

American Perspectives:
**Stories from the American Folk Art Museum
Collection**

Label Booklet
for in-gallery use only

Alphabetical by Artist

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sanctioned forms of artistic employment for women.

Ann and her sisters may have learned the art of flower painting as part of their education at Greenville Academy. Ann became the primary decorator by the age of 14 or 15 and was conversant with all phases of production of the tinware business, sometimes accompanying her father on trips as far away as New York City.

Consuelo “Chelo” González Amézcuca 1903 – 1975
King’s Trays mid-20th century

Del Rio, Texas

Ballpoint pen on board

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Calvin-Morris Gallery, New York, and the
artist’s family

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

Consuelo “Chelo” González Amézcuca was 10 years old when she crossed the Mexican border from Piedras Negras, Coahuila, into Del Rio, Texas, with her parents and siblings. On November 27, 1913, against the backdrop of revolution and violent political chaos, the family struggled to make the journey from Mexico to the United States. After a period of transience, they finally moved into a small house that remained the family residence throughout her life.

Chelo’s family held traditional expectations for their irrepressible child. Autobiographical statements suggest that she lived mainly in her imagination. Completing only six years of formal education, González Amézcuca was self-schooled in areas that interested her: history, art, architecture, and

religion. From an early age, she was a natural performance artist, dancing, singing, and playing the guitar, piano, castanets, and tambourine. Eventually, she wrote and recited original poetry and made stone carvings. In 1964, she began to draw using a ballpoint pen on cardboard or paper. The consistent delicate line and ever-flowing ink permitted a fluidity in her **mental recordatorio**, or mental drawings, evoking Mexican silver filigree work.

Eugene Andolsek 1921 - 2008

Untitled #14A 1950 - 2003

Crabtree, Pennsylvania

India ink on graph paper

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of the artist

2005.18.3

For decades, Eugene Andolsek was employed as a stenographer on the Rock Island Railroad line, a challenging and fast-paced workplace at odds with the artist's temperament. The sensitive Andolsek found the pressure enormously stressful, yet he lived in fear that he would be fired. Feeling the need to gain some control over his anxiety, Andolsek began an activity that brought beauty and relief into his life: artmaking.

As a child, Andolsek had collected stamps because he was attracted by the intricate lines and delicate colors. For the next 50 years, Andolsek made thousands of similarly detailed ink drawings, though he rarely shared them with anyone. His nightly ritual entailed drawing hypnotic patterns on paper at his kitchen table using a straightedge and a compass. He said his drawings just "came out" of him. He would sometimes wake up "and a drawing was there, and I didn't even know how it got there." First, he created the black outlines, the "designs,"

and then filled them in with beautiful colors achieved through his careful mixing of store-bought inks that he blended with an eyedropper.

Felipe Benito Archuleta 1910 - 1991

Tiger 1977

Tesuque, New Mexico

Paint and gesso on cottonwood with straw

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of George H. Meyer

2000.17.1

Felipe Benito Archuleta, considered the “father” of the New Mexican group of animal carvers, created this fierce, striding tiger. When he was 35 years old, he joined the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, working in the carpentry trades for the next 24 years. By 1964, after a lifetime of hard work, Archuleta found a new life as an artist, innovating a form of sculpture based on techniques associated with the **santo**, a traditional type of religious figure. Archuleta applied these techniques in an innovative way to secular subjects while also using recycled and found materials. By the 1970s, his work proved so popular that he had expanded to a menagerie of animals, both wild and tame, large and small, relying on children’s books and magazines such as **National Geographic** as models for preparatory sketches.

Archuleta used a chainsaw to rough out the forms from cottonwood and then applied a variety of carpentry tools to fashion details and shape body parts. Small animals were made from a single piece

of wood; larger animals were joined with a mixture of sawdust and glue, the final surface scored to create the texture that he needed. The figure was then covered with a coat of white paint and finished with the final decoration.

Artist unidentified, possibly Richard Brunton
c. 1749 – 1832

Lovebirds Printing Block late 18th century

Probably New England

Wood

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Paul Joseph

1970.3.1

This tiny printing woodblock of a pair of lovebirds may have been carved by Richard Brunton, a British-born engraver and diesinker (engraver of dies for stamping coins, etc.) whose dramatic story, uncovered by researcher Deborah M. Child, is one of struggle to survive in the flux of early American nationhood.

