



FOLK ART AND AMERICAN MODERNISM

Organized by the Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York

On View at the American Folk Art Museum

July 18–September 27, 2015

Checklist

Height precedes width precedes depth

INTRODUCTION



Bernard Karfiol (1886–1952)

Making Music

Ogunquit, Maine

1938

Oil on canvas

32 x 40"

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Promised gift of Bunty and Tom Armstrong, 2000.TA.1 (L)

Ex coll. Robert Laurent, Edith Halpert

This scene depicts the sitting room in Robert and Mimi Laurent's Ogunquit, Maine, farmhouse. Their two sons are shown: John playing the banjo with his back to the viewer and Paul playing the accordion on the loveseat. Behind the boys are three of Robert's treasured folk portraits, two of which are included in this exhibition. The paintings on the wall exemplify Robert's taste for the simple, abstract, and sometimes stark lines and masses of folk painting and sculpture, while the loveseat and chair reflect Mimi's love of curvilinear Victorian forms.

The artist of *Making Music*, Bernard Karfiol, was a close friend of Robert Laurent's. Brooklyn-born Karfiol had lived in Paris where he became acquainted with collectors Leo and Gertrude Stein, the American painter Samuel Halpert, and even the self-taught artist Henri Rousseau. Back in the United States, though, he did not meet with success until Hamilton Easter Field saw his work in the 1913 Armory Show and became a patron. Karfiol's specialty was

painting; much of it was inspired by the Maine landscape, and he is also known for his figure paintings of children and nudes.



Artist unidentified

Portrait of a Young Boy Seated with His Dog on a Painted Floor

New England

1830–1840

Oil on canvas

33 x 28 1/2 x 2 3/4" (framed)

Collection of Jeffrey Tillou Antiques

Ex coll. Robert Laurent

The artist of and the sitter in this painting have yet to be identified, but it is known that Robert Laurent bought it in Wells, Maine. “The face [is] a photo touched up,” he wrote, after he and his wife spent two days removing the mildew that had covered the painting when he brought it home. The portrait has achieved some fame in the folk art world because it is the central example in the lineup of three children’s portraits in Bernard Karfiol’s *Making Music*. Like many portraits of its era, this one gains color and interest from the inclusion of the brightly patterned floor and the boy’s pet dog. The lack of any detail in the background causes the central figure to appear to move forward, demanding the viewer’s attention.



Artist unidentified

Unidentified Baby

Possibly Dover, New Hampshire

Probably c. 1840

Oil on canvas

26 x 21"

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1999.100.1

Ex coll. Robert Laurent

Because Robert Laurent found this portrait in Dover, New Hampshire, he always called it “Dover Baby.” It hung in the Laurents’ Ogunquit, Maine, sitting room, the setting of Bernard Karfiol’s *Making Music*; it is pictured on the right in Karfiol’s painting. Laurent had begun collecting antiques and folk art in and around Ogunquit with his mentor Hamilton Easter Field in the 1910s. Field wasn’t interested in portraits, however, so Laurent went looking for them—he was particularly fond of babies—with younger artist friends such as Bernard Karfiol and Stefan Hirsch.

The creator of this portrait chose to paint the baby against a plain black background, as if it were floating in space. Laurent, a modernist, very likely understood this lack of concern with realism and appreciated the effect the artist achieved of a two-dimensional figure hovering on the surface of the canvas.

Section I: THE OGUNQUIT MODERNISTS



Artist unidentified

Decoy

New England

Nineteenth century

Carved wood

6 1/2 x 6 3/4 x 16"

Private collection

Ex coll. Robert Laurent

The artist-collectors who summered in Ogunquit, Maine, seem to have been particularly fond of decoys, for a number of them decorated their homes and studios with the carved birds. Robert Laurent acquired this example for his collection, which was the largest of any of the Ogunquit artists. His enthusiasm for decoys and feeling of kinship with the decoy carver is apparent from his delighted exclamation when showing off one of his specimens: “Look at the way the wings are carved on this one. The fellow who did it enjoyed it, surely!”

Decoys, like weathervanes and folk portraits, appealed to early modernists because of their pure lines and abstracted forms. Collector Joel Barber’s book *Wild Fowl Decoys* (1934) introduced this folk art category to a wider audience than ever before, and the number of decoy collectors increased steadily throughout the twentieth century. About 1985, a 22-cent stamp bearing a canvasback duck decoy was issued by the United States Postal Service.



Artist unidentified

Man with Grapes

Wells, Maine

c. 1860

Wood, metal wire, and bone

16 5/8 x 7 1/2 x 5 1/4"

Brooklyn Museum, New York

Gift of The Guennol Collection, 2000.80

Ex coll. Robert Laurent

Photo courtesy Creative Commons-BY

Robert Laurent found this appealing figure in Wells, Maine, and described it as having been made for a tavern or the bar room of an inn. This and another carved figure in his collection, called *Policeman*, have a simplicity of line and detail that may well have influenced Laurent's own work (see *Flirtation*, for example, also on view). "I have . . . collected unknown American artists of the early nineteenth century," Laurent wrote, about gathering folk art. "I was one of the first to collect them—long before the dealers. I found out that the best hunting ground for them was New England. Maine was very good—so was New Hampshire."

This figure, whose eyes are made of bone, is dressed in a suit in the style of circa 1860 and wears knee-high boots and a derby hat. The grapes he holds are attached to wires threaded through a hole in his right hand. His left hand is fist shaped; the hole bored through it was probably for receiving a now lost component, perhaps a wineglass.



Robert Laurent (1890–1970)

Flirtation

Probably Maine

1921

Carved mahogany

20 x 16 x 5 3/4"

Private collection

Robert Laurent observed that in the early years of the twentieth century, when he first came to America from France, the creation of wood sculptures had more or less come to a halt. But, he said, “one could still see the beautiful ship figureheads that were carved by very skillful woodcarvers—unknown great sculptors. Also one ran across wooden Indians still in front of cigar stores. . . . Very fine wood figures and decorations were also found in bar rooms.” Laurent emulated these unidentified nineteenth-century carvers by choosing subjects that everyone could relate to and by employing the direct-carving method.

In February 1922 a writer for Hamilton Easter Field’s *The Arts* remarked that the still, formal figures in *Flirtation* seem like “old-fashioned folk who are satisfied with country living and old ways.” However, if his subjects are old fashioned, Laurent’s treatment of them is not: the figures are streamlined, their silhouettes making a bold statement in space. Details are kept to a minimum. These are not specific people, but a *type* of person—Laurent is portraying the essence of a certain kind of country dweller he had come to know in rural Maine.



Ira Chafee Goodell (1800–c. 1875)

Woman with Red Shawl

Probably New York

c. 1830

Oil on wood

26 1/8 x 18 7/8"

Newark Museum

Purchase 1931, Felix Fuld Bequest Fund

Ex coll. Robert Laurent

Woman with Red Shawl was exhibited in *American Primitives* (1930–1931) at the Newark Museum. The exhibition was the first large museum show of “primitive painting,” as it was then called. Holger Cahill, curator of the exhibition, wrote “the work of these . . . largely untutored artists represents the unconventional side of the American tradition.” The show was favorably reviewed, and when it ended its Newark engagement, the museum bought several paintings, including this one. With the exception of one signed canvas, the painters of the portraits in *American Primitives* were unidentified when the exhibition opened. In the more than eighty years since then, researchers have brought the names of many itinerant painters to light. Ira Chafee Goodell worked in the upper Hudson Valley and western New England from 1826 to 1834, and then he moved to New York City, where he lived for most of the rest of his life. Goodell’s sitters are stiffly posed, painted from the waist or bust up, and are often portrayed wearing black and white; happily, the severity of this woman’s costume is relieved by the red shawl.



Artist unidentified

Fish Hooked Rug

Maine

Late nineteenth century

Wool

19 x 41 1/4"

Private collection

Ex coll. Hamilton Easter Field, Robert Laurent

Hamilton Easter Field liked old furniture, hooked rugs, and other antiques, but wasn't interested in portraits, according to his protégé Robert Laurent. The earliest American hooked rugs were made in Maine, New Hampshire, and the maritime provinces of Canada, and by 1860 they were being produced throughout New England, along the Atlantic seacoast, and in parts of Pennsylvania.

Laurent told the following story about a trip he took with Field during the early 1920s: "I went with Field to the White Mountains. We heard of a wonderful chance to get fine hooked rugs. Three women worked at them—grandmother, mother, and granddaughter. They lived in the back woods way off the beaten track. We found the place, and every room in their large home was covered by at least two or three layers of rugs. The best were made by the grandmother although the three knew their job well. . . . The price then was from 5 to 10 dollars for good sized rugs." To judge by its subject, a fish, the hooked rug shown here is one that Field very likely bought somewhere along the Maine seacoast.



Arnold Newman (1918–2006)

Portrait of Yasuo Kuniyoshi

New York City

1941

Photograph (reproduction)

11 1/2 x 14"

Courtesy Getty Images

This is one of two photographs that Arnold Newman took of Yasuo Kuniyoshi posed with objects from his folk art and toy collections. Newman was known for photographing his subjects in “their own natural environments, revealing their habits and personalities through their interaction with the things that surrounded them.” Here we see Kuniyoshi with a carved cow in the foreground and a toy train engine, a rooster weathervane, and an angel figure in the background.



Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1889–1953)

Cock Calling the Dawn

Ogunquit, Maine

1923

Oil on canvas

30 x 25"

Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio

Gift of Ferdinand Howard, 1931.195

Art © Estate of Yasuo Kuniyoshi/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

The rooster depicted in this painting is reminiscent of those in weathervanes seen on the steeples of many New England churches, but Yasuo Kuniyoshi’s inspiration was horticultural rather than theological or meteorological. According to his good friend Robert Laurent, the rooster that belonged to a neighboring fisherman in Ogunquit, Maine, ravaged Kuniyoshi’s prize tomato patch one summer. Instead of flying into a rage, as Laurent expected, Kuniyoshi determined to paint the culprit. The result was the canvas shown here, which Laurent deemed “one of Kuniyoshi’s best pictures.”

Born in Okayama, Japan, in 1889, Kuniyoshi came alone to the United States in 1906, at the age of sixteen. He returned to Japan only once, in 1931, to see his father before he died. During that trip Kuniyoshi bought “papier-mâché toy tigers with bobbing heads and detachable tails . . . a bit of old Japan, allowing him to rediscover the ambiance he remembered from his life before 1906,” according to art historian Gail Levin. “Yas loved toys,” recalled his widow, Sara. “Everywhere he went he bought toys.” These toys were related to the folk art—particularly weathervanes and carvings—that Kuniyoshi and his fellow artists collected in and around Ogunquit.

Section II: ELIE AND VIOLA NADELMAN



Elie Nadelman (1882–1946)

Woman at the Piano

New York City

c. 1917

Stained and painted wood

35 1/8 x 23 1/4 x 9"

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

The Philip L. Goodwin Collection, 105.1958

Copyright © Estate of Elie Nadelman

Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, New York

This sculpture belongs to a group of streamlined figures in contemporary dress that Elie Nadelman began to create in 1914. The figures are made of various materials including plaster, metal, even marble—but most are made of wood and are painted. The majority are less than three feet tall.

