remained in Lancaster,

married, and had a daughter. Two years after the untimely deaths of both wife and child, he remarried and, by 1794, had purchased land in East Petersburg, where he removed with his growing family. Here he became a respected and successful schoolteacher, scrivener, justice of the peace, and property owner.

Strenge was a member of the Reformed Church, but he made many forms of *fraktur* for Mennonite, Lutheran, and Reformed constituencies. These included bookplates, writing samples, birth records, presentation *frakturs*, tunebooks, and elaborate papercut *Liebesbriefe*, or love letters. The center and each of the sixteen hearts in this *Liebesbrief* are beautifully inscribed with conventionalized inked sentiments that appear in other similar examples by his hand.

## Liberty Needlework, 1808

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“Remember the ladies,” Abigail Adams adjured her husband, John Adams, in 1776. She was advocating equal freedoms for women in the newly conceived United States. What developed instead was a system of Republican Motherhood in which education for women was not an end in itself but was intended to equip mothers to raise moral sons, the future leaders of the nation. Lucina Hudson of Oxford, Massachusetts, was twenty-one years old when she stitched this accomplished silk needlework. She was at the upper age limit of students who attended the school operated by Abby Wright (1774–1842) in South Hadley, and of an age to knowingly comply with the ideals of Republican Womanhood expressed in Wright’s educational goal to lead young women “in the paths of rectitude and virtue, that they may establish an unblemished reputation and become ornaments to society.” Although such needleworks were often intended as evidence of taste and accomplishment aimed at attracting the affections of a husband, Lucina remained unmarried and died in Ellisburgh, New York, where her family lived around 1823.

In 1777, Lucina’s father, William, served in the War of Independence as a corporal in Colonel Jonathan Holman’s regiment under Captain Jeremiah Kingsbury, whose daughter Hannah also stitched a Liberty needlework at the Abby Wright School. Lucina was thus one of several young women from Oxford whose families were closely allied through the war effort and who were privy to firsthand narratives of the war from family members. This intimate connection may have contributed to her rendition of the allegorical figure of Liberty as an approachable contemporary, carrying a cornucopia in one arm and a liberty pole in the other topped by a Phrygian cap, the ancient headgear associated with liberty, and a striped banner literally spangled with applied sequins. Nevertheless, the long-established use of the female figure to symbolically embody civic values was a double-edged device that both elevated and constrained, as many of the freedoms such figures represented were not extended to women themselves.

# General Washington, c. 1810

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At the invitation of William Penn, German immigrants had begun to settle in America by the seventeenth century. Their German-American descendants were among the forces organized to fight for independence against British tyranny. Known as the German Regiment, and formed from settlers in Maryland and Pennsylvania, they participated in major battles in Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, sometimes pitted against soldiers from their homelands—Hessians who were conscripted to fight for Britain. This drawing, in the colorful ink-and-watercolor style associated with the Germanic tradition of illuminated documents known in America as *fraktur*, is probably based on one of the many images of George Washington mounted on horseback that

proliferated after the war. It is inscribed in German “General Washington and the city that was built in his name,” referring to the new capitol of Washington, DC, which was established in 1791. The English words “Congress House” further appear on the facade of a building that bears features of Philadelphia’s Carpenters’ Hall and Independence Hall—sites of the First and Second Continental Congresses. In this testament to the formal installation of the newly formed government in Washington, the artist expresses his pride in Philadelphia’s pivotal role by conflating the removal of Congress from that city to the new capitol and the establishment of Congress on Pennsylvania Avenue.

## Lovebirds Print, late 18th century

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This tiny woodprint of “lovebirds” may have been carved by Richard Brunton, a British-born engraver and diesinker whose picaresque story, uncovered by researcher Deborah M. Child, is one of struggle to survive in the flux of early American nationhood. Brunton arrived in Boston as a soldier in the 38th Regiment of Foot, and participated in major battles at Bunker Hill, followed by campaigns in New York, New Jersey, and Philadelphia. By 1779, and after the British retreat, Brunton deserted at Verplanck’s Point, New York, and made his way back to Boston. Thereafter, he began a vagabond existence that vascillated between legitimate and illicit activities.

After a series of unsuccessful business ventures in Boston and Providence, Rhode Island, Brunton began a pattern of itinerancy and legal printing activities alongside the production of counterfeit currencies. One of the strategies employed by the British during the Revolutionary War was the introduction of false currency to destabilize the colonial economy and undermine the Continental Congress’s ability to fund the American war effort. Counterfeiting continued to plague the new republic as the old barter system clashed with the growing market economy, war

debts were called in, taxes levied, veterans of the war remained uncompensated, and individual states sought to keep money circulating despite a shortage of hard currency. By 1799, Brunton was arrested for “coining,” or minting counterfeit coins, and given a two-year sentence in Connecticut’s notorious New-Gate Prison. After his release, Brunton returned to Massachusetts but no longer sought to earn a lawful income. He was captured in 1807 with his tools and counterfeit bills, and given a life sentence to the recently opened Massachusetts State Prison in Charlestown, where he was described in the prison records as a man age fifty-eight, six feet one inch in height, and with fair skin, grey eyes, and dark hair. During both incarcerations, the artist produced family registers, silver tokens, and even plates for advertisements, including the widely circulated stagecoach broadside, which is one of the earliest graphic images depicting transportation in the New Republic. He even painted portraits of the jail keepers and their families. In 1811, Brunton was granted a pardon on the grounds of ill health, but lived another twenty-one years before dying in the poorhouse at Groton in 1832.

# Charlestown State Prison, c. 1851

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In 1805, the Massachusetts State Prison at Charlestown was opened on five acres of land in Lynde's Point, which was well situated for sanitary and security purposes, and for transporting the stone that was cut and shaped through the hard labor of convicts. It was a penitentiary, intended for rehabilitation, and an early experiment in "moral architecture" intended to support these efforts. By this time, the greatest percentage of the prison population sentenced to hard labor was for property crimes.

Counterfeiting and forging often merited the most severe punishments, striking as they did at the very foundation of an emerging market economy that depended upon the integrity of its medium of exchange. Long-term incarceration, without the support of family and friends from the outside, necessitated an entirely new and self-sufficient ecosystem with a tenuous balance between the work product of the prisoners, sometimes contracted to independent concerns, and the internal maintenance of the

facility and the prisoners. The men organized into their own societies, sometimes mentoring younger men who, rather than being rehabilitated, honed their skills in various illicit activities.

For the first sixty years in the life of the prison, inmates wore uniforms that were half blue and half red, with painted caps. A yellow stripe was added for repeat offenders, and convicts were tattooed before being released. At the center of the prison was a five-story administration building, flanked by two wings of four stories containing ninety cells measuring 17 by 11 feet, and intended to house from four to sixteen prisoners. On the lower stories were smaller, windowless solitary cells. Upon admittance, each prisoner—many of whom had trade skills—was allowed to choose his occupation. The largest portion of their time was then spent in hard labor in the workshop buildings, initially located in a single, narrow, two-story brick building as seen in this watercolor.



## Lectern Box: The Rock of Liberty, mid-19th century

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*Mayflower* descendant Richard Warren published his patriotic poem “The Rock of Liberty” at a time of growing intolerance toward immigrant groups who were crowding cities and infiltrating insular interior communities. Warren’s words, written while he was president of the Pilgrim Society, celebrate the history of Plymouth Rock and the stalwart Pilgrim Fathers. In 1855, the poem was set to music by James G. Clark and published in Boston by Henry Tolman. It is not known whether his

intention was a reminder of the liberties upon which the nation was founded, or an expression of distaste for the newcomers. Nevertheless, it was popular during the Civil War era to drum up patriotic sentiment and may have been one means of encouraging support for the Union cause. In this unique lectern box, the poem is applied to the surface of a trompe-l’oeil book that rests atop a quilted baize cloth with heavy tassels at the front corners.

# Rhoda Goodrich Bentley and Daughter Maria, 1815–1820

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The portrait of Rhoda Goodrich Bentley (1786–1842) and her daughter Maria Louisa H. Bentley (1813–1901) was painted by Ammi Phillips, whose very name, meaning “my people,” lends an incisive truthfulness to the thousands of friends and neighbors whom he portrayed primarily in New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, during a career that spanned more than fifty years. Mrs. Bentley bore nine children through the years of her marriage to Captain William Northrup Bentley (1777–1849). The Bentleys were the proprietors of Columbia Hall, the first spa and largest hotel in Lebanon Springs, New York, with three hundred rooms. They could boast George Washington, General Lafayette, and other early American luminaries as among their guests.

Phillips was born in the flush of a new nation founded on Enlightenment principles, and his portraits of the 1815 period are shimmering and classical-inspired conceptions. The artist’s style

underwent several dramatic transformations over the next five decades, reflecting changes in taste and culture. Through the use of attributes strategically contained within the compositions, Phillips was adept at capturing a shifting economic and political climate—from the optimism of early nationhood to the devastation of civil war. In the companion portrait of her husband, Captain Bentley holds a book whose title references the history of slavery. In her portrait, Mrs. Bentley holds a piece of pleated white cotton and her daughter holds a slice of watermelon, cultivated primarily in the South, and often in gardens worked by enslaved black Americans for their own consumption or for sale during the period in which the portrait was painted. Both portraits thus make oblique reference to the “peculiar institution” of slavery and, by implication, their own abolitionist sentiments.

*Dave belongs to Mr. Miles / Wher the oven bakes  
& the pot biles. —July 31, 1840 / Dave*

*I wonder where is all my relations / Friendship to  
all—and every nation. —August 16, 1857 / Dave*

How do we fathom the temerity of an enslaved potter incising a name, poem, or date, indelibly fired into the clay body of a stoneware vessel? The history of the turner who signed his vessels as “Dave” has been partially recovered, in large part because of his own self-actualization through such sentiments embedded into utilitarian pots intended simply to store food and drink. More than one hundred examples, fashioned largely between 1834 and 1864, bear his name or date. A number of them also bear snippets of original poetry and observations. In the Federal Census of 1870, the potter listed his name as “David Drake, occupation turner,” and that is how this discussion will refer to him.

Drake was born into slavery around 1800, when the United States was still a young nation that was founded upon principles of equality and freedom. Until 1833, he belonged to the household of Harvey Drake who, with his uncle and partner, Abner Landrum, operated a pottery just outside Edgefield, South Carolina. At a time when it was not lawful to teach enslaved people to read and write, Drake’s unusual literacy may have been a result of his employment at the local newspaper, the *Edgefield Hive*, published by Landrum. David Drake grew to be one of

seventy-six enslaved African Americans known to have worked in Edgefield’s potteries, and one of only two identified potters capable of building enormous vessels of more than twenty-gallon capacity. There is some evidence that he lost one of his legs in a railroad accident but remarkably was able to continue working with someone else driving the pottery wheel. The earliest piece attributed to his hand is dated 1821. In the ensuing years, he worked for and was traded among potteries in the Edgefield district known as Pottersville, whose owners—Drake, Gibbs, Landrum, Miles, and Rhodes—were interrelated by partnerships and through marriage. Between 1840 and 1843, and again after 1849, David Drake became the property of Lewis J. Miles, who seems to have supported his textual expressions and whose name appears on this ovoid jug. By contrast, the pots are resoundingly mute during the years 1843 to 1848, when he was working for Franklin Landrum. After emancipation, Dave took the surname of his first owner, Drake.

In 1859, the *Edgefield Advertiser* published a remembrance of the Edgefield potteries: “The first sight of that furnace nearly thirty years ago—can we ever forget it? ... Do we still mind how the boys and girls used to think it a fine Saturday frolic to walk to old Pottersville and survey its manufacturing peculiarities? To watch old Dave as the clay assumed beneath his magic touch the desired shape of jug, or jar, or crock, or pitcher, as the case may be?”

# Maria Rex Zimmerman and Peter Zimmerman, 1827–1835

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Jacob Maentel was a German immigrant who served in the Pennsylvania Militia and was naturalized in York County soon after his discharge in 1815. Between 1807 and 1846, Maentel painted more than two hundred watercolor portraits of neighbors in southeastern Pennsylvania and Harmony, Indiana. The portraits of Maria Rex (1804–1887) and Peter Zimmerman (1802–1887) epitomize the formula that Maentel developed in the late 1820s and 1830s of depicting married couples on separate sheets of paper standing within colorful and elaborately appointed interiors.

Maria, known as Mary or Polly to her family and friends, was descended from the founder of Schaefferstown. Her father, Abraham, and his brother, Samuel, were Schaefferstown storekeepers. Abraham's surviving ledger books show that Maentel was a patron of the store for purchases of paints, brushes, and paper between at least 1825 and 1830. In addition, the artist attended the same church as the Zimmermans. When Abraham inherited the family home from Samuel after he died in 1835, he passed it to his daughter for a nominal sum. She and Peter

moved into the house in the latter part of that year, having also purchased a looking glass, table, and two chairs when Samuel's estate was sold at public auction. There is evidence of stenciling on the kitchen walls of the house, which is now part of Historic Schaefferstown, but it is nowhere as elaborate as the papered or stenciled patterns that appear in these portraits.

It is not certain whether these portraits were painted in 1835, when Mary solely acquired ownership of the home, or closer to the date of their marriage in 1827, when they were living in nearby Jackson Township. Peter's business as a cattle dealer frequently took him out west, leaving Mary on her own for long periods of time to contend with five children, and to manage the household and business affairs. She seems to have been equal to the task, also owning bank stock in her own name as well as several Schaefferstown properties that she leased to tenants.

*My gratitude to Diane Wenger for providing images and biographical information about Maria Rex and Peter Zimmerman.*

## Tea Caddies, Trunk, Trinket Box, c. 1830

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Ann Butler was the eldest daughter of eleven children born to Aaron Butler (1790–1860) and Sarah Cornell Butler (1793–1869) in Greene County, New York. The bountiful apple orchards on Butler’s property allowed him to establish a successful cider mill and brandy business. He also operated a general store and hay press. The Butlers of Brandy Hill are best remembered today for the beautiful wares that they produced in the tin shop, which opened in 1824 and continued to operate until a few years before his death. While Butler’s sons were occupied with the manufacture and distribution of the tinwares, his daughters engaged in “flowering” the forms, painting the beautiful designs of scrolls, flowers, and decorative bands that made such tinware desirable. This was one of the few socially sanctioned artistic employments for women.

Ann and her sisters may have learned the art of flower painting as part of their education at Greenville Academy. Ann became the primary

decorator by the age of fourteen or fifteen and was conversant with all phases of production of the tinware business, sometimes accompanying her father on trips as far away as New York City. Nevertheless, her involvement in the family business effectively ended in 1840, when she married Eli Scutt. She moved with her husband to Livingstonville, New York, where she raised three children. Ann Butler’s short professional life typifies the course of many young women who were expected to cease such activities after marriage and the establishment of their own homes, but her impact on the aesthetics of tinware produced by the family shop helped to determine the popularity of their wares. Several pieces, including those displayed here, are signed with Ann Butler’s name on a heart-shaped device enclosing her initials. The Battersea-type shaped trinket box and Chippendale-style caddy were among seven pieces that descended within the Butler family.

## Eliza Gordon, c. 1833

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Eliza Gordon (1813–1893) was around twenty years of age when she gazed clear-eyed and open-faced from her watercolor portrait painted by Dr. Samuel Addison and Ruth Whittier Shute. Like so many young women living on rural New England farms, she left home in Henniker, New Hampshire, and traveled twenty-seven miles to Peterborough, where she found employment in the Phoenix Factory, one of the many textile mills that were bringing prosperity to the river towns of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Young women flocked to the mills for “every reason, and for no reason at all,” as mill worker Harriet Farley wrote in 1844, though many were lured by the promise of opportunities for self-sufficiency, broadened horizons, and companionship in chaperoned communities. The reality of mill life and work was much harsher, as young women came to appreciate and ultimately rebel against, staging the first labor strike in the United States in 1824, and organizing the first union of women workers a decade later.

Gordon worked in the Phoenix Factory from June 1833 through February 1835. The thirteen-hour day started as soon as it was light and ended at 7:30 in the evening, broken only by two half-hour intervals for breakfast and lunch. The young women enjoyed two hours of liberty before curfew. Gordon was stationed in the preparation room and also engaged in drawing, meaning she was responsible for ensuring the lines of yarn remained straight and parallel as they were fed into the looms. A large percentage of her salary went toward room and board in one of the boarding houses built by the mill for the express purpose of housing their workforce. Women lived five beds to a small, low ceilinged room, with one small window, no furniture or closet, bandboxes stored under the headboards, and their trunks used for sitting. Yet a library was made available to them, and the hours at the machines provided time for reflection and mental improvement as they challenged each other’s intellectual growth.

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The faces of these young women would have remained entirely unknown but for the work of the Shutes, whose distinctive portraits in watercolor on large paper offered a less expensive though no less impressive alternative to oil on canvas. The couple formed an unusual artistic collaboration shortly after they were married in 1827. Their respective roles in this partnership are indicated on a small number of portraits inscribed: “Drawn by R.W. Shute / and / Painted by S.A. Shute.” The Shutes employed a number of unorthodox techniques and materials in their work. Oils were interspersed with layers of varnish and glazes; watercolors were supplemented with pastel, gouache, pencil, metallic paint, foil, collage, and gum arabic; areas of paper were even left blank to suggest transparency and other effects. Most of the watercolors feature vigorous diagonal or horizontal strokes in the background. After Dr. Shute’s untimely death at the age of thirty-three, Ruth continued to paint in oil and pastel, remarrying in 1840 and removing to Kentucky.

Eliza Gordon married Zophar Willard Brooks (1812–1906) in June 1835. Brooks was a farmer on a family homestead in Hancock, New Hampshire, and also a decorative painter of houses, carriages, and stenciled furniture, much like the chair in which Eliza sits in her portrait. After a brief stint in Jaffrey, the couple returned to Hancock, where both led full, industrious lives and raised their large family, although Eliza still made time to dip thirty-two dozen candles every year, take care of the milking, make cheese and butter, spin wool, and knit socks and mittens. After her death, she was remembered as a “fine example of the old-fashioned New England mother.”

In June 1788, New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify the constitution of the newly formed United States. Ammi Phillips was born in April of that same year, in Colebrook, Connecticut, his birth coinciding with the promise of a government formed upon principles of equality and representation by the people. The artist died in 1865, as the nation was attempting to repair the deep wounds inflicted by civil war and the divisive issue of slavery that had undermined its foundations since the country's very inception. Phillips painted portraits for more than five decades, responding to the desires of his patrons, families who were actively engaged in the political issues of the day. The artist provided validation for landed families living

primarily in the border areas of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York, the portraits presenting a defense against the agrarian lifestyle that was slipping away with the encroachment of industrialization. They were to play a similar role in the modernist era of the early twentieth century, when such portraits once again provided a sense of historical heritage and artistic precedent for artists seeking an authentically American expression. A clue to Phillips's professional longevity, even after the introduction of photography, may lie in his earliest known advertisement of 1810, wherein he promises to provide "correct likenesses ... in the prevailing fashion of the day," a pledge he was to fulfill for more than fifty years.



## Increase Child Bosworth, 1840

## Abigail Munro Bosworth Simonds, 1840

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Increase Child Bosworth (1812–1888) and Abigail Munro Bosworth Simonds (1809–1883) descended from a family with deep roots in the American colonies. The siblings were born in Greenfield, New York. As did many families in the early years of the nineteenth century, they migrated to the pioneer communities of Illinois in 1836, settling in Dundee and later relocating to Elgin. Increase graduated from Chicago University and served as a trustee there throughout his life. He was also a trustee of the Baptist Theological Seminary, Elgin Academy, and Northern Illinois Hospital for the Insane. He showed a talent for business early and was quick to recognize opportunities, becoming one of the wealthiest men in the region. By 1875, Bosworth turned from mercantile interests to found a private bank that then merged with the First National Bank of Elgin; he served as its president until his death. Bosworth was also a founder of the major railroad lines to connect Illinois with the rest of the country. Increase is noted in a history of Kane County for his influence on the “side of improvement, progress, justice, truth, and charity.” Increase was remembered as a fond and playful grandfather, and his sister as a gentle, loving presence. Both were portrayed by the artist Sheldon Peck, who had also migrated from western New York State—first to

Chicago and then on to Babcock’s Grove (now Lombard), Illinois. Abigail was already married when her portrait was painted, but Increase was not to wed until four years later, which perhaps explains why the siblings were portrayed rather than a husband and wife.

The portraits feature magnificent trompe l’oeil frames directly painted on canvas, befitting the future business titan. This was a visual device that Peck devised for a finished effect without the additional cost of framing. Abigail’s dress is sprinkled with the rabbit’s paw motif that also became one of the artist’s leitmotifs. The portraits were painted just after the new technology of photography was introduced into America, ultimately replacing painted likenesses. Although Peck may not yet have faced real competition from the innovation, the illusionistic frame, large scale, rich color of his portraits, and personal relationship with the sitters continued to be incentives for potential commissions. In addition to his painting activities, Peck was an influential and proactive member of his community. He hired the first schoolmistress to operate out of the summer kitchen of the Peck farmhouse, and was also an ardent abolitionist whose home was a station on the Underground Railroad.