After serving in the Revolutionary War but ultimately deserting, Brunton began a vagabond existence that vacillated between legitimate and illicit activities, seeking to capitalize on various craftsmanship skills. By 1799, Brunton was arrested for “coining,” or minting counterfeit coins, and given a two-year sentence in Connecticut’s notorious New-Gate Prison. Captured again in 1807 with his tools and counterfeit bills, Brunton was given a life sentence to the recently opened Massachusetts State Prison in Charlestown.

During both incarcerations, the artist produced family registers, silver tokens, and plates for

advertisements, including a widely circulated stagecoach broadside, which is one of the earliest graphic images depicting transportation in the New Republic. He even painted portraits of the jail keepers and their families. In 1811, Brunton was granted a pardon on the grounds of ill health but lived another 21 years before dying in a Massachusetts poorhouse.

Artist unidentified; initialed "J.F.R."

Cleveland-Hendricks Crazy Quilt 1885 - 1890

United States

Lithographed silk ribbons, silk, and wool with cotton fringe and silk and metallic embroidery

American Folk Art Museum

Gift of Margaret Cavigga

1985.23.3

In her 1869 novel *An Old-Fashioned Girl*, author Louisa May Alcott envisioned a ballot box among the symbols laid at the feet of a sculpture of an ideal woman, created by a bold, young female artist. With this image, Alcott anticipated a day that was yet to arrive for another half-century. It was not until 1920 that the 19th Amendment would officially extend the right to vote to some — although notably not all — American women.

In the meantime, women's voices found alternative paths to articulate their engagement with the political process and make their opinions known. The unidentified maker of this textile usurped the socially acceptable format of a quilt to express her preference for the Democratic Party. The strutting rooster prominently featured in the center of the quilt was an emblem often used by the Democratic Party during the 1880s and 1890s, particularly in Grover Cleveland's presidential campaign. The quilter placed the portraits of two unsuccessful

Democratic presidential candidates below the rooster: Samuel J. Tilden and Winfield S. Hancock.

These fabrics, originally parts of printed campaign banners, evidently were saved by the maker until after Grover Cleveland's successful bid in the 1884 campaign. Cleveland and his running mate, Thomas A. Hendricks, are shown in the upper corners of the central block. A Cleveland-Hendricks inaugural ribbon, dated March 4, 1885, is placed above.

Artist Unidentified

Anniversary Tin Apron, Lady's Bonnet with

Curls, Bowtie, Lady's Slippers

1880 – 1800

Gobles, Van Buren County, Michigan

Tin

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Marin and Enid Packard

1988.25.3, 1988.25.1, 1988.25.9, 1988.25.12

The custom of giving anniversary gifts of increasing value through the years of marriage originated in medieval Germany but was interpreted in a whimsical manner in Victorian America. During the second half of the 19th century, the 10th — or tin — anniversary became an occasion of riotous celebration. Whimsical gifts made of tin were presented to the married couple. Often, they were oversized replicas of everyday items or humorous pieces with personal meaning.

Professional tinsmiths cut the pieces from sheet tin using templates, and the sections were soldered together. The seams were hooked over each other and hammered to create a tight seal. Surviving anniversary tin demonstrates the skill with which the items were fashioned and the variety of forms available. The apron, bonnet, bowtie, and slippers are part of a group of more than 20 pieces discovered together in Gobles,

Michigan, and were probably gifts from a single 10th-anniversary celebration.

Artist unidentified

Box c. 1832

Possibly New York State

Paint, gold leaf, and bronze-powder stenciling on wood

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of the Historical Society of Early American Decoration

76.5.2

We do not know who made or owned this box; however, it holds a secret political sentiment when the lid is opened, revealing a sidewheel steamship inscribed with the word “Veto.” This is likely a reference to an explosive political battle of the 1830s known as the Bank War, pitting President Andrew Jackson against Senator Henry Clay and dividing the nation into elite and anti-elite factions.

Senator Clay was among those who supported the Second Bank of the United States’ role in centralizing and stabilizing American finances. However, President Jackson was vehement in his distrust of the bank and his fear of the political weight a national bank could wield. After a recharter bill was passed in the Senate in 1832, Jackson used his veto power to suppress it.

Clay passionately denounced the President’s veto, characterizing the bank as “a mere vehicle; just as

much so as the steamboat is the vehicle which transports our produce to the great mart of New Orleans, and not the grower of that produce.” Nonetheless, Jackson was ultimately the winner of the Bank War and the next presidential election, presenting his opponent Clay and others as the entrenched aristocracy of big government, in direct opposition to his anti-elite populist stance.