As is the case with *Woman at the Piano*, many of the figures are performers. Sculptures of a clown, an orchestra conductor, singers, dancers, and circus performers reflect Nadelman's fascination with those segments of the popular arts. The group also includes society figures such as *Host*, *Hostess*, and *Seated Woman*, which date from about 1915 to 1925. The self-satisfied poses and complacent expressions of the society figures invite the viewer to join Nadelman in regarding the characters ironically. When a selection of these unconventional figures was shown in a 1917 exhibition at New York's Scott & Fowles Gallery, public reaction ranged from shock and outrage to that of *Time* magazine's reviewer, who called it "an exhibition of a totally different kind, a roomful of carved comments on modern life." And that is no doubt exactly what Nadelman meant it to be.



Elie Nadelman (1882–1946)

Head of a Woman
New York City
1916–1918
Bronze
10 1/2 x 3 1/4 x 5 1/2"
Private collection



Clarkson Crolius Sr. (1774–1843)

Jug
New York City
1800–1814
Stoneware and cobalt oxide
11 x 7 1/2"
New-York Historical Society
Purchased from Elie Nadleman, 1937.808
Ex coll. Viola and Elie Nadelman
Photo © New-York Historical Society

The Nadelmans' Museum of Folk Arts in Riverdale, New York, contained one thousand pieces of American and European ceramics, including a special collection of New York State stoneware, of which this vessel is a part. Elie Nadelman was particularly proud of his New York stoneware, and his collection was well enough known only two years after the museum's 1926 opening to be the subject of an article in *Country Life* titled "Early New York Pottery."

This example was made in Clarkson Crolius Sr.'s lower Manhattan pottery and bears the impressed maker's mark "C. Crolius / Manhattan, Wells / New-York." According to pottery authority William C. Ketchum Jr., Crolius "... must be considered as one of the most prominent of this state's potters. He was first listed in the directory in 1794 and ran his own stoneware business from 1800 until 1838, in the meantime serving as a member of the New York City Common Council, assemblyman, and City Collector." The New-York Historical Society has nearly a dozen more pieces of stoneware by Clarkson Crolius Sr. from the Nadelman collection, which the society bought in 1937.



Artist unidentified

Cake Print (mold)

Switzerland

c. 1790

Carved wood

12 1/2 diam. x 1 1/4"

New-York Historical Society

Purchased from Elie Nadleman, 1937.1353

Ex coll. Viola and Elie Nadelman

The art of carving cake prints, or molds, reached its peak in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. The tradition was centered in the German-speaking regions, where to this day ornamented cakes and molds are sold. The Nadelmans' folk art collection contained numerous European cake prints such as this one as well as some American examples, fulfilling the Nadelmans' desire to compare similar folk objects from Europe and America. The cake print demonstrates the couple's interest in tools and implements of all kinds—objects made for the kitchen, dairy, sewing room, hunting field, and other spheres of domestic life in the preindustrial era.



Artist unidentified

Miniature Chest with Drawers

Europe

1800–1850

Paint on wood with iron and brass

6 1/2 x 8 x 6"

New-York Historical Society

Purchased from Elie Nadelman, INV.8526

Ex coll. Viola and Elie Nadelman

This miniature chest with drawers is representative of the many European chests, boxes, and other furniture forms that the Nadelmans exhibited at their Museum of Folk Arts in Riverdale, New York, from 1926 to 1937. Once the Nadelmans conceived the idea of creating a museum that

would illustrate the European background of American folk art, the couple went to Europe most summers from 1924 to 1930. Their European trips were accomplished in great style: they booked three staterooms for their passages over and back and took their son, his nurse, and a maid, staying for months at a time. Folk art had been a subject of particular interest in northern Europe since the second half of the nineteenth century, so there were many museums where it was on view and many dealers from whom it could be purchased. The Nadelmans once told a reporter that more than sixteen countries were represented in their Museum of Folk Arts.



The Compass Artist (active late eighteenth–early nineteenth centuries)

Box

Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

1800–1840

Paint on tulip poplar with tin hasp

6 1/2 x 10 x 10"

New-York Historical Society

Purchased from Elie Nadelman, 1937.1767

Ex coll. Viola and Elie Nadelman

The furniture and other objects that the Nadelmans brought back from Europe were displayed along with American examples at their Museum of Folk Arts in Riverdale, New York, so that styles of the Old World could be compared and contrasted with those of the New. This Lancaster County box exemplifies the continuing Germanic tradition of paint-decorated furnishings in Pennsylvania. It belongs to a group of boxes by an unidentified artist-decorator who has come to be known as “The Compass Artist” because he used a compass to lay out designs of pinwheels and floral devices, which were often embellished with freehand leaves and scrolls.

This piece is in the Compass Artist’s most popular form: a dome-topped box with hinged top, which he made in a wide range of sizes. More than sixty boxes decorated in this style have been identified, including a salt box, two diminutive cradles, and five full-size chests. Scholars are still trying to determine if these are the work of a group rather than a single artist.



Artist unidentified

Deer

Probably Pennsylvania

1850–1890

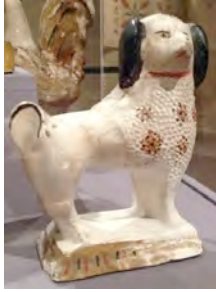
Paint on plaster of Paris

11 x 8 3/4 x 4 1/4"

New-York Historical Society

Purchased from Elie Nadelman, 1937.1143

Ex coll. Viola and Elie Nadelman



Artist unidentified

Standing Dog

Probably Pennsylvania

1850–1890

Paint on plaster of Paris

6 1/2 x 4 1/2 x 2 3/4"

New-York Historical Society

Purchased from Elie Nadelman, 1937.1145

Ex coll. Viola and Elie Nadelman

These plaster animals provide only a tiny glimpse of the Nadelmans' chalkware collection. When Mr. and Mrs. G. Glen Gould published the article "Plaster Ornaments for Collectors" in the August 1929 issue of *House and Garden*, they stated that "the Nadelman collection is large enough to be notable, and representative enough to be important." In addition to animals, the collection included human figures, classical urns filled with fruit, pinecones on pedestals, watch holders flanked by classical pillars supporting an arch, buildings such as churches, and bas-relief profile portraits of historical figures, among other subjects.

Small chalkware figures were inexpensive enough for people of very modest means to acquire one or two. The Goulds reported that a little white duck impressed with the date 1883 in the Nadelman collection was marked fifteen cents. The figures were made in molds but were decorated by hand, giving them an individual quality that set them apart from the Staffordshire ornaments they imitated. Chalkware figures were made in the United States as early as the eighteenth century, and figures such as these were fashioned up until the 1890s and sold primarily by peddlers.



Albert P. Moriarty (active 1847–1856)

Fire Engine Condenser Case

New York City

1845–1850

Paint on wood with gilding

34 x 31 x 14 1/2"

New-York Historical Society

Purchased from Elie Nadelman, 1937.1632

Ex coll. Viola and Elie Nadelman

Elie Nadelman was an enthusiastic collector of fire engine paraphernalia, including condenser cases, which were part of steam-powered fire engines. These cases were often beautifully painted with depictions of allegories and historical events. This example belonged to New York City's Jackson Engine Company No. 24, which was founded in 1798. The station was located at 17th Street, west of 9th Avenue; the company went out of service in 1865.

A banner at the top of the panel bears the inscription "To the / Memory of / Departed / Worth," suggesting that a great leader had died. The pedestal in the foreground is inscribed "Jackson . . . Died / June 8th 1845," memorializing President Andrew Jackson's death. The names Luther Billings and John Wallace, also apparently deceased, appear on the condenser case. Albert P. Moriarty, who decorated the case, was a New York City painter of fire engines and hose carriages. In 1856 he won a silver medal for fancy painting from the American Institute.



Artist unidentified

Crib Quilt

United States

1840–1850

Cotton

40 1/4 x 39 3/4 x 1/4"

New-York Historical Society

Purchased from Elie Nadelman, 1937.1321

Ex coll. Viola and Elie Nadelman

Handmade quilts were a necessity in every household before such textiles were manufactured, and they also allowed the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century housewife to beautify her home, reuse salvageable fabric from worn-out clothing, and, in some cases, teach her young daughter to sew.

This appliquéd quilt was part of Viola Nadelman's large collection of textiles, needlework, and lace, which she had been forming since girlhood. Its small size indicates it may have been used as a crib quilt. The Nadelmans were among the few early folk art collectors to have an interest in quilts, which were not recognized as a serious art form related to twentieth-century modernism until 1971, when the Whitney Museum of American Art presented *Abstract Design in American Quilts* organized by Jonathan Holstein and Gail van der Hoof.



Artist unidentified

Fraktur: Birth and Baptism Certificate of Christina Michaelin

Northampton County, Pennsylvania

c. 1807

Gouache, watercolor, glazing, and brown ink on paper

13 1/2 x 16 1/4"

New-York Historical Society

Purchased from Elie Nadelman, 1937.1818

Ex coll. of Viola and Elie Nadelman

This document is an example of *fraktur*, described by scholar Donald Shelley as “. . . illuminated manuscript pages employing letters based on the sixteenth-century Gothic type-face of the same name.” The calligraphic folk art flourished from about 1750 to 1840 among Americans who shared a Germanic heritage. The letters were executed in ink and embellished with fanciful birds, hearts, tulips, and other motifs painted in vibrant watercolor. These same motifs were used to decorate painted furniture, slip and sgraffito pottery, tinware, and other types of household objects. *Fraktur* was usually created by schoolmasters and religious leaders and took a variety of forms, including *Vorschriften* (writing samples), *Taufscheine* (birth and baptismal certificates), marriage and house blessings, bookplates, rewards of merit, and floral and figurative scenes.

Elie and Viola Nadelman were very interested in the arts of the Pennsylvania Germans and collected many outstanding examples. After they sold their first collection to the New-York Historical Society in 1937, they began to collect once again and gathered a notable group of *fraktur* drawings. Forty-one *fraktur* from the second collection are now at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Asahel Powers (1813–1843)

Mrs. Patrick Henry (Dorothea Dandridge)

Probably New England or New York

Possibly 1831

Oil on canvas

33 1/2 x 23 3/4"

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Gift of Martha C. Karolik for the M. and M. Karolik Collection of American Watercolors and Drawings, 1800–1875, 47.1225

Ex coll. Viola and Elie Nadelman

Asahel Powers began painting in Springfield, Vermont, and is said to have been well-known locally by the time he turned eighteen, in 1831. This portrait may have been painted in that year; its subject, Dorothea Henry, died that February.

Because the year 1826 is lettered onto the scrolls that encircle Mrs. Henry's head, it was previously believed that this is when the portrait was painted. However, the inscription almost certainly refers to 1826 as the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, a monumental event for the relatively new nation. Patrick Henry, Dorothea's first husband, was a signer of the founding document and the orator who, in 1775, cried: "Give me liberty or give me death." The word "liberty" inscribed on the round disk Mrs. Henry holds testifies to this famous demand.

The Shelburne Museum owns a companion portrait of Patrick Henry that must have been painted at the same time as Dorothea's because of the similar treatments, although Henry died in 1799, well before the artist was born. Further research may reveal where these portraits were painted: the Henrys lived in Virginia and the itinerant Powers is not presently known to have traveled so far south.