*Dividing of the Ways*, 1947

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One of ten children, Anna Mary Robertson Moses was born on a rural farm in upstate New York. Her life was bifurcated between the nineteenth century and the twentieth, encompassing the Civil War, Reconstruction, the dawn of a new century, and two world wars. Informed by this remarkable life, her art is quietly and slyly subversive, representing the founding values of an America that ever existed largely in the mythos of invention and imagination, and hinting at harsh truths that lie beneath the nostalgia.

Robertson was “hired out” at the age of twelve to work for a wealthier family on a neighboring farm. It was here she met Thomas Moses, whom she married in 1887. The couple departed immediately for North Carolina, where Thomas had found work in the New South as manager of a horse farm. The newlyweds never made it further than Staunton, Virginia, where they were enthralled by the richness and majesty of the Shenandoah Valley, which was so different

from their hardscrabble lives in New York. They started married life as tenant farmers, but eventually were able to purchase their own farm. Moses gave birth to ten children, only five surviving into adulthood. In 1905, they returned to New York and settled in Eagle Bridge, not far from where Moses was born. Her foray into artmaking was incidental and, as befitting her nineteenth-century roots, began with needlework. In 1932, while tending her daughter Anna who was dying from tuberculosis, Moses began to stitch what she called “worsted” pictures. At the age of seventy-five, when arthritis made it hard for her to hold a needle, she turned to paint.

Moses invented various strategies. She collected illustrations and other printed imagery that became resources for her landscapes, which often are filled with people at various activities associated with rural life. Her paintings were displayed first at county fairs, then exhibited in

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nearby Hoosick Falls at a woman's exchange. Through the persistent interest of Louis Caldor, an engineer passing through, they came to the attention of New York gallerist Otto Kallir, who granted the artist her first exhibition at his Galerie St. Etienne in 1940. Moses's old-fashioned presence overlay a core of determined grit that had carried her through a challenging life. Yet the comforting persona captured and soothed the public imagination at a time of endemic national distress in the years following the Great Depression and the onset of World War II. She earned the affectionate moniker "Grandma Moses" and became one of the most famous self-taught memory painters of the twentieth century, whose work was published in monographs, reproduced on Christmas cards, and covered in such media outlets as *Time* magazine. In 1949, she received a special award from President Truman. And, in 1960, as she approached her one hundredth birthday,

she was celebrated by *Life* magazine, and New York's governor, Nelson Rockefeller, declared "Grandma Moses Day."

There is a disquieting undertone to this snowy scene that evokes the well-known poem *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost (1874–1963), whose life span is not dissimilar from Moses's own. A large hearse-like sled with a single male figure diverges along a path that originates from and encircles a center of cheerful activity. Here, the landscape is dotted with the deep green of fir trees, residents stand before their homes, cut firewood, walk dogs, and ride sleds. There are no people on this fork in the road, however. The trees have lost their leaves, and the landscape is spare and unoccupied. The lonely figure seems to be leaving life and all its connections behind on this road "less traveled by."

# The Apple Paring, c. 1945

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*God gave me the power. Sometimes I try to quit paintin'. I can't. I can't.* —Clementine Hunter

Clementine Hunter brought truth and dignity to the everyday activities of a rural southern agricultural lifestyle that was rapidly fading into history. In her largely matriarchal world, industrious women whose physical toil never ceases run the engine of life. When not engaged in washing, fishing, laundering, picking cotton, or food preparation, they function as the moral compass of their communities, attending church, a baptism, or a funeral. In Hunter's art, women normalize life; men disrupt it, letting off steam by carousing on rowdy Saturday nights.

Hunter was born into a Louisianan Creole family on Hidden Hill Plantation along the Cane River. Here the family continued the fieldwork of picking cotton and pecans that their enslaved grandparents had done. When she was a teenager, they moved to Melrose Plantation in Natchitoches. The owner, Cammie G. Henry, ran the historic Melrose as something of an artist's colony situated on a working plantation. By the time Hunter arrived, it was already known for its support of artists in multiple disciplines. Hunter continued to work in the fields until sometime during the 1920s, when she started doing domestic indoor work, cooking, washing, and cleaning. She would clear out the rooms vacated by artists-in-residence, becoming exposed to the tools of artmaking. Sometime in the 1940s, she asked François Mignon, a landscape artist himself, and the plantation librarian and curator, for permission to try her hand at "marking," using some tubes of oil paint that had been left behind. She had always been making,

whether it was dolls for her children, colorful quilts, basket weaving, or sewing clothes. Mignon recalled providing her with a discarded window shade for canvas and some turpentine. Hunter went on to paint thousands of pictures, mostly in the evening hours when she was finished with work. Using brilliant colors that she mixed on a plywood board, Hunter would sit at a table with a canvas on her lap and paint scenes that she knew intimately from the inside. She earned recognition for her art during her lifetime, eventually needing to distinguish idle visitors from art buyers with a sign posted on her doorframe that charged admission of twenty-five cents just to look.

In this tranquil image of a mother and child engaged in paring apples, the two figures are situated outside in the warm sun. One can almost hear the insects humming. The mother looms large in this setting, with her back straight, head regally inclined in her honest activity, and sitting in a throne-like chair under the shade of a tree that is dwarfed by her figure. The child sits in obeisance at her feet in the shade of an umbrella. In the distance is a structure that strongly resembles the historic Yucca House, the first residence on Melrose Plantation erected between about 1795 and 1800. The name "Clemence" is written along a path on the left-hand side of the painting. Hunter was not able to read or write. For a brief period between 1945 and 1950, her paintings were signed with this name, which she sometimes claimed as her own original name, by James Register, a visiting writer who spent three months at Melrose while researching a book on Louisiana.

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A banner across this quilt proudly proclaims “Clara J. Martin Age 82 July 14, 1964.” Martin had a hard life. She received little formal education and had no occupational training. After her husband was incapacitated and no longer able to work, she took to tailoring, alterations, and mending; she cut hair; and anything else she could do from home to support her family. Between 1916 and 1919, she is listed among the charitable recipients for boarding of up to two children. Her hardships did not prevent her engagement with and participation in the democratic process. Her unique textile is constructed in the irregular crazy quilt fashion, popular when Martin was born in 1882. It includes portraits, hand-painted on canvas, of the thirty-five presidents who held office until 1964. Martin herself had lived through fifteen presidential cycles and was eligible to vote in ten of those elections after

women earned the vote in 1919. John F. Kennedy is featured most prominently; he and Lyndon Baines Johnson are the only two whose presidencies are not numbered. Kennedy is also the only president portrayed with members of his family: his wife, Jacqueline, and daughter, Caroline, on her pony, Macaroni. Rather than the date of his assassination, Martin has chosen to note April 13, 1963, when Kennedy received a telegram informing him that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Reverend Ralph Abernathy had been arrested while demonstrating in Birmingham, Alabama, and placed in solitary confinement. An earlier date in April of that year appears with Jackie Kennedy’s portrait: On April 9, 1963, she had taken part in a ceremony awarding honorary citizenship to Winston Churchill—two events that seem to have held meaning in Martin’s memories.

## Frank Peters, 1965

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In 1965, Joseph Pasquale Aulisio painted a portrait of his former employee, Frank Peters, who worked as a tailor at Lease Dry Cleaners, the establishment that Aulisio founded in Old Forge, Pennsylvania, in 1929. The portrait is a remarkably unvarnished study of the architecture of flesh. Folds in Peters's face appear both soft and hard, like molded plastic. Each gnarled knuckle and vein in his hands is delineated, testifying to his work as a tailor, and reinforced by the tape measure that he hugs fast against his body. His light-color eyes are unflinching and piercing behind horn-rimmed eyeglasses. What cannot be apparent is that this is a posthumous portrait, a reflection of Aulisio's memory of his longtime employee who had died years previously in 1954. The portrait is a nod to a significant tradition of capturing loved ones in oil on canvas to be remembered by generations to come—a tradition that transitioned to the prolific post-mortem photographic image captured on metal and glass plates and, later, paper.

Aulisio was the son of Giorgio and Rosina Aulisio, Italian immigrants who came to America in 1898. They were among the vast wave to enter through the port of New York City. They made their way to a growing Italian community in Old Forge, Pennsylvania, where Giorgio found work as a coal miner in the anthracite coal mining industry. Joseph was born in Old Forge in 1910. After graduating from high school, he briefly studied forestry, and worked for a time as a forest ranger before returning to start Lease Dry Cleaners, a play on his family name, Aulisio. Frank Peters was born in Poland in 1882, and immigrated to the United States in 1902, taking up residence in Taylor, Lackawanna, Pennsylvania. In 1918, his draft registration card listed his occupation as coal miner; it is not known when Peters took up tailoring. Today, Lease Dry Cleaners continues to operate as a family-run business.

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As the pre-dawn light fills the lowering sky, a line of men makes the long trek to the anthracite coal mines that were the mainstay of the Pennsylvania economy. They carry their lunch and water in tin pails; some also carry the pick axes that they will use to pry coal from veins deep underground in the mine shaft. Each figure is clad in a heavy blue uniform. The thick cloth affords some protection from the unremitting chill and dank of the mines, and the dark color absorbs the coal dust that will cover them by day's end. Their visored headgear will sport lamps to enable each miner to see in the darkness underground. After they clock in, the men will load into small carts on tracks and be slowly lowered into the depths of the mine where they will labor for many hours, mindful of trapped gases, and other dangers.

John "Jack" Savitsky was born in Silver Creek, Pennsylvania. Like his father before him, he worked in the mines for thirty-five years, starting

as a slate picker at the age of twelve and graduating to the mines at fifteen. He had little formal education, only attending public school through the sixth grade. After laboring in this region for years, he relocated to Lansford and found work in the No. 9 Coaldale Colliery. When the mine closed in 1969, he retired. He had been able to purchase a red brick house, where he lived with his wife and their son. His years in the mines took their toll, and he developed black lung, emphysema, diabetes, and heart disease. After retiring, Savitsky started to draw and paint the deceptively cheerful and cartoonlike autobiographical scenes.

Savitsky's terse inscription on the back of one of his paintings suggests the narrowness of routine in the life of a miner:

*Sunrise in the coal region./I went to school./  
I went to work./ And on pay day, I went out and  
got drunk.*

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Nan Phelps engages in a sense of life review as she contemplates the humble beauty and familiarity of a scene enacted innumerable times through generations of women. Gathered around a quilting frame, confident and competent, the women of all ages form a circle of community whose continuity is ensured by the presence of a young pregnant woman. It is difficult not to draw comparisons with Grandma Moses, whose memory paintings of a generation earlier evoked similar emotions of an enduring yet changing landscape. The serenity and constancy of the scene belie the tough narrative of Phelps's own life. The second oldest of eleven

children born into an impoverished family in Kentucky, she was forced to leave school after the eighth grade to care for her brothers and sisters. She entered into an abusive marriage at age fifteen and, after three years, fled with her two children to Hamilton, Ohio. There she met and married her second husband, Robert Phelps, in 1929, and bore three more children. Phelps began to paint during the 1930s, and gained recognition in the post-war years of the 1940s. Like Grandma Moses, her expressive scenes reveled in the small pleasures of the everyday and provided a sense of calm stability in turbulent times.



# 20 NICK QUIJANO TORRES (b. 1953)

## *Memories of the Veteran, 1984*

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Nick Quijano Torres appreciates the universal appeal of small moments that communicate on a deeply personal level. He paints his life: born in New York City to Puerto Rican parents, he spent his summers on “La Isla del Encanto,” the enchanted island, through elementary school, when the family returned full-time to the island. He calls his paintings “collages” of memories from childhood. In this scene, he depicts himself standing beside his beloved grandmother on one side and his sister on the other; the three

figures are connected through the children’s trusting touch. A portrait of his uncle Juan, a veteran, hangs above the family grouping, a gentle reminder of Puerto Rico’s steadfast contribution to safeguarding the American way of life. Torres views his art that invokes people from his past and present as a corrective; the story of his mixed race culture that he found was missing from the art he encountered in formal museum settings.

*The Dining Room Lady*, 1990

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Formal rooms for dining were introduced during the nineteenth century and represented a family's taste and attainment. So-called dining room pictures, still life paintings of overflowing fruit and flowers, became popular as symbols of plenty and material comfort. Lorenzo Scott's *The Dining Room Lady* relies on that history of association for the qualities of refinement that he wishes to bestow upon the figure of this beautiful woman with golden eyes. He uses his conversance with early Western European art traditions to evoke queenly attributes: the neck ruff, jeweled headband, and gold-encrusted gown. His knowledge of Elizabethan, Renaissance, and Baroque art was not gleaned through formal university study but rather his own keen observations of art hanging in museums and pictured in books, and experimentation with available materials to learn to layer and glaze.

Scott was born in West Point, Georgia. His family, devout Southern Baptists, moved to Atlanta when he was an infant. During the 1960s, he had the opportunity to live and work in New York City, where he frequently visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art and also enjoyed the work of sidewalk artists in Greenwich Village. When he returned to Atlanta around 1970, he supported himself as a construction worker and house painter, but he also began to paint, incorporating the religious and historical themes and visual and technical approaches that he so admired.

# 22 ATTRIBUTED TO JOHANNES KNISKERN (1746–?)

## Jacob Kniskern Blanket Chest, 1778

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The chest that bears the name Jacob Kniskern and the date 1778 is one of three made for Kniskern's family that together comprise the most important surviving group of early decorated Germanic chests from Schoharie, New York. The Kniskern family was among the first wave of Palatine Germans who arrived in the Hudson River Valley about 1710. By 1730, they had relocated to the Schoharie Valley, where they received a large land patent and became prominent members of the growing community. As discovered by researcher Andy Albertson, the year 1778 marked on this chest proved to be one of devastating significance in the life of Schoharie County and of the Kniskern family and survives as a testimony to trauma and survival.

Jacob Kniskern was a respected member and trustee of the Schoharie Lutheran Church. During the Revolutionary War, in 1778 (the year notated on the chest), he and his brother Johannes enlisted with the patriot forces. The Schoharie Valley was a strategic location in the British plan to capture Albany. In a succession of violent raids between 1777 and 1778, the valley was destroyed by British troops, and bolstered by Native American forces, with great loss of life and property. Jacob was captured in 1778, marched to Canada, and escaped from "Rebel

Island" on a float constructed of brandy kegs. He returned to find the devastation left behind: property and livestock burnt, lives lost, and the valley in ruins. The Schoharie Valley was razed twice more, destroying whatever property remained, including the Kniskern family mill. In addition to these losses, many of the farmers were financially ruined, having accepted paper money in exchange for their farm products—money that was now virtually worthless.

Following the war, Kniskern successfully rebuilt his life and became once again a man of substance in the area. Upon his death, he owned seven chests, but it is not known who used this chest that testifies to the traumatic events of 1778. It has long been believed that his brother Johannes made the chest, as well as two more for Jacob's daughters. It is unique in the region for its combination of applied architectural elements, the shaped bracket base with medial third foot, and painted decoration of complex designs deeply incised with a compass and straight edge. Also provocative is the motif around the key escutcheon that suggests the figure of a seated, dark-skinned man, recalling the enslaved persons listed in Jacob's probate inventory, one of whom possessed his own "Box...with Rubbish."

# Birth and Baptismal Certificate for Martin Andres, c. 1788

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Embellished texts known as *fraktur* were produced in Pennsylvania German communities and other areas where Germanic families migrated. They testify to the retention of cultural traditions even as immigrants traveled far from home. Johannes Spangenberg was one of many German immigrants to the American colonies who fought in the Revolutionary War. He served as a sergeant major, adjutant, and quartermaster in the Northampton County Militia, and his pension papers commend his service and loyalty. In Europe, *fraktur* was accepted as legal documentation of births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths. They continued to fulfill a similar function in the New World when they were submitted as proof of birth with applications for military pensions in the post-Revolutionary period.

*Fraktur* occurs in a variety of forms, from birth and baptismal certificates to house blessings, rewards of merit for students, love tokens, and small gifts. Pastors and schoolmasters produced the majority of these documents, which shared a cohesive visual language with other American Germanic decorative arts. In a convention

derived from illuminated manuscripts, the symbolic and narrative pictures frequently accompanied texts that might include a biblical verse and sometimes a pious motto or proverb. *Fraktur* was not intended as wall-hung art. Most frequently, it was pasted on the underside of a chest lid, a primary piece of furniture in Germanic homes. This *Geburts und Taufschein*, or birth and baptismal certificate, was drawn by Spangenberg and attests to his ability to communicate in both German and English. He is most closely associated with *fraktur* made for children in Easton and Greenwich townships, Pennsylvania, and Sussex County, New Jersey. His artistry is particularly appealing with its animated parade of musicians. In some cases, these figures may be singing praises to God. At other times, they appear to be dancing and enjoying a secular celebration. It has been suggested that, as a Lutheran, Spangenberg's depiction of musicians is related to the tradition of musicians gathering to play during services held on special occasions such as births.

## S. D. Plum Tavern Sign, 1813

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As early as 1644, Connecticut towns were ordered to provide a place where travelers and strangers could obtain food and lodging. In 1799, a turnpike was cut through the town of Meriden, Connecticut. Meriden was largely the province of farmers at the time, and the plans for the turnpike occasioned the purchase of some properties and relocation of others. In 1805, when Seth D. Plum (c. 1779–1836) bought a house on Broad Street, near a strip of the highway, there were meeting houses, a school house, and the beginnings of a town center comprising a tanner, miller, and storekeeper, and two taverns including his own.

Plum's house served as a tavern for many years. Such taverns and inns were indistinguishable from other buildings, and signboards were essential to identify them as safe havens for the increasing numbers of travelers moving along the improving system of roads that was developing throughout the new nation. Following English tradition, the earliest signboards were usually freestanding rectangular boards hanging between two posts. The word *entertainment* on this example would have been understood to describe the services of food and lodging that could be obtained within. Additionally, the emblematic image clearly welcomes the “teamsters” who drove horse-drawn passenger coaches on the turnpikes.

# Mr. and Mrs. Lyman Day and Daughter Cornelia, c. 1823–1824

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A parcel of letters and an old leather traveling bag: these were artifacts lovingly preserved after the death of a beloved mother in 1836 and rediscovered in the early twentieth century by family descendants. The letters revealed the intimate course of a courtship, marriage, family, and untimely death. The old leather satchel opened to reveal a number of cylindrical tin canisters holding small bladders filled with oil paints, little newspaper parcels tied with string containing powdered watercolor pigments, slices of ivory, and handmade feather quill brushes—thus, the history of Deborah Goldsmith, one of the few women in early nineteenth-century America to work professionally as an itinerant artist. Between 1824 and her marriage in 1832, Goldsmith traveled distances averaging seven to thirteen miles from her home bases of Brookfield and Hamilton, New York, to nearby Cooperstown, Hartwick, Hubbardsville, Lebanon, Sangerfield, and other small hamlets in western New York State. It was not a usual sight for a young woman to travel by stagecoach alone, and Goldsmith was most always accompanied by a relative, religious leader, or trusted acquaintance. The youngest daughter of aged parents, she spent much of her time at the home of her sister in Hamilton, a hub of intellectual activity and

culture in the frontier communities of New York. Although there is no indication that she attended any of the academies established in Hamilton, two friendship albums, dating to the years from 1826 to 1831, are filled with offerings from her numbers of friends, many of whom were educated at one of the schools. The albums reveal her deep and reflective nature through her own beautifully composed poems, and sentiments and writings copied from other books and annuals such as *The English Reader* and *The Token*. The pages are enriched also by her beautiful and delicate drawings, both original and copied from published sources.

Goldsmith knew most of the people whom she portrayed, although the connection between the artist and the family of Lyman Day (1794–1874) is not known. This portrait was probably painted within a year or so of the birth of daughter Cornelia (1822–1904) to Lyman and Maria Preston Day (1803–1880) of Sangerfield, Oneida County. It is one of the earliest compositions known by the artist, who would have been only fifteen or sixteen years old at the time yet was already traveling a short distance from her home in Brookfield, New York, to paint portrait commissions. Although the palette is muted,

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Goldsmith's interest in interior details is evident in the patterned rug and wallcovering in the sparsely furnished Day home, and reveals the aspirations of this farming family. Her observant eye captures the emotional trappings of life in this self-contained family scene expressing pride of place and tender affection for their first-born.