Artist unidentified

Cenotaph to Three Martyred Presidents c. 1926

United States

Wood with photographic images on paper

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of the Hirschhorn Foundation

1997.6.5

This cenotaph commemorates the assassinations of presidents Abraham Lincoln, James A. Garfield, and William McKinley. A tremendous outpouring of grief ensued after the deaths of each of these presidents. This tribute was possibly made to commemorate the anniversary of one of the assassinations, which occurred in 1865, 1881, and 1901, respectively.

The circumstances of Lincoln's assassination are well known. President Garfield was killed by Charles Guiteau (1841 - 1882), a delusional man who believed he had helped Garfield win office and expected to be rewarded with a government appointment. When his supplications were repeatedly ignored, he shot Garfield at point-blank range in the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Station as the president was embarking on his summer vacation.

President McKinley was shot by anarchist Leon Czolgosz (1873 - 1901) during a visit to the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo. Czolgosz had lost his job during the Panic of 1893. In his despair, he

turned to anarchism, influenced by the example of European anarchists who used assassination to eliminate oppressive foreign leaders. He came to view the president in this light, and McKinley's handshaking public reception granted the opportunity to carry out his deadly plan.

Artist unidentified

E. Fitts Jr. Store and Coffeehouse Trade Sign

1832

Paint on wood with wrought iron

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Margery and Harry Kahn

1981.12.9

Coffee, tea, and chocolate were introduced into England by the late 17th century, and coffeehouses quickly became centers of social and business interaction for travelers and locals. By the 18th century, these establishments were imitated in America, where they offered current newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets and served as meeting places for social, political, military, religious, and secular activities.

E. Fitts Jr. has not been identified, but his painted trade sign illustrates the close relationship between the coffeehouse milieu and commercial activities. One side shows his coffeehouse's name, whereas the other depicts his store with a range of staple and "fancy" goods. In addition to a large stock of hats, reams of fabric, and dry goods, the store may have offered some food or drink, as there are barrels stacked on one side, and the shelves have a variety of pottery vessels.

Artists unidentified

Ephrata Cloister Tunebook c. 1745

Ephrata Cloister, Ephrata, Pennsylvania

Watercolor and ink on paper, with cloth and leather binding

American Folk Art Museum

Gift of Ralph Esmerian

2005.8.32

In 1732, Ephrata Cloister was founded on the Cocalico Creek banks in northern Lancaster County under the charismatic leadership of Conrad Beissel (1691–1768). A Radical Pietist dissenter who arrived in Pennsylvania in 1720, Beissel and a small group of disciples established a celibate monastery for men and women based on a synthesis of pietism, asceticism, and mysticism. Hymnody, the singing of hymns, was an essential part of worship. The cloister is celebrated for its original texts and music for hymns and the handwritten and printed books that preserve this legacy.

Illuminating and writing the musical scores was considered a meditative act. In Beissel's words, "Whoever can lose himself is found in God." He did not permit drawings to be copied or duplicated, believing that a divine spark of original inspiration would be unleashed by the act of illuminating the sacred hymns.

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

Artist unidentified

Equestrian Crazy Quilt 1880 - 1900

Possibly New York State

Silks, including velvet, and cotton with cotton embroidery

American Folk Art Museum

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James D. Clokey III

1986.12.1

This quilt represents an unusual take on a popular trend and speaks to the incorporation of cosmopolitan style into local tradition. “Crazy” quilts, which began to appear around the time of the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876, took many of their cues from Japanese design, and may have been named after the “cracked” or “crazed” seen in some Japanese ceramics. Since they were made for show rather than utilitarian purposes, Crazy quilts were often comprised of especially lustrous fabrics like velvets or silks. This unidentified quilter picked up these common practices while laying out her own design, notable for its incorporation of elliptical patches featuring performing figures.

An anecdote passed down with this quilt is that it was made by a member of a traveling circus. Although probably a myth, this story speaks to the imaginative appeal of the quilt’s composition, in

which multiple birds, horses, and riders appear to cavort across the surface of the textile, coming together in a festive performance.

Artist unidentified

Gabriel Inn Sign 1810 – 1835

Guilford Center, New York

Paint on wood

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Alice M. Kaplan, museum trustee (1977 – 1989)

2001.3.1

Early American visual culture is steeped in representations of millennial ideas (notably linked to “end of time” philosophy and the hopeful establishment of new, more just societal transformations), and it was not uncommon for a figure of Gabriel — the herald of the Second Coming in Christian tradition — to appear as a weathervane on the steeples of churches. The Archangel Gabriel appeared in secular settings, as well. For more than a century, this gentle carving welcomed visitors to the Angel Inn in Guilford Center. The inn’s original frame structure was built around 1806 and was located on a busy stagecoach route. At various times it also served as a restaurant, a general store, a blacksmith shop, and even a bordello. It is not known precisely when this Archangel Gabriel was carved, but the front of the inn was altered in 1830, at which time the sign was placed under a high pediment that newly crowned the entranceway.