Terrence J. Kennedy (dates unknown)

Whig Political Banner

Fleming/Auburn, New York

c. 1836–1844

Oil on canvas
66" diam. (framed)
Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York
Viola and Elie Nadelman Collection, gift of Stephen C. Clark, N0537.1948
Ex coll. Viola and Elie Nadelman
Photo by Richard Walker

This large Whig campaign banner was probably carried in parades or at political gatherings during the 1840s. It conveys a potent political message by juxtaposing images of commerce and industry with a screaming eagle—a symbol of an aggressive, vital America—and a tricolored shield from the Great Seal of the United States. The right side of the composition is dominated by a view of the Erie Canal, which was probably based on a scene painted to celebrate the canal's opening in 1825. The banner expresses the Whig political party's belief that the development of internal transportation and the protection of home industries were vital to the growth of the country. The creator of the banner, Terrence J. Kennedy, apprenticed as an ornamental coach painter and received training from a local artist in Troy, New York; he was later an active participant in the Civil War.

Like many of the other collectors featured in this exhibition, Elie Nadelman was an immigrant to the United States who admired the forthright qualities of American folk art. This imposing political banner was one of thirteen pieces purchased by Stephen Clark and Louis Jones for the New York State Historical Association after Nadelman's death.



Artist unidentified
House and Flowers Rug
United States
1820–1830
Linen and wool
36 x 70 1/2"
Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York
Viola and Elie Nadelman Collection, gift of Stephen C. Clark, N0528.1948
Ex coll. Viola and Elie Nadelman

This yarn-sewn rug is one of the thirteen folk objects that Viola Nadelman sold to the New York State Historical Association patron Stephen Clark and the association's director, Louis Jones, after Elie Nadelman's death. In December 1948 Clark heard that Mrs. Nadelman was selling the folk art she and her husband had gathered after the sale of their first collection to the New-York Historical Society. He and Jones met at the Nadelman house in Riverdale, New York. Jones recalled that when they arrived, Mrs. Nadelman "began to take us around this big house, beautiful quilts and carvings and paintings and all sorts of things." Clark presently asked Jones, "Now if we were to buy twelve pieces, which twelve would you buy?" Jones, although new to the field,

picked twelve. Clark said, “Well, I agree with you on eleven of them—why don’t we buy thirteen.” So they did, acquiring some of the most important objects now at the New York State Historical Association’s Fenimore Art Museum. This rug is an unusually large example of an early technique known as yarn sewn. In appearance, it is related to the later technique of rug hooking, but is instead sewn with yarn in a running stitch.



Artist unidentified

Stereotypical Carving of an African American Man

United States

1830–1850

Paint on carved wood

45 x 18 x 19"

Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York

Viola and Elie Nadelman Collection, gift of Stephen C. Clark, N0538.1948

Ex coll. Viola and Elie Nadelman

When this sculpture—one of the Fenimore Art Museum’s best-known pieces—was found in Charleston, South Carolina, in the 1930s, it was thought to be a tavern sign. Although it has suffered the ravages of time, it was originally brightly painted. It is a stereotypical representation of an African American man dressed in rags, a battered hat, and broken-down shoes. This racial caricature was popularized in the 1830s by the internationally famous American playwright and minstrel performer Thomas Dartmouth Rice. The figure was probably carved by a white artist familiar with the “Jim Crow” character developed by Rice that was based on African American vernacular speech, song, and dance.

Stephen Clark and Louis Jones were attracted by the vitality and power of the carved figure. It was one of the thirteen folk objects they bought from Viola Nadelman for the New York State Historical Association in 1948.

Section III: WILLIAM AND MARGUERITE ZORACH



William Zorach (1887–1966)

Seated Cat

Bath, Maine

1937

Granite

18 x 9 x 12 1/4"

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Purchase, Edward C. Moore Jr. Gift, 1937, 37.121

© The Zorach Collection, LLC

Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image Source: Art Resource, NY

William Zorach, along with Robert Laurent, was among the first American sculptors to employ the technique of direct carving. Early in the twentieth century, both men had looked at carved weathervanes, cigar-store Indians, ships' figureheads, and decoys with interest and admiration, and decided to adopt the method the creators of these works used: that of carving directly into wood or stone with no preliminary model. Zorach had begun his career as an artist by drawing and painting, but when he turned to sculpture at the age of thirty-six, it became his primary means of expression. Of this piece, Zorach wrote:

Before carving my granite cat, I had had cats around in the city and in the country for many years and made hundreds of drawings of them. I knew our cat in all his ways and moods. I observed and studied him, making endless drawing notes each time I saw something that interested me. In this way I built up within my mind a knowledge of cats and cat forms. Then with a stone before me I began to evolve a cat fitting into the rock and expressing my knowledge and feeling and appreciation of cats.



Artist unidentified

Seated Cat

Probably Boston or Pennsylvania

1850–1900

Paint on plaster of Paris

15 5/8 x 8 3/4 x 10 1/8"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Effie Thixton Arthur, 1963.3.1

The similarity between William Zorach's granite cat and this chalkware example is close enough to seem significant. Whether Zorach was conscious of the resemblance or not, he must have seen chalkware cats on his visits to antiques shops and other collectors' homes. Chalkware is a misnomer: this and all other so-called chalkware objects are made of plaster of Paris. These decorative items were an affordable alternative to more costly Staffordshire objects. The latter, imported from England from the eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth, took the form of

musicians, animals, classical deities, allegorical figures, and portraits, all produced in lead-glazed earthenware. Cats and dogs were common chalkware figures, though many other animals and additional forms were made.



Artist unidentified

Lion Hooked Rug

New England

c. 1920

Cotton and wool

28 x 43"

Collection of Tim Zorach

Ex coll. Marguerite and William Zorach

Photo courtesy Mildred and Marius Peladeau

Marguerite and William Zorach were inspired to begin collecting folk art and other antiques in 1914, after seeing an elderly lady making a hooked rug. Rugs such as this example were plentiful in antiques shops and at house sales in the 1910s and '20s, and the Zorachs eventually had a splendid assortment of hooked rugs that they used to cover the floors of all thirteen rooms of the Maine sea captain's house they acquired in 1923.

By the 1920s, hooked rugs had become an immensely popular collectible in New England, New York, and Pennsylvania. From 1920 to 1930 there were at least fifteen auction sales of hooked rugs in New York City alone—most of them containing three hundred or more lots. Not all of these rugs were old, though, for their artmaking had survived into the twentieth century. By the early post-Civil War period, stamped patterns for hooked rugs were available, but those rugs lacked what Hamilton Easter Field called “the instinct, the feeling” of rugs whose makers both designed and hooked them, as did the creator of this rug.



Marguerite Zorach (1887–1968)

The Black Pig Hooked Rug

Probably Maine
1944
Wool on linen backing; mounted on board
37 x 54 1/2"
Private collection
Ex coll. Marguerite and William Zorach
Photo courtesy Mildred and Marius Peladeau

Both Marguerite and William Zorach were influenced by the fauvist painters, who were led by Henri Matisse and André Derain and whose work the Zorachs became familiar with when they studied in France around 1910. The fauves, or “wild beasts,” were famous for their use of bold, undisguised brush strokes, brilliant colors, and a high degree of abstraction. While the fauves worked with paint, Marguerite chose to apply the fauvist vision to the textile arts. “The wealth of beautiful and brilliant color available in woolen yarns so fascinated me that I tried to paint my pictures in wool,” she wrote. She began working with fiber in 1913.

Pieces such as this appealing rug illustrate how successful Marguerite Zorach was in carrying out her ideas. The birth of her first child in 1915 resulted in her need to constantly interrupt her work to take care of the baby, and it strengthened the artist’s desire to “paint” with yarn and thread, as it was much easier to stop and start work on a rug or embroidered picture than a painting. She thus became a committed promoter of handcraft as a legitimate art form.

Section IV: JULIANA FORCE AND THE WHITNEY STUDIO CLUB



Artist unidentified
Girl in Garden
United States
c. 1840
Oil on canvas
39 7/8 x 27 1/4"
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1939.100.2
Ex coll. Juliana Force, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

The juxtaposition of oversize plants with the delicate child in lace-trimmed pantalets creates a surreal quality evocative of the work of Henri Rousseau, a French postal worker and a self-taught artist whose paintings inspired the fauves and the early cubists. *Girl in Garden* belonged to Juliana Force until 1939, when she sold it at Parke-Bernet Galleries in New York; it then became part of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller’s collection. Like most paintings found in the early days of folk

art collecting, the artist of this portrait, where it was painted, and the identity of the subject are not known.



Eliodoro Patete (1874–1953)

Liberty

Anawalt, West Virginia

c. 1909

Wood, glass, and paint

32 x 17 x 12"

Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vermont

Museum purchase, 1954, from Edith Halpert, The Downtown Gallery, 1954-537

Ex coll. Juliana Force

Eliodoro Patete immigrated to the United States from Italy in 1909 and found work in the coal mines of West Virginia. In his spare time he made religious carvings to sell and to gift to local Catholic churches. Art historian Virginia Clayton noted that this “oddly affecting allegorical figure . . . is in essence a secular, patriotic Madonna, with all the color and exuberance of the other saints by the carver.”

Liberty is believed to have been a gift to President William Howard Taft, whose secretary acknowledged receipt of a wood carving in 1909. Apparently President Taft did not keep the figure, because by the 1930s it was in Juliana Force’s collection and was rendered for the Index of American Design by artist Elizabeth Moutal. In 1953, art dealer Edith Halpert arranged for its sale to Electra Havemeyer Webb for her outdoor museum of Americana in Shelburne, Vermont.

Patete eventually returned to Italy, where he worked as a farmer and shepherd, and continued to make carvings of the Madonna and saints that can still be found in local churches. In 2013 Patete’s work was honored with an exhibition and conference in his native village, Vastogirardi.



Joseph Pickett (1848–1918)

Coryell's Ferry, 1776

New Hope, Pennsylvania
c. 1914–1918
Oil on canvas
37 1/2 x 48 1/4"
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
Purchase, 31.316
Ex coll. American Folk Art Gallery
Digital Image © Whitney Museum, N.Y.

One of the works in the founding collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art is this painting by Joseph Pickett, a storekeeper and self-taught artist from New Hope, Pennsylvania, which Juliana Force bought after seeing it in *American Primitives*, an exhibition organized by Holger Cahill for the Newark Museum in 1930–1931. Cahill found this and another painting by Pickett through intensive detective work that led him from a Baltimore artist who had heard about the paintings in Paris to a New Hope collector who, in turn, introduced Cahill to a local couple who had acquired the paintings after Pickett's death.

In this canvas Pickett celebrated the role of his hometown—then known as Coryell's Ferry—in the American Revolution. It depicts local boatmen rowing George Washington's troops to safety across the Delaware River after their defeat by the British in New York and their flight across New Jersey. General Washington is the tiny figure on the hill at upper right, surveying the scene through a spyglass. Pickett ignored historical accuracy, choosing to paint a summer scene despite the fact that the event took place in the wintry December of 1776, when snow covered the ground.



Artist unidentified

Baby with Cane

United States

Nineteenth century

Oil on canvas

30 x 25"

Newark Museum

Purchase 1931, Felix Fuld Bequest Fund

Like so many paintings acquired by early folk art collectors, nothing is known about this portrait's origins. It is the painting listed as No. 20 and titled *Portrait of a Child* in the catalog for the *Early American Art* exhibition at the Whitney Studio Club in 1924. Holger Cahill later included it in his 1930–1931 exhibition *American Primitives*, considered the first major museum exhibition of folk painting, at the Newark Museum. After *American Primitives* closed, the museum bought the painting from the lender, Mrs. Elizabeth Bacon of South Salem, New York,

for \$30. Mrs. Bacon's daughter, Peggy Bacon, belonged to the group of artists who summered in Ogunquit, Maine.

