

Subject to Change: Art and Design in the 20th Century, February 1, 2010-August 1, 2010

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Jaroslav Rössler, Czech
Untitled, 1923-1924
Gelatin silver print
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 1987.009

Jaroslav Rössler's work exemplifies the often radically reductive modernism of early twentieth-century avant-garde European photographers, who used the camera to reorient awareness to experiences outside the scope of normal human vision. His nonrepresentational compositions of simple geometric shapes were informed in particular by Russian Constructivist design principles. In this image, common materials such as paper and a narrow cylinder are seen arranged on a tabletop and dramatically lit, creating a dynamic rapport between abstraction and the material of daily life.

Egon Schiele, Austrian, 1890-1918
Woman with Crossed Hands, 1917
Gouache and graphite on paper
Anonymous gift 1989.109.2

Stimulated by the work of Gustav Klimt and other members of the Vienna Secession, Egon Schiele explored the expressive power of shape, space, and color in paintings and drawings of emaciated and contorted human bodies, often portrayed in sexually explicit poses. This drawing of an unidentified young woman conveys, with the heavy, angular contours of the sitter's nervously twisted hands, a psychological intensity that is emphasized by the void between the hands and the upper body. The work was created while Schiele was serving in the Austrian army during World War I.



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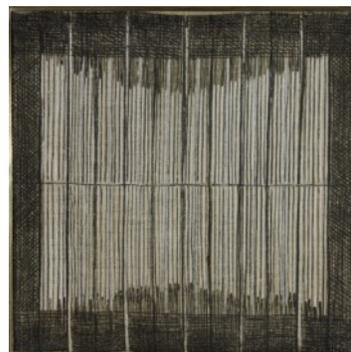
Agnes Martin, American, 1912-2004

Untitled, 1960

Oil on canvas

Gift of the Bayard and Harriet K. Ewing Collection 1993.105.12

In New York during the late 1950s, Agnes Martin began to refine her abstract style, moving toward the compositions of fine, regular grids that she would consider her mature work. In this transitional piece, made up of irregular and relatively gestural lines, Martin's hand is more conspicuous than in later works. Martin remained committed to the grid, which she valued for its complete abstraction, throughout her life. While her paintings are formally associated with Minimalism, she saw them as personal and spiritual.



Arthur Garfield Dove, American, 1880-1946

Hillside, 1932

Charcoal and watercolor on wove paper

Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 1995.014

Arthur Dove drew the admiration of fellow artists including John Marin and Georgia O'Keeffe with abstractions based on observation of the landscape, suggesting its elemental forces and the natural rhythms of the sun, moon, tides, and seasons. He also made more literal watercolor studies, such as this view of a hillside scattered with trees, which was probably painted outside his home near the town of Huntington on Long Island, where he lived from 1921 to 1933. Dove regarded these watercolors as "ideas" for larger oil paintings, but nonetheless sent many to Alfred Stieglitz's seminal American Place gallery in New York, constructing their gilt wooden frames, as seen here, himself.



William H. Bradley, American, 1868-1962

The Blue Lady, poster for *The Chap-Book*, 1894

Color lithograph

RISD Library Transfer 1997.17.4

William Bradley's illustrations, book covers, and poster designs of the 1890s introduced the Art Nouveau style to a wide American audience. This poster advertised the August 1894 issue of *The Chap-Book*, a short-lived avant-garde literary magazine that owed as much to its design as to its esteemed contributors, including Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Robert Louis Stevenson. Drawing inspiration from contemporary European illustrators, notably Aubrey Beardsley, and from Japanese printmaking, Bradley aimed to both delight and perplex his viewers, deliberately confusing the outlines and shapes of his stylized figures with the background elements and text.

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Lithograph posters were inexpensive to produce but also appealed to collectors; this one of a woman holding a pair of ice skates uses only two ink colors, red and blue, which combine to produce a rich purplish black.