In 1831, Goldsmith was called to paint four portraits of the Throop family in Hubbardsville, where she met George Addison Throop. A devout Baptist, her correspondence with Throop, a Universalist, illuminates their struggle in resolving their different religious beliefs before deciding to marry. In her letter dated May 29, 1832, Goldsmith wrote, "...truth and truth alone shall flow from my pen...your religious sentiments and mine are different. Do you think that this difference will ever be the cause of unpleasant feeling? Your age and mine differ. I do not know your age exactly, but I believe that I am nearly two years older than you...has this ever been an objection in your mind? And another thing which I expect you already know is, that my teeth are partly artificial. Nature gave me as many teeth as she usually gives her children, but not as durable ones as some are blessed with. Some people think it is wrong to

have anything artificial but I will let that subject go." George and Deborah were married by the end of the year and had their first child in 1833. Three months after the birth of her son in December 1835, Deborah became fatally ill. She died in March 1836, after a premonition of her own death, related to George in a letter from her mother:

*March 6th. 1836*

*She told me today she thought she had been warned of her approaching dissolution by dreams before her confinement. Her grandmother appeared to her in a dream in celestial splendor, her raiment white and glittering, love and friendship beaming in her eyes. She told Deborah she had not long to live, but that need be no cause for regret. It would be to her unspeakable gain. She had a remarkable dream some time before her last sickness. She thought she had been painting her own likeness; she had a most excellent likeness, the eyes looked like real life. While she was looking and admiring it, suddenly the eyes closed. She felt surprised and called her husband; she said she certainly drew them open. She dreamed they both fell on their knees.*

## E. Fitts Jr. Store and Coffeehouse Trade Sign,

1832

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Coffee, tea, and chocolate were introduced into England by the late seventeenth century, and coffeehouses quickly became centers of social and business interaction for travelers and locals. By the eighteenth century, these establishments were imitated in America, where they offered current newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets and served as meeting places for social, political, military, religious, and secular activities. E. Fitts Jr. has not been identified, but his

painting illustrates the close relationship between the coffeehouse milieu and commercial activities. One side names his coffeehouse, whereas the other depicts his store with a range of “staple and fancy goods.” In addition to a large stock of hats, reams of fabric, and dry goods, the store may have offered some food or drink, as there are barrels stacked on one side and the shelves have a variety of pottery vessels.



# Map of the Animal Kingdom, 1835

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Maps in early American classrooms provided an essential means of shaping an awareness of an ever-expanding world. Quaker schools were among the first to include geography and “working maps” as part of the regular curriculum. This unusual map of the animal kingdom shows animals native to regions around the globe.

For young women who attended the Litchfield Female Academy in Connecticut, geography was also integrated into their education in the applied arts, where students drew maps in ink and shaded the boundaries with watercolor in a manner similar to this example. In their stewardship of the Litchfield Academy, Sarah Pierce and her nephew John Pierce Brace considered the study of geography and history important in enlarging the minds of their charges, improving their memories and giving them a wider perspective on the world and a clear understanding of their perceived place in it.

This perspective was filtered through four major themes characteristic of the time and place: the greatness of God’s plan, the global superiority of Christendom, the glory of the United States, and the especial superiority of New England. Although presented through the supposedly factual medium of the map, each of these themes reveals a distinctly biased worldview. In particular, the stereotyped depiction of human figures around the map shows a highly romanticized and paternalistic attitude towards Indigenous and non-Western peoples.

The map closely follows a pictorial atlas map published in 1831 by W. C. Woodbridge of Connecticut, and that was specifically intended for use in the classroom. The map is bordered by a delicate theorem painting of roses with thorny stems and leaves, a popular art technique that relied upon the use of hollow-cut stencils to create each pictorial element.

## Sea Captain, c. 1845

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Portraits were commissioned for a number of reasons, such as a new marriage, growing family, and documentation of achievement. Portraits of sea captains and others in the maritime trades held a particular urgency for both sitter and loved ones. Perhaps more than members of any other profession, men who earned their livelihood at sea relied on painted portraits to function as a surrogate presence in their homes, as voyages frequently lasted years; they became memorials when men did not survive to return to home shores. They are also a reminder that those who followed a seafaring occupation were among the very few members of American society who were privy to exotic and fantastic sights around the globe.

This unidentified sea captain is shown with several attributes associated with his profession: ship's rigging, telescope, and seascape

with sailing vessels in the distance. It is one of several similar portraits painted by Sturtevant J. Hamblin, descended from a family of house and ornamental painters in Portland, Maine. In 1828, his sister Rosamond married the artist William Matthew Prior (1806–1873) of Bath, Maine. The Hamblins and the Priors moved together to East Boston, where Sturtevant Hamblin and Prior established a painting garret. They developed a closely related and distinctive style of portraiture that ranged from the academic to “flat without shade,” depending on the cost of the commission. By 1857, Hamblin had given up painting for the “gent's furnishing goods” business with his brother Joseph, and he left Boston by 1860. Four years before his death in 1884, Hamblin returned to Boston and took up painting once again, listing his occupation in the 1880 census as a portrait painter.

## Mourning Piece for Captain Matthew Prior and His Son Barker Prior, c. 1815–1822

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As the child of a Bath, Maine, sea captain, Jane Grey Otis Prior, older sister of celebrated artist William Matthew Prior, would have always known the long absences of her father and the uncertainty of his return from sea. Every family who stood on shore as their loved ones sailed into the horizon faced the same burden of doubt. In 1815, that eventuality occurred when her father, Captain Matthew Prior (1774–1815) and her sixteen-year-old brother Barker (1799–1815) were “lost in the ocean,” never to be seen again.

Prior’s schoolgirl mourning piece commemorates the calamitous loss of father and brother with a breathtaking economy of words: “They sailed from Bath to England Novr 7, 1815 and have never been heard of since.” These few words not only tersely reflect the incalculable tragedy of losing these significant family members, but the additional horror that their bodies most likely would never be recovered. Unlike mourning pieces in Europe, where the art form originated, mourning expressions were democratized in the newly formed United States, and

Americans soon came to memorialize their own loved ones as well as historical and literary figures. This watercolor and ink on silk may have been painted while Jane boarded at the respected Portland school operated by the Misses Martins between 1803 and 1829. Here, according to contemporary sources, the “English branches were taught, a little French, music, painting, and many kinds of fancy work, lace making and filigree, also geography with the use of globes.” It is not known whether this mourning piece was composed shortly after the tragic event in 1815 or some years after the loss. Jane Otis Prior is documented at the school through a wood box painted with scenic views that she gifted to a schoolmate in 1822. Only two years later, she was in Richmond, Virginia, where she married Dr. Erastus Willey. After her death in 1884, Jane Otis Prior Willey was remembered as having “educated herself as a teacher, and was a lady of fine accomplishments, a writer of verses for the *Philadelphia Courier*, and was much beloved by her step-children.”

The Stolps and the Cranes were families of Dutch descent living in the rural hamlets of Pultneyville and Marion in Wayne County, New York. In 1832, Catherine Stolp (1814–1889) married David Crane (1806–1849), and the following year, her fifty-two-year old father, Frederick, trekked on foot to Illinois, attracted by tales of fertile lands and deep forests. He staked his claim in the area known as Big Woods, and then walked back to Wayne County to gather his extended family for the long return journey by covered wagon. They were soon counted among the pioneer families of Aurora, Illinois, in 1834, the year the town was first settled.

Almost a decade later, the Cranes commissioned two impressive portraits of themselves and their daughter Janette with her paternal grandmother. They hired a local artist, Sheldon Peck, who had also migrated from western New York, thus sharing their experience, culture, and values. Although photography was available by this time, painted portraiture still held cachet

as a measure of success that the daguerreotype could not yet claim. Further, an artist like Peck could offer the luxury of scale and color befitting such an important venture, while still borrowing the modern aesthetic of the studio photographic portrait. Additionally, the grain-painted trompe l'oeil frame also provided a portrait that was finished and ready to hang without further expense. From the outset, Peck innovated a tri-lobe motif resembling a rabbit's paw that he often used as a pattern on lace and fabrics, as in the collar and cuffs of Mrs. Crane's dress. A Bible pictured in the companion portrait of the Crane's daughter descended with a note that the portrait was painted on a linen sheet provided by the family and paid for with the trade of one cow, indicating a barter system still existed in face-to-face communities despite encroaching industrialization. David Crane died suddenly in 1849. Although his cause of death is not known, this was the year of a terrible cholera outbreak that swept through Illinois.

# John Van Reed Evans Homestead and Farmscape, c. 1879–1886

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The pristine, idyllic world portrayed in this scene presents a snapshot of Berks County in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In the foreground, a hub of neat and impressive homes is brought to busy life by people, coaches, and wagons traveling along the road. A locomotive and cars chug into view from the opposite direction, running along the tracks of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad (P&RR), one of the first in the United States. Originally constructed to haul coal from Pennsylvania's coal region to Philadelphia, the P&RR became one of the largest companies in the world. Telegraph poles installed at regular intervals along the road and the tracks signify the use of this new technology to direct traffic along the extensive routes and to dispatch trains. Behind this modern nexus are enacted the traditional seasonal activities of a prosperous working farm, the beautiful patchwork of fields and crops separated by slim wood fences. In the far distance, the rich natural landscape dominates with smoky, blue mountains and misty forests.

John Rasmussen, the artist of this composite vision, was living in very different circumstances when he painted this optimistic scene. He had traveled to the United States from his native Germany in 1865, entering through the port of New York. By 1867, he was working as a painter and housepainter in Reading, Pennsylvania. On June 5, 1879, widowed, crippled with rheumatism, and debilitated by chronic alcohol abuse, Rasmussen was committed to the Berks County Almshouse, established in 1824, where, in the 1880 Federal Census for Berks County, Pennsylvania, he is registered as a fifty-two-year-old widower, occupation “fresco painter,” and an inmate of the Poorhouse. In his remarkably fresh vistas

of the almshouse and surrounding properties painted in oil on zinc panels reclaimed from the wagon and machine shops, Rasmussen closely followed the prototype innovated by Charles C. Hoffmann (1820–1882), a fellow German immigrant, with whom he overlapped for a period of three years until Hoffmann's death. The elder Hoffmann appears to have trained as a lithographer, and often includes a cartouche and a legend in his works that are painted in a flat, stylized manner. Rasmussen's detailed and precise renderings of the Almshouse facilities and grounds employ a sense of depth, tonality, and technique. Most, if not all, of the views were painted for directors and those closely associated with the Almshouse. Other works were special commissions depicting nearby private properties. This scene has now been identified as the homestead in Spring Township belonging to John Van Reed Evans (1804–1864), a prosperous farmer of Welsh descent whose lineage is intermingled with Berks County's most prominent families, including the Van Reeds, whose own farm was rendered by Hoffmann in 1872. Evans's daughter Hannah inherited the property in 1880, one year after Rasmussen entered the Almshouse. A legal dispute in 1894 describes the house as a two-and-one-half-story brick and stone dwelling with land situated along the Berks and Dauphin Turnpike road (now Penn Avenue), and near the tracks of the Lebanon Valley Railroad, a subsidiary of the P&RR. The cart drawn by six mules on the road is a reference to the transport of iron ore from the mines that dotted the landscape to the railroad.

*My thanks to Lisa Adams, Vicky Heffner, Michelle Lynch, George M. Meiser, Sharon Merolli, Richard Polityka, and Susan Speros for their assistance in identifying this scene.*

# 32 EMMA REBECCA CUMMINS BLACKLOCK SNIVELY CROSIER PAULING (1848–1923)

## Crazy Trousseau Robe, 1882–1900

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This trim and elegant robe, pieced in the crazy patchwork that was popular during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was made by an unusual woman whose life was as irregular as the patches that she expertly stitched together and embellished. Emma Rebecca Cummins lived variously in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Utah, Wyoming, and Idaho. She married four times, braved life on the frontiers, and became one of the first women telegraphers in the American West.

Cummins was the lively and comely daughter of Civil War colonel Robert P. Cummins, who fell in the Battle of Gettysburg. At the age of fourteen, she married a French Canadian named Blacklock, who treated his child bride so cruelly that his own family paid for her return from Canada to Pennsylvania. Her second husband was Dr. George Snively, with whom she had two daughters, one dying in early childhood. In the late 1860s, Snively was lured to the mining towns of Tooele County, west of the Salt Lake Valley of Utah. For a few years, Emma was one of the “waiting women” whose husbands journeyed

west in search of precious minerals, fortune, land, and adventure, leaving their families behind to fend for themselves. By 1870, she and her daughter, Hattie, traveled to Utah to join Snively, and in December 1872, she was hired as a telegrapher by the Western Union Company, the first transcontinental telegraph line, because of her fluid handwriting and the speed with which she could write a message. By this time, telegraphers were stationed in depots all along the railroad lines, receiving orders from central dispatch that were critical in regulating railroad traffic and safety. A thorough knowledge of the telegraph code being used—usually the code introduced by Samuel F. B. Morse (1791–1852), inventor of the telegraph—a legible hand, and the ability to write quickly and communicate essential messages within a limited number of words were all imperative qualities of the railroad telegraph operator.

A growing number of women recognized the potential in the new technology for earning power, continuing education, and advancement

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despite their gender. Such operators often worked in lonely outposts in unpopulated areas. The messages that they transcribed onto paper were manually handed to the crews of passing trains, often their only human contact during their shift. Sometimes, passengers might dash into the depot and leave money and a written message to be telegraphed. It was then up to the operator to ensure that the message did not exceed the standard number of words. Throughout the 1880s and early 1890s, Emma worked in Utah, maintaining a scrapbook filled with newspaper articles of interest, personal letters in her beautiful hand, and business communications.

In 1874, “Doc” Snively was killed in a bar brawl after making loud and uncomplimentary remarks about his wife. He was challenged by an acquaintance, Nicholas Lawless. In the ensuing struggle, Snively was fatally shot, but Lawless was found innocent on grounds of self-defense and married Emma’s sister a few years later. It is not known when Emma married her third

husband, George Crosier, but in 1880, she was divorced and back in Somerset, Pennsylvania, living only with her young daughter. By 1884, she had returned to Utah, where she was appointed postmaster of Collinston, Box Elder County. In 1892, she is listed in the Salt Lake City directory as a cashier. The following year, Emma was married for the fourth and last time to George M. Pauling (1840–1898), a veteran who had served during the Civil War, first with Pennsylvania Company K, 126th Pennsylvania Volunteers and then with Company M, 21st Pennsylvania Calvary. In 1899, penurious and now residing with family in Somerset, she applied for a pension of \$12 per month, which was granted in large part because of her father’s exemplary service during the war. After a life of adventure, lived largely on her own terms, Emma Cummins Blacklock Snively Crosier Pauling died at home with her family at the age of seventy-five.

# 33 CLARA LEON (1845–1921)

## Crazy Quilt, c. 1885

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This quilt is believed to have been made by Clara (Dobriner) Leon. Clara was born in Hoffenheim or Heidelberg, Germany, and came to the United States on March 11, 1867, arriving in the port of New York on the ship *America*. The following year, she married German-born Pincus (Peter) Leon (c. 1831–1896) in Manhattan. Following the migration pattern of many immigrant German Jews, the Leons joined a growing Jewish pioneer community on the western frontiers as they traveled by covered wagon seeking greater economic opportunities. In 1869, they were living in Independence, Missouri, where their daughter, Carrie, was born. By 1873, they were in Las Vegas, New Mexico, the largest town between San Francisco, California, and Independence, where the infamous Doc Holliday once hung his shingle. As a merchant, Pincus was attracted to the location by the proximity to the Santa Fe Trail and expansion of commerce through the developing railway system. In 1884, the Leons were among thirty-six Jewish families living in Las Vegas who established Temple Montefiore, the first congregation in the New Mexico territories. They also contributed to the Las Vegas Academy, which their daughter attended.

Clara came from a cultured and musical family who supported arts, entertainments, and musicales in their new areas of settlement. Family lore states that her piano also traveled by covered wagon. This may account for some of the musical motifs in the fashionable and elegant textile that features sumptuous velvets, chenille threads, and silk embroidery, perhaps available through her husband's business or the three-story department store founded by Charles Ilfeld, another Jewish pioneer. Each of the borders displays a bounty of floral and leaf arrangements suggestive of the changing seasons from fall leaves to winter sprays. One block includes the Odd Fellows interlocking three rings. By 1892, Clara and Pincus were living in Trinidad, Colorado, and were members of Temple Aaron, the oldest synagogue in Colorado, which was founded in 1883. She was a charter member of the Hebrew Ladies Aid Society, and participated in fundraising fairs and teas. Clara and Pincus Leon are buried next to each other in the Masonic (also Odd Fellows) Cemetery in Trinidad Colorado, in a section devoted to members of the congregation.



# 34 EUDOXIA AURORA KELLY NIBLIN (1865–1945)

## Oregon Pioneer Association Quilt for Euda Aletha Kelly, 1923

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Quilts historically hold elements of memory and commemoration. Often utilizing remnants of fabric recycled from other textiles, they are encoded with deep meaning that is specific to the maker, the recipient, and those close to the events captured in bits of cloth. By the late nineteenth century, and especially after the national centennial celebrations of 1876, quilts became literal scrapbooks through the idiom of the crazy quilt whose irregular patches incorporated personal references and ephemera associated with time, place, and occasion. The evolution of the crazy quilt coincided with the availability of domestically produced luxury textiles, including velvets, brocades, and silks, and the development of a secondary weaving industry based on commemorative and decorative ribbons woven with a jacquard loom. Known as Stevengraphs, the collectible ribbons were available in hundreds of standardized patterns and could also be specially commissioned. Embellished ribbons, whether woven, printed, or painted, became standard fodder for incorporation into the crazy quilt as shorthand for lived experience.

The silk quilt made in 1923 by Eudoxia Amelia Kelly Niblin for her niece Euda Aletha Kelly (1911–1964) celebrates a specific chapter in the history of American expansionism, when explorers, missionaries, and pioneer families traveled on horseback and in covered wagons across challenging terrain to settle in the

Oregon territories. Beginning with the Lewis and Clark expedition mandated early in the nineteenth century by President Jefferson, the establishment of commercial routes to and incorporation of the western territories were perceived as part of the Manifest Destiny of the United States. Quilt researcher Deborah Harding established that this quilt testifies to the pioneers who settled the Willamette and other valleys of the Oregon Territory before 1859, when the southeastern portion of Oregon was admitted to the Union. Against a background of pieced blocks, a center medallion is composed of reunion ribbons of the Oregon Pioneer Association (OAP) dating from 1846 to 1922, commemorating important figures in the history of Oregon. It also includes ribbons denoting grange and political events, and the Wives of Veterans of the Indian Wars, a reminder of bloody encounters, especially at the expense of native populations, that accompanied the western expansion. The center handkerchief is a souvenir from the 1894 Midwinter Fair in San Francisco; the Eiffel tower-like building is the Electric Tower. Eudoxia was the daughter of two Oregon pioneers, Plympton Kelly, who fought in the Yakima Indian War, and Elizabeth Aurora Clark. As a direct line descendant of pioneers who arrived before statehood, Eudoxia was eligible for membership in the association. It is not known what occasioned the gift of this quilt, documenting with pride the family's pioneer status, to her niece.

*Betty*, 1897*Martha Ann*, 1923

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A distance of twenty-six years and more than two hundred miles separate *Betty*, the doll Letta Vanderhoof made for her daughter Emily's seventh birthday on October 14, 1897, and *Martha Ann*, the second cloth doll that she made for her granddaughter Barbara's seventh birthday on June 19, 1923. Each of the dolls features similarly hand-painted cloth faces, and their dresses are meticulously stitched. They wear underclothes and socks. Nothing hints of their distance in time and space, yet together they tell a story of generations and unwavering affection despite the vagaries of life. The dolls were cherished within the family as they moved variously to Sarasota, Florida; Chicago, Illinois; Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, Michigan; Las Cruces, New Mexico; and Woodsworth, Wisconsin.

Letta Miller married Charles Vanderhoof in September 1889. Their first and only child, Emily, was born almost exactly one year later. In 1912, Letta Vanderhoof filed for divorce on grounds of cruelty and non-support. The ensuing years were marked by relocations and hardships as Letta supported herself through her dressmaking skills, appearing in city directories as “dressmaker” and “seamstress.” Emily married Charles Hixson one year after her parents officially divorced and bore her own first child, Barbara, in 1916. The couple divorced between 1930 and 1940, when the Federal Census for Chicago lists Emily as head of household, working as a clerk in a furniture company. Her household also included daughters Barbara and Esther, and her mother, Letta Vanderhoof, who continued to live with her daughter and her family until her death at the age of eight-four.

# 36 JOSEPH YOGES (1878–after 1957)

## Tramp Art Clock, 1930s

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From about the 1880s through the 1940s, making decorative and useful objects from recycled wood boxes and crates became a popular pastime, especially among men. The Revenue Act of 1865 had mandated the use of wooden boxes—commonly made from mahogany, cedar, and pine—to pack cigars and tobacco, but did not permit the boxes to be reused. As a result of this and the increasing volume of goods shipped in wooden crates, an enormous amount of raw material became freely available to those with the talents and imagination to use it. The name “tramp art” was applied to this type of work that became associated in the popular imagination with an itinerant lifestyle and the act of whittling to fill time. In truth, many men living in stable households—often immigrants—practiced the art. Surfaces were built up in graduated layers. In each layer, the edges were notched in a repeating V-shape, a chip-carving technique that was widespread throughout many areas of Europe, particularly in Germany and Scandinavia. As each layer was slightly smaller than the last, the notched edges created

a crimped effect and the construction took on the typical pyramidal form associated with tramp art.