Artist unidentified

Lectern Box: “The Rock of Liberty”

mid-19th century

New England

Paint on wood, with applied printed pages

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Ralph Esmerian

2013.1.23

Mayflower descendant Richard Warren published his patriotic poem “The Rock of Liberty” at a time of growing intolerance toward immigrant groups, perceived to be crowding cities and infiltrating insular interior communities. Warren’s words, written while he was president of the Pilgrim Society, celebrate Plymouth Rock’s history and the stalwart Pilgrim Fathers. In 1855, the poem was set to music by James G. Clark and published in Boston by Henry Tolman.

It is unknown whether Warren’s intention was a reminder of the liberties upon which the nation was founded or an expression of distaste for the newcomers. Nevertheless, it was popular during the Civil War era to drum up patriotic sentiment, and Warren’s work may have been one means of encouraging support for the Union cause.

In this unique lectern box, the poem is applied to the surface of a trompe-l’œil book that rests atop a

quilted baize cloth with heavy tassels at the front corners.

Artist Unidentified

Love Token for Sarah Newlin 1799

Envelope for Love Token for Sarah Newlin 1799

Pennsylvania, United States

Ink and watercolor on paper

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of J. Randall Plummer and Harvey S. Shipley
Miller

2007.24.1A and 2007.24.1B

Valentine's Day may have taken its original inspiration from the Ancient Romans, who celebrated a fertility feast in the middle of February. However, the tradition of sending love tokens in America was popularized in the mid-18th century by the Pennsylvania Germans. During this period, handmade Valentines could be exquisitely elaborate, taking the form of intricate cut paper, folded puzzles, and delicately drawn labyrinths and lover's knots.

This token resembles Quaker love tokens from Pennsylvania. Built around a diamond enclosing four circles, the note centers around a small red heart inscribed with the initials "S.N." The details of the love story remain remote; however, "S.N." is thought to refer to Sarah Newlin, a young woman living in Chester County at the end of the 18th century.

To follow the meandering verse, the reader must rotate the letter, engaging in a playful and suspenseful game that seems designed to mirror the excitement of courtship.

Artist unidentified

Political Harvest Jug 1857

United States

Salt-gazed stoneware with cobalt decoration

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Jerry and Susan Lauren

2015.14.1

This stoneware jug offers a glimpse into a highly troubled moment in American political history. Noted on the surface is the year 1857, a critical time of growing sectionalism that moved the nation toward civil war.

In 1857, the Supreme Court's decision in the Dred Scott case ruled that "persons of African descent," all Black Americans, could not become citizens under the United States Constitution, that Congress would not ban slavery in the territories covered by the Missouri Compromise, and that an enslaved person did not become free upon entering into a free state. By declaring the Missouri Compromise illegal, the balance between slaveholding and free territories was threatened, with economic implications that contributed to the financial Panic of 1857.

That same year, the nativist anti-Catholic, anti-immigration Know Nothing Party lost its bid for the presidency with the ticket of Millard Fillmore and Andrew Jackson Donelson. "Aries B. Donelson,"

whose name appears twice on this vessel inscribed in a spidery script, has not been identified; however, he was likely a member of the extended Donelson family of Tennessee who figured in American politics. An allusion to “Governor Pain” and the word “Democracy” further suggest an impassioned political stance whose meaning remains cryptic.

Artist unidentified

S. D. Plum Tavern Sign 1813

Probably Meriden, Connecticut

Paint on pine with iron

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Ralph Esmerian

2013.1.55

As early as 1644, Connecticut towns were ordered to provide a place where travelers and strangers could obtain food and lodging. In 1799, a turnpike was cut through the town of Meriden, bringing change to the farming community. In 1805, when Seth D. Plum (c. 1779 – 1836) bought a house near a strip of the highway, the beginnings of a town center included a tanner, miller, and storekeeper, as well as two taverns, counting his own.

Plum's house served as a tavern for many years. Such taverns and inns were indistinguishable from other buildings. Signboards were essential to identify them as safe havens for the increasing numbers of travelers moving along the improving system of roads that was developing throughout the new nation.

Following English tradition, the earliest signboards were usually freestanding rectangular boards hanging between two posts. The word "entertainment" in this example would have been understood to describe the services of food and

lodging that could be obtained within. The emblematic image welcomes the “teamsters” who drove horse-drawn passenger coaches on the turnpikes.