Robert Rauschenberg, American, 1925-2008
Gemini G.E.L., printer
Earth Crust, from the series *Stoned Moon*, 1969
Color lithograph on paper
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Barnet Fain 1999.91.3

Robert Rauschenberg, best known for including objects from life in his art, established Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) in 1966 with scientist Billy Kluver to promote collaboration between artists and scientists. In July 1969 NASA invited the artist to the Kennedy Space Center to witness the launch of Apollo 11, the space shuttle that first placed a man on the moon. Using maps, charts, and photographs related to the launch, Rauschenberg created "Stoned Moon", a series of thirty-three prints of which this is a part. The seemingly random assortment of pictures seen here emulates the media's bombardment of moon-walk related images, yet placed on a dark ground they also capture the mystery of early space exploration.



Christopher Grant La Farge, American, 1862-1938
Newfoundland, ca. 1900
Platinum print
Gift of Mrs. Muriel A. La Farge 2002.98.19

Christopher Grant La Farge's photographs exemplify the aesthetic of the Pictorialists, who used soft-focus effects to suppress detail in favor of an expressive reading of the image. Closely aligned with the handcrafted works of the Arts and Crafts movement, Pictorial photographs were a reaction against the mass-produced objects of the modern industrial age. Even though the image was captured with a machine (the camera), the prints are often uniquely crafted, such as this evocative platinum print by La Farge.



A native Rhode Islander and son of the renowned painter, muralist, and stained-glass designer John La Farge, Christopher Grant La Farge maintained a successful career as a partner in the New York architectural firm Heins & La Farge but never abandoned an early interest in photography, shooting in Canada and across the northern United States. The shimmering patch of light captured here at water's edge in Newfoundland recalls the luminous drama of his father's stained glass.

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Gordon Parks, American, 1912-2006
Selwyn, 42nd Street, New York, 1955
Gelatin silver print
Georgianna Sayles Aldrich Fund 2005.112

Gordon Parks documented the effects of the Depression for the U.S. government's Farm Security Administration before becoming a contributor to *LIFE* magazine from 1948 until 1972, working also as a filmmaker, composer, and writer. While many of his photographs were published sequentially, here a single frame captures a narrative in which two figures remain absorbed in conversation despite the alluring glow of a theater marquee. This work captures a dual appeal typical of Parks's images: historic details draw immediate attention, while insights into relationships create lasting impressions.



El Lissitzky, Russian, 1890-1941
Vladimir Vladimirovich Mayakovsky, Russian, 1893-1930, poet
R.S.F.S.R. State Publishing House, Russian, Moscow-Berlin
For the Voice (Dlia golosa), 1923
Construction-paper cover, letterpress text, illustrations, and
typographic designs
Mary B. Jackson Fund 2006.92.1

For the Voice is a book of thirteen poems by Vladimir Mayakovsky that El Lissitzky set into a dynamic design he hoped would provoke readers to recite aloud, spreading the poems' provocative content. Lissitzky, who called himself an "architect of the page", created this design using only the elements of the compositor's type-case: letters, rules, bars, bullets, and so on. The book is a tour-de-force of hand typesetting, executed by a Berlin typesetter who did not know Russian. Language comprehension was not essential here, however: Lissitzky was a convert to Kazimir Malevich's revolutionary use of total abstraction to express the spirit of the new Soviet society.



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Mark Tobey, American, 1890-1976
The Street, 1954
Tempera on brown paper
Gift of Richard Brown Baker 2009.92.222

In 1918 Mark Tobey discovered the Bahai World Faith, a religion that emphasizes the interconnectedness of all humanity, a belief that would become central to his life and visible in his art: the network of calligraphic marks seen here is a visual representation of interconnectivity. Informed by Asian calligraphy, Tobey developed his abstract script, which he called "white writing", in 1938. While all-over composition, which eliminates a focal point, is commonly associated with Jackson Pollock (whose work is on view in this gallery), Tobey developed his all-over gestural field independently.