The *American Primitives* catalog comments that the small child in this painting strikes a pose similar to that of John the Baptist and of the Christ Child in Renaissance paintings, but this child holds a cane rather than a cross. In the nineteenth century babies wore unisex clothes; it was customary for artists to indicate gender by the choice of playthings depicted. Canes, whips, and other instruments of authority were typically assigned to young boys.



Attributed to the Wilkinson Limner (active 1824–1830)

Young Woman with Elaborate Lace Collar and Holding a Red Book

Probably Philadelphia

c. 1827

Oil on cradled poplar panel

27 1/2 x 21 1/4"

Collection of Eric J. Maffei

Ex coll. Juliana Force

Folk art scholars have often used the archaic term *limner* (painter) for unidentified artists. The painter of this young woman is known as the Wilkinson Limner because of a similar portrait in the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum that is said to be of Mrs. Seth Wilkinson of New York.

Juliana Force loaned this portrait to the 1924 exhibition *Early American Art*. In the exhibition catalog the painting was listed simply as *Portrait of a Woman*, alongside *Portrait of a Man*—probably her husband. The pair passed through the hands of several dealers, among them Edith Halpert, who noted in her gallery records that the portraits had been found in Philadelphia. Eventually the two were separated, and the location of the man's portrait is presently unknown.

Researcher Deborah Child has identified twenty-three portraits that can be attributed to this artist. Each is painted in oils on a wood panel, with hair, jewelry, and costume rendered in meticulous detail. Child has found evidence that the artist painted some of these portraits while he was an inmate in the Massachusetts State Prison in Charlestown, possibly serving time for counterfeiting.



W. L. Bresse (active c. 1860)

Locomotive Briar Cliff

Probably Pennsylvania

c. 1860

Oil on canvas

24 1/8 x 35 3/4"

Philadelphia Museum of Art

Gift of Frank and Alice Osborn, 1966

Ex coll. Yasuo Kuniyoshi

Yasuo Kuniyoshi lent this painting, as well as a woodcarving of a cow, to the 1924 exhibition *Early American Art* at the Whitney Studio Club. The painting then passed to fellow Ogunquit, Maine, artists Frank C. Osborn and his wife, Alice Newton, who gave it to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. W. L. Bresse's great attention to the *Briar Cliff's* mechanical details suggests that he may have worked from a technical print. He faithfully depicted the colorful paint schemes and decorative elements that were typical of early American locomotives.

This painting belongs to a little-known folk art genre consisting of nineteenth-century paintings of steam locomotives, which have been collected mostly by railroad buffs. These "portraits" depict the locomotive facing right in profile against a minimal background. The *Briar Cliff* is a 4-4-0 type of steam locomotive, which has four small wheels in the front and four large ones behind. This design originated with the Philadelphia, Germantown, and Norristown Railroad in 1836 and was commonly known as the "American" type because it was the most widely used locomotive in the United States during the early days of railroads.

Section V: CHARLES SHEELER



Charles Sheeler (1883–1965)

Interior

South Salem, New York

1926

Oil and fabricated chalk on linen

33 1/8 x 22 1/8"

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Gift of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, 31.344

Digital Image © Whitney Museum, N.Y.

At the beginning of his career, Charles Sheeler supported himself as a commercial photographer and often used photographs as models for his paintings. He recorded his rented cottage in South Salem, New York, in numerous photographs and in his *American Interiors* series of paintings (1926–1934), which are among the earliest depictions of American folk objects in a contemporary domestic setting. The poet William Carlos Williams described Sheeler's South Salem cottage as "a charming stucco studio, where the antiques of Pennsylvania Dutch and Shakers . . . mingle in agreeing medley with modernist furniture."

Interior is the first in the series and, with its visible brushstrokes, is more painterly than Sheeler's later precisionist canvases. The view of the living room, seen from a disquieting elevation, shows an antique table and pitcher, a trestle table with a pewter charger, a woven coverlet on a low-post bed, two rag rugs, and a rug hooked in the Log Cabin pattern—a series of geometric shapes neatly arranged at right angles to one another. Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney bought this painting in 1932 for her new museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, directed by Sheeler's longtime friend Juliana Force.



Charles Sheeler (1883–1965)

American Interior

Ridgefield, Connecticut

1934

Oil on canvas

32 1/2 x 30"

Yale University Art Gallery

Gift of Mrs. Paul Moore, 1947.424

This is the last and most masterful of Charles Sheeler's *American Interiors* series, rendered in the artist's signature precisionist style. Sheeler painted it from a photograph made in 1929, before he moved from the South Salem, New York, cottage and after his wife, Katharine, had died. Some critics have interpreted *American Interior* as a mourning picture that memorializes the happy life the Sheelers had shared in that home.

The painting portrays the antique chair, tables, and rugs that furnished the Sheelers' living room, compressed and flattened on the picture plane with dramatic cropping and a dizzying sight line. The small Shaker table in the foreground of *American Interior* and the rush-bottomed ladderback chair in the painting are on view in this exhibition. The chair is actually English, although its simple lines may have caused Sheeler to believe it, too, was made by the Shakers.



Artist unidentified

Table

Probably Hancock Shaker Community, Massachusetts

1810–1850

Poplar, cherry, and pine

27 1/4 x 25 x 19"

Hancock Shaker Village, Massachusetts, 1965.244.1

Ex coll. Charles Sheeler

Artist unidentified

Ladderback Side Chair

England, probably Lancashire

1790–1850

Elm

39 1/4 x 19 x 15 1/2"

Collection of Ann and Andrew Dintenfass

Ex coll. Charles Sheeler

Section VI: Isabel Carleton Wilde



Artist unidentified

Worth Family Mourning Picture

New England

c. 1815

Watercolor and ink on paper in original bronze-powder stenciled frame

15 x 17 1/4 x 1"

Private collection

Ex coll. Isabel Carleton Wilde, Edith Halpert

Photo by Steve Tague, courtesy David A. Schorsch—Eileen M. Smiles American Antiques

An unidentified artist depicted nine members of the Worth family mourning the deaths of four other members. The tomb is inscribed with a sympathetic message that contains a felicitous play on the word *worth*: “There is rest in HEAVEN sacred to the Memory of Departed Worth.” Four initialed coffins adorn the tomb, as well. The dealer Edith Halpert bought this picture from Isabel Carleton Wilde, probably in the 1930s, and kept it in her personal collection. Halpert speculated that the diminutive house on the left was perhaps the Worth homestead and that the fish weathervane atop the church may have represented a Massachusetts codfish.

Mourning pictures were made using a variety of materials. Watercolors were painted on paper, silk, and ivory, and needlework might be sewn with silk, cotton, or wool thread on a linen or silk ground. According to needlework expert Betty Ring, “although some mourning pieces were worked immediately following a death, the majority appear to have been made as a record and a decoration, rather than an expression of current grief, and they were the result of fashion rather than melancholy.”



Mrs. Thomas Cushing (active 1822)

Table of Fruit

United States

1822

Watercolor on velvet

9 3/4 x 13 3/16"

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Gift of Maxim Karolik for the M. and M. Karolik Collection of American watercolors and drawings, 1800–1875, 57.230

Ex coll. Isabel Carleton Wilde

Isabel Carleton Wilde was lured into the field of American folk art by a stenciled picture, or theorem painting, that she saw in the window of a shop as she passed by on her way home from class studying Asian art. Thinking it was Asian, Wilde went inside to inquire about the piece. To her surprise it was American and, according to an interviewer, Wilde’s “career was decided. The variety of these subjects and the skill of drawing and coloring awoke in her a comprehension of the craftsmanship which so many of our ancestors had at their disposal.”

Two labels on the back of this piece affirm that it was “Painted and presented to Andrew Cushing by his Aunt Thomas Cushing, 1822.” Many theorems were produced by girls enrolled at female academies, whose instructors provided stencils of fruit, flowers, leaves, and birds from which students could choose to create their own compositions on canvas, silk, velvet, or occasionally on paper. Velvet was used frequently enough that many early collectors of theorems simply called them “velvets,” as Wilde did. The area of “velvets” was, in fact, where Wilde felt she had made a significant impact on contemporary collectors.



Attributed to The Beardsley Limner (possibly Sarah Bushnell Perkins, 1771–1831)

Oliver Wight and Mrs. Oliver Wight (Harmony Child)

Probably Massachusetts

1786–1793

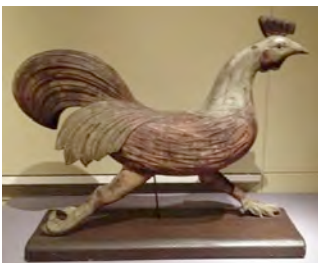
Oil on canvas

31 1/4 x 25 1/2" each

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1957.100.9, 10

Ex coll. Isabel Carleton Wilde

Departing from her usual routine of pursuing theorems and watercolors, Isabel Carlton Wilde purchased a pair of oil portraits that are part of an exciting folk art mystery. In 1957 Nina Fletcher Little, the premier scholar-collector of New England folk art, attributed these portraits of Oliver and Harmony Child Wight to an artist she called the Beardsley Limner, named after the subject of a stylistically related painting. Others made parallel discoveries that expanded knowledge of this artist, and in 1984 folk art scholars Colleen Heslip and Helen Kellogg announced that they believed the Beardsley Limner was Sarah Perkins of Plainfield, Connecticut. If they are proven right, the Beardsley Limner, whose work is considered an important contribution to eighteenth-century American painting, was not only a woman, but a very young woman who had begun to paint as a teenager at a time when few females worked on this scale or in this medium.



Edmund Brown (1870–1939)

Carousel Roosters

St. Johnsbury, Vermont

c. 1900

Paint on wood

40 x 48 x 14 1/2" each

Private collection

Ex coll. Isabel Carleton Wilde

Edmund Brown was born in French Canada and, as a young man, went to St. Johnsbury, Vermont, where he worked primarily as a cabinetmaker. Brown installed this pair of energetic roosters on a portable merry-go-round he built and took to county fairs. Brown's roosters were retired when large mechanical carousels, populated with realistic horses and other animals, were introduced.

Brown's *Roosters* achieved greater fame than was possible as mere carousel mounts when one of the pair was selected for inclusion in the Index of American Design and rendered by Index artist Howard Weld.



Artist unidentified

Locomotive Weathervane

Possibly Rhode Island

1850–1875

Zinc, brass, iron, and paint

22 x 44 x 3"

Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vermont

Purchased from Edith Halpert, The Downtown Gallery, New York, 1950, 27.FW-34

Ex coll. Isabel Carleton Wilde

Photo by Ken Burris

This locomotive, dramatically spouting lightning from its chimney, is but one of many weathervanes collected by Isabel Carleton Wilde, who responded enthusiastically to their bold, dynamic forms. Of her weathervanes, Wilde said, "My interest is aesthetic and historical and I think of the old vanes as a high order of art. They are part of our contribution to the artistic development of a people. Our ancestors had to . . . fight revolutions and [it is] wonderful that they had any energy left to put into art." Although several of the Ogunquit artists would probably have disputed her claim, she believed that she had introduced the artistic appreciation of weathervanes to the American public. This example passed from Wilde to dealer Edith Halpert to collector Electra Havemeyer Webb, founder of Vermont's Shelburne Museum. It originally sat atop a railroad station in Providence, Rhode Island. The dazzling lightning-flash superstructure is probably a later addition.