Attributed to Sturtevant J. Hamblin 1817 – 1884

Sea Captain c. 1845

Probably Massachusetts

Oil on canvas

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Robert Bishop

1992.10.2

In the 19th century, men who earned their livelihood at sea could often be away from home for years. Their families relied on painted portraits to function as a surrogate presence. Such images took on compelling significance during long absences or could even become memorials when men did not survive their journeys. The unknown man depicted here is identified as a sea captain by several attributes associated with his profession: the ship's rigging, telescope, and seascape with sailing vessels in the distance.

This is one of several similar portraits painted by Sturtevant J. Hamblin, an artist descended from a family of house and ornamental painters in Portland, Maine. Hamblin and his brother-in-law, William Matthew Prior (1806 – 1873), moved together from Maine to East Boston, where they established a painting studio. They developed a closely related and distinctive style of portraiture that ranged from academic to “flat without shade,” depending on the commission's cost. The similarities between their

work have led scholars to adopt the term “Prior-Hamblin School” for paintings that share certain characteristics but cannot be definitively attributed to a particular artist.

Attributed to Johannes Kniskern 1746 - ?

Dower Chest 1778

Schoharie County, New York

Paint on pine, with iron hasp, key, and hardware

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Ralph Esmerian

2013.1.31

This blanket chest survives as a testimony to trauma and survival. The year 1778 — inscribed on the chest's surface along with the name Jacob Kniskern — proved to be one of devastating significance in the life of the Kniskern family, as well as of the valley north of Albany in which they made their home.

In a succession of violent raids between 1777 and 1778, the Schoharie Valley was destroyed by British troops during the Revolutionary War. Enlisted as a patriot, Jacob was captured in 1778 and marched to Canada. He dramatically escaped by water on a float constructed of brandy kegs. However, he returned home to find the devastation that was left behind.

Following the war, Kniskern successfully rebuilt his life, such that upon his death, he owned seven chests. In a time when chests were often used to store a family's most valuable possessions, owning multiple examples indicated a comfortable level of prosperity. It has long been believed that Jacob's

brother Johannes made this chest, as well as two more for Jacob's daughters.

Attributed to José Benito Ortega or his school
1858 - 1941

Bulto 1870 - 1900

Vicinity east of Santa Fe, New Mexico

Gesso and paint on wood with iron and leather

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Anonymous gift

1976.2.1

José Benito Ortega was a prolific, itinerant New Mexican **santero** or maker of saints. The work of the **santero** was crucial in bringing devotional religious practice into households dispersed across remote areas throughout the Hispanic Southwest. In **Bulto**, Ortega has captured the sorrow and human dimension of Jesus's crucifixion through his emaciated body, painfully stretched and attenuated. This is reinforced by the weight of the figure's dropped head, closed eyes, and the path of blood traced along the arms, legs, and feet.

Unlike earlier **santeros**, Ortega used cheap scrap millboard to rough out his figures with minimal carving and significant amounts of gesso to build up physical features. Rather than leather or twill, calico rags were employed for creating jointed arms and legs. It is not clear whether Ortega worked alone or with family members or maintained a **taller** ("workshop"), but it is possible that this particular work is that of one of the artist's followers.

After the death of his wife, Ortega stopped making religious figures, leaving his home in La Cueva to live out his days in the homes of his children.

Attributed to Henry Young 1792 – 1861

General George Washington on Horseback

1825 – 1835

Pennsylvania

Pen and ink, pencil, and watercolor, on wove paper

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Ralph Esmerian

1993.10.1

This drawing was made in the colorful ink-and-watercolor style associated with the Germanic tradition of illuminated documents known in America as **fraktur**. The possible artist, Henry Young, was a prolific maker. Notable for the use of English inscriptions within a German visual tradition, Young's work represents the blend of cultures present in 18th- and 19th-century Pennsylvania.

Reverence for George Washington as a military hero was widespread across the young United States, including among German-American communities who had played a key role in the Revolutionary War. At the invitation of William Penn, German immigrants had begun to settle in America by the 17th century. Their descendants were among the forces organized to fight for American independence. Known as the German Regiment, they participated in major battles in Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, sometimes pitted against soldiers from their

homelands—Hessians who were conscripted to fight for Britain.