This is one of four pieces that are unusual because of their variety and size, and significantly because the maker is identified. Joseph Yoges (1878–after 1957) was born in Lithuania and immigrated to the United States in 1910. He was naturalized in Detroit, Michigan, in 1934. His occupation in the 1930 Federal Census is listed as a laborer in a pump house and later records record him as a janitor in a government building. Yoges was living in Detroit in the 1930s when he fashioned two ornate clocks, a large cabinet, and a more typical jewelry box. He used a variety of wood boxes; the drawers in the cabinet, for instance, were fashioned from Eagle Brand preserved milk boxes from the Borden Corporation. The four works, including this tall clock, were proffered to his landlord in lieu of rent during this time of economic hardship and depression.

# 37 CHARLES CARMEL (1865–1931)

## Outer Row Jumper Horse, c. 1918

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Riding a carousel is one of the most magical experiences of childhood. The anticipation begins the moment you step onto the large circular wooden deck of the pavilion, under a canopy bedazzled with electric lights and painted panels, lively music already booming from the band organ. Next comes the thrilling task of choosing the perfect steed, stationary or galloping; sitting in the saddle; strapping in with a weathered leather belt; and finally, holding the reins in readiness. Once the ride starts, you travel faster and faster, heart pumping, hoping to glimpse a reassuring sight of a parent as you fly by. The carvers who provided this magic were travelers of a different kind, immigrants to America who found their opportunities in the growing amusement industry at the turn of the twentieth century and incidentally changed the nature of the carousel through their creative visions.

In 1883, Charles Carmel became one of a handful of Jewish woodcarvers who emigrated from the Eastern European Pale of Settlement, the geographical boundary in which Jews were legally permitted to reside, to the United States where they aspired to greater liberties, tolerance, and success. Like his compatriots Marcus Charles Illions, Solomon Stein, and Harry Goldstein, Carmel located in Brooklyn, New York,

home to one of the most lavish and exciting parks of the day: Coney Island. Together, they infused the American carousel with an innovative dynamism characterized by realistic attitudes, flying manes, lolling tongues, ferocious expressions, and extravagant embellishments. The Coney Island Style, as it came to be known, was distributed throughout the city's almost two dozen carousels, and also the rest of the country. As did Illions, Carmel lived and operated a shop on Ocean Parkway, near the Prospect Park stables. Here, he was able to observe the movements and musculature of living horses as he modeled his carousel carvings. Carmel enjoyed success as a carver in the shops of Charles Loof and William Mangels before opening his own shop. His dream of operating his own carousel went up in smoke—literally—the day before it was to open in Coney Island's ethereal Dreamland Park, victim of a construction accident that resulted in the devastation of the entire wonderland. Thereafter, he supplied horses and menagerie figures to the Philadelphia Toboggan Company and other manufacturers who preferred his horses that retained the realism of the Coney Island style, but with an added grace and gentleness of expression. This example has elaborate latticework and carved trappings lavishly embellished with faceted glass jewels.

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*Remember who you are. Remember where you came from. Change the world.* —Epitaph, gravemarker for Ralph Fasanella

Ralph Fasanella's New York City is a crowded, boisterous, diverse, hardworking, and hard playing place—a tough crust with a soft center. He was raised in a largely Italian immigrant neighborhood, in the shadow of impending world war. His father struggled to make ends meet as an ice-delivery man, and his mother was a garment worker on the Lower East Side. She was a woman with progressive views who advocated for anti-fascist and pro-trade union causes. Fasanella himself was an energetic, rambunctious, and aggressive boy. He became increasingly difficult as he grew older, graduating to petty crimes that landed him in the constricting environment of a Catholic reform school. He might have continued on this troubled path if not for his mother's influence. She urged him to funnel his passion, strong work ethic, and empathy with working-class values and culture into action. Fasanella became highly political—his philosophy of life constructed between the wars and the forces that were threatening the democratic model in which he deeply believed. He joined the anti-fascist movement in Spain, advocated rigorously on behalf of labor unions,

and became an organizer for many years. In 1945, Fasanella began to experience a tingling sensation in his hands. As therapy, he began to draw and, ultimately, to paint. In his minutely detailed yet increasingly monumental and sweeping scenes, he found a new outlet for his political activism and dreams of a fair shake for all in blunt visual critiques of post-World War II America.

This canvas highlights Coney Island as an ideal of working-class culture—a mecca open to all and sundry on a hot summer day. Shedding the grit and worries of city life, Fasanella's vision offers a happy polyglot of people and amusements just out of reach on the other side of the ocean. But how to reach that happy place? A stream of cars queues into a long tunnel that abruptly ends at the shoreline, funneling the passengers into the water with no indication how they might emerge on the other side. The cheerful scene assumes a darker aspect as the playful promise of Coney Island, once a privileged escape and later a playground for the masses, still remains out of reach for so many. The vista collapses three separate entities into a single, impossible frame: the city of tenements and churches on one side, the beach on the other, and the ocean in between.

# 39 CALVIN BLACK (1903–1972) AND RUBY BLACK (1915–1980) Possum Trot Figures and Totem, 1953–1969

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Seen from above, the compound is rambling and haphazard, isolated from all signs of life. It is situated on Calico Ghost Town Road, in Yermo, California, a lonely, featureless expanse of the Mojave Desert. It is here that Cal and Ruby Black made a life together on land that they purchased sight unseen from a magazine ad and called “possum trot,” an old southern expression for a shortcut between two locations. Who knows what they thought once they arrived at their new home in the middle of nowhere. They had no children, but they had each other and their faith, their hardworking ethic, and Cal’s talents and can-do optimism. Over time, they filled the emptiness with the sound, animation, and phantasmagoria of more than eighty child-size female figures, ramshackle structures, moving trains, merry-go-rounds, stage coaches, and covered wagons, Ferris wheels, totems, signs, and paintings.

The Blacks were rural southerners. Cal was born in Tennessee, and Ruby was from Georgia, where they met while he was traveling with a circus and carnival. They were married in 1933, and moved to California, where Cal panned for gold. But standing in frigid waters for hours at a time, year after year, took its toll, and in 1953, they relocated to the desert, hoping the change would improve his health. The year that Highway 15 was extended along their stretch of land, the Blacks started a rock and tourist shop, hoping to attract passing motorists. Business was slow, and Cal conceived the idea of carving lifelike dolls that he would station around the property, alone and in vignettes, positioned high and low. Using a hatchet and pocketknife, he shaped figures from downed redwood telephone poles,

with sugar pine for noses, and arms and legs that would swing eerily in the dry desert wind. Ruby refashioned outfits from cast-off clothing that grew more and more tattered through exposure with each passing season. The compound became ever more populated and the dolls more elaborate as the Blacks collaborated on shaping each personality, naming and discussing character, deciding eye and hair coloring, and choosing appropriate clothing and accessories. By 1969, Cal had added the Birdcage Theater to his ghost town emporium. As a teenager, he had won a prize for singing in falsetto voice. This, with his circus and vaudeville experience, prepared him to record original skits, songs, and dialogue, and activate the “actors” by placing speakers in the back of their heads connected to battery-powered tape recorders. “The Fantasy Doll Show” included dance, dolls riding bicycles, and performing acts of daring do, and the admission was fifty cents. Each doll had a tip can. If a visitor was especially delighted with a particular feat, he or she could make a contribution toward the purchase of perfume or a piece of jewelry for the performer.

In March 1972, Cal had a heart attack. As Ruby related to filmmaker Allie Light in 1974, Cal had been trying to fix the windmill and he fell down in the yard. “He told her he was dying. She had no help, no telephone, and no one passed on the road. So he died. He lay in the yard all afternoon because she couldn’t move him,” said Light. Calvin had asked Ruby to burn the dolls when he died, but she did not, preferring to keep the site intact as long as she was able. When Ruby died in 1980, the dolls were dispersed, and Possum Trot was no more.

## *Mt. Trinity of Clear Water Range Near Boise Idaho., 1968*

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Joseph Elmer Yoakum was a visual fabulist, and, in the tradition of the best storytellers, it is often not possible to distinguish between truth and invention. His colorful life needed no embellishment, though Yoakum seemed to delight in confounding facts, variously claiming that he was born in 1888 or 1889 rather than 1890; on Navajo land near Window Rock, Arizona, rather than Ash Grove, Missouri; and that his mixed African American heritage included Navajo blood rather than Cherokee. His biography comprised grand American themes that later informed his drawings: wanderlust, adventure, war, and independence.

Yoakum ran away from home at the tender age of nine or ten to work and travel with the Great Wallace Circus, which was to give rise to such storied entertainers as Emmett Kelly, followed by stints with Ringling Brothers and Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show. He traveled with these outfits throughout the United States and Europe, rising from horse handler to billposter, part of a large advance marketing team that traveled to each site to stir up anticipation for the entertainment to follow. In 1908, Yoakum returned to Ash Grove where he married, started a family, and worked as a superintendent on the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad. After the company failed, he moved his family to

Kansas where he worked in the coal mines. When World War I broke out, Yoakum was drafted and stationed in France repairing roads and railroads. Upon his return, he divorced his wife and wandered the world for the next two decades, finding jobs on the railroads, at sea, and with circuses. But by the 1920s, Yoakum ceased his peregrinations, settled in Chicago, and remarried. It was not until 1962 that he devoted his time to visual confabulations that drew upon his rich reserves of memory and experience.

Yoakum's landscapes constitute a new sublime, acknowledging the insignificance of man against the awe-inspiring power of nature, but also noting the particularity of experience. He evokes the legacy of geological illustrations that used undulating and geometric line engravings with delicate handwashes of transparent color to distinguish types of strata and their various formations. In this work, Yoakum captures the grandeur of the ranges that lie east of Boise, Idaho. One path from the trailhead at Rainbow Basin leads to Trinity Mountain, one of the highest peaks in the Boise Mountains at 9,451 feet. The scene shows the series of cirques, or glacial slopes, that characterize the north side of the mountain and the lakes below.

*Flying Machines (4575: Broad Cutt/  
4576: Vogel), c. 1920 (double-sided)*

In 1709, a Portuguese Jesuit wrote a “Short Manifesto for those who are unaware that it is possible to sail through the element air.” Life once rested on the four elements of earth, fire, water, and air. Maintaining balance among them was critical to health of body and mind; controlling an element was alchemy. The most insubstantial of these elements was air, unseen until the wind trembled leaves on a tree, or was felt as a breeze against the skin. Riding air, like a bird, was a dream that was explored generation after generation.

Charles Dellschau had such dreams of flight. A Prussian immigrant, he arrived in Galveston, Texas, in 1849, the year a French balloonist made the first flight over the Alps, and the Yankee polymath Rufus Porter published his pamphlet “AERIAL NAVIGATION—The Practicability of Traveling Pleasantly and Safely from New-York to California in Three Days.” Dellschau’s own occupation was the decidedly earthbound trade of butchering, but his soul yearned to soar. During the 1850s, Dellschau joined the throngs of hopefuls panning for gold in the west. He lived for a time in Sonora, California, where—at least in his own imagination—he became one of a league of extraordinary gentlemen, the Sonora Aero Club, dedicated to inventing, building, flying, and dismantling flying machines. From 1899 to 1922, Dellschau dedicated himself to chronicling the landmark innovations in flight that resulted from the work of this secret club, the lives of the inventors, their experiments, and other development in flight. In the model of such secret fraternal societies as the Freemasons,

no one outside the members were privy to this work, and Dellschau conducted his documentation of pen, ink, and watercolor drawings—many double-sided, collages, and clippings from various sources—in absolute privacy outside his own family. These comprised three handwritten journals of “Recolections” [*sic*] and at least twelve extant volumes dating from 1908 to 1921 (after Dellschau retired), containing at least two thousand pages of heavily painted watercolor and ink drawings of “aeros” on heavy butcher paper. Each page of these bound volumes is numbered and contains a clipping from a daily newspaper—what Dellschau called a “press bloom,” indicating there may have been about ten volumes that preceded those that survive. Many of the drawings are diagrammatic, offering explications of the mechanics of the flying machine, and further annotated with complex alphabetic codes. Often one side displays a cut-through view—what Dellschau termed a “Broad Cutt”—and the reverse contains an exterior rendering. This double-sided work shows *Flying Machine 4575*, with a clipping dated March 17, 1920, with the headline “Flyer saves life by daring exploit.” The broad cut reveals two aeronauts operating the aero and the mechanical workings of the flying machine. On the reverse, exterior view, an aeronaut peeps through a window of the colorfully striped aero. The aero is titled *Vogel*, which means “bird” in German, is numbered 4576, includes the words “Maybe So,” and the date of March 16, 1920, clipped from a newspaper.



# 42 NELLIE MAE ROWE (1900–1982)

## *Cow Jump over the Mone, 1978*

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*I draw things you ain't never seen born into the world and they ain't been born yet. They will be seen some day, but I will be gone.* —Nellie Mae Rowe

Nellie Mae Rowe was a brilliant traveler of the imagination, whose inner eye contemplated a lush world teeming with saturated color, organic flowing forms, and spiritual reverberations. Her father was a basketmaker and ironworker, and her mother was a quiltmaker. Rowe's own artistic nature was evident early in life when, as a child, she fashioned dolls from the family's laundry. A devout woman, she was married at sixteen, widowed, and remarried, working much of her life as a domestic. After the death of her second husband, Henry Rowe, she began to embellish her home and yard—her “playhouse”—with sculptures, drawings, and hand-made dolls to dispel the encroaching loneliness, using conventional and unorthodox materials such as chewing gum, clothing remnants and T-shirts, wigs, costume jewelry, Magic Markers, and jewel-tone crayons.

Rowe's imagery is largely derived from the natural world, but it is also deeply rooted in vernacular culture and populated with folk figures and references. *Cow Jump over the Mone* is one of three significant autobiographical

drawings in which she used the moon metaphorically to reflect upon herself. The title, placed within the glowing orb, derives from the nursery rhyme “Hey Diddle Diddle,” but it is an ancient and mythic trope. The cow/female hybrid is a deity of maternal love, nurturing and sexual. When she jumps over the moon, she is filled with joyful dance and music. She is also a gentle companion through the transition from life to death. In this vision, Rowe has appended her own head, sporting a smart blue pillbox hat on top of the body of a large black cow. The hybrid creature is flying over a radiant moon, dividing the spheres of earth and heaven. Above, the sky is a phantasmagoria of pattern, color, and design—a paradise awaiting Rowe's arrival.

The works that Nellie Mae Rowe created in the last years of her life, and especially throughout 1982, hint at her impending death. There seems to be a freedom—or escape—from pain and worldly considerations as Rowe strives to rise above her physical self or nestle within her spiritual doppelgänger. At the end of her life, Rowe's mood evolved from puzzlement and worry to acceptance and even joy at the prospect of entering a wonderful “promised land.”

# 43 IONEL TALPAZAN (1955–2015)

## Untitled, August 4, 2004 (double-sided)

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The defining moment of Ionel Talpazan's life occurred when he was a young boy in his native Romania. Escaping into the night forest to avoid being punished by his foster parents, Talpazan was suddenly engulfed by a celestial light, a "blue energy," emanating from an aircraft hovering overhead. This otherworldly event transfixed him, and the possibility of alien technology ultimately became the theme of his many drawings that depict and deconstruct spaceships and unidentified flying objects with detailed descriptions and commentary written in Romanian.

In 1987, Talpazan escaped Romania by swimming across the Danube into what was then Yugoslavia. He lived in a refugee camp in Belgrade, operated by the United Nations, and was eventually granted asylum in the United

States, becoming a citizen shortly before his death in 2015. Talpazan struggled in New York, finding it difficult to make ends meet and sometimes living on the street or in subsidized housing. But his vision and mission endured through all and any obstacles. His art was a quest for answers: "My art is about the big mystery in life. How did we get here on earth? Why are we here? Is there life on other planets?" A seeker and traveler, Talpazan used his art to ponder the universe: "My art shows spiritual technology, something beautiful and beyond human imagination, that comes from another galaxy." In this double-sided work, Talpazan has arranged the planets spinning on concentric rings, like a diagram of the heavenly or celestial spheres, as the planetary model of the universe was once conceived.

# 44 ARTIST UNIDENTIFIED

## Steamboat *Veto* Box, c. 1832

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A classical vocabulary influenced by archaeological discoveries in ancient parts of the world became the standard of elegance in European decorative arts by the late eighteenth century. References gleaned from artifacts discovered in these sites were interpreted in gold leaf and painted decoration on furniture, decorative objects, and architecture. The taste was introduced into the urban American market by the turn of the nineteenth century, and as it became more widespread, expensive and labor-intensive materials and decorations were replaced through less costly and timesaving production techniques.

The mahogany graining and stenciled embellishments of flowers, leaves, and strawberries in tinted bronze powder on this box are typical of the simplified and desirable Empire-style that was practiced in areas removed from the major urban centers, especially upstate New York. It is not known who made the box nor for whom it was intended; however, it holds a secret political sentiment when the lid is opened, revealing a sidewheel steamship with the word "Veto" written on the paddle box. This is likely a reference to the rechartering of the Second Bank of the United States, an issue that erupted in advance of the presidential campaign of 1836, pitting President Andrew Jackson against Senator Henry Clay and dividing the nation into elite and anti-elite factions.

Jackson's suspicion of the power held by the Second Bank of the United States, and his fear that it could be politicized, was well known. The charter was not actually due to expire until 1836, but Clay, Nicholas Biddle, president of the bank, and others who supported the role of the bank in centralizing and stabilizing American finances correctly gambled that the early recharter would receive little resistance in the Senate and the House of Representatives. However, they miscalculated President Jackson's vehement distrust of the bank and his fear at the political weight it could wield. After it was passed, Jackson used the power of the presidential veto to quash the bill. In response, Henry Clay passionately denounced the President's veto as "mischievous," characterizing the bank as "a mere vehicle; just as much so as the steamboat is the vehicle which transports our produce to the great mart of New Orleans, and not the grower of that produce." The Second Bank of the United States became a central issue in the presidential campaign. Jackson won an overwhelming victory, presenting Clay, Biddle, and other cronies as the entrenched aristocracy of big government and in direct contraposition to his own anti-elite populist stance.

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Three years before his death, in his sixty-seventh year, Quaker artist Edward Hicks painted this rendition of the farmstead of David Twining. It is one of four such scenes that he made within the last decade of his life. It is possible that Hicks painted the property from life (the farmhouse is still standing), but the emotional resonance is that of a guileless five-year-old boy standing at the knee of his beloved adoptive mother—an elder’s self-reflection on how he came to be the man he was. In 1783, Hicks’s mother died, his father was impoverished, and the wealthy and kind Quaker Twining family offered to raise the child because Elizabeth Twining and Catherine Hicks had been fast friends. Hicks boarded with the Twinings for the next twelve years—years that were crucial in forming his character and his later devotion to the Quaker faith. In his memoir, Hicks remembers David Twining as “one of the most respectable, intelligent, and wealthy farmers in the county of Bucks.” But it was Elizabeth whom Hicks credited as being “providentially appointed to adopt me as a son, and to be to me a delighted shepherdess, under the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls.” Stationed at the knee of this “woman of valor,” the vignette recalls the words that he wrote in 1843: “How often have I stood, or sat by her, before I could read myself, and heard her read, particularly the 26th chapter of Matthew, which made the

deepest impression on my mind. It was there that all the sympathy of my heart, all the finer feelings of my nature, were concentrated in love to my blessed Saviour.”

When Hicks was thirteen, he was apprenticed to a coachmaker by his father. In 1811, he opened his own painting business. Having now embraced the Quaker faith, Hicks was soon discouraged by the Society of Friends from pursuing worldly topics in his easel art. Beginning between 1816 and 1818, he found expression instead in the theme of the Peaceable Kingdom described in Isaiah 11:6, a subject that gave visual representation to a core belief of the Quaker faith, denying one’s own base nature for the glory of God: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.”

Hick’s innate nature was passionate. His anguish over rifts within the Society, which by 1827 had divided into two groups—the conservative Hicksites, named after Hicks’s elderly cousin Elias Hicks (1748–1830), and the Orthodox, who advocated formal structure in worship—and his distress over other changes were palpable in the sixty-two versions of the Peaceable Kingdom that he painted over more than three decades.

# 46 ARTIST UNIDENTIFIED

## Political Harvest Jug, 1857

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Stoneware is a clay body that becomes water-tight when fired at high temperatures, making it desirable for dry and liquid storage. Typically, cobalt oxide was used as decoration because of the pleasing contrast of the dark blue against the gray body. It was an expensive glaze and usually used sparingly to name businesses or potters, and for decoration of flowers, birds, and animals. Pieces commissioned for special occasions might display a more extravagant use of cobalt with inscriptions or motifs specific to the event being commemorated. And more infrequently, it was used to express a particular sentiment on the part of the maker or recipient. The year 1857, which is noted on this jug, was a critical time of growing sectionalism in American politics and divisive events that moved the nation inexorably toward civil war. In 1857, the Supreme Court decision in the Dred Scott case ruled that “persons of African descent,” all black Americans, could not become citizens under the United States Constitution, that Congress could not ban slavery in the territories covered by the

Missouri Compromise, and that an enslaved person did not become free upon entering into a free state. By declaring the Missouri Compromise illegal, the balance between slaveholding and free territories was threatened as they sought statehood, with economic implications that contributed to the financial Panic of 1857. In this year, the nativist anti-Catholic, anti-immigration Know Nothing Party (also known as the American Party) lost its bid for the presidency with the ticket of Millard Fillmore and Andrew Jackson Donelson. “Aries B. Donelson,” whose name appears twice on this vessel inscribed in a spidery script, has not been identified, though it is likely he is a member of the extended Donelson family of Tennessee who figured largely in American politics. The letter “L” is flourished multiple times across the front. An allusion to “Governor Pain” and the word “Democracy” further suggest an impassioned political stance whose meaning remains cryptic.

