

Art/Art History: Selections from the Permanent Collection

Anne Gary Pannell Center Gallery Sweet Briar College

January 20-April 4, 2010

The Reunion of the Soul and the Body

The Artist's Perspective

The concept of this exhibition is simple enough. Take an eclectic body of artworks, chosen by diverse people over the course of nearly a century and open it to two perspectives, the perspective of an artist and the perspective of an art historian.

For my part, the process of looking at nearly every artwork that Sweet Briar owns has been a pleasure. The criteria I used in allowing works across the threshold and into this exhibition was also quite simple: does it work, visually? If not, despite the fact that it had Picasso's name or Matisse's name attached to it, despite the fact of it being historically significant, it was not among my selections. I believe it is fair to say that Chris and I were in agreement on a surprising number of these decisions, but there are a few exceptions, and you'll no doubt be able to tell what they are.

The show is composed of some 50 works—from very large paintings to tiny etchings—works made on four continents and over the course of six centuries. As we began to assess the pieces we had allowed “in,” we began to notice things that some of the pieces had in common. Mostly, these relationships had to do with subject matter, or perhaps more accurately, with the intentions of the artist. So you will notice that there are quite a significant number of works that wrestle with the problem of man's inhumanity to his fellow man, for example, or on the other hand, a group that wrestle with the problem of painting itself: what is an appropriate subject matter for painting?

In my mind, those groups, the “clusters” that you see, become the “works of art” that Chris and I have created, each cluster drawing upon the lines and shapes and subject matter used by several different artists of different time periods, each drawing upon the rectangular elements of their somewhat arbitrary framing to create assemblages indebted to both Piet Mondrian and Alan McCollum. As in any other artwork, the smaller elements of the work will resonate with each other, both visually and conceptually. Composition, repetition, light and dark, subject, content, narrative, all have been considered and have become part of the individual “pieces” as well as the overall exhibition.

The signature pairing of the exhibition is the unlikely combination of a print by William Blake and a print by Joan Miró. One is intricate in its realistic depiction, the other just as insistently abstract—non-objective, even. One is black and white, the other color, one is narrative, the other mute, but both reach for the ultimate moment for an artist, a moment of transcendence. The eighteenth-century artist tries to communicate this moment through depiction, by showing the moment of the unification of opposites—the reunion of the soul and the body. The twentieth-century artist communicates it by direct action—through “automatic” drawing—allowing the consciousness to tap into a state of transcendence and produce something with a “third hand” like the flow of a jazz musician or a perfectly tuned golf swing. Chris and I attempt that moment by thrusting these two opposites together—or, more truthfully, by allowing the two orphans of the exhibition to find each other and marry—over our own objections.

All for your delectation. Enjoy.

Craig Pleasants, Guest Curator, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts

The Reunion of the Soul and the Body

The Art Historian's Perspective

The exhibition comprises works from the Sweet Briar Art Collection selected by an artist (Craig Pleasants) on the one hand, and an art historian (Christopher Witcombe), on the other. The selection process was guided by our respective interests and tastes, which, of course, did not always coincide. To a certain extent, the exhibition explores a little the supposed professional antagonism between the artist and the art historian. The artist is more appreciative of such matters as skill in the handling of the medium and in the aesthetic quality and visual success of the result. The art historian, on the other hand, is more concerned with such matters as authenticity, interpretation, and meaning of the work in its historical context. Certainly there was some friendly disagreement over the inclusion of certain pieces in the exhibition!

The selection process for me was also guided by the need to include artworks that can be used in connection with a course I'm teaching this spring called *The Visual Experience* (ARTH117). Both individual pieces and the exhibition as a whole will be utilized to explore various issues, ideas, and approaches covered in the course.

The exhibition is conceived to function on several levels of apprehension. The selection of artworks and their placement in relation to each other and the within the space of the gallery are intended to alert the viewer to a range of possible responses. Each artwork, of course, has its own singular identity and presence, to be enjoyed and contemplated by the viewer on an individual basis. In the arrangement of the pieces on the walls of the gallery, though, we have tried to establish a sort of visual and perceptual counterpoint or syncopation that we hope will serve to enhance or offset each individual work (or in some cases deliberately diminish or sublimate it) and allow unexpected aesthetic encounters to occur, provoke more nuanced considerations of meaning, and even cause alternative interpretative strategies to emerge.

As you view the exhibition, be aware of how you are seeing, looking, and processing information. Pay attention to your initial visual impressions and your responses to such things as color, tone, levels of brightness, lines, edges, shapes, textures, and space. These provide a foundational level of response. As you focus on individual features in each of the artworks, take note of what catches your attention and think about how your mind is recognizing and identifying what you are looking at and what thoughts come to mind as you consider what it might mean. Take your thoughts about one piece and consider them in connection with thoughts that emerge while viewing another piece nearby. Allow your thoughts to mingle and interact, and be willing to adjust and modify them as your thinking evolves and adapts. Take your time. Enjoy your responses to and your thoughts about the art.

Christopher L. C. E. Witcombe, Guest Curator, Art History Department, Sweet Briar College

Checklist of the Exhibition

The exhibition's guest curators have chosen not to put labels on the wall.