Joseph P. Aulisio 1910 - 1974

Frank Peters 1965

Old Forge, Pennsylvania

Oil on Masonite

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Arnold B. Fuchs

1978.8.1

In 1965, Joseph Pasquale Aulisio painted a portrait of his former employee, Frank Peters, who worked as a tailor at Lease Dry Cleaners. The portrait is an unvarnished study of the architecture of flesh. The folds in Peters' face appear both soft and hard, like molded plastic; each gnarled knuckle and vein in his hands is delineated. This is a posthumous portrait, a reflection of Aulisio's memory of his longtime employee who had died in 1954. The portrait is a nod to a significant tradition of capturing loved ones in oil on canvas to be remembered by generations to come — a tradition that transitioned to the prolific post-mortem photographic image.

Aulisio was the son of Italian immigrants who entered through New York City in 1898 and made their way to an Italian community in Old Forge, Pennsylvania, where he was born in 1910. Aulisio worked as a forest ranger before returning in 1929 to start Lease Dry Cleaners, a play on his family name. Frank Peters was born in Poland in 1882 and immigrated in 1902, taking up residence in Taylor,

Lackawanna, Pennsylvania. In 1918, his draft registration card listed his occupation as a coal miner; it is not known when Peters took up tailoring. Lease Dry Cleaners continues to operate.

Marino Auriti 1891 - 1980

Encyclopedic Palace/Palazzo

Enciclopédico/Palacio Enciclopédico/

Palais Encyclopédique or Monumento

Nazionale. Progetto Enciclopédico Palazzo

(U.S. patent no. 179,277) c. 1950s

Kennett Square, Pennsylvania

Wood, plastic, glass, metal, hair combs, and model kit parts

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Colette Auriti Firmani in memory of Marino Auriti

2002.35.1

A native of Guardiagrele, Italy, Marino Auriti served during World War I and lived under Benito Mussolini's Fascist regime. He first immigrated with his family to Brazil and then to the United States sometime between 1923 and the 1930s. Settling in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, he worked as an auto-body mechanic, but architecture was his passion.

Over the course of three years, Auriti executed a model, built on a scale of 1:200, for an ambitious construction called the **Palazzo Enciclopédico** (Encyclopedic Palace). Had it been realized, it would have stood 136 stories or 2,322 feet and spread across 16 city blocks in Washington, DC,

just slightly smaller than the Burj Khalifa skyscraper in Dubai — completed in 2009, the tallest human-made structure in the world, at 2,716.5 feet.

In his highly technical six-page statement of purpose, he wrote: “This building is an entirely new concept in museums designed to hold all the works of man in whatever field, discoveries made and those which may follow, ...everything from the wheel to the satellite.” Auriti’s own code of ethics is articulated in transfer letters along with the lintels of the seven-tiered building, including “Forgive the First Time” and “Do Not Abuse Generosity.” The model was exhibited twice in Auriti’s lifetime, encased in a pyramid-shaped vitrine that he built.

Calvin Black 1903 - 1972

Ruby Black 1915 - 1980

“Possum Trot” Figure and Small Totem

1953 - 1969; 1955

Yermo, California

Carved and painted redwood, blond wig and satin dress

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Elizabeth Ross Johnson

1985.35.5; 1985.35.6

Cal Black was born in Tennessee, and Ruby Black was from Georgia, where the two met while he was traveling with a circus and carnival. They married in 1933 and moved to California. As Highway 15 was extended, the Blacks started a tourist shop in Calico Ghost Town Road, in Yermo, California, a lonely expanse of the Mojave Desert. They called their property “Possum Trot” after an old southern expression for a shortcut between two locations.

Cal conceived the idea of carving lifelike dolls that he would station around the property. Using a hatchet and pocketknife, he shaped figures from downed redwood telephone poles, with arms and legs that would swing eerily in the dry desert wind. Ruby refashioned outfits from cast-off clothing that grew more and more tattered through exposure with each passing season.

The compound became more populated and the dolls more elaborate as the Blacks collaborated on shaping each personality, naming them and discussing their characters. By 1969, Cal had added the Birdcage Theater to his ghost town emporium. Thanks to his singing, circus, and vaudeville experience, he was able to prepare original skits, songs, and dialogue, activating the “actors” by placing speakers in the back of their heads. “The Fantasy Doll Show” included dance, dolls riding bicycles, and performing acts. The admission was 50 cents.

Georgia Blizzard 1919 - 2002

Mourning Urn 1998

Glade Springs, Virginia

Fired Clay

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Judith Alexander

2000.11.1

Georgia Blizzard had the “feel of the clay.” She dug it from the banks of the muddy creek behind the house her father built in the 1930s. Blizzard worked in a munition factory during World War II and then in a textile mill. In the 1970s, living in her family home in Plum Creek, Glade Spring, Virginia, she started “making art about things I felt. I got to thinking more about spiritual things.” At first, she used a simple coal kiln, whose flames burnt and darkened the clay in places and created glazes out of uncommon materials; later, she would receive an electric kiln. Blizzard continued to use both kilns throughout her life.