Section VII: HOLGER CAHILL



John Haley Bellamy (1836–1914)

Eagle with Flag

Maine

1890

Paint on carved wood

8 x 27 x 4"

Newark Museum

Bequest of Dorothy Canning Miller Cahill, 2004.24.3

Ex coll. Holger Cahill

[no photo credit]

John Haley Bellamy was born in Kittery Point, Maine, and as a young man trained with the noted Boston carver Laban Beecher. Bellamy maintained a workshop near the Portsmouth Navy Yard in New Hampshire, and another across the Piscataqua River in Kittery, Maine. His iconic carved eagles have been prized by generations of folk art collectors and are widely copied. According to his business card, Bellamy was also a “figure and ornamental carver [with] Particular attention paid to house, ship, furniture, sign and frame carving and garden figures.”

Holger Cahill found this Bellamy eagle in 1938 in a Boston shop owned by Fred Finnerty. It remained in Cahill’s personal collection and, after his death in 1960, passed to his wife, Dorothy Miller. She in turn left it to the Newark Museum, where she and Cahill had worked in the 1920s.



Artist unidentified

Moses in the Bull Rushes

Probably Connecticut

c. 1810

Watercolor and graphite on paper with original eglomisé mat in gilded frame

17 1/2 x 23" (oval); 24 1/2 x 29 3/4" (framed)

Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts
Bequest of Dorothy C. Miller (Mrs. Holger Cahill), class of 1925
Ex coll. Holger Cahill

This scene is based on the story of the baby Moses as told in the book of Exodus. The story begins in ancient Egypt when a new pharaoh perceived the Israelites, who had long lived peacefully among the Egyptians, as a threat and feared they would revolt. He decreed that all male Israelite babies be killed. To prevent his death, Moses's mother hid him in a basket she floated among the reeds, or bulrushes, in the Nile River. Pharaoh's daughter discovered the baby while bathing, rescued him, and raised him as a member of the Egyptian royal family.

Moses grew up to become one of the most important prophets in Judaism and also a significant figure in Christianity and Islam. In 1776, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin proposed that the first United States seal depict Moses leading the Israelites to freedom. At George Washington's funeral in 1799, two-thirds of the eulogies referred to him as "America's Moses." The watercolor is framed with a *verre églomisé* mat, a technique of applying gold leaf and paint to the reverse side of the glass.



Artist unidentified

Leaping Stag Weathervane

United States

1800–1849

Copper

15 x 19 1/2 x 4 5/8"

Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts

Bequest of Dorothy C. Miller (Mrs. Holger Cahill), class of 1925

Ex coll. Holger Cahill

Weathervanes have been used as decorative aids to weather forecasting since at least the first century BCE. In medieval times, they occurred most often in two forms: a banner and a cock, or rooster. The latter referenced Christ's prophecy to his disciple Peter, "Before the cock crows twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." Pope Nicholas I (c. 800–867) is said to have ordered all churches to place a cock atop their domes or steeples as a reminder of Peter's betrayal.

As time passed, weathervanes were made in a wider variety of forms, their very diversity sometimes reflecting larger changes in the age itself. Farm animals of all sorts and especially horses, birds, and fish became common; locomotives and fire engines were representative of the mechanical era. Holger Cahill and his wife, Dorothy Miller, displayed the *Leaping Stag Weathervane* in their apartment as part of a small and select collection of weathervanes that also contained a cock, a horse, and patriotic figures of Liberty and Columbia.

Section VIII: EDITH GREGOR HALPERT



Artist unidentified

Horse Toy

Probably Cumberland County, Pennsylvania

c. 1860–1890

Paint on poplar

11 3/4 x 12 3/8 x 3 1/2"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

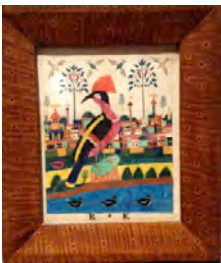
Gift of Ralph Esmerian, 2013.1.29

Ex coll. Edith Halpert

Photo © 2000 John Bigelow Taylor

This polka-dot horse toy was found in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1932, probably by Holger Cahill for the American Folk Art Gallery, his joint venture with Edith Halpert. It appeared in many early folk art exhibitions and publications and was retained by Edith Halpert for her personal collection.

Similar horse toys by this unidentified carver have been found around Carlisle, in the Cumberland County area. Imported toys from Bavaria and the Tyrol were popular among the Germanic peoples of Pennsylvania, and one such toy with similar construction may have served as the model for this one. The horse is made of three carved elements—head, body, and tail—that were joined, glued in place, and then meticulously finished to receive lively freehand decoration painted on bare, unprimed wood. In the late 1930s this horse toy was the subject of three different watercolor renderings made for the Index of American Design. The most accomplished, on view, is by Mina Lowry, a professional portrait painter who made some two hundred lifelike renderings while employed by the New York City project of the Index.



Attributed to Abraham Heebner (1802–1877)

Exotic Bird and Townscape

Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

c. 1830–1835

Watercolor and ink on paper

8 3/4 x 6"

Collection of Jane and Gerald Katcher

Ex coll. Edith Halpert

Hundreds of folk art paintings and sculptures passed through Edith Halpert's gallery during her long career as an art dealer. She kept a select number for herself, three of which are included in this exhibition. After Halpert's death in 1970, her personal collection passed to her heirs, who sold thirty paintings and carvings in 1994.

This fraktur is one in a related group attributed to Abraham W. Heebner, a Pennsylvania farmer who belonged to a family of prolific fraktur artists that included his father, Abraham Heebner, his aunt Susanna, and his sister Maria. The Heebners were Schwenkfelders, a persecuted Protestant sect from Europe who settled in southeastern Pennsylvania beginning in the early eighteenth century. Schwenkfelder artists employed a palette of brilliant yellow, red, green, and blue to create an exuberant style of fraktur. *Exotic Bird and Townscape* is a purely secular work, unlike earlier examples of this traditional Germanic art that usually included hand-calligraphed lettering in forms such as birth and baptismal records, house blessings, and rewards of merit.

Section IX: ABBY ALDRICH ROCKEFELLER



Artist unidentified

Girl Seated on Bench

Probably New England

c. 1845

Oil on canvas

26 x 22"

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1931.100.6

Ex coll. Robert Laurent, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

This charming portrait of a young girl had great appeal to both Robert Laurent and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. Sometime during the mid-1920s, Laurent and fellow artist Stefan Hirsch went from Ogunquit, Maine, to nearby Wells to preview an auction. When Laurent saw *Girl Seated on Bench*, he fell in love with it and implored the auctioneer to sell it to him before the sale began. After much pleading, he was finally allowed to buy it. Mrs. Rockefeller later saw the painting in the Laurents' Brooklyn Heights home and tried, without success, to buy it. She then asked the dealer Edith Halpert to buy it for her, and after many attempts, Halpert triumphed. Mrs. Rockefeller added it to her collection in the early 1930s.

This painting was exhibited in *American Primitives* (1930–1931) at the Newark Museum, the first large museum show of what was then called “primitive painting.” The artist who painted this little girl remains unidentified, although scholars have pointed out that the portrait is in some ways similar to those created by William Matthew Prior and the artists associated with his style.



Matilda A. Haviland (1817–1853)

The Tilted Bowl

Probably Dutchess County, New York
c. 1840

Paint on cotton velvet
14 1/2 x 17 1/2"

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
Gift of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1932.403.1

Ex coll. Viola and Elie Nadelman, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

Theorem painting was something of a fad in mid-nineteenth-century America. The technique was practiced primarily by schoolgirls, genteel ladies, and other amateur artists who made still-life arrangements using theorems, or hollow stencils, cut of stiff paper or purchased readymade. A number of theorem paintings using stencils identical to those in this example have been made, but Matilda Haviland has arranged them to create an imaginative, gravity-defying composition, finished off with the addition of a sprightly butterfly, painted freehand. Matilda was the wife of Hiram Haviland, a farmer and carpenter in the Quaker Hill district of Pawling, New York.

Abby Aldrich Rockefeller was particularly fond of theorem paintings on velvet and displayed them in the bedrooms of Bassett Hall, her Williamsburg home. Folk art collectors Viola and Elie Nadelman owned the Haviland theorem when it was exhibited in *American Primitives* at the Newark Museum in 1930–1931; the following year they sold it to Mrs. Rockefeller, who lent it anonymously, along with some 175 items from her collection, to *American Folk Art: The Art of the Common Man in America* (1932–1933) at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Joseph H. Davis (1811–1865)

The York Family at Home

Probably Lee, New Hampshire
1837
Watercolor, pencil, and ink on wove paper
11 1/16 x 14 7/8"
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
Gift of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1931.300.13
Ex coll. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

For decades, researchers tried to determine which of the J. H. Davises in New England was the itinerant portraitist who sometimes signed himself “Left-Hand Painter.” In 1989 the collectors and researchers Arthur and Sybil Kern established that this artist was the Joseph H. Davis who was born on August 10, 1811, in Limington, Maine. During his painting career, Davis traveled through towns on the border of Maine and New Hampshire, producing some 160 watercolor portraits. He eventually became a land trader and inventor, and in 1854 he received a patent for a paint manufacturing process, no doubt drawing on his firsthand knowledge of art materials.

Davis’s standard format for family groups is seen in this portrait of Thomas York, his third wife, Harriet, and their infant daughter, Julia Ann. Each is depicted in profile, wearing their best clothes, and surrounded by emblems of middle-class prosperity. Davis personalized the portrait by adding a painting of a house with four chimneys—probably the York family home. Thomas holds *The Morning Star*, published by the Free Will Baptists, a denomination to which both the Yorks and the artist belonged. The decorative carpet and the flourished calligraphy with information on the subjects are signature elements of Davis’s paintings.



Attributed to Rochester Iron Works
Horse Weathervane
Possibly Rochester, New Hampshire
1875–1900
Cast iron
20 1/8 x 17 7/8 x 12"
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
Gift of David Rockefeller, 1931.800.9
Ex coll. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

Abby Aldrich Rockefeller lent this weathervane to the Newark Museum for the 1931–1932 exhibition *American Folk Sculpture: The Work of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Craftsmen*. Organized by Holger Cahill, it was the first museum exhibition devoted exclusively to folk sculpture. The accompanying catalog stated: “Unlike many modern stylized animals with strained tightness in their affected poses, this gains rather than loses in dignity by the formality of his pose.” Ever since, such horse weathervanes have often been referred to as “formal horses.”

This weathervane was found in Boston and was probably made by the Rochester (New Hampshire) Iron Works, which produced this form in several sizes; this is the smallest. The horse is missing its tail, which would have been riveted in place between the cast-iron halves of the body. The arched neck, tucked head, and stately controlled gait give the impression of a parade horse, while the elevated tail, dished face, and small pricked ears enhance the silhouette.