## 47 FRANKLIN WILDER (1813–1892) The Messiah's Crown, 1878–1882

## 48 A Political Explanation, 1878–1882

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*From sad experience I now have been unlawfully confined and otherwise barbacued by the Government going on twenty-three years while I am yet uncondemned by any witness of either friend or foe....I was once taken before the Court without any warrant and sent to the House of Correction for the space of nine months without any trial....Now the Seven Evil Confronting Spirits are...Knavery, and Slavery, and Pledged Secretiveness and Know Nothing Hypocrisy that forms the Grabbgame theology and the Ku Klux of Hell. Now these are the first four Inferior Evil Spirits and then to keep them in vogue it takes Wrath and Strife and bloodshed in War.*

—Franklin Wilder

These two drawings are signed by Franklin Wilder, a descendant of English dissenters who arrived in the American colonies in the seventeenth century seeking religious freedom. The copious texts that indicate a schooled intelligence are framed in fervent religious terms and constitute an impassioned indictment of government, judicial courts, bloody wars, the Know Nothings, and the Ku Klux Klan that together comprise the secret societies that control the lives of individuals powerless in their grip. Although the texts speak to a troubled mind and life, there is a foundation of truth to the conspiratorial tone.

The Wilder family was among the founders of Lancaster, Massachusetts, now forming parts of Clinton and Sterling. They participated in Queen Anne's War and the French and Indian War, yet responded to the patriot cause during the Revolutionary War, bridling under British economic oppression. The Wilders were one of four families that established large homesteads and farms on the east side of the Nashua River.

Following the death of Revolutionary soldier Stephen Wilder, his three hundred acres were divided among his sons. It is this inheritance that descended to Franklin Wilder in 1834. Wilder was married the following year and soon had three children to support. As a yeoman farmer with few labor resources outside his own family, he struggled to manage the large farm and make ends meet. In 1842, the farm burned, and two years later Wilder's property and that of neighboring farmers were appropriated by the Lancaster Mills, a powerful textile corporation that effectively destroyed the agrarian way of life that had persisted in this small corner of the state. In September 1855, Franklin Wilder was jailed over a dispute involving property rights. His incarceration, the loss of his family legacy, and other calamitous events proved too much. That same year, he suffered "delusions and insanity" and was committed to the Massachusetts State Hospital.

In 1859, Wilder was transferred to the new Northampton Lunatic Hospital facility, where he would live for the next thirty-three years until his death in 1892. Although the hospital was designed to hold 200 patients, it had 233 occupants by the time Wilder arrived. The early years were modeled on guidelines of moral treatment and the benefits of physical labor. Working on the hospital's farm provided activity, fresh air, engagement, and encouraged a sense of accomplishment and normalcy. Not coincidentally, the farm production also contributed to the institution's financial welfare. For a time, Wilder drove an oxteam and did some farming, but he gave this up when he became very religious, spending his time instead reading the Bible, interpreting the Scriptures, and writing.

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John Jacob Omenhausser was born in Philadelphia, but in April 1861, just weeks after the War between the States commenced, he enlisted as a Confederate soldier in Company A, Virginia 46th Infantry Regiment. In June 1864, Omenhausser was captured near Petersburg, Virginia, and transferred to the infamous Union prison camp at Point Lookout, St. Mary's County, Maryland. By occupation, he was a candymaker, but at heart Omenhausser was a journalist. In a series of sketchbooks, of which around four survive, Omenhausser documented events and situations as he wryly observed them. The quick drawings create a firsthand record that gives insight into the dynamics of daily life within the camp as inmates fought over lost rations, and bartered with each other for blankets, shoes, food, tobacco, and other necessities.

The Union army originally founded Point Lookout as a much-needed military hospital on a summer resort ground. In 1863, in the aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg, it was expanded to include a prisoner-of-war camp on a sandy stretch at the mouth of the Potomac. It was designed as two enclosures of thirty-eight acres combined, and intended to hold ten thousand prisoners garrisoned in tents. That number soon doubled, adding to the misery of inadequate

shelter; lack of clothing, blankets, and rations; and acts of violence perpetrated on the inmates by the guards, mostly African American troops, who were deliberately incited by the administration. Inmates were allowed to fish on the bay to augment their meals, and some lucky few received money and amenities from family members. Omenhausser may have received such extras from his northern relatives, allowing him to procure pen and ink, watercolor, and paper. He may also have used his sketchbooks as a medium of exchange with Union officers as the extant examples are inscribed to camp overseers. Omenhausser was imprisoned at Point Lookout for nearly a year, through June 1865, when he took the requisite oath of allegiance and was released. The following year, Omenhausser married his sweetheart, Annie, in Richmond, Virginia, where he resumed his occupation as a candymaker until his untimely death at the age of forty-six. This sketchbook includes twenty-two drawings, some repeated in the other examples. The book is inscribed "Sketched by Mr. Omenhausser/a Prisoner of War confined in / Prison at Lookout Md.; Charles Rambo, Sergt. Co. D 20th U. Regt." Sergeant Rambo was a Union soldier from Illinois who served in the Veteran Reserve Corps.

## Screen for the Order of United American Mechanics, 1860–1871

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Throughout its history, the United States has experienced periods of intolerance—sometimes violent—toward newcomers, usually instigated by fear and resentment during times of economic depression and war. The Order of United American Mechanics (OUAM) was an anti-Catholic and Nativist secret society that was organized in Philadelphia in 1845, anticipating the rise of the American Know Nothing Party. It was born as a growing number of Catholic Irish, Italian, French, and German immigrants were entering the city in increasing numbers through the port of Philadelphia. The new arrivals were viewed as direct threats to the scarcity of labor opportunities available to native-born Americans. The organization was founded on principles of promoting “American-labor” and the purchase of goods and services from only native-born Americans. In its structure, the OUAM was modeled after the Freemasons; its logo of an arm and hammer held in a fist within a square and compass was a play on the Masonic device. As did other fraternal organizations, the society offered funeral and sick benefits to its members, which was paid for through membership and subscription.

The OUAM soon developed a body of rituals for its members, loosely based on older fraternal organizations. Teaching charts were an accepted part of the paraphernalia of fraternal organizations, providing a visual means of transmitting the society’s beliefs, symbols, and rituals to new members and reinforcing the same for its established members. This is one of a series of such screens or charts illustrating American workers and painted in Philadelphia by Clark Vernal Eastlack Jr., an ornamental painter on North 2nd Street, located not far from the site of the original meeting place of the organization. Eastlack was a second-generation painter and a member of the OUAM. His death in 1871 at age thirty-six may have been sudden, as he is still listed in the city directory for that year. Eastlack’s family received funeral benefits from the OUAM, whose members were invited to the funeral, as well as the state and national councils. He also belonged to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows Meridian Sun Lodge No. 471, and was a volunteer fire fighter with the Independence Hose Company. Eastlack’s older brother Francis composed “The Great Know-Nothing Song, I Don’t Know,” which was published at the height of Know Nothing influence and distributed at Philadelphia booksellers.



## Grover Cleveland Quilt, 1888

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In her 1869 novel *An Old-Fashioned Girl*, author Louisa May Alcott envisioned a ballot box among the symbols laid at the feet of the ideal woman sculpted by a bold, young female artist. Alcott was anticipating a day that was yet to arrive for another half century; the Nineteenth Amendment giving the right to vote to American women was not ratified until 1920. Women's voices were not stifled, but they found alternative paths to articulate their engagement with the political process and to make their opinions known. The unidentified maker of this textile usurped the socially acceptable format of a pieced quilt to "cast" her vote for the Democratic ticket of Grover Cleveland and Allen G. Thurman in the 1888 presidential election.

The quilt is pieced in a typical one-patch diamond in the square pattern; however, a red bandanna printed with a portrait of Grover Cleveland is substituted for the center square. Such red bandannas were a popular symbol of the Democratic candidates in the reelection campaign of 1888. Cleveland's managers even published a booklet titled *Our Bandana* to capitalize on the popularity and widespread proliferation of the symbol. Campaign songs such as "The Red Bandana" further promoted the symbol: "The red bandana will elect two honest men I know. The noblest Roman of them all and the man from Buffalo," alluding to Cleveland's term as the Mayor of Buffalo in 1882. Although Cleveland was not successful in the campaign of 1888, he was reelected to the presidency in 1892—the only president to serve two non-consecutive terms.

# 52 HOSEA HAYDEN (1820–1897)

## Folding Chair, 1883–1896

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In 1863, Hosea Hayden, a forty-three-year-old Indiana farmer and father of four, registered for the Civil War draft in the 5th Congressional District of Indiana. It is not clear whether he served, but Hayden followed in the footsteps of his ancestors who emigrated from England, fought in the Revolutionary War, and migrated from Massachusetts to Ohio and Indiana, where they were among the first settlers in the early 1800s. Twenty years later, in 1883, Hayden crafted his first chair to celebrate the one-hundredth year of the “burth” of his father, Stephen. This also became his chosen forum to voice strong opinions and philosophies that were not always in alignment with popular thought and politics of the day. Hayden refers to himself as “H. H. Ingraver” in some examples, and was remembered as “a versatile genius” and “a cherished neighbor and a loyal citizen.”

Over the next number of years, Hayden made more than one dozen folding chairs—mostly tripods—of his own unique designs. This example collapses like an easel when the handle in the back is grasped. He sometimes identified the wood that he used, which was reclaimed from trees on his own property, noting this chair is made of horse chestnut, whereas others were

fashioned from walnut. In addition to their attenuated arthropod-like shapes and nervous energy, each of the chairs is a “journal,” defined by musings and drawings that Hayden incised into the legs, seats, backs, and undersides. The chairs must be manipulated through folding and unfolding to fully reveal lines of text and accompanying drawings that testify to a particular set of his beliefs and observations. In one chair for instance, Hayden writes, “Shame on Christian USA, where males are tyrants and knaves./Treat females little better than slaves.” He often wrote in defense of equality and fairness and critically of organized religion followed blindly.

The inscriptions on this chair include the sentiments:

*Talk Talk mythology the rule science the exception*

*Humanity the now should be the watchword*

*Give all an equal chance for the winning of bread./ Those that sees otherwise their brain is dead/ If the brain is not dead they are possessed of a devil/ Bread should be withheld until their heads become level.*

# Cenotaph to Three Martyred Presidents, c. 1926

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This cenotaph commemorates the assassinations of presidents Abraham Lincoln, James A. Garfield, and William McKinley. Published photographs of each president by esteemed photographers Alexander Gardner, Edward Bierstadt, and Frederick Gutekunst top three columns of densely packed block letters. The letters name each president and spell out his date of birth, date that he was shot, and date that he died. The plaque is crowned by two opposing American flags, the whole made in a combination of two techniques: inlay, in which wood veneers are embedded into a wood foundation, and parquetry, in which the surface is embellished with an overlay of wood veneers in geometric shapes with straight edges. A tremendous outpouring of grief ensued after the deaths of each of these presidents, and it is possible that this tribute was made to mark a landmark anniversary of one of the assassinations, which occurred in 1865, 1881, and 1901, respectively. It may also have been a patriotic expression of remembrance inspired by the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, which was celebrated in 1926 in Philadelphia with a World's Fair Exposition.

The circumstances of Lincoln's assassination are well known. President Garfield was shot by Charles Guiteau (1841–1882), less than four months into his presidency. Guiteau was a delusional man who believed he had helped Garfield win the office and expected to be rewarded with a government appointment. When his supplications were repeatedly ignored,

he plotted to kill the president, bringing his plan to fruition in 1881, when he shot Garfield at point-blank range in the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Station as the president was embarking on his summer vacation. Garfield lingered into the fall and might have survived had he received better medical care. Inventor Alexander Graham Bell even devised a metal-detecting device to trace the bullet that was still lodged in his body, but the physicians only allowed it to be used on one side of the president's body—the wrong side. Garfield died of sepsis, his wound probed by unwashed hands that also further damaged his internal organs.

President McKinley was shot by anarchist Leon Czolgosz (1873–1901) while attending a reception at the Temple of Music during his visit to the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo. Czolgosz had lost his job during the Panic of 1893. In his despair, he turned to anarchism, influenced by the example of European anarchists who used assassination as a means of eliminating oppressive foreign leaders. He came to view the president in this light, and McKinley's handshaking public reception granted the opportunity to carry out his deadly plan. The president's visit to the exposition had been filmed using Thomas Edison's early process to produce moving images. After McKinley's death, Edison created a mourning film titled *Martyred Presidents*, which showed photographic images of Lincoln, Garfield, and McKinley fading in and out of a tomblike structure, a figure of mourning with bowed head sitting on the steps, and ending with blind justice brandishing scales and a sword.

In 1927, a man named Andrew Kehoe (1872–1927) perpetrated what remains the worst school massacre in American history when he murdered thirty-eight schoolchildren and six adults, and injured fifty-eight more in Bath, Michigan. This haunting and diminutive figure is a hand-carved replica of a cast bronze statue made to memorialize this event. The statue was funded by pennies contributed by children across the state and designed by Michigan State University artist Carleton W. Angell, who is better known for paleontological drawings and sculptures that he made for the university's natural history museum and science departments. It is not known how the E. A. Hatch who made and signed this tiny carving was related to the tragedy, nor whether he gleaned a measure of comfort in recreating the small, vulnerable figure. It testifies to the horrific event in a pencil inscription on the base. On the back, it is further inscribed and dated March 15, 1928, which is curious because this is months before the installation of the bronze statue on the site of a new school, along with a memorial marker and the cupola of the original school building.

In 1927, Bath was a small agricultural area ten miles northeast of Lansing, with only around three hundred residents. Five years earlier, the township had voted to replace scattered one-room schools with a new, consolidated school district. To pay for the larger school facility, an increase in property taxes was levied on local landowners. When the new consolidated school opened, it had 236 students enrolled in grades 1 through 12.

Kehoe had studied electrical engineering at Michigan State College, and moved to Bath in

1919, when he and his wife purchased her family home and farmstead from a relative. As a large property owner, he was heavily assessed to pay for the new consolidated school. In 1924, he was elected to the school board as treasurer, arguing for lowering taxes and often at odds with other members of the board and the superintendent. He served as Bath Township clerk in 1925, but was publically defeated the following year. During these years, Kehoe's wife was gravely ill, and he was suffering serious financial difficulties. In the period leading up to his devastating actions, he had virtually stopped farming, making payments, and engaging with his neighbors.

As an electrical engineer, Kehoe was sometimes called in to assist in technical issues at the school. Over a period of months, and unbeknownst to anyone, he had been rigging the school's infrastructure with almost one thousand pounds of explosives. On May 18, 1927, Kehoe firebombed his home and barn; he had already murdered his wife, and bound his animals so they could not escape. Simultaneously, he detonated bombs in both wings of the hated school at 8:45 A.M. Although most of the dynamite failed to explode, the building's north wing was destroyed and so many young lives with it. Around twenty or thirty minutes after the explosion, as rescuers were gathering at the scene, Kehoe drove up to the school in his truck that he had rigged as a dirty bomb, filled with nuts, bolts, and machine parts. He fired his shotgun into the truck killing himself, the superintendent, and others including a young boy who had escaped the initial blast in the school, as well as injuring many bystanders. A sign later found on Kehoe's fence read, "Criminals are made, not born."

Encyclopedic Palace/*Palazzo Enciclopedico/*  
*Palacio Enciclopedico/Palais Encyclopédique or*  
*Monumento Nazionale. Progetto Enciclopedico*  
*Palazzo* (U.S. patent no. 179,277), c. 1950s

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Marino Auriti pondered the imponderable. He conceived a new set of commandments (“forgive the first time, enjoy liberty but don’t hurt anyone”), a code for moral living that would be embodied in a magnificent paean to the achievements and aspirations of all humanity from all time. It would be a house of knowledge, a new Alexandria, an *Enciclopedico Palazzo del Mondo*, or Encyclopedic Palace of the World, that would represent “an entirely new concept in museums, designed to hold all the works of man in whatever field, discoveries made and those which may follow.” An automechanic with a lifetime of experience designing horse-drawn carriages, then buses, mail trucks, and coffee threshers, Auriti studied more than one hundred architectural books and journals before envisioning a multi-domed structure along classical plans that would illuminate the world and rival the United States Capital from its intended placement in Washington DC. He carefully and thoughtfully designed, patented, and constructed an eleven-foot-tall maquette on a scale of 1:200, ostensibly the tallest building in the world if actualized. It would contain 1,584,754 square feet of interior exhibition space infused with natural light, research laboratories in three of the four domed corners, administrative offices, and a restaurant in the fourth. Twenty-four entrances would reveal one hundred and forty-four interior columns, most topped by statues of mankind’s greatest contributors to the arts and sciences. (There would be no military figures in this house of peace.) The piazza would have two hundred and twenty such columns with additional statues

of important men and women. At each corner would be an allegorical figure of the four seasons, and around the colonnade, cleverly composed of cut-down rubber hair combs, would be this epigraph in Italian, Spanish, French, and English: “Human wisdom of all the ages.” Every entrance arch would further bear the name “Encyclopedic Palace/*Palazzo Enciclopedico/Palacio Enciclopedico/Palais Encyclopédique or Monumento Nazionale. Progetto Enciclopedico.*”

This audacious thinker was an Italian immigrant and automechanic living in Kensett Square, Pennsylvania, but at heart, he was a dreamer, an architect, and a builder. A native of Guardiagrele, in the Abruzzo region of Italy, Auriti served during World War I, lived under the growing oppression of Benito Mussolini’s (1883–1945) Fascist regime, and immigrated with his family to Brazil. He found passage on the vessel *American Legion*, which drew into New York harbor on February 16, 1931, at the height of the Great Depression and despite tightened immigration limitations. After living in New Jersey and commuting to an auto shop on Long Island, he moved his family to Kennett Square, where he successfully opened his own business. One imagines the idea of the Encyclopedic Palace took hold over time, gestating until Auriti retired and could devote himself to research and thought. His statement of purpose, submitted with his patent application, indicates the depth of consideration that his ingenious mind and generous heart gave to the monumental project for the betterment of mankind.

# 56 ULYSSES DAVIS (1913–1990)

## *Strange Fruits*, After 1968

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Barbershops have long played an important role as centers of community life, as men gather in trusted and intimate surroundings to converse, share information, and discuss topics as diverse as religion, local events, and politics. When Ulysses Davis lost his job as a blacksmith's assistant on the railroad during the 1950s, he began to barber, opening a shop that he built behind his home in Savannah, Georgia. This is also when Davis allowed himself the creative pleasure of carving, an art that he practiced for the next many years. He ultimately made and displayed approximately three hundred sculptural works and used the multifarious themes to spark further dialogue among his customers. Davis sold very few of his works. "They're part of me. They're part of my treasure. If I sold these, I'd really be poor," he said.

Davis had whittled wood scraps as a young boy and learned metalworking from his blacksmith father. He later worked as a blacksmith's assistant on the railroad, experience that enabled him to make many of the tools he was to use in carving wood. Despite the racial oppression suffered by the African American community, Davis was highly patriotic; his best-known work is a series of forty-one presidential busts from

George Washington through George H. W. Bush, which he completed over a number of years. He also delved deeply into religious and historical subjects, and conjured "created beasts." It was not until the civil rights era of the 1960s and 70s that he explored a decidedly African aesthetic in sculptures that evoked African art, history, and lore. *Strange Fruits* was made during this period of growing pride in cultural identity and strongly recalls African reliquary sculpture in its form and representation. The rosebud that decorates the central element was a symbol of love for the artist, and the title is a reference to a 1937 poem by Abel Meeropol that became a civil rights protest song, first sung by Billie Holiday in 1939:

*Southern trees bear a strange fruit,*

*Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,*

*Black body swinging in the Southern breeze,*

*Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.*

*Strange Fruits*, then, is a mixed metaphor. Even as its title evokes the horror of lynching, it is a testament to ancestral pride, human dignity, love, and endurance.

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Jesse Howard was a slight man, standing five feet four inches and weighing only 120 lbs. according to his 1942 draft registration card, but his voice was heard, loud and clear, by all those who crossed his path. Howard was born in Shamrock, Missouri, one of twins with his sister Myrtle. He left home at a young age, receiving only a sixth-grade education, and led a peripatetic life of odd jobs, migrant labor, and freight train hopping. In 1905, he returned home, where he remained for a number of years until he married in 1916 and started his own family. By the early 1940s, Howard purchased a house and twenty acres of farmland in Fulton, Missouri, and also started to use the vernacular idiom of sign painting as a potent means of expressing his commentary on the state of the country, the world, and his own life.