Please use this numbered checklist to identify the works.

The numbered checklist is in order of the work's date of accessioning into the collection.

Note the accession number at the end of each entry; the first number is the year that the work was cataloged. For example, checklist # 1 was cataloged in 1936.

1.

EDWARD GAY 1837-1928 (United States)

Wheat Fields 1914

oil on canvas

Gift of Susanne Gay Linville '32, granddaughter of the artist

1936.002

2.

PAUL CADMUS 1904-1999 (United States)

Two Heads 1938

egg tempera on canvas mounted on Masonite

Gift of the Friends of Art

1939.001

3.

SANFORD ROBINSON GIFFORD 1823-1880 (United States)

Autumn by the Lake (Autumn at Bolton, Lake George) 1863

oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Torrey

1956.005

4.

MARC CHAGALL 1887-1985 (France)

Lion Tapping a Man Asleep 1927-1930

etching on paper

Sweet Briar College Art Fund purchase

1957.002

5.

FRANCISCO JOSÉ de GOYA y LUCIENTES 1747-1828 (Spain)

No quieren (from *Los desastres de la guerra*) 1808-1814 (published 1863)

They Do Not Want To (from *The Disasters of War*)

aquatint on paper

Sweet Briar College Art Fund purchase

1960.002

6.

RAOUL DUFY 1879-1953 (France)

Two Heads

etching on paper

Sweet Briar College Art Fund purchase

1961.003

7.

attributed to ROSA BONHEUR 1822-1899 (France)

Ram

oil on canvas

Gift of Dr. Sadie D. Patek

1962.001

8.

JULIEN DUPRE 1851-1910 (France)

Landscape with Figure

oil on canvas

Gift of the estate of Dr. Sadie D. Patek in memory of Judge Frank Dunne

1962.004

9.

ANDREA VICENTINO (Andrea dei Michielli) 1539-1614 (Italy)

The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian ca. 1583-1605

pen and ink on paper

Anonymous gift in honor of Dr. Elenor Barton

1963.001

10.

LEONARD EDMUNDSON 1916-2002 (United States)

Flying Machine II

etching on paper

Sweet Briar College Art Fund purchase

1967.009

11.

JOAN MIRÓ 1893-1983 (Spain)

Composition ca. 1933

lithograph on paper

Sweet Briar College Art Fund purchase

1967.014

12.

Female Figure (Sudan)

wood

Gift of Mr. Morton D. May, May Department Stores, through the College Art Association

1968.005

13.
GRACE HARTIGAN 1922-2008 (United States)
#19 Pastorale 1953
silkscreen on paper
Sweet Briar College Art Fund purchase
1969.001

14.
KATSUSHIKA HOKUSAI 1760-1849 (Japan)
View from the Timber Yard at Tategawa in Honjo, Edo (from *Views of Mt. Fuji*) 1822-1831
woodblock on paper
Gift of Miss Ruth W. Smith
1970.010a

15.
UTAGAWA HARUTAKE (Japan)
The Farmer's Wife in Harvest Season (from *Notable Occupations in the Country of Plenty*) ca. 1851
woodblock on paper
Gift of Miss Ruth W. Smith
1970.023

16.
KEISAI EISEN 1790-1848 (Japan)
Lady Presenting a Gift ca. 1810-1847
woodblock on paper
Gift of Miss Ruth W. Smith
1970.038

17.
UTAGAWA HIROSHIGE 1797-1858 (Japan)
Inasa Mountain at Nagasaki in Hizen Province (from *Famous Views of the Sixty-odd Provinces*) ca. 1853-1856
woodblock on paper
Gift of Miss Ruth W. Smith
1970.047b

18.
HENRI de TOULOUSE-LAUTREC 1864-1901 (France)
Ta Bouche (*Your Mouth*) 1893
lithograph on paper
Sweet Briar College Art Fund purchase
1971.019

19.

WILLIAM HOGARTH 1697-1764 (Great Britain)

False Perspective 1753

Time Smoking a Picture 1761

engraving on paper

Sweet Briar College Art Fund purchase

1971.021a and b

20.

CORNELIUS CORT VAN HOORN 1533-1578 (Netherlands)

Archer Shooting a Crossbow 1579

engraving on paper

Transfer from Cochran Library

1973.004

21.

JOHANN WIERIX 1573-1619 (Flanders/Belgium)

Two Couples Walking in the Woods

engraving on paper

Transfer from Cochran Library

1973.020

22.

ALBRECHT ALTDORFER 1480-1538 (Germany)

from *The Life of Christ* 1504-1529

woodcut on paper

Transfer from Cochran Library

1973.050 a-i

23.

FÉLIX BRACQUEMOND 1833-1914 (France)

Geese in a Storm

etching on paper

Transfer from Cochran Library

1976.004

24.

JEAN FRANÇOIS MILLET 1814-1875 (France)

Man Leaning on a Spade 1839-1872

etching on paper

Transfer from Cochran Library

1976.017

25.