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

On yonder distant knoll
Daisies bow to the breeze.

Evening sun is setting The Lonesome Dove coo
Shadows pull down the curtains of time Perhaps it

Or maybe its mine. Ravin call.
Then Twilight Takes over, Its, all, Its all.

Charles Carmel 1865 – 1931

Outer Row Jumper Horse c. 1918

Coney Island, Brooklyn, New York

Paint on wood with glass jewels and glass eyes

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift from the collection of Larry and Gail Freels

2020.1.4

In 1883, Charles Carmel became one of a handful of Jewish woodcarvers who emigrated from the Pale of Settlement in Eastern Europe, the geographical boundary in which Jews were legally permitted to reside. In the United States, they sought greater liberties, tolerance, and success. Like several of his compatriots, Carmel relocated to Brooklyn, New York, home to one of the most lavish and exciting amusement parks of the day: Coney Island.

Together, these men infused the American carousel with an innovative dynamism characterized by their carved figures' realistic attitudes, flying manes, ferocious expressions, and extravagant embellishments. Carousel carvings in the Coney Island Style were distributed throughout New York City's almost two-dozen carousels and to the rest of the country.

Charles Carmel lived and operated a shop near Brooklyn's Prospect Park stables. Here, he observed the movements and musculature of living horses as he modeled his carousel carvings. Sadly, Carmel's

dream of operating his own carousel went up in smoke — literally — in a Coney Island fire the day before its opening. However, some of his horses and menagerie figures survive as a testament to his skill. This example has elaborate latticework and carved trappings lavishly embellished with faceted glass jewels.

Henry Darger 1892 – 1973

**URIKLIN LA FOTLIN SACRAMENTO DE
LA VIVI, GLANDELINIA (Flag of
Glandelinia) c. 1915 – 1930**

Chicago, Illinois

Watercolor, pencil, and carbon tracing on paper

American Folk Art Museum, New York

American Folk Art Museum purchase

2000.25.5

Bereft and abandoned throughout his life, Henry Darger was a solitary figure. He worked at menial jobs in Catholic hospitals, attended mass several times each day at a Catholic church near his home, and lived quietly in a one-room apartment in Chicago. Behind closed doors, he created a complex oeuvre that was discovered posthumously. This trove included a 15,145-page novel titled **The Story of the Vivian Girls, in What Is Known as the Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinian War Storm, Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion**, written sometime between 1910 and 1939. This epic, composed of long-winded descriptions of battle scenes and climate cataclysms, borrowed from multiple sources such as historical newspaper accounts of the Civil War and World War I, Catholic liturgy, sacred hymns, and popular literature, such as **Uncle Tom's Cabin**, **The Pilgrim's Progress**, and the **Oz** books.

Darger's visual art practice developed around 1915 – 1930 as a parallel to his literary activities. His art can be considered as an extension of his writing, rather than a secondary illustration. He created collages made of children's book clippings, newspaper fragments, and stamps, as well as several hundred sketches, large, scroll-like watercolors, and studies such as this one, referring to characters and themes from his narratives.

This particular rendering displays the hateful flag of the Glandelineans, the Vivian Girls' evil enemies. It is among the 20 flags designed by Darger. Non-narrative and essentially military, these indispensable war accessories were created by Darger to reference the nations, regions, and armies present in the **Realms**.

Ulysses Davis 1913 - 1990

Strange Fruits After 1968

Savannah, Georgia

Paint on wood with glass

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of John and Margaret Robson

2001.14.1

Ulysses Davis whittled wood scraps as a young boy and learned metalworking from his blacksmith father, growing up in Savannah, Georgia. He later worked as a blacksmith's assistant on the railroad, which enabled him to make many of the tools he used to carve wood.

Despite the racial oppression suffered by the African American community, Davis was highly patriotic; his best-known work is a series of 41 presidential busts. It was not until the civil rights era of the 1960s and 1970s that he explored a decidedly African aesthetic in sculptures that evoked African art, history, and lore.