If Howard were alive today, he would be an inveterate tweeter. As it is, his words—painted all-cap in black house paint on white board, and sometimes punctuated in red—have probably reached a far wider universe than he ever anticipated. *Free Thought and Free Speech!* was constructed in bitterness toward the end of Howard's life. For almost forty years, he had been venting his religious injunctions and diatribes against government, authority, and personal

slights on hundreds of hand-painted signs that he posted on his property in plain sight to the dismay of his neighbors, leading him to dub his property in a moment of ironic self-awareness as "Sorehead Hill" or "Hell's 20 Acres." His signs were repeatedly vandalized, and he was harassed to the point of an unsuccessful campaign to have him institutionalized. In this work, he stubbornly asserts his right to free speech and to having his own thoughts, whether or not they were considered acceptable by local or mainstream society, not unlike Hosea Hayden a generation earlier. There is a note of pain in his declamations on this panel; his sense of abandonment by those upon whose support he depended is made implicit through the sacred verses that he has chosen to reference. He uses the medieval calligraphic device of a manicule, an icon of a pointing finger, to emphasize certain words and phrases that betray his deep hurt: "Truth; forgotten me; [they whom I] loved have turned against me." The work positions Howard, a man of "Signs and Wonders," as a modern-day Job, capriciously tested by God and persevering despite his trials and rejection by the community in which he resided.

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Excerpted from Marc Fasanella, *Ralph Fasanella: Portraits of American Life* (forthcoming):

My father was keenly aware of what it means to be an American. Having grown up in the economic and political cauldron of New York's little Italy just after the turn of the century, and then moved as a teenager to the cultural as well as physical expansiveness of the Bronx, he formed a keen awareness of immigrant life. At the age of twenty-three, he shipped off for France to join the Spanish Civil war with a group of ideologically motivated military volunteers. By the time he returned from Spain in 1938, he had gained a political and economic education of profound depth. My father's political education revealed to him the outlines of how a nation-state is formed, and how a corporate and military oligarchy orchestrates a national identity to their own benefit. In his painting *American Heritage*, he draws upon this political insight into national identity and the economic machinations that create it, to display the internal workings, showmanship, and drama that surround Washington politics.

I vividly remember him working on the painting surrounded by the political ephemera of the era. Labor history and civil rights buttons and leaflets, anti-Vietnam war placards, and Kennedy assassination, as well as Watergate newspaper and magazine clippings littered the walls and surfaces of his large studio. At the center of the painting is a flag-draped coffin, presumably that of John F. Kennedy, but in many ways it is iconic of all the elaborate state funerals that are used to draw a nation together and focus attention away from the geopolitical forces that shape it. Above the coffin, shown inside the White House, enjoying the advantage of their position and rank, are members of the military-industrial cabal manipulating international and national affairs to their financial gain. The central coffin is surrounded by many other coffins in a clock-like arrangement, from a pine box above to the coffins of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg below. The Rosenbergs, depicted surrounded by their books, were executed in 1953 by the Federal government as a chilling message to the left-wing movement and the many secular Jewish



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workers and intellectuals who populated the American left throughout the McCarthy era. The coffins of Julius and Ethel are draped with flags because my father did not want the political right wing to take ownership of the American identity. To the lower left a flag also adorns the coffin of Bernard “Bunny” Ruck, attended by family and friends; just above this scene, to the right, is a coffin wrapped in a flag at an African American funeral that is being both photographed and sniped at by the cameraman to their right. Above them, just to the left, is Martin Luther King’s coffin, bearing a flag and carried by a military escort as his corpse is about to be placed on a mule cart. The Founders and presidents memorialized across the fascia of the White House may have played an essential role in forming the recognized history of the American identity, but so too do the signatories surrounding the “We the People” inscription at the lower portion of the pediment. I think my signature may be on that small panel of the painting as well as those of others who visited his studio and the names of those he grew up

with. To either side of the White House, in the upper portions, are protesters doing their utmost to end the Vietnam War. At the bottom is a pantheon of Americans who also deserve to be memorialized as American icons. I remember my father painting this section over and over again trying to decide who should be lionized in this way. He finally settled on the names now recorded but the list of everyday Americans he found important and would include in a depiction of America’s heritage was far too large to incorporate into any number of canvases.

The concept of a freedom quilt can be traced at least as far back as the Civil War, when women were urged to “prick the slave-owner’s conscience” by embroidering antislavery slogans and images into their needlework. One hundred years later, Jessie Telfair’s freedom quilt was born of the civil rights movement to reverse a history of inequality and subjugation. Organizations such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), formed in 1960 by African American college students who bravely challenged a climate of violence and longstanding policies of segregation and disenfranchisement, urged resistance to institutionalized racism through peaceful means. The members participated in freedom rides across the South and initiated a voter registration effort in southwest Georgia as part of their Freedom Now! campaign.

In 1963, Jessie Bell Telfair answered the call. As a result of attempting to register to vote, she lost her job as a cook at Helen Gurr Elementary School in Parrott, Georgia. Telfair had learned to quilt from her mother, and after the trauma of losing her job, members of SNCC encouraged her to use her talent to frame a response to these overwhelming events. It was not until 1983 that Telfair made several freedom quilts that stand witness to the civil rights era and her experience through the powerful invocation of a single word: *FREEDOM*. Each capital letter is cut from navy blue fabric and occupies its own block of red cotton with white corner blocks. Read horizontally across the quilt, Telfair’s intentional use of red, white, and blue mimics the stripes of the American flag, accentuated by quilting stitches in a right-angle pattern that further evokes the stripes and canton of the flag.

## *Mother Sister May Have Sat in That Chair When She Lived in This House Before Me, 2014*

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*When I first purchased my house in Treme, there were still a few pieces of furniture left over from the last owner. It was for decades, a rooming house that housed many of New Orleans single male musicians, and was owned and operated by a woman known to the neighborhood as Mother Sister. After Katrina, one of the chairs she left behind was damaged along with the rest of the house, so I cut up the chair and put it in this piece.* —Jean-Marcel St. Jacques

Jean-Marcel St. Jacques is a twelfth-generation Afro-Creole. He was raised in Richmond, California, a small city in the Bay area settled by many black families like his own who had fled Louisiana and Texas between the 1940s and 70s to escape racial oppression. He returned to Louisiana sixteen years ago, inspired to reconnect with the land of his ancestors. In the wake of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, St. Jacques began to make art with wood salvaged from his damaged home in the Treme neighborhood of New Orleans, and also to “mask” as a medicine man in the Black Masking Indian tradition. Many of his pieces take the form of “wooden quilts,”

patchwork constructions of strips of wood reclaiming and transforming the stories of those lives touched by Katrina.

According to the artist:

*My great-grandmother made patchwork quilts.*

*My great-grandfather was a hoodoo man who collected junk and re-sold it for a living.*

*As a visual artist, I work mainly with wood and junk.*

*As the great-grandson of hoodoos, I work folk magic.*

*These wooden quilts are my way of being with the spirits of my late great elders.*

*They are also my way of finding a higher purpose for the pile of debris hurricane Katrina left me with. [They] grew out of an impulse to find beauty in the ugliness of one of the worst human disasters this country has ever experienced, and, on a more practical note, to save and rehab my house for me and my family.*

## Ephrata Cloister Tunebook, c. 1745

In 1732, Ephrata Cloister was founded on the banks of the Cocalico Creek in northern Lancaster County under the charismatic leadership of Conrad Beissel (1691–1768). A Radical Pietist dissenter who arrived in Pennsylvania in 1720, Beissel and a small group of disciples established a celibate monastery for men and women based on a synthesis of pietism, asceticism, and mysticism. Like the Shakers, Beissel believed in the dual nature of God; sisters would be spiritually joined with Jesus and brothers with Sophia, the female aspect of God. The brothers and sisters were organized into two orders known collectively as the Solitary, and also welcomed families, known as Householders, who participated in worship and contributed to the self-sufficiency of the community. In monastic tradition, members prayed and meditated throughout the day and at midnight, and lived in cells sparsely furnished with narrow wood benches for sleeping and blocks for pillows. They ate one main vegetarian meal a day from produce grown in their gardens. Brothers and sisters were garbed in simple linen, cotton, or wool robes, girdled around the waist, women further wearing an apron known as a scapular and a rounded hood, as seen in this illumination. The cloister established a publishing center with a paper mill, printing office, and bookbindery largely operated by the brothers.

Hymnody, the singing of hymns, was an essential part of the worship. The cloister is especially celebrated for its original hymn texts and music, and the handwritten and printed books that preserve this legacy. Beissel composed many of the early hymns, developing a unique theory of harmonics that named the heavenly choirs as

the source for his compositions. He established a vigorous singing school where he instituted his idiosyncratic style that he explicated in the 1747 edition of the *Turtel-Taube* hymnal, one of three primary hymnal texts to accompany tunebooks that were hand-scribed and illuminated by sisters in the Scriptorium, or writing room. Although none of the illuminations are signed, sisters Anastasia and Iphegenia are sometimes credited as the primary ornamental writers and the overseers of the Scriptorium. Illuminating and writing the musical scores was considered a meditative act. In Beissel's words, whoever can lose himself is found in God." He did not permit drawings to be copied or duplicated, believing that the deepest devotion to the act of illuminating the sacred hymns would unleash a divine spark. The drawings in homemade inks and watercolors follow a number of conventions. Many are floral, expressing the cloister's belief in all natural creation as an outflowing of God's divine self and drawn from such texts as the Song of Solomon: "I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys." Their relationship to established needlework motifs suggest the designs are derived in part from the many European needlework patternbooks that were widely circulated.

Occasionally, names appear within elaborate cartouches on some pages in the more than 124 Ephrata tunebooks that have survived. These seem to indicate authorship of the musical compositions to which they are appended. According to musicologist Christopher Herbert, this includes the names of three sisters, Föben, Hanna, and Ketura, and may constitute the earliest identified works composed by women in the American colonies.

# 62 DANIEL STEELE (DATES UNKNOWN)

## Tunebook, 1821

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Presbyterian immigrants of Scotch-Irish descent, fleeing unrest and displacement in Ulster, began arriving in the American colonies beginning in the seventeenth century and continuing into the early nineteenth. Settling initially in Pennsylvania, New York, and New England, many continued their journey further into frontier areas of Virginia, North Carolina, and Ohio, where there were greater opportunities. Daniel Steele, whose name is inscribed in this remarkable illustrated and illuminated tunebook, is not identified but was of Scotch-Irish heritage based on the psalm tunes contained in these pages. They comprise ten of the twelve traditional tunes used with the Scottish Psalter published in 1650, the metrical version of the psalms in which singing constituted a primary feature of the denomination.

It has recently been recognized that a small number of such illuminated psalm books, once believed to be of Pennsylvania German origin, were actually made by members of Scotch-Irish communities. They are written in English, and the earliest examples include the sanctioned tunes that are written using Sol-Fa notation, a system of musical notes that enabled all congregants to sing the sacred psalms. This booklet of

forty some-odd pages further includes several drawings that apparently derive from English and Irish sources, such as a depiction of Springhill Castle in Ireland. One illustration of the “Whimsical Lover and Frail Alice” is based on an engraving of 1786, an anti-Semitic lampoon on Sampson Gideon, a banker and financier of Jewish heritage who was raised as a Christian and granted an Irish peerage as First Baron Eardley of Spalding, County Lincoln. Another page illustrates the “Moon and Seven Stars,” which may refer to the jig tune played by American patriots as they burned a British war ship in the harbor of Warwick, Rhode Island, in 1772, and may also have held Masonic connotations. A page of particular note shows a figure in the guise of a plague doctor, wearing the characteristic mask in the form of a beaked bird and carrying a scythe, a symbol of death. The imagery may be connected to two pages whose inscriptions indicate the death of an infant. These include *Epitaph on an Infant*, composed in 1794 by Samuel Coleridge and later emended in the form as it appears in this tunebook, and verses from Isaac Watts’s *Divine and Moral Songs*, first published in 1715.

*Bulto*, 1870–1900

José Benito Ortega was a prolific, itinerant New Mexican *santero* or maker of saints. The work of the *santero* was crucial in bringing the sanctity of faith into the devotional practices of households dispersed in remote areas throughout the Hispanic Southwest. By the time Ortega was working in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the classical tradition of saint-making in northern New Mexico was on the wane. The new clergy was advocating the replacement of idiosyncratic hand-carved *bultos*, sculptural images of popular saints and other holy personages, with conventional mass-produced plaster figures. There was also a movement to discredit the use of such “pagan” images altogether. Yet Ortega continued to find custom in the villages east of Santa Fe in Mora, San Miguel, and Colfax Counties. Traveling by foot from his home in La Cueva, he supplied the demand for religious figures for domestic use and also carved images for use in *moradas*, the local chapters or meetinghouses of the Brotherhood of Our Father Jesus Nazarene, more commonly known as the *Penitentes*, who reenacted the Passion of Christ in public acts of penitence during Holy Week.

The figures that Ortega created for the *Penitentes* are distinguished from those that he carved for household devotion in their larger scale, often standing as high as five feet, and

most depict Christ on the cross. This *bulto* is just such a *morada* piece with Ortega’s characteristic treatment of the figure’s rib cage as an inverted “V” and the decorative painted patterning on the cross. With an economy of intervention, Ortega has captured the sorrow and human dimension of the crucifixion through the emaciated body painfully stretched and attenuated, the weight of the figure’s dropped head and closed eyes, the path of blood traced along the arms, legs, and feet. Unlike earlier *santeros*, Ortega used cheap scrap millboard to rough out his figures with minimal carving and excessive amounts of gesso to build up physical features. Calico rags were employed for jointing arms and legs rather than leather or twill. The use of such materials has resulted in the deterioration of the figures over time. It is possible that Ortega worked with family members or even a *taller*, or workshop, as two related groups of *bultos* from the Mora area have been identified. Examples from the group known as the School of José Benito Ortega show particularly attenuated torsos, as in this *bulto*, suggesting perhaps that it is the work of a follower, rather than carved by Ortega himself. After 1907, and the death of his wife, Ortega stopped making religious figures, leaving his home in La Cueva to live out his days in the homes of his children.

# Archangel Gabriel Weathervane, c. 1840

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The weathervanes that graced the steeples of early American churches were most often in the form of openwork banners, arrows, or roosters, but winged figures of the archangel Gabriel, trumpet in hand, also had a place high above northeastern towns and villages. The archangel Gabriel is the harbinger of the Millennium, the thousand-year period of peace and justice referred to in Chapter 20 of the Book of Revelation, which Christianity associates with the Last Judgment and the Second Coming of Christ. When this weathervane was made in the 1840s, probably by an individual artisan rather

than a commercial manufactory, millennial speculation was rampant in the United States. The followers of William Miller (1782–1849), a farmer-turned-preacher from upstate New York, calculated that the thousand-year period would begin in 1843 or 1844. We have no record of the artist who created this figure, but it is likely that he intended his work to reflect the prophetic tradition. As is often true, Gabriel appears as a robed figure with long hair, but as angels are without gender, the figure is neither male nor female.

# Shape-Note Teaching Chart, late 19th century

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Singing masters, itinerant or based in a particular community, were an integral part of early New England culture that held psalmody and hymnody—the singing of psalms and hymns—as part of their sacred traditions. Singing schools would be held for weeks or a few months at a time, utilizing a shape note system based on the solmization Fa So La, with each distinct shape assigned to a note. This enabled all congregants to participate in group-song during worship without the ability to read music. In 1846, singing master Jesse Bowman Aikin (1808–1900) published *The Christian Minstrel*, the first tune-book compilation using the seven-shape notation he claimed to have invented. By the last quarter of the century, the seven shapes that he assigned to the phonics Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti Do became the standard in sacred music publications. One peculiarity of the Aikin system, evident in this music teaching chart, was for all the note stems to point downward, and the stems for Do, Re, and Ti to be placed in the middle of the shape rather than to one side. Although this music tradition gradually faded

from New England to be replaced by more elite and standardized musical notations, it flourished in the Southern United States, where it is still used in a great number of churches and in such large gatherings as gospel conventions.

This rare surviving chart was made and used by an itinerant singing teacher, identified only as Mr. Sanders, in rural Mississippi during the late nineteenth century. It employs the Aiken seven-shape note system with scales in various keys and includes musical notations such as crescendo, decrescendo, swells. The large teaching chart descended with the information that it was painted with inks ground from walnut shells or tree bark, and red ink culled from chokeberries. The notations were stamped onto fabric remnants seamed from cotton sheets using stamps he carved from wood and dipped into the ink. Pinholes along the edges indicate that it was once hemmed, and small nail holes in the upper corners suggest it was nailed onto a wall or surface for teaching large groups.



# 66 WILLIAM MATTHEW PRIOR (1806–1873)

## Heavenly Children, c. 1850

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William Matthew Prior is best known for a reductive approach to portraiture that he accommodated to the finances of his clients through a sliding price scale. Prior had the proven ability to paint formal, academic portraits for those who had the means and desire, or the spontaneous and gestural portraits for which he is most admired and recognized today. Prior married into a prominent artisan family, the Hamblins. He had a strong influence on the painting style of his brother-in-law Sturtevant J. Hamblin (1817–1884), constituting what is loosely known as the “Prior-Hamblin School.” Around 1840, he moved with family members to East Boston, where he established a painting garret.

Prior was a man of strong beliefs, an ardent Millerite, a proponent of abolition, and, with the advent of the spiritualist movement after 1848, a believer in the ability to make meaningful

contact with the deceased. Prior was no stranger to death, having lost his first wife and six of their children. About 1850, he began to paint portraits from “spirit effect,” including his own brother, Barker, who had perished at sea in 1815 and was memorialized by their sister Jane, in an artwork on view in this exhibition. There was already a strongly established tradition of posthumous portraiture painted from corpse or memory, but Prior promised a true likeness of loved ones painted from the actual spirit of the deceased. This portrait uses the trope of heavenly clouds that was popular in portraits of deceased children. Such references helped grieving parents to be strong in their belief that their innocent child’s death earned a reward in the world to come as their spirits have been accepted into the kingdom of heaven.

## Gift Drawing: The Tree of Light or Blazing Tree, 1845

*Recto: The Tree of Light or Blazing Tree/ The bright silver coulered light streaking from the edges of each green leaf resembles so/ Many torches. N.B.B I saw the whole tree as the angel held it before me as distinctly as I ever/ saw a natural tree. I felt very cautious about taking hold of the tree lest the blaze should/ touch my hand. Seen and received by Hannah Cohoon in the City of Peace Oct. 9th/ 10th h. A.M. 1845 drawn and painted by the same hand.*

*Verso: NB Be cautious and not lay warm hands/ on the paint as it is easy to cleave to the/ hand and take off little pieces of paint;/ sister/ Be so kind as to accept of this little/ token of my love and remeemberance/ Hannah Cohoon/ 60*

Many communal societies have been established in the United States, but none survived as long or had as great an impact as the Shakers, or members of the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing. The first Shakers left England for America in 1774, under the charismatic leadership of Mother Ann Lee (1736–1784), whose adherents accepted her as Holy Mother Wisdom, the female aspect of the duality of God accepted by their faith. In this celibate society, each brother and sister enjoyed an unusual parity in authority, though daily activities might be assigned along typical gender lines. By the middle of the nineteenth century,

nineteen principal Shaker communities had been founded from New England to Indiana, with more than five thousand members. Each community was a self-sufficient village, structured into smaller church families that replaced familial bonds from the outside world, and administrated work, worship, and daily life.

Receptiveness to vision and prophecy was fundamental to Shaker belief. The decision to escape persecution for their ecstatic practices in England and set forth to America was inspired in part by the vision received by James Whittaker (1751–1787), one of Mother Ann's disciples, and later her successor. Whittaker related: "I saw a vision of America, and I saw a large tree, and every leaf thereof shone with such brightness, as made it appear like a burning torch, representing the Church of Christ, which will yet be established in this land."

Gift drawings postdate the period of Mother Ann's leadership. They also were manifested at a time of growing doubt, as the first generation of leaders had died and the new generations had lost touch with the source of belief and inspiration. Beginning in 1837, an intense religious revival swept through the Shaker villages. Over a period of twenty or more years known as the Era of Manifestations, or Mother's Work, visionary phenomena were received and recognized

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as “gifts” by the Shaker leadership and included messages, songs, dances, and drawings, sent by deceased Shaker elders, celestial beings, historical figures, and others. A little more than two hundred gift drawings survive, all but a few the work of women at the Shaker villages in New Lebanon, New York, and Hancock, Massachusetts. This is one of two nearly identical gift drawings of the Tree of Light by Hannah Cohoon, who was a twenty-nine-year-old mother of two young children when she joined the Shaker community in Hancock, Massachusetts, known as the City of Peace, in 1817. Cohoon was visited by an angel on the 9th of October, 1845, at ten in the morning. It is not known when she manifested this gift in paint on paper, but the number “60” on the reverse may indicate her age when she drew the Blazing Tree. She also indicates that it was intended as a gift for another, unidentified sister. Her physical experience of the vision is implicit in her fear that the blaze would burn her hands if she touched it.