Richard Neutra, American, b. Austria, 1892-1970
Perspective View of the John Nicholas Brown "Windshield" House,
1936-38
Diazo print with colored pencil, graphite, and gouache on paper
Gift of the Richard J. Neutra Office 39.142.8

Richard Neutra's design for Windshield House---a summer home on New York's Fishers Island---exemplifies the International Style of modernist architecture. Associated with the German Bauhaus school, whose founder Walter Gropius called him a "lonely pioneer" of modernism in America, Neutra subscribed to the purist belief that a modernist building must be functional and unornamented. Here he adheres to the style's technical precision, expression of structure, lightening of mass, and incorporation of brand-new products, such as aluminum windows, linoleum, and Buckminster Fuller's one-piece Dymaxion bathroom. Weeks after Neutra's house for the John Nicholas Brown family was completed in 1938, it was severely damaged by a hurricane. Rebuilt and occupied by the Brown family until 1959, it was destroyed by fire in 1973.



Charles Ephraim Burchfield, American, 1893-1967
Gates Down, 1920
Watercolor, gouache, and graphite on paper
Gift of Mrs. Una Hunt Drage 51.505

In 1919 Charles Burchfield read Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, a collection of colorful vignettes about Midwestern small town life. Shortly thereafter he began to take his subjects from his immediate surroundings, the buildings and landscape of his hometown of Salem, Ohio, where he worked as a clerk. Painting in his free time, Burchfield captured the subtly ominous atmosphere of settings such as the local railway yard, here heightened by details like



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the lonely silhouette in the signal tower. The artist's journals reveal a fascination with the eerie sounds of the railroad: "A screaming freight-whistle opens up the far-stretching hills to the south," he wrote in 1920, "a harsh passenger train whistle comes out of the west."

Robert Motherwell, American, 1915-1991
Tanglewood Press, Inc., publisher
Untitled, from the portfolio New York International, 1966
Lithograph
Museum Works of Art Fund 65.118.4

A student of philosophy and art history, Robert Motherwell was a vocal advocate for abstract art in America and a teacher to such artists as Cy Twombly, whose painting hangs to your right. He was also one of the most prolific printmakers among the Abstract Expressionists. Here he exploits the expressive potential of printmaking with an exuberant gesture that replicates the spontaneity of his paintings and ink drawings of the period.

Richard Lindner, American, b. Germany, 1901-1978
The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui, 1968
Watercolor and ink with collaged correction on paper
The Albert Pilavin Memorial Collection of 20th Century American Art
69.080

This image takes its subject from Bertold Brecht's *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui*. Written in 1941, the play, whose protagonist is a fictitious Chicago mobster named Arturo Ui, is an allegory of Hitler's rise to power. Accordingly, Richard Lindner portrays a whip-wielding, Hitler-mustached figure in stereotypical gangster dress. Lindner's colorful, stylized figures were a strong influence on Pat Steir, the subject of the current Chace Gallery special exhibition and Lindner's student at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.



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Gego (Gertrud Goldschmidt), Venezuelan, b. Germany, 1912 - 1994
Maurice Sanchez, American, 20th century, printer
Tamarind Lithography Workshop, publisher
Untitled, 1966
Lithograph
Nancy Sayles Day Collection of Modern Latin American Art 70.040

Gego fled Germany in 1939, securing a Venezuelan visa and settling there for the remainder of her life. This print, created during a fellowship at the Tamarind Lithography Workshop, then located in Los Angeles, marks a shift in the artist's oeuvre: early works feature precise parallel lines, while later works show an increasing dissolution of regularized linearity in favor of mesh-like and interrupted lines. In her wire sculptures and ink drawings, as in this print, the delicacy of the renderings belies the tensile strength of the compositions.



Aaron Siskind, American, 1903-1991, (RISD Faculty 1971-1976,
Photography)
Chicago 21, 1949
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Mr. Robert B. Menschel 77.145.22

In the 1940s, in response to the trauma of World War II, Aaron Siskind moved away from the documentary photographic style to explore a more personal, metaphoric vision. The urban environment, particularly walls showing signs of age or deterioration, became a primary source for his images. Among the stains, peeling paint, rust, and random human markings, Siskind found landscape and figurative allusions---such as this suggestion of a pair of animated figures---that evoke profound emotions.