Artists unidentified

Group of Six Toy Animals

Pennsylvania

c. 1850

Paint on carved wood; string, rope and chain

Snake: 1 3/8 x 1 1/4 x 28 long"

Elephant: 6 15/16 x 8 1/8 x 1 7/8"

Cow: 5 5/8 x 8 1/2 x 2 1/4

Bull: 6 3/4 x 10 3/16 x 2 13/16"

Bison: 7 x 10 1/2 x 2 1/2"

Giraffe: 16 1/4 x 7 11/16 x 2 13/16"

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1979.1200.3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Ex coll. Juliana Force, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

In form, painted surface, and condition, these are among the best surviving folk toys with Pennsylvania origins. They may be an assembled group: the elephant and giraffe are similar in design and construction, while the other animals appear to have been carved by a different hand. Like a number of other folk art examples once owned by Juliana Force, this carved menagerie became part of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller's large collection.



Joseph Pickett (1848–1918)

Manchester Valley

New Hope, Pennsylvania

1914–1918

Oil with sand on canvas

45 1/2 x 60 5/8"

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1939, 541.1939

Ex coll. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

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Around 1930, after he discovered two paintings by Joseph Pickett, Holger Cahill learned of a third example that had hung for many years in the high school in New Hope, Pennsylvania. The same school, in an area known locally as Manchester Valley, is the centerpiece of this painting and looms over the surrounding structures and the toy-like steam train.

Pickett operated shooting galleries at carnivals and local fairs before marrying and opening a general store in New Hope. He began painting around the age of fifty and was entirely self-taught; he invented his own techniques, like mixing sand and shells into pigments to simulate the textures of bark, cement, or brick. Sometimes he spent years on a single canvas, building up layers of paint into a distinctive high relief.

Abby Aldrich Rockefeller acquired *Manchester Valley* and in 1939 gave it, along with other folk art, to the Museum of Modern Art. At the time, Holger Cahill wrote "I am glad that these works have been given to a museum where they will be shown not as 'quaint antiques' but as part of that living past of American art which has definite and clear relation to contemporary American creative expression."

Section X: INDEX OF AMERICAN DESIGN



Mina Lowry (1894–1942)

Whirligig

c. 1941

Watercolor, graphite, and pen and ink on paperboard

28 5/16 x 14"

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Index of American Design, 1943, 1943.8.7766

New York City project

This rendering was painted by Mina Lowry, who was a successful portrait painter with a studio on West 57th Street in Manhattan. Her subjects included socially prominent women like Wanda Toscanini, daughter of the conductor Arturo Toscanini, but commissions dried up during the Depression and Lowry found steady employment with the New York City project of the Index of American Design. It is one of 204 renderings she executed in the trompe l'oeil style mastered by the best of the Index artists.



Artist unidentified

Quaker Whirligig

Quakertown, Pennsylvania

c. 1890

Paint on wood with metal

44 1/4 x 10 x 13" (arms up); 30 3/4" high (arms down)

Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York

Gift of Stephen C. Clark, N0172.1961

Ex.coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Found in Quakertown, Pennsylvania, this whirligig represents a figure dressed in early Quaker attire: a long, dark coat and wide-brimmed hat. It was carved in two halves and joined lengthwise with dowels and glue; the long and flat paddle arms appear to be made from pine shingles. Holes on the coat indicate that large nail heads once served as buttons. Jean and Howard Lipman acquired this whirligig in the late 1940s. Jean was familiar with it from a rendering in the Index of American Design and included it in her 1948 book *American Folk Art in Wood, Metal, and Stone*.



Howard Weld (active c. 1935)

Rooster

c. 1938

Watercolor and graphite on paper

23 15/16 x 19 3/4"

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Index of American Design, 1943, 1943.8.16484

Connecticut project



Mina Lowry (1894–1942)

Toy Horse

c. 1937

Watercolor, gouache, and graphite on paperboard
8 7/16 x 11"

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Index of American Design, 1943, 1943.8.13992

New York City project

[no photo credit]



Lucille Chabot (1908–2005)

Gabriel Weather Vane

c. 1939

Watercolor on paper

14 1/4 x 20 5/8"

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Index of American Design, 1943, 1943.8.9505

Massachusetts project

Although little is known about the approximately one thousand artists who worked for the Index of American Design, Lucille Chabot is an exception. Chabot trained at the Worcester Art Museum School in Massachusetts and worked as a freelance illustrator and writer in New York City and Boston before participating in several WPA art projects. In 1937, Chabot joined the Index's Massachusetts project, earning \$36 a week. She painted twenty-seven watercolors as well as a demonstration drawing of the *Archangel Gabriel Weathervane*, also on view, to instruct fellow artists in the meticulous techniques required by the Index. Beginning with a carefully drawn pencil outline, Chabot applied thin washes of colors in multiple layers to "get the thing to glow."

Chabot went on to a successful career at Raytheon, where she established the company's technical publications department. In 1965 the United States Postal Service selected her rendering *Gabriel Weather Vane* for its Christmas stamp. Remembering her work for the Index, Chabot told

an interviewer in 1986, “I think it deepened our appreciation for this country. It also gave us an insight on how the early settlers, under great difficulty, produced some beautiful work.”



Gould and Hazlett

Archangel Gabriel Weathervane

Charlestown, Boston

1840

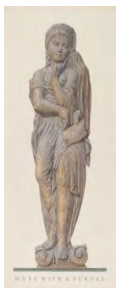
Gold leaf on iron and copper

28 1/2 x 71 1/2 x 6"

Kendra and Allan Daniel Collection

Photo by George Kamper, www.gkamper.com

A slip of paper discovered in the trumpet of this unusually graceful *Archangel Gabriel Weathervane* indicated that it was crafted in 1840 in the shop of Joseph P. Gould and William Hazlett in Charlestown, Boston’s oldest neighborhood. Unlike late nineteenth-century weathervanes, which were manufactured in large quantities, this appears to be a one-of-a-kind example. It originally adorned the Universalist Church in Newburyport, Massachusetts. When that church was abandoned, the weathervane was removed and stored in a barn for many years until it was placed on the steeple of the People’s United Methodist Church in Newburyport in 1897. After an important weathervane in a neighboring town was stolen in the 1970s, the *Archangel Gabriel Weathervane* was replaced by a replica and the original was sent to a local bank for safekeeping. Eventually, it was acquired by the present owners.



John Matulis (1910–2000)

Muse with a Scroll

c. 1938

Watercolor, graphite, colored pencil, and gouache on paper

21 15/16 x 10 3/16"

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Index of American Design, 1943,1943.8.8029
Connecticut project

John Matulis graduated from the Hartford Art School in the midst of the Depression and found employment with the Connecticut project of the Index of American Design, for which he made forty-three renderings. During World War II, Matulis served in the U.S. Army as a topographical artist, drawing maps from aerial photographs. After he was discharged, he became a technical illustrator at the Pratt & Whitney aircraft corporation, and in retirement he enjoyed a second career as an artist and art instructor for senior citizens.

William Lamson Warren, an exceptionally energetic and knowledgeable recent graduate of Yale's new American decorative arts program, was director of the Index's Connecticut project. He dispatched some twenty-six artists and four photographers to numerous museums, historical societies, and private collections to record Connecticut's rich visual history. Through an advertisement for circus figures in Bridgeport, Connecticut, he found twenty-four carved muses, exposed to the elements in an open field, and purchased all of them. Matulis captured the cracked and weathered surface of one of the muses in this rendering and, in an unusual addition to an Index rendering, titled it with elegant lettering.



Attributed to Samuel Anderson Robb (1851–1928), for Sebastian Wagon Company

Three Muses from Barnum & Bailey Circus Wagon

New York City

c. 1882–1903

Carved wood

Approx. 50 x 13 x 3" each

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Altria Group, Inc., 2008.9.5–7

Photo by Gavin Ashworth

These flat-backed carvings depict three muses—in Greek mythology, goddesses of inspiration in the arts and sciences—and were made as exterior decorations for a circus wagon that the Sebastian Wagon Company of New York City supplied to the Barnum & Bailey Circus. Brightly painted and gilded wagons with extravagant decorations, sometimes carrying splendidly dressed musicians, were exciting features of the traditional parade that preceded the opening day of the circus in each town of its annual circuit.

These figures are attributed to Samuel Robb, who began to accept commissions for carousel figures and circus wagons when the demand for traditional “wooden Indians” and other advertising figures declined. In 1903 Robb closed his workshop at 114 Centre Street in Manhattan. For the next few years he kept small shops in various locations in Manhattan and

continued carving until a few years before his death in 1928. The *Three Muses* were left behind in Bridgeport, Connecticut, when Barnum & Bailey Circus relocated its headquarters to Sarasota, Florida, in 1927.



Elizabeth Moutal (active c. 1935)

Seated Figure: "Liberty"

c. 1938

Watercolor, gouache, and colored pencil over graphite on paperboard

20 1/2 x 13 9/16"

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Index of American Design, 1943, 1943.8.10148

Massachusetts project

Section XI: JEAN AND HOWARD LIPMAN

Notebook owned by Jean Lipman

1938–1950

Ruled paper in embossed ring binder

7 x 4 1/4 x 3/8" (closed)

American Folk Art Museum Archives, New York

Gift of Jean Lipman

Jean Lipman recorded the purchases of folk art (including these miniatures, noted on the open page, and other works on view in this exhibition) that she and her husband, Howard, made during the years 1938–1950 in the pages of what has come to be called "Jean Lipman's little black book." For each artwork she noted the artist's name (if known), the date, where it was found, the name of the dealer, the price paid, and its size, medium, and condition, as well as ideas for future articles, books, and exhibitions. In the fall of 1990 Lipman published an article in the American Folk Art Museum's magazine, *The Clarion*, and recalled the unimaginably low prices she had paid for folk art during those years.



James Sanford Ellsworth (1803–1874)

Unidentified Gentleman and His Wife

New England

1852

Watercolor on wove paper

4 1/4 x 6 1/2" (framed)

Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York

Gift of Stephen C. Clark, N0068.1961 a, b

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

James Sanford Ellsworth led a long career as an itinerant painter, creating some 275 miniature portraits in watercolor and several full-size oil portraits. By his own account, he traveled through Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York, “to the edge of Ohio.” A contemporary described Ellsworth as something of an eccentric who, after traveling in the West, reappeared in his native Connecticut as “a weather-beaten wanderer, followed by an old dog, which he said was his only friend on earth.”

Ellsworth developed a stock formula for miniature portraits wherein highly individualized and meticulously drawn subjects, depicted from the waist up and in profile, seem to float on stylized clouds with additional clouds behind their heads. Portraits of a husband and wife were usually displayed facing each other in a single frame, as seen in this example.

Jean Lipman’s mentor, Frederic Fairchild Sherman, was the first to publish Ellsworth’s miniatures, in 1923. Lipman, whose master’s thesis was titled “The Florentine Profile Portrait in the Quattrocento,” was struck by the similarities between the Italian primitives she had studied in graduate school and American “primitives” like Ellsworth. After Sherman died, she acquired a number of his Ellsworth miniatures, including this pair.