Cohoon’s statement of prophetic and artistic authorship, unique among the Shaker instruments or visionists, indicates that she carefully drew the image in pencil before boldly painting it in heavily pigmented water-based colors suspended in gum Arabic, materials that would have been available for various domestic uses

within the community. Based upon a 1992 conservation study that included *A Bower of Mulberry Trees*, drawn and painted by Cohoon, the border is painted in ultramarine and the dark green leaves are a combination of chrome yellow and Prussian blue with areas of a lighter shade of arsenic-based green. The leaves tremble with animated red lines vibrating around the edges. The composition gives an impression of symmetry and indeed the disposition of the leaves is largely bilateral, but the limbs branching off the main trunk are random as they would be in nature. In 1817, when Hannah Cohoon entered the City of Peace, the prevalent motif for needlework and quilt making would have been such a tree of life emerging from a hillock; her vision appeared in an iconography that she well understood. The imagery also recalls the biblical story of Moses and the Burning Bush, revealed by an angel of God who instructs Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and away from oppression. This narrative would have resonated during this period of disaffection within the Shaker body. The spirit guide moved Cohoon to record a glorious vision, the strong trunk representing the core of their faith, each branch and distinct shining leaf the flourishing of their word.

*I am grateful to Emily Sylvia, librarian and archivist, Hancock Shaker Village, for sharing this study.*

*The School or arts/I couldn't afford and for that I thank the lord/For what He has given me is the truth of His great love/For Him I worked and carved a stone and make a drawing and sing a song.* —Consuelo González Amézcuca

*I was always a dreamer, and I am still painting my dream visions.* —Consuelo González Amézcuca

Consuelo "Chelo" González Amézcuca was ten years old when she crossed the Mexican border from Piedras Negras, Coahuila, into Del Rio, Texas, with her parents and siblings. On November 27, 1913, against the backdrop of revolution and violent political chaos, the family struggled to make the transition from one reality to another, one border culture to another, from Mexican to American. After a period of transience, the artist's father was hired as a bookkeeper, and they moved into a small house in a quiet neighborhood that remained the family residence throughout her life.

Chelo's family held traditional expectations for their irrepressible child. Autobiographical statements suggest that she lived largely in her imagination. Completing only six years of formal education, González Amézcuca was self-schooled in areas that interested her: history, art, architecture, and religion. She was a natural performance artist, dancing, singing, and playing the guitar, piano, castanets, and tambourine from an early age. Eventually, she also wrote and recited original poetry, carved stone, and drew the delicate "Texas filigree art" for which she is acclaimed today. One early photograph shows Chelo as a lovely young woman tightly swathed

in an embroidered shawl that pools at her feet like a mermaid, a flower in her hair, and feathered fan in her hand. She was enchanting.

In 1932, González Amézcuca was granted a scholarship to a renowned art school in Mexico. Sadly, the death of her father prevented her from accepting, and she soon started to work at the candy counter of the local Kress variety store. In 1964, she began to seriously draw, using ballpoint pen on cardboard or paper. The consistent line and ever-flowing ink permitted a fluidity in her *mental recordatorio*, or mental drawings, that evoke the intricacy of Mexican silver filigree work. Despite the fact that they are dense and tightly controlled images, the scrolling, curving lines also exhibit a free and joyous abandon in the feminine abundance of flowers, birds, graceful women, mythical figures, and fantasy architecture. Her spiritual nature sought expression in biblical subjects, such as this depiction of Milcah, one of the five beautiful daughters of Zelophehad, who lived during the time of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. As recounted in Numbers 27, Milcah and her sisters petitioned that they might inherit their father's name and property. The Lord granted permission, provided they did not marry outside their ancestral tribe, a culturally insular narrative González Amézcuca may have internalized as the daughter of two cultures. Crossing one border to another is not an erasure of where and what one has been; it is a melding of two existences. As a survivor of the mass deportations of Mexicans and Mexican American citizens during the 1930s and 40s, González Amézcuca asks, "Mystery of life/Whose blood [in] her veins flow?"

# 69 EUGENE VON BRUENCHENHEIN (1910–1983)

## Vessel, 1960s–1980s

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“Create and be recognized” commanded a sign that Eugene Von Bruenchenhein hung in his basement studio—both a direction and affirmation. Von Bruenchenhein created 1,080 paintings, and thousands of photographs, drawings, cement masks, sculptures, ceramics, and poetry over a fifty-year period, between the late 1930s until his death in 1983. Though he is recognized today as a self-taught master and polymath, such approbation eluded him during his lifetime. Yet Von Bruenchenhein had no choice but to create. He was compelled by what he dubbed his divine “genii” who looked over his shoulder, and an unwavering belief in his own prodigious talents and special destiny. Ultimately, every corner of the small childhood home in Milwaukee that he shared with his adored wife, Marie, was filled with his art, writings, and recordings.

Von Bruenchenhein was born in Marinette, Wisconsin. His mother died when he was seven years old. He was raised by his father and stepmother, Elizabeth Mosley, a schoolteacher, artist, chiropractor, and author of treatises on evolution and reincarnation. Her unorthodox teachings and interest in the natural world had a profound influence on the young Eugene, who was introduced to the act of artmaking from a young age through her still life studies and his father’s occupation as a sign painter. He was idiosyncratic in his techniques, manipulating paint with his fingers, firing clay pieces in his kitchen oven, and constructing delicate and intricate thrones and towers using leftover chicken and turkey bones from fast food meals. Although he worked in many mediums, it is often Von Bruenchenhein’s photography that initially fascinates, perhaps because of the sheer

overwhelming number of images, or perhaps because of the relentless preoccupation with his wife. Von Bruenchenhein and Eveline T. Kalke (1920–1989), whom he called Marie, met at a state fair, fell in love, and were married in 1943. He was a small man, too short to qualify for enlistment during World War II. He adopted the World War II-era aesthetic of pinup girls, Hollywood starlets, and burlesque in photographs of Marie that pose her in the nude or partially clad, bound in pearls and other materials, and clearly imitating depictions of female film stars in promotional posters and other ephemera that were especially aimed at male audiences. The innocently sexual nature of these photographs reveals a trust between wife and husband, exposed in their awkward role-playing.

Von Bruenchenhein’s interest in botany and foliate forms is most clearly evinced in the clay works that he began to develop fully by the late 1960s and early 1970s until his death. He harvested clay from deposits in nearby construction sites and baked the shaped forms in his home’s coal oven. Drawing upon his botanical knowledge, Von Bruenchenhein initially sculpted hundreds of small, individual, flower-like forms. He began to make crowns for Marie, whom he called “the queen of my existence.” Salvaged silver and gold radiator paint provided viable alternatives to precious metals, the stuff of crowns. He also fashioned delicate hollow vessels that miraculously did not collapse in firing, constructed entirely from leaf forms that call to mind cake decorations made with pastry tips, and testify to Von Bruenchenhein’s work as a florist and a baker.

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How does a proud Mexican man, a devout Catholic, accomplished *Jinete* or rider, with land, animals, wife, children, family, and hope end his life trapped in the California state mental health system, and yet become an internationally recognized master draftsman? Writing in Brooke D. Anderson's *Martín Ramírez* (American Folk Art Museum, 2007), biographers Victor M. and Kristin E. Espinosa provided the context for Martín Ramírez's remarkable story, whose existence was traumatically divided between his life as a *ranchero* in Tototlán, Jalisco, Mexico, and his years in the United States, spent largely in confinement. In 1925, in a climate of political unrest and economic hardship, he traveled with friends by railroad to California seeking migrant work in the mines and on the railroads to send money back to his family. Just a short time after he left Mexico, Ramírez learned of the birth of his only son, whom he was never to meet. The following year, his home and family were threatened by the civil unrest of the Cristero Rebellion which pitted Catholic rebels against the secular government. Ramírez's family, along with

countless others, lost their property, their animals, and their way of life. Mistakenly believing that his wife had sided with the Federal Army against the Church, Ramírez severed ties with his family and vowed never to return to Mexico.

The Great Depression that struck the United States soon after these events left Ramírez stranded, jobless, and homeless in an environment of increasing intolerance toward Mexican immigrants. In 1931, confused and unable to communicate in English, he was committed to a state psychiatric hospital in Stockton. The first indication of Ramírez's prodigious talent resided in doodles sketched in the margins of letters that he sent home to his family before his confinement. By the mid-1930s, living in Stockton, he was drawing more intentionally. When he was transferred to DeWitt State Hospital in 1948, his drawings came to the attention of Dr. Tarmo Pasto, a professor of psychology and art at Sacramento State College, who became fascinated by the work, ultimately bringing it to public recognition.

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Ramiréz produced small drawings and monumental works that share themes of trains, tunnels, *jinetes*, animals, and architecture. He creates magnificent volumetric spaces through the hypnotic and majestic repetition of lines, arcs, and prosceniums. Ramiréz fabricated large-scale surfaces by scavenging paper from his institutional environment: Blue-ruled paper from nursing stations, lengths of paper from examination tables, even paper cups that he flattened out, and he often included collaged elements from the many magazines available to him in the institution. The pieces were joined using a paste that he made from mashed potatoes, bread, and saliva. Burned matchsticks provided charcoal, he made pigment from chewed up colored newsprint, and he also used pencil and colored crayon. Until around 2007, Ramiréz was renowned for around three hundred drawings. Following the exhibition *Martín Ramiréz*, presented that year at the American Folk Art Museum, an additional one hundred and thirty drawings came to light, held by descen-

dants of Dr. Max Dunievitz, a physician who had treated Ramiréz during last three years of his life.

Ramirez's art was once perceived purely in psychological terms. Now it may be considered within his life circumstances, the memories and losses playing in an endless loop of frozen time. Perhaps the works most deeply rooted in his place of birth and faith are depictions of the *Reina*, or queen, particularly in the guise of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. These are fierce, powerful figures and almost all draw upon same traditional iconography that Ramiréz would have known from an eighteenth-century painting in the small parish of Capilla de Milpillas, in Tepatitlán, where he was born and married. Filtered through the artist's idiosyncratic and linear visual language, the Virgin stands on an abstracted globe and crescent moon, stamping out evil in the form of a snake writhing at her feet, wearing woven sandals, a thorny crown, and a black scarf draped over upraised hands.

# 71 **SISTER GERTRUDE MORGAN (1900–1980)** *New Jerusalem, c. 1970*

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*Paradise a name apparently denoting heaven*  
*Luke 23:45* —Sister Gertrude Morgan

When the Lord calls, you answer with a glad heart. That is what Gertrude Williams Morgan did when in 1934 she received a revelation, telling her to sing and spread the word of the gospel. Morgan was born in Alabama, and moved as a teenager with her family to Columbus, Georgia. Here, she became an active member of Rose Hill Memorial Baptist Church and, in 1928, married Will Morgan. In 1939, Morgan received another divine message directing her to leave the social norms of family, husband, job, and place, and travel back to Alabama, and then to Louisiana to do God's work. Now self-identified as "Sister," Morgan arrived in New Orleans without any premeditated plans or means of support, trusting in the Lord to show her the way. She soon joined forces with two strong women, Mother Margaret Parker and Sister Cora Williams, and together they operated a

small chapel and child-care center. The Holiness and Sanctified Faith the women followed promoted communication with God through joyous music and dance. Sister Morgan was gifted with a deep and full-throated voice that she used as a powerful tool to raise money for their mission, accompanying herself on tambourine and guitar. In 1957, she received an annunciation, revealing that she was now joined with her redeemer as the Bride of Christ. After that date she discarded her habitual black robes and was always garbed in all-white. This was also about the time that she began to make the word of God manifest through brilliant amalgams of word and image captured in paint and pen on whatever materials were at hand. If there was no paper or cardboard, she would embellish toilet paper rolls, fans, window shades, Styrofoam trays, and other unorthodox materials. Sometime between 1963 and 1965, Morgan moved into a small white shotgun house on North Dorgenois Street in the lower ninth ward. This became her own



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“Everlasting Gospel Mission.” The simple interior of this domestic house of worship was as pure white as her robes, creating a heavenly atmosphere without earthly distractions from the spiritual work at hand.

Morgan began painting numerous versions of John the Apostle’s apocalyptic vision of the New Jerusalem after around 1966. She often included depictions of herself, recognizable through her white clothes, as the teacher or narrator of the events described in the Book of Revelation she holds in her hand. She fills all the spaces around pictorial elements with copious biblical texts. At the lower right are the righteous risen who will join the saviour in the new city: “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed,” 1 Cor. 15:51–52.

Morgan’s ecstatic visions came to the attention of a New Orleans gallerist and entrepreneur named E. Lorenz “Larry” Borenstein in 1960. He arranged for showings of her art, preaching “performances,” and even recorded her mesmerizing singing and chanting. For many years, their partnership provided the exposure, recognition, and financial stability that permitted her to evangelize without the burden of survival on the street of New Orleans. In 1974, Sister Gertrude Morgan received another revelation. The money she generated through her art was unacceptable to God. She must stop and devote herself instead to the written word: her poetry. Sister Gertrude Morgan died in 1980, and was buried in a pauper’s grave.

# 72 FELIPE BENITO ARCHULETA (1910–1991)

## *Tiger, 1977*

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Felipe Benito Archuleta, considered to be the “father” of the New Mexican group of animal carvers, created this fierce, striding tiger. Archuleta was born into a large family and, as the eldest child, he worked from a young age and held a variety of odd jobs throughout his early life. In 1935, as the Depression continued to take its toll across the nation, he signed up with the Civilian Conservation Corps, a New Deal program that offered employment and housing. It also taught skills in a variety of infrastructure and environmental conservation areas to young men who were then able to send money back to their families. Archuleta returned to New Mexico, taking up residence in Tesuque. When he was thirty-five years old, he joined the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, working in the carpentry trades for the next twenty-four years.

By 1964, after a lifetime of hard work, Archuleta was growing older, jobs were scarce, and he did not know where to turn for help. He recalled praying for guidance out of desperation, for some idea of what to do with the rest of his life, and he received the inspiration to employ his skills in a new and unorthodox fashion, rather than seeking conventional employment.

Archuleta dared to imagine the possibilities and found new life as an artist, innovating a type of sculpture based on traditional techniques associated with the *santo*, or religious figure, but applied to secular subjects and using recycled and found materials in original ways. Archuleta started with simple snakes and ox-drawn wagons. By the 1970s, his work was proving so popular that he had expanded to a menagerie of animals, both wild and tame, large and small, relying on children’s books and magazines such as *National Geographic* as models for preparatory sketches.

Archuleta used a chain saw to rough out the forms from cottonwood and then applied a variety of carpentry tools to fashion details and shape body parts. Small animals were made from a single piece of wood; larger animals were joined with a mixture of sawdust and glue, the final surface scored or planed to create the texture that he needed. The figure was covered with a coat of white paint and then finished with the final coat. Brooms, rubber combs, rope, wire, and other materials became teeth, whiskers, tongues, manes, and features that bring his animals to life—many with a certain calculated menace, some with a keen sense of humor.

## *Baptism of Reverend Midlton 1920 and Sam Doyle, c. 1970s*

Thomas “Sam” Doyle’s portraits hold the essence of life and place; they capture and preserve the soul and proud heritage of St. Helena Island and its inhabitants, past and present. The island, in the South Carolina low country, retained a uniquely Gullah culture and dialect, forged from a mixture of Afro-Caribbean influences during the era of slavery, and enduring after Emancipation due in part to its remoteness from the mainland; it was not until 1927 that bridges linked the island to Beaufort. Following the Civil War, the plantations were partitioned and the land granted to the former enslaved population and its descendants. In 1862, the Penn School was established by Quakers to educate freed slaves on the island. Doyle attended the school through ninth grade, when family circumstances forced him to leave. His artistic talent was recognized as a student, but it was not until after retirement that he was able to pursue his creative nature.

Doyle’s community taught him to honor his ancestors; the Penn School taught him to honor history. Collector and scholar Gordon W. Bailey has written that Doyle committed to “painting history” in two series, “*Penn* (school) and *First* (achievement or event) [that] commingled with his folkloric works and clearly established Doyle’s mission to honor Gullah culture and, more generally, African American advancement.” Doyle’s art conjured elders, Gullah traditions and lore, and reflected experiences of his own generation and younger residents who were more in touch with notable figures and events in the world at large. He painted high-achieving African Americans on the national scene: political heroes, religious leaders, and sports figures. He immortalized ancestral island figures, and local

characters and types. His preferred materials were reclaimed from his environment, primarily house paint on metal roofing or plywood panels. Over the years, Doyle filled his yard with art in a display he titled the “St. Helena Out Door Art Gallery.” After 1982, when his work was included in the seminal exhibition *Black Folk Art in America, 1930–1980*, presented at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, Doyle was visited by many outsiders who came to experience his personal museum firsthand. In acknowledgement, he noted their places of origin on a 4 x 8 foot panel and also added the words “Nation Wide” to his own sign.

This painting seems to have held particular significance for the artist, who included his full name rather than his customary initials “S. D.” It is painted on a vinyl tablecloth, a supple material that evokes the ripple of water when it moves. The cloth was apparently laid flat on the ground as Doyle worked; it bears the deliberate and nearly invisible mark of his footprints in a path that traces the demarcation between the sphere below a bridge that parts the waters, and the heavens above the waters where a baptism is being enacted. The figure on the upper right is Reverend Washington, an elder whose primary functions included the baptism of church members. His hands are placed on the head of a contemporary of Doyle, who was later to become a reverend. Time is therefore collapsed, conflating this important step at the beginning of Middleton’s spiritual journey with the present, and his attainment as a religious leader in the community. Doyle shares in the significance of the moment, his own head emerging from the baptismal waters just below Reverend Middleton.

*This painting shows two ideas of what is heaven. One dreamer is Ben Eliezer. He founded the Hasidic idea. The other is a philosopher, not religious. The philosopher doesn't believe there is a heaven up there, so he wants to bring it down to earth where the people are. In plain words, you got to make life so that the paradise is here. Ben Eliezer, he wanted to bring mankind up to heaven and give his people this hope when they were in misery. "Don't worry," he said, "this is only a passing way, only temporary. The main idea is afterward, the hereafter. Up there you will have meat, bread, wine. If you have faith, then everything is right." You got to have both in yourself, philosopher and dreamer. Use your will to improve your life here, and keep up your home. This is how heaven helps you. —Harry Lieberman*

Harry Lieberman was born in the small Polish *shtetl* of Gniewoszczów. He was raised according to the tenets of Hasidism, a populist-based, ecstatic practice of Judaism founded in the eighteenth century by the religious leader known as the Baal Shem Tov. In 1906, Lieberman immigrated to the United States, one of the many thousands of Jews fleeing the hardships and violence of Jewish life in Russian Poland. In New York City, he adopted a largely secular lifestyle, working first in the textile trades and then operating a candy store on the Lower East Side with his wife, Sophie, until they retired in 1950.

In 1956, Lieberman traveled to Israel for the first time. Early one morning, he went to King David's tomb, where he opened the Book of Psalms at

random to Psalm 130: "From the depths I called you Oh Lord." Lieberman found the words revelatory, and he was inspired to return to the Orthodox life that he had shed soon after his arrival in America. Coincidentally, this was also the year that he began to paint, at the age of seventy-six, encouraged by a worker at the Golden Age Club of the Senior Citizen Center in Great Neck, New York. Many of the early works were autobiographical, and today they provide insights into Lieberman's personal history but also into the *shtetl* life that was destroyed during World War II. As time went on, Lieberman was increasingly drawn to his own rich Jewish heritage to provide the texts of brilliantly colored narrative paintings, ceramic sculptures, and drawings. The artist wrote the texts in Yiddish and attached them to the backs of his paintings.

In *Two Dreamers*, which portrays a Hasid and a secular Jew, Lieberman reflected on the path that he followed in America. On the one hand, he found his "paradise" in the successful life that he made for himself and his family, and created his "hereafter" through the legacy of paintings that he completed before his death at the age of 103. A close reading of this painting, on the other hand, reveals the artist's ambivalence: The area around the secular philosopher is sere and bare of any leaves, and the flower growing behind him is the only indication of a fruitful life. The Hasid, however, is surrounded by green, fertile, flowering trees and grass and watched by angels. In Lieberman's words, "You got to have both in yourself, philosopher and dreamer."

## *The Comfort of Moses and The Ten Commandments, 1988*

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Richard Dial acquired his metalworking skills as a machinist at the Pullman Standard Company in Bessemer, Alabama, alongside his father, Thornton Dial Sr., who is now celebrated for his powerful art. In 1984, and in the wake of the failure of Pullman Standard and other industries in the area, he founded Dial Metal Patterns with his father and brother. It was a small business that made wrought iron patio furniture. Dial was able to hire skilled labor, and the business developed into a cottage industry producing functional patio furniture under the label “Shade Tree Comfort.” After 1987, and for only a few years, Dial allowed himself to explore his own conceptual art through a series of around twenty anthropomorphic chairs that play upon conflicting notions of comfort and discomfort inspired by the name of his utilitarian line. *The Comfort of Moses and the Ten Commandments* is one in a series that specifically considers the implications of this biblical patriarch, who holds a special place as the visionary who led his people from slavery. The structure of the chair itself is no different from the typical furniture produced by the company at the time, using flat straps of

metal to form the seat and back and curving the metal to terminate in hands and feet. But these limbs are actualized, wearing rope sandals and straining to hold the weight of the tablets with the word of God. Comfort is not possible in this chair, which emphasizes the discomfort and difficulty of obeying the commandments. The Decalogue appears as inscrutable markings in red on separate wood panels, “signs and wonders” that can only be interpreted by someone with special sight. Moses himself has the face of an elder—hopeful, loving, querying—his hoary eyebrows and beard made of humble and approachable materials, including a mop.