SALVADOR DALI 1904-1989 (Spain)
Velázquez (from *The Five Spanish Immortals*) ca.1968
etching on paper
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Hall Dickey (Margaret Stuart Wilson '41)
1986.003

26.

ROY LICHTENSTEIN 1923-1997 (United States)
Painting in Gold Frame 1983-1984
lithograph, woodcut, screenprint, and collage on paper
Gift of the Friends of Art
1986.005

27.

SUSAN ROTHENBERG born 1945 (United States)
Breath-Man 1986
relief and intaglio on paper
Gift of the Friends of Art
1988.003

28.

JUDY PFAFF born 1946 (United States)
Yoyogi II 1985
woodblock on paper
Gift of the Friends of Art
1988.004

29.

STEVAN DOHANOS 1907-1994 (United States)
State Fair 1948
wood engraving on paper
unknown provenance
1988.005

30.

UTAGAWA HIROSHIGE 1797-1858 (Japan)
Kameyama (from *Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido Road*, Hoeido Edition) ca. 1831-1834
woodblock on paper
Gift of Mr. Victor Henningsen, Jr.
1989.006

31.

ROBERT LAVRAC-TOURNIÈRES 1667-1752 (France)

formerly attributed to Hyacinthe Rigaud

Louis Phelypeaux, Comte de Pontchartrain, Chancellor of France ca. 1702-1749

oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Gammill (Lynn Crosby '58)

1992.007

32.

SUE COE born 1951 (Great Britain)

The Tail that Wagged the Dog 1990

linocut, etching, and aquatint on paper

Gift of the Friends of Art

1993.001

33.

EUGÈNE DELACROIX 1798-1863 (France)

Juive d'Alger 1830

etching on paper

Gift of the Friends of Art

1995.002

34.

SALLY MANN born 1951 (United States)

Shiva at Whistle Creek 1995

gelatin silver print

Gift of the Friends of Art

1995.005

35.

CLARENCE HOLBROOK CARTER 1904-2000 (United States)

White Supremacy 1947

oil on canvas

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Arthur J. Horowitz

1995.006

36.

HELEN LEVITT 1913-2009 (United States)

Girl with Lily 1940

gelatin silver print

Gift of the Friends of Art

1996.009

37.

MARCH AVERY born 1933 (United States)

View of Distant Vermont 1995

watercolor on paper

Gift of the artist

1996.010

38.

ROBERT MOTHERWELL 1915-1991 (United States)

Elegy in Black 1982-1983

lithograph on paper

Gift of the Friends of Art

1998.003

39.

WILLIAM BLAKE 1757-1827 (Great Britain)

The Reunion of the Soul and the Body 1808

engraving on paper

Gift of Lynn Pearson Russell '69

1999.005

40.

ANA MARIA PACHECO born 1943 (born Brazil; works in Great Britain)

Tales of Transformations I ca. 1990

drypoint on paper

Gift of the Friends of Art

1999.009a

41.

ANNI ALBERS 1899-1994 (born Germany; worked in United States)

Triangulated Intaglio I 1976

etching on paper

Gift of Celia Williams Dunn '61 in honor of her parents Celia Howell and Bernard Franklin Williams

2001.002

42.

HELEN FRANKENTHALER born 1928 (United States)

Tiger's Eye

aquatint on paper

Gift of the Friends of Art

2001.003

43.
JOAN MITCHELL 1925-1992 (United States)
Tree I 1993
lithograph on paper
Gift of the Friends of Art
2001.005
44.
GRACE HARTIGAN 1922-2008 (United States)
Manhattan 1986
oil on canvas
Gift of Fay Martin Chandler '43
2001.008
45.
KARA WALKER born 1969 (United States)
The Emancipation Approximation 2000
silkscreen on paper
Gift of the Friends of Art
2002.001
46.
CATHERINE OPIE born 1961 (United States)
Miggie and Irene, Los Angeles, California 1995
chromogenic print
Gift of the Friends of Art
2002.002
47.
AUDREY FLACK born 1931 (United States)
Royal Flush 1977
silkscreen on paper
Gift of Louis K. and Susan P. Meisel
2002.006
48.
BRIDGET RILEY born 1931 (Great Britain)
Elapse 1982
silkscreen on paper
Gift of Shirlee S. Dalton through Diane Dalton '67
2002.008

49.

REMBRANDT VAN RIJN 1606-1660 (Netherlands)

Self-Portrait as a Beggar 1630

etching on paper

Gift of the estate of Ruth M. Firm, Professor of Art History emerita

2003.006

50.

DOROTHEA LANGE 1895-1965 (United States)

Apartment House Dweller, Bay Area, California ca. 1965

gelatin silver print

Gift of Jackie Mabie Humphrey '60 in memory of Hugh Humphrey

2003.018

51.

SYBIL ANDREWS 1898-1992 (Great Britain)

Storm 1935

woodcut on tissue

Gift of the Friends of Art

2005.003

52.

ELIZABETH MURRAY 1940-2007 (United States)

Cup 1981

pastel on paper

Gift of the Friends of Art

2006.019

53.

MARK FOX born 1963 (United States)

Teenywhip II 2005

watercolor, ink, and gouache on paper

Gift of the Friends of Art

2007.001