Artist unidentified

Colonel Sellers Trade Figure

Sellersville, Pennsylvania

c. 1875

Paint on wood
58 1/2 x 21 x 14 1/2"
Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York
Gift of Stephen C. Clark, N0224.1961
Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman
Photo by Richard Walker

Life-size shop figures were once familiar sights on American city sidewalks. Carved, painted in bright colors, and mounted on wheels, they were rolled out in the morning and rolled in at night for safekeeping. "Wooden Indians" that stood before tobacconist shops were the most common, but a variety of figures was used by other tradesmen to advertise their wares. This figure depicts a character named Colonel Sellers and was made, appropriately, for a Sellersville, Pennsylvania, apothecary shop. One wonders, however, if the Colonel, a fast-talking huckster from Mark Twain's *The Gilded Age* (1873), was an effective advertisement for a legitimate business. In Twain's popular novel, Colonel Beriah Sellers extols the virtue of his "infallible Oriental Optic Liniment and Salvation for Sore Eyes—the Medical Wonder of the Age," a concoction that, according to the lettering on the base of the Colonel Sellers figure, brought "oceans of money" to anyone promoting it.



Edward Hicks (1780–1849)
Peaceable Kingdom
Bucks County, Pennsylvania
c. 1830
Oil on canvas
30 1/8 x 34 1/2"
Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York
Gift of Stephen C. Clark, N0038.1961
Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

When French modernist Fernand Léger visited New York City in 1931, he saw a *Peaceable Kingdom* by Edward Hicks at Edith Halpert's Downtown Gallery and declared that it was the greatest painting he had seen in America. Hicks's kingdom paintings, of which more than sixty-two are known, have become American art icons, and owning one has been an ambition of serious collectors, including Jean and Howard Lipman.

Hicks, a sign and carriage painter by profession, was a devout Quaker lay preacher whose *Peaceable Kingdom* scenes have been called "sermons in paint" based on Isaiah's prophecy: "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" (Isaiah 11:6).

In this version, the animals, which stare at the viewer with expressive eyes, are massed in the foreground, surmounted by young children. The scene in the distance is based on a print by

Benjamin West and depicts William Penn purchasing land from the Lenape Indians. For Hicks, this Quaker leader's fair dealings with the Indians represented a fulfillment of Isaiah's vision of a peaceful world.



Robert Fibich (1820–1878)

Scene at Odd Fellows Cemetery

Tamaqua, Pennsylvania

c. 1875

Oil on canvas

18 1/8 x 24 1/8"

Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York

Gift of Stephen C. Clark, N0035.1961

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by Richard Walker

Jean Lipman recalled the “extravagant price” that she and her husband, Howard, paid for this painting to an antiques shop in York, Pennsylvania, in 1939:

We had decided we badly needed a genre scene with people in it. . . . The graveyard picture . . . was just what we had in mind, but it was fifty dollars. My husband said, “We’re really sorry,” and I said, “Let’s just walk around the block and think about it,” which as we walked, I altered to, “We’ve really got to do it.” We did, but ended our vacation right there and drove home.

Jean originally titled the painting *York Springs Graveyard* because of a notation on the frame: “Found in York Springs, Pennsylvania.” Judith Pyle, a local researcher, recently shed new light on R. Fibich, who signed this canvas. He was Robert Fibich, born in Prussia in 1820, who by 1854 was living in Reading, Pennsylvania. In 1865 he moved to nearby Tamaqua and lived there until his death in 1878. Pyle believes that the graveyard is the Odd Fellows Cemetery in Tamaqua, which has similar topography and a large white monument like the one barely showing at the far left of this painting. The painting has since been re-titled as it now appears.



Artist unidentified

Winter Sunday in Norway, Maine

Probably Maine

c. 1860

Oil on canvas

21 x 27 1/2"

Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York

Gift of Stephen C. Clark, N0231.1961

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by Richard Walker

When Jean and Howard Lipman began collecting in the late 1930s, they were on a tight budget and always on the lookout for a bargain. Jean recalled the purchase of a canvas they titled *Winter Sunday in Norway, Maine* with special relish:

It hung, in 1941, in a barn antiques shop in Norway, had a small tear, but looked wonderful. We cannily asked the price of several things we *weren't* interested in, then the winter scene—of people coming to church on foot and in a sleigh. The shop owner said, “Well, I figured I’d better get fifty cents for that frame so if you want the picture you can have it for that.” We had the painting cleaned and relined, an unusual extravagance.

When the Lipmans sold their collection to Stephen Clark in 1950, they arrived at a price by doubling what they had paid for each piece—thus their price for this painting was one dollar. Jean included it in many of her books and in her landmark 1974 exhibition *The Flowering of American Folk Art*. She was particularly delighted when the United States Postal service selected it for the 1969 Christmas stamp.



Attributed to Job (active c. 1825–1850)

Female African American Cigar Store Figure

Freehold, New Jersey

c. 1850

Paint on wood

46 1/2 x 16 1/2 x 12 1/4"

Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York

Gift of Stephen C. Clark, N0145.1961

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by Richard Walker

Jean Lipman had planned to restrict the folk art collection she formed with her husband, Howard, to paintings, particularly watercolors, but he persuaded her that they could not pass up exciting woodcarvings such as this trade figure, which they bought from Fred Johnston, an antiques dealer

in Kingston, New York. Its function as a tobacco figure is evidenced by the cigars in her right hand and by the Native American tunic and deerskin boots.

It is not difficult to see why such a figure would appeal to collectors with modernist sensibilities. The enthusiasm of Picasso and his fellow artists for African figures and masks was well known, and American interest in African tribal art coincided with the rediscovery of American folk art. The mask-like face may give credence to the tradition that it was carved by an African American slave named Job for a tobacconist in Freehold, New Jersey. Slavery was not abolished in New Jersey until 1846, and loopholes in the law permitted slaveholding until the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment after the Civil War.



Eunice Griswold Pinney (1770–1849)

Two Women

c. 1815

Windsor or Simsbury, Connecticut

Watercolor on paper

9 1/2 x 11 3/4"

Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York

Gift of Stephen C. Clark, N0077.1961

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by Richard Walker

Jean Lipman was intrigued to discover that many folk artists were women at a time when painting was a male-dominated profession. In 1943 she published an article in the *Art Quarterly* about one such woman, Eunice Griswold Pinney. Wellborn, well educated, and capable, this Connecticut watercolorist was twice married and the mother of five children. Recent research has uncovered evidence that Pinney's first marriage was abusive and ended in divorce. By the time she began painting around the age of thirty-nine, Pinney was a mature woman with an uncommon variety of life experiences.

Around fifty of Pinney's watercolors survive. Some were derived from popular English prints but were executed in the artist's distinctive style, which, according to Lipman, was characterized by "her versatile, dramatic, and infallibly sound sense of design." *Two Women* epitomizes Pinney's style. An older woman, seated stiffly in a ladderback chair in a New England parlor, holds a small child and stares across a candlelit table at a dejected younger woman. The drama of the scene is heightened by draperies that frame the figures, like curtains on a stage. Something momentous is about to happen; what that might be is left to the viewer's imagination.



Mary Ann Willson (active 1815–1825)

Maremaid

Greene County, New York

c. 1815

12 3/4 x 15 1/2"

Watercolor on paper

Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, New York

Gift of Stephen C. Clark, N0085.1961

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by Richard Walker

The Harry Stone Gallery in New York City was one of the Lipmans' favorite sources for folk art. In 1943 the gallery offered a portfolio of twenty watercolors by Mary Ann Willson for sale. Jean later regretted that they bought only one, this fanciful mermaid. The following year she published an article about Willson in *American Collector*, observing that "the recent popularity of American primitive painting . . . is largely due to the fact that the primitive painters unconsciously achieved a non-realistic style which is very close to the deliberately abstract style of modern art." At the time she stated that "the primitive artist's inability to paint realistically made way for a compensating *interest in* and *emphasis on* abstract design."

A letter written around 1850 by "An Admirer of Art" accompanied the portfolio of watercolors. It described "Miss Willson and her friend, Miss Brundage . . . who left their home in the East with a romantic attachment for each other" and settled in Greene County, New York, where "one was the farmer . . . and the other made pictures which she sold to the farmers and others as rare and unique 'works of art.'"



Paul A. Seifert (1840–1921)

Residence of Lemuel Cooper

Plain, Wisconsin

1879

Watercolor, oil, tempera, ink, and pencil on paper

21 7/8 x 28"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Museum purchase, 1981.12.26

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by John Parnell

When Jean Lipman discovered a watercolor of a late nineteenth-century farmscape by Paul A. Seifert, she embarked on “a fascinating art treasure hunt . . . the treasure being the reconstruction of the painter’s life . . . and the acquisition of a group of his paintings.”

Lipman’s correspondence with the artist’s granddaughters yielded much information: Seifert was born in Dresden, Germany, and settled in southwest Wisconsin shortly after the Civil War. There he raised vegetables and planted fruit and shade trees for local farmers, often painting “portraits” of their farms, which he sold to them for as little as \$2.50. He summed up his art activities succinctly: “People like my work, and I like to paint for them.”

Lipman admired “the clarity and originality of Seifert’s designs, the sureness of his draftsmanship, and the crisp tonal contrasts.” Seifert used colored paper to set the dominant tone for each painting. This is the earliest signed and dated work by Seifert that is known, and it formed the basis for additional attributions to the artist.



Artist unidentified

Federal Sideboard Table

New England

1810–1830

Paint on wood with brass knob

34 7/8 x 26 x 20"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Museum purchase through the Eva and Morris Feld Folk Art Acquisition Fund, 1981.12.6

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by John Parnell

After the Lipmans sold their first collection to Stephen Clark, they began a second one, concentrating on folk carvings and paint-decorated furniture; much of it was acquired through the dealer Mary Allis of Southport, Connecticut.

This small sideboard table in the Federal style was one of Jean Lipman’s favorites. She called the unusually deep front panel a sampler of the furniture decorator’s *trompe l’oeil* techniques, whereby he imitated the appearance of birch, satinwood, and other expensive wood veneers and inlays in paint, arranged in symmetrical ovals and rectangles. However, on the top and the backsplash this decorator abandoned imitation of natural wood and reveled in exuberant brushstrokes and in the paint itself. The resulting abstract patterns reminded Jean of the modernist art of her own time, and she liked to point out that Andy Warhol, a fellow collector of nineteenth-

century painted furniture, called the work of early American decorative painters “the first Abstract Expressionism.”



Artist unidentified

Chest over Drawers

New England

1825–1840

Paint on wood, including basswood

40 x 42 1/4 x 18 1/4"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Jean Lipman in honor of Cyril Irwin Nelson, 1994.5.1

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by Gavin Ashworth

In addition to employing the techniques of combing, scumbling, and dry brush, the decorator of this chest used vinegar painting to achieve particularly dramatic effects. In this technique, a quick-drying glaze made of pigment dissolved in vinegar is applied over a base coat, and designs are created using a roll of putty. The fans in the top section of the chest and the large medallions that span the drawers were made by rolling the putty in a circular motion. Some of the medallions overlap slightly, lending a three-dimensional quality to the “spinning” disks. Jean Lipman compared this dazzling optical effect to the work of contemporary op artists like Bridget Riley and Julian Stanczak. She gave the chest to the American Folk Art Museum in honor of board member Cy Nelson, her favorite editor at E. P. Dutton, who published many seminal books on folk art.

This is one of several chests of virtually identical decoration and construction. A recently discovered blanket chest that is closely related to this example bears the pencil inscription “Solomon Garfield, Tyringham, Massachusetts.” It is not yet known if Garfield was the maker or the recipient of the chest.