In 1992, Dial had a revelation regarding his subconscious affinity for chairs and hyperawareness of the tension between comfort and discomfort. He realized that he had strived as a youngster to provide such comfort and function for his sister, Patricia, a victim of severe cerebral palsy. His attempts to fashion chairs to help her sit up were not successful, but they left an impression of the ways in which the simplest amenities of life have far-reaching consequences.

# 76 JOHN W. PERATES (1895–1970) Saint Matthew, 1938–1970

# 77 Saint John, 1938–1970

John W. Perates was born in the Greek town of Dardio (renamed Amfiklia in 1915), near the ancient city of Delphi. He learned woodworking skills from his grandfather, who also taught him to read and write. In 1912, when he was only seventeen years old, Perates boarded the *S. S. Laura* in Athens, arriving in the port of New York on June 1. From there, he made his way to Portland, Maine, where he lived the remainder of his life. Perates was single when he enlisted for the draft in 1917, but was married a year later to Catherine Keenan, an Irish immigrant. In 1919, both of them applied for naturalization. Perates supported the family as a car repairer through at least 1921, before he found employment as a cabinetmaker with the J. F. Crockett Company. Here, he was able to employ his considerable skills in making hardwood furniture. By 1930, even as the country suffered the throes of economic depression, Perates established the J. H. Pratt Company, specializing in reproductions of English and Colonial furniture.

There is little information about the Greek Orthodox community in Portland before 1925, when the parishes were officially recognized by the State of Maine. Shortly after this date, the Portland parish purchased an old church and founded the Holy Trinity Orthodox Church. Beginning around 1938, the artist began his life's work of creating "furniture for the House of the Lord." He was first commissioned to create a bishop's throne that was 14 feet high when finished. He then independently began work on an octagonal pulpit carved of walnut and cherry, embellished with panels depicting the four Evangelists and other pivotal religious figures. The artist also carved what is considered his

masterwork, a massive altar and altar screen 16 ½ feet high and containing thirty-nine elaborately embellished relief panels, two hundred angels, and six candlesticks in the form of angels.

These two panels depict Saint Matthew and Saint John, two of the four authors of the Gospels. The carved frames introduce some decorative elements familiar from New England moldings, but the overall flattened scheme within an arched architectural space under the canopy of heaven is similar to carved ivories and other small icons from Eastern orthodoxy. In this faith, John is believed to also be the author of the Book of Revelation, written while he was "in the spirit" and in exile on the Greek island of Patmos. Despite the singularity of his interpretation, Perates retains many conventions of Byzantine icons. Usually carved in relief, rather than as fully dimensional sculptures, each element was canonical and highly symbolic, including personal attribute, pose, and appearance. Saints Matthew and John are thus depicted as old men with white beards. As scribes, each holds a quill pen that he has used to inscribe the book of truth lying upon a writing stand. They are bathed in the light of the all-seeing eye of God as they engage in His work. Perates has further retained the attribute of the "living creature" from Revelation 4:7 associated with each figure: the winged man of Matthew and the Eagle of John. Color also plays a traditional role in such depictions: the gold halos, white faces, blue robes, and purple outer garments represent the radiance of God, his uncreated light, and their human nature glorified by God. Last, the crosses bear the Greek letters Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, referring to God's assertion in Revelation.

Lureca Outland was 104 years old when she died in 2008. Growing up in and around Boligee, Greene County, Alabama, she was born early enough to experience the aftermath of reconstruction and lived long enough to glimpse the hope of America's first African American presidential candidate. Outland's father died when she was only one year old. Her mother and grandmother raised her in a log house that had no electricity. She worked in the cotton fields for seventy-five cents a day alongside her two sisters and mother; formal schooling was only possible when the harvest was done. Outland learned to quilt as a youngster: "I quilted the tops my mother pieced. Some were filled with

cotton left from ginning; others were filled with worn out clothing. My mother taught me to quilt when I was in my teens. We would piece up pants and dress pieces. Those quilts were not fancy like they are now. We used to piece up strip quilts. My mother knew some pattern quilts." These early quilts were largely utilitarian; it was not until her own five children were grown that she was able to fully explore her own creativity in patterns that are often riffs on traditional blocks. This improvisational quilt relies on a repeated four-patch of diamonds and crosses. The blocks line up and shift in surprising ways; a field of white crosses emerges off-center, like grave markers set within an enclosure.

## Untitled (Portraits of General Bichnellian, General Tomas Federal, General Tamerline, and General Meldonia Shoeman), mid-20th century

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Bereft and abandoned throughout his life, Henry Darger was a solitary figure. He worked at menial jobs in Catholic hospitals, attended mass several times each day at a Catholic church near his home, and lived quietly in a one-room apartment in Chicago. He gave no hint that behind his closed door, amidst the debris and detritus he collected, the twine balls, and empty Pepto Bismal bottles, was a magnificent and complex world filled with magic, beauty, and color—but also great cruelty, violence, and heroism. Beginning in 1910, Darger began to write his epic *The Story of the Vivian Girls, in what is known as The Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinnean War Storm, caused by the Child Slave Rebellion*. When he was through, the typewritten manuscript was 15,145 pages long, and was contained in fifteen volumes. Darger's ambitious vision was essentially literary in conception but it was expanded through around three hundred luminous watercolors miraculously painted using inexpensive children's watercolors on cheap newsprint ranging in size from single sheets to panoramic scenes on pieced paper many feet in length, all bound into three huge volumes. The tale encompasses timeless themes of good versus evil, acts of astounding bravery and craven cowardice, kindness and horror, all centering on the child-slave rebellion, led by the seven brave Vivian sisters, against the unimaginable acts perpetrated by the enslaving anti-Christian

Glandelineans. The detailed descriptions of military engagements were heavily influenced by Darger's knowledge of the American Civil War, and he chronicled the flags, maps, and officers in separate journals. In addition to his epic, Darger kept various journals, wrote a little-known second novel that revisits the Vivian Girls, and, in 1963, ten years before his death, embarked upon an autobiography that filled eight volumes, *The History of My Life*.

Darger was born in Chicago. Shortly before his fourth birthday, the little boy lost his mother, who died after giving birth, and the baby sister who was presumably given up for adoption. A few years later, his father placed him in a Catholic institution for young boys. Despite his apparent intelligence, his behavior caused his removal to the Lincoln Asylum for Feeble-Minded Children in Lincoln, Illinois, an institution that housed 1,500 children. Darger made several attempts to escape, finally succeeding in 1909, when he trekked almost two hundred miles back to Chicago by foot. In 1930, Darger rented a single, large room from artist and industrial designer Nathan Lerner that he inhabited until he became too feeble to climb the stairs. He went to live in the Little Sisters of the Poor Home for the Elderly, ironically, the home in which his father had died years before. Within six months of being removed to the facility, and one day after his eighty-first birthday, Henry



# Untitled (Flag of Glandelinia), mid-20th century

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Darger died. It was not until Lerner was cleaning out the apartment that the astounding breadth of Darger's private world of the imagination was discovered.

From the very beginning, Darger relied on the use of published images to draw the figures that populated his paintings culled from newspapers, magazines, comics, and coloring books. Initially, he painted directly over published images, cutting them out and using them as collage or tracing the figures same-size. Around 1944, he began to have negatives from the small pictures made at his local drugstore that were then enlarged to 11 x 14 inch. In this manner, he created a library of 246 images that were stored in their original brown envelopes and labeled as to their intended uses. Most of the large paintings show carbon residue left from tracing the figures onto the newsprint that Darger typically used. He altered the figures by adjusting their sizes, moving the positions of the limbs, and either removing the clothing or changing details of the dress.

These two works evidence Darger's fascination with military history and trappings. He has portrayed four of the generals responsible for some of the most heinous acts against Christian children described in his saga, including the murder of Annie Aronburg, whose martyrdom early in the rebellion inspired the leadership of

the Vivian sisters. The persona of Aronburg was based upon a cherished photograph clipped from the *Chicago Daily News* in 1911, at the early stages of Darger's opus. It depicted five-year-old Elsie Paroubek, an angelic-looking child whose murder in the Chicago area was closely followed by millions of readers. Darger later misplaced the precious photograph, launching him into a period of sorrow and rage that manifested in horrific violence perpetrated in the pages of his story. As time passed, and his prayers to God for the return of the photograph went unanswered, the successful outcome of the rebellion was threatened. As he wrote in his journal: "October, 1912: Prediction and Threat: Despite the new situation in the war, petition must be granted before March 21, or change will come in favor of the enemy. H.J.D." These renderings display the hateful flag of the Glandelinean nation and a formal portrait in the war room of the most savage high-ranking generals of the Glandelinean army, responsible for the murder of Annie Aronburg.

The alternative universe that Darger created is both strange and familiar. Its violence finds real-life parallels in the depredations of world war and other conflicts; its beauty and quest for moral victory is heartbreaking. The paintings cut to the heart of fear that underlies the veneer of family life: the fear of loss in a volatile world.

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Artmaking as a restorative act knows no boundaries of age, time, or place. For Elizabeth Layton, a sixty-eight-year-old Kansas homemaker, it was literally a lifesaver. Suffering from bipolar disorder and deep depression, Layton was introduced to the technique of blind contour drawing in an art class at the local university. Drawing became a lifeline that slowly lifted Layton from her depression and empowered her with a voice and validation that brought color and joy back into her life. Despite the challenges of facing each new day through the fog of depression, Layton had never shirked duties, and her approach to artistic self-examination was just as uncompromising. In her drawings, Layton objectively contemplated her own life and circumstances, and her strengths and weaknesses. She commented on the pressures of family, politics, poverty, morality, history, religion, and feminism; art provided a platform that gave rise to a newfound confidence and passion.

Layton was born in Wellsville, Kansas. She came from a family of writers and journalists and was herself managing editor of the *Wellsville Globe* for a time. After a divorce, Layton raised five children on her own despite her deepening depression and difficulty dealing with the demands of daily life and survival. She resisted the label “artist” and called herself a housewife and drawer of pictures. This plain speaking is typical of her drawings, which directly explore painful personal and societal issues. In *Garden of Eden*, a woman who resembles Layton has entered the grounds through a gate whose title is read in reverse. A dream catcher hangs from the words, presaging the lush but dangerous botanical garden that is beautiful but hallucinogenic and nightmarish. Nature, fertile and unforgiving, ensnares her as her mouth opens in a silent scream. Her long hair, scantily clad body, and ripe setting suggest youthfulness, but instead her old and naked flesh is revealed through the unyielding leaves that twine around her.

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Kevin Blythe Sampson was raised in an Elizabeth, New Jersey, home where doing what was right was never in question. Sampson's father, Stephen, was a powerful advocate for equal opportunities, labor, and voting rights. The house was a center of activist planning during the civil rights era, and the young Sampson had the opportunity to listen, observe, and learn from the most prominent black men and women of the day. After a few years of college, Sampson entered the Scotch Plains, New Jersey, police force as an officer and then a detective. His artistic affinity was already recognized when he became the first African American uniformed police composite sketch artist in the country. In 1993, Sampson moved to Newark following the tragic deaths of his wife and son. He left the police and devoted himself instead to reclaiming identity and order through an alternative means: artmaking. From his activist roots, he was well versed in the issues underlying Newark's struggles. He began to use the very stuff of urban decay, detritus from the streets and abandoned buildings, in artmaking, which became an act of healing after the devastating loss of those whom he loved. He reinfused these objects with meanings that time and circumstance have

stripped. Now a retired police officer living in Newark, Sampson continues to collect ephemera and discarded objects from the streets to create sculptural portraits, memorials, and tributes, as well as monumental and powerful expressions of social action against the sacrifice of humanity in the cogs of corporate America.

*Blue Meat* considers aspects of personal history, survival, and spirituality. The title comes from conversations between the artist and his Georgia-born father, who shared early memories of eating the "blue" meat of crows to survive the hardships of the Depression. Repulsed yet fascinated, Sampson recognized the spiritual dimension of crows, an intangible quality that he was then exploring through a series of three artworks. He fixed on the idea of using organic materials that had once been living, and whose animus would infuse the work with a sort of magic. According to the artist, "This particular piece deals with the Garden of Eden and the apple. If you look inside...I have constructed the biblical Garden of Eden complete with miniature landscape and waterfalls. This piece is in fact a biblical landscape."

# 82 EUGENE ANDOLSEK (1921–2008)

## Untitled #9B, 1950–2003

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Born in Adrian, West Virginia, Eugene Andolsek was an intelligent, slight boy with artistic sensibilities. His father was a coal miner and a rough and abusive man who derided his son's artistic proclivities. Despite a promise that his father would pay for his college education, Andolsek was sent instead to the Elliott School of Business in Wheeling, West Virginia, and embarked on a career as a clerk and stenographer. When he registered for the World War II draft in 1942, Andolsek was working in the State Department, Division of Public Liaison, for the government in Washington, DC. He served briefly in the US Coast Guard, and was stationed stateside in Baltimore, Maryland, during the war from 1942 to 1946.

For decades, Andolsek was employed as a stenographer on the Rock Island Railroad line that achieved notoriety in the folk song "Rock Island Line," which was first recorded in 1934 by inmates of the Arkansas Cummins State Farm prison. The railroad trade was tough and fast-paced, and the stenographers were hard put to clean up the unvarnished language as it was being dictated. Many young men used their skill as a stepping-stone to greater responsibilities within the railroad. The sensitive Andolsek found the pressure anxiety-producing, yet he lived in fear that he would be fired, an event that did not come to pass for twenty-three years, when the

railroad went bankrupt. By 1953, Andolsek felt the need to gain some control over his anxiety and began an activity that brought beauty and relief into his life: artmaking. As a child, he had collected stamps because he was attracted by the intricate lines and delicate colors. Over the course of the next fifty years, Andolsek made thousands of ink drawings, rarely sharing them with anyone. His nightly ritual entailed drawing hypnotic patterns on paper at his kitchen table using a straightedge and a compass. He said his drawings just "came out" of him. He would sometimes wake "and a drawing were there and I didn't even know how it got there." First, he created the black outlines, the "designs," and then filled them in with beautiful colors achieved through his own careful mixing of store-bought inks that he blended with an eyedropper.

In 2004, Andolsek was diagnosed with macular degeneration and was ultimately unable to continue drawing. He died in on September 17, 2008, at age eighty-seven, having received recognition for his jewel-like compositions. Today, a memorial scholarship in his name, established by The Community Foundation of Westmoreland County, gives students living in Westmoreland and dealing with a chronic medical condition the opportunity to continue their education.

# 83 JUDITH SCOTT (1943–2005)

## Untitled, 1988–1989

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One night, in Columbus, Ohio, inseparable seven-year-old twins Joyce and Judith Scott fell asleep “curled together, like soft spoons” in the bed that they shared. In the morning, Judith was inexplicably gone and Joyce was alone. In 1950, there were few options available to families who had children with developmental disabilities. It would be decades before federal legislation was enacted to protect members of society with physical and developmental challenges. Vulnerable children like Judith Scott, born with Down syndrome, were virtually discarded. When Judith was assessed for her potential to be educated, neither her family nor the assessor recognized that she was profoundly deaf. Her lack of verbal response and engagement were taken as further signs of her inability to be mainstreamed to any appreciable extent. In mid-century, this meant that she was sent to a state institution where the conditions were deplorable, children were warehoused, and indifference was extreme. We have Joyce’s perspective on being ripped apart from her twin; we will never know Judith’s. We can only surmise the pain, fear, and confusion of a child who had inhabited a silent, loving, and secret world with her sister, only to be deposited with strangers and abandoned. Remarkably, Scott survived in this environment for thirty-five years before her now-adult sister was able to wrest legal guardianship in 1985. Joyce brought her beloved twin to live with her in California, where the twins became whole once again.

Joyce enrolled Judith in the Creative Growth Arts Center in Oakland. The Center was established in 1974 in the wake of the Rehabilitation Act, which had been legislated by the federal government the previous year. Creative Growth was founded to encourage creative expression among those who were intellectually, physically, or developmentally disabled in a professional art studio space. Judith was not responsive until 1987, when visiting fiber artist Sylvia Seventy opened a new world of color, tactility, and communication to her. For the next eighteen years, until she died at the age of sixty-two entwined in her sister’s arms, Scott devoted hours each day to knotting, webbing, weaving, and tangling mysteries into works both large and small using various fibers and materials. She embedded secret objects gleaned from the center and from home into the cavities of sculptures that might take hours, days, weeks, or months to complete. Initially, when she was done, Scott would simply leave the finished piece on the worktable; later, she would signal one of the staff to remove the sculpture so she might start another. As she blossomed, Scott’s wrappings extended to her own person, which she encased in colorful headgear and clothes. Her vital works are cocoon-like specimens of color, complexity, and presence. They seem on the verge of metamorphosing into some remarkable life form, yet they will forever remain timeless, totemic, and inscrutable.

# 84 GEORGIA BLIZZARD (1919–2002)

## Mourning Urn, 1998

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Georgia Belle Blizzard had the “feel of the clay.” She dug it from the banks of the muddy creek behind the home her father had built in the 1930s. She purified it, shaped it, and gave birth to anthropomorphic vessels that she fired using the traditional methods to burn and harden the clay that she had learned as a child. She was the daughter of Apache and Irish blood, in touch with nature and with deeper elements that emerged in her clay sculptures exploring themes of suffering, yearning, flesh and spirit.

Blizzard was born in Statesville, Poor Valley, Virginia, but moved to Plum Creek in Glade Spring, Virginia, as a child. Too poor to afford store-bought toys, she and her sister May fashioned dolls and other playthings from the native clay. She attended school through the eighth grade, married at the age of twenty-one, and was widowed by thirty-five, with a daughter to raise. Blizzard worked in a munitions factory during World War II, and then in a textile mill until she suffered a health crisis, losing one lung. In the 1970s, living with her daughter and granddaughter in the family home in Plum Creek, she started using the clay that was second nature to her to start “...making art about things I felt. I got to thinking more about spiritual things than I did when I was younger. I got more interested in making pieces about something that’s touched me—something that makes me happy or makes me sad.” At first, she used a simple coal kiln, built by a friend, whose flames licked and burnt and darkened the clay in places, glazing the pieces with coal, wood, leaves, rubber scraps, cow dung. Later, she received an electric kiln, and she continued to use both.

This rectangular mourning urn, an ode to death, is a somber object, burnt and writhing with figures of angels, men, and women. The wide mouth on top eviscerates an angel whose wings are spread and flattened, allowing the Holy Spirit to empty or fill the vessel. The bottom is incised with a poem written by the artist, who was also a published poet:

*On yonder distant  
knoll  
Daisies bow to the  
breeze.  
Evening sun is setting  
The Lonesome Dove  
coo  
Shadows pull down the  
curtains of time  
Perhaps it  
Or maybe its mine.  
Ravin call.  
Then Twilight Takes over,  
Its, all, Its all.”*

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Luke Haynes knitted and crocheted for years before he attempted his first quilt portraits during college, inspired by a box of fabric squares and the work of artist Chuck Close. He is an architect by training and is comfortable with volume and perspective, which he sometimes exploits in the anamorphic technique that creates illusionistic space and three-dimensionality, as seen in this quilt. Haynes employs a “take no prisoner” approach, introducing a foreground and background but no middle ground, and he forges what he terms a “collaboration” with his long-arm sewing machine to accomplish an end that he cannot achieve with hand sewing. Materiality is privileged in Haynes’s work; he uses fabrics processed from recycled clothing that he buys from Goodwill in quantities of hundreds of pounds. He breaks these items into their constituent parts by cutting off the waistbands, cuffs, and other finishing elements. In this sense, each quilt is a distillation of the randomness of these clothing lots, and each portrait a Golem of sorts, made from something that has existed before and into which he has breathed new life.

Haynes reveals much of his life on social media. His focus on self is not selfish, but rather an experiential exploration that he invites everyone to join. Much of his quilt work responds to this sense of seeking as well: introspective self-portraits that posit him in various stages of thought, attitude, and action. For this project, he was interested in projecting his self-image on a background structured in squares. The foreground is dominated by large squares that are placed on point and constructed in multiple frames around a central square mimicking the traditional log cabin block. The background is a grid of smaller squares that recedes in muted tones graduating from bold blues to pale pinks and lavenders. His face is photographic and strongly textured by the weave of the fabrics used, the body subsumed into and emerging from the background through color shifts. The anamorphic perspective of the self-portrait literally puts Haynes “out there,” staring at each visitor as he or she walks by.

# EXHIBITION TEXTS

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