Artist unidentified

Secretary Bookcase

Probably New England

1760–1780

Paint on wood, including tulip poplar

67 3/4 x 37 x 16 3/4"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Museum purchase through the Eva and Morris Feld Folk Art Acquisition Fund, 1981.12.1

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by John Parnell

American country furniture was often painted to disguise the fact that it was made from an inexpensive wood, like pine, or a combination of different woods. Some pieces were painted a single color, but the more interesting examples—the ones favored by the Lipmans—were highly decorative with faux graining and imaginative effects achieved by the use of sponges, putty, combs, feathers, corncobs, or even the decorator's fingers.

This secretary bookcase has a spotted, mottled surface evocative of tortoiseshell; it may also be related to the “sponge painting” found in early architectural interiors. As the term implies, sponge painting refers to the decorative technique of daubing a dry, painted surface with a sponge saturated in a contrasting color. What appears to be a brown ground coat on this secretary bookcase is actually a varnished surface that has darkened with age and grime. The original ground coat was a vibrant yellow ocher spotted with red lead, white lead, and black. The desk front is further embellished with a branching tree emerging from a mound of earth, a decorative motif associated with the furniture and textiles of the Connecticut River Valley.



Artist unidentified

Fireboard

Eastern United States

c. 1830

Paint on wood

43 1/4 x 47 1/8 x 7"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Museum purchase, 1981.12.12

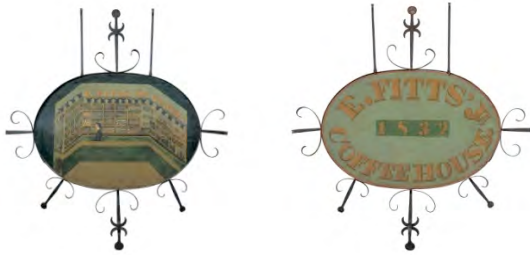
Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by Helga Photo Studio

Fireboards are decorated panels that were used to block fireplaces during the warm summer months. They often received elaborate ornamentation ranging from painted depictions of an urn of flowers to architectural landscapes that sometimes featured the very house that the fireplace was in. Such images were typically painted on canvas that was stretched on a frame the size of

the fireplace opening or, as in this example, on wide wood boards held together with battens on the back.

In this unusual fireboard, architectural trims and other materials have been inventively combined to suggest a three-dimensional church in the ecclesiastical style that was a standard in small American towns by the 1830s. Although this fireboard was found in Connecticut, where the Lipmans' eighteenth-century farmhouse was located, oral history maintains that it was removed from a home in Somerset County, Pennsylvania.



Artist unidentified

E. Fitts Jr.'s Store and Coffeehouse Trade Sign

Vicinity of Shelburne, Massachusetts

1832

Paint on wood with wrought iron

22 3/8 x 34 1/2" (oval); 47 x 46 1/2 x 1 1/2" (with ironwork)

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Margery and Harry Kahn, 1981.12.9

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by John Parnell

The Lipmans displayed this double-sided trade sign, which features a dramatic wrought-iron frame, in the entrance hall of their Connecticut farmhouse. Neither the sign painter nor E. Fitts Jr. has been identified, but the proprietor's coffeehouse is portrayed on one side and his store on the other. In addition to the large stock of hats, bolts of fabric, and dry goods depicted, the store may have offered some food or drink; barrels are stacked at far left, and a variety of pottery vessels are on the shelves. Mr. Fitts's eye-catching sign was probably attached to the exterior of his dual-purpose establishment by two hanging uprights.

Taverns were the physical and social centers of American community life through at least the middle of the nineteenth century. Coffeehouses were an alternative to taverns and frequently offered newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets in addition to non-alcoholic beverages. They became especially popular with the advent of the temperance movement during the late 1820s.



Artist unidentified

Yarn Reel

Possibly Connecticut

c. 1850

Paint on wood

39 1/4 x 16 x 26 1/8"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Museum purchase through the Eva and Morris Feld Folk Art Acquisition Fund, 1981.12.10

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by John Parnell

For years this anthropomorphic yarn reel stood guard by a fireplace in the Lipmans' Connecticut farmhouse. In the early nineteenth century, when many women still did their own spinning, a reel was used to wind woolen yarn into precisely measured skeins for knitting and weaving. This utilitarian object was reimagined as a female figure with an expressive face and painted squiggles that suggest a necklace and a frilly blouse.

This yarn reel is perhaps the quintessential folk object as understood by the early collectors—created by an anonymous craftsman, unique in its conception, with a quirky sense of humor and whimsy. It is a perfect example of what Holger Cahill described as “folk art in its truest sense”: “[It] comes out of craft traditions, plus that personal something of the rare craftsman who is an artist by nature if not by training. . . . It goes straight to the fundamentals of art—rhythm, design, balance, proportion.”



Ruth Whittier Shute (1803–1882) and Dr. Samuel Addison Shute (1803–1836)

Eliza Gordon (Mrs. Zophar Willard Brooks)

Peterborough, New Hampshire

c. 1833

Watercolor and gouache on paper with applied gold paper

24 5/8 x 19"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Museum purchase, 1981.12.24

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by Gavin Ashworth

The first pair of portraits signed “R. W. and S. A. Shute” was discovered by the dealer Edith Halpert in 1937, launching years of speculation about the artists' identities. Halpert thought they might be brothers, or maybe father and son. In 1978 the researcher Helen Kellogg was able to definitively name them as Dr. Samuel and Mrs. Ruth Whittier Shute, a husband and wife team working together in New England.

This portrait of Eliza Gordon exemplifies the Shutes' method of portrait painting: it features heavy pencil shading, watercolor wash in the background, applied gold paper simulating

jewelry, unpainted areas to suggest sheer fabric, and ribbon-like spaces between the full sleeves and waist. It is also the type of portrait the Shutes produced in the early 1830s for young women employed at the burgeoning textile mills of New England. Eliza Gordon worked in the Phoenix Factory, a cotton mill in Peterborough, New Hampshire, from 1833 to 1835, the year she married Zophar Willard Brooks (1812–1906). Brooks was a farmer, a carriage and house painter, and a decorator of chairs much like the one in which Eliza is seated.



Probably Lovice Collins (c. 1793–1847)

Mourning Piece for Mrs. Ebenezer Collins

South Hadley, Massachusetts

1807

Watercolor, pencil, ink, silk thread, metallic thread, and chenille thread on silk and velvet with printed paper label

17" diam. (sight)

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Museum purchase through the Eva and Morris Feld Folk Art Acquisition Fund, 1981.12.8

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by John Parnell

After the American Revolution, educational opportunities for young women expanded with the establishment of female academies, which taught needlework and painting as well as academic subjects. Abby Wright, who operated one such school in South Hadley, Massachusetts, from 1803 until 1811, wrote that her educational goal was to lead young women “in the paths of rectitude and virtue, that they may establish an unblemished reputation and become ornaments to society.”

This mourning piece is dedicated to Azubah Collins, who died in 1805, and was probably made by her daughter Lovice at Abby Wright’s academy. Lovice would have been about fourteen years old when this needlework was stitched. The composition, exquisitely rendered in watercolor with silk, metallic, and chenille threads, is typical of this genre: the weeping Collins family is dressed in black and gathered about Azubah’s funerary urn, which is flanked by willows and cypress trees, traditional symbols of mourning.



Artist unidentified

Heart-and-Hand Love Token

Possibly Connecticut

1840–1860

Ink and varnish on cut paper

14 x 12"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Museum purchase, 1981.12.15

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by John Parnell

This love token is an assemblage of seventeen paper hands with a paper heart interwoven on each palm; a contrasting strip of paper is woven through the wrists. The hearts are different sizes, some are varnished, and two incorporate pieces of ruled paper. One hand carries the familiar sentiment “Hand and heart shall never part / When this you see / Remember me.” By the mid-nineteenth century the exchange of love tokens had become so popular that publications such as *Godey's Lady's Book* and *Harper's Weekly* offered instructions for cut-paper projects for both men and women.

Jean Lipman paired this work with a print by the contemporary artist Jim Dine in *Provocative Parallels*, a 1975 book in which she examined the affinities between folk art and modern art. “It now seems clear,” she wrote, “that the kind of abstraction that twentieth-century sophisticates achieved by deliberately unlearning or ignoring their acquired techniques was intuitively created by the [folk artists].”



Artist unidentified, signed “AJH/77”

Oswego Starch Factory

Oswego, New York

Possibly 1877

Watercolor and ink on paper

36 1/8 x 53 1/4"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Museum purchase, 1981.12.16
Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman
Photo by John Parnell

This large-scale watercolor of Thomas Kingsford's starch factory in Oswego, New York, may have been commissioned as the prototype for a lithograph, but more probably it was copied from one of the many existing prints of the factory that were produced for advertising or decorating purposes. By the 1870s, the Oswego factory was producing thirty-five tons of cornstarch per day and was the largest company of its kind in the world. The complex, almost a small town, included twelve acres of floor and five acres of roof, and comprised the starch factory, a box factory, a machine shop, a carpentry shop, storehouses, other outbuildings, and its own firehouse. Artworks that recorded large cities, small hamlets, industrial complexes, and other scenes of progress proliferated after the Civil War and often employed an aerial perspective that emphasized individual buildings.



Artist unidentified

Anne Beer Low Blanket Chest

Pennsylvania

1790

Paint on pine with iron hardware

24 3/4 x 50 1/2 x 23 3/4"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Museum purchase, 1981.12.4

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by John Parnell

Blanket chests with lift tops were among the earliest furniture forms made in Germanic communities in America. They were often presented to a bride as part of her dowry, and are sometimes referred to as dower chests. The chest features a typical dovetailed construction, but what appear to be unusual feet are actually end panels that would have flanked two side-by-side drawers, now missing.

This example was almost certainly made on the occasion of a marriage or engagement. Anne Beer's name is inscribed in ornate lettering over the date "March the 18 1790." The decorative motifs are replete with symbolism: the central pair of overlapping urns holding intertwined flowers suggests the joining of two family lines in fruitful union; the mermaids are associated with childbirth and domestic households, according to German folklore; and the flowering vines held by the mermaids represent fertility, as do the floral motifs that are repeated on the side panels.



Artist unidentified

Clockworks attributed to Lambert W. Lewis (c. 1785–1834)

Tall Case Clock

Trumbull County, Ohio

1812–1834

Paint on pine case, with watercolor on paper clockface and wooden clockworks

87 x 21 1/2 x 12 3/4"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Museum purchase through the Eva and Morris Feld Folk Art Acquisition Fund, 1981.12.22

Ex coll. Jean and Howard Lipman

Photo by John Parnell

In rural areas it was not unusual for expensive clockworks to be purchased from well-known makers and to be housed in locally made cases. This clock has a wood case embellished with an overall spotted decoration that is sometimes called "paw print." The pattern is an example of a dry-brush technique that was probably effected by dabbing the surface with a crumpled rag or a dry brush.

Although this clock was found in New Jersey, it relates most strongly to Connecticut clock- and cabinetmaking traditions; the movement is a Connecticut type, with pull-up weights that run the clock for thirty hours. The name on the hand-painted clock face identifies the maker as Lambert W. Lewis, a native of Connecticut who learned his trade in the clock-making area around Waterbury before moving to Ohio. With several of his brothers, Lewis became the earliest and largest manufacturer of clocks in Trumbull County, a part of the Western Reserve that was developed primarily by Connecticut Yankees.