Strange Fruits was made during this period of growing pride in cultural identity. The work strongly recalls African reliquary sculpture in its form and representation. The rosebud that decorates the central element was a symbol of love for the artist. The title is a reference to a 1937 poem by Abel Meeropol that became a civil rights protest song, first sung by Billie Holiday in 1939:

Southern trees bear a strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root, Black
body swinging in the Southern breeze, Strange
fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

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

Richard Dial b. 1955

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

Bessemer, Alabama

Steel, wood, hemp, enamel paint

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Museum purchase made possible with grants from
the National Endowment for the Arts and the
Metropolitan Life Foundation

1990.3.5

Richard Dial acquired his metalworking skills as a machinist at the Pullman Standard Company in Bessemer, Alabama, alongside his father, celebrated artist Thornton Dial Sr. After 1987, Dial allowed himself to explore his conceptual art through a series of twenty anthropomorphic chairs that play upon conflicting notions of comfort and discomfort.

The Comfort of Moses and the Ten

Commandments considers the implications of this biblical patriarch, who holds a special place as the visionary who led his people from slavery. The structure of the chair itself is no different from the typical furniture produced by the Pullman Standard Company. But these limbs are actualized, wearing rope sandals and straining to hold the weight of the tablets inscribed with the word of God. Comfort is not possible in this chair, which emphasizes the discomfort and difficulty of obeying the

commandments. The Decalogue — the Ten Commandments — appears as inscrutable markings in red on separate wood panels, “signs and wonders” that can only be interpreted by someone with special sight. Moses himself has the face of an elder — hopeful, loving, querying — his hoary eyebrows and beard made of humble and approachable materials, including a mop.

Sam Doyle 1906 - 1985

Baptism of Reverend Midlton 1920 and Sam Doyle

c. 1970s

St. Helena Island, South Carolina

Paint on vinyl tablecloth

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Betty M. Kuyk in honor of Richard Farris

Thompson

2007.20.1

Sam Doyle's portraits preserve the soul and proud heritage of St. Helena Island, located in the South Carolina Lowcountry. In 1862, the Penn School had been established by Quakers to educate formerly enslaved people on the island. Doyle attended the historically important school through ninth grade, and his artistic talent was recognized, but it was not until after retirement that he was able to pursue his creative nature.

This painting seems to have held particular significance for the artist, who included his full name rather than his customary initials "S. D." It is painted on a vinyl tablecloth, a supple material that evokes the ripple of water when it moves. The cloth was apparently laid flat on the ground as Doyle worked; it bears the deliberate and nearly invisible mark of the artist's footprints.

A bridge divides the heavens from the waters above where a baptism is being enacted. The figure

on the upper right is Reverend Washington, an elder whose function included the baptism of church members. His hands are placed on the head of Reverend Middleton (spelled "Midlton" in Doyle's title), a contemporary of the artist who later became a reverend. Time is collapsed, conflating this vital step at the beginning of Middleton's spiritual journey with his present-day realization as a religious leader.

David Drake c. 1800 – c. 1870

Jug 1853

Lewis J. Miles Pottery, Edgefield County, South
Carolina

Alkaline-glazed stoneware

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Sally and Paul Hawkins

1999.18.1

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

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

By signing his name to this utilitarian jug, the enslaved potter David Drake engaged in an extraordinary act of resistance. In a time and place when it was illegal to teach enslaved people to read or write, Drake's signature boldly proclaimed his literacy. Further, by asserting his identity and agency, Drake exposed one of slavery's central delusions: the idea that people could be considered things.

Drake's unusual literacy may have resulted from his employment at a local newspaper, the **Edgefield Hive**, published by the family of one of his enslavers. However, as shown by the Federal Census of 1870, Drake considered his primary occupation to be that of a "turner" or potter. Born

into slavery around 1800, Drake grew to be one of 76 enslaved African Americans working in the potteries of Edgefield, South Carolina.

More than 100 works survive that bear a date or signature made by “Dave,” as he signed his name. A number also bear snippets of original poetry and observations. Where the histories of enslaved craftspeople can often be challenging to reconstruct, Drake’s remarkable story has been recovered in large part because of his self-actualization through the words he embedded into utilitarian pots.

Clark V. Eastlack Jr. 1836 – 1871

**Screen for the Order of United American
Mechanics** 1860 – 1871

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Oil on canvas

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Charles, Barbara and Chip Reinhard

2011.1.1

Throughout its history, the United States has experienced periods of intolerance — sometimes violent — toward newcomers, often instigated by fear and resentment during times of economic depression and war. The Order of United American Mechanics (OUAM) was an anti-Catholic and nativist secret society organized in Philadelphia in 1845. The organization was founded on the principle of promoting “American labor” and the purchase of goods and services only from people born in the country.

In its structure, the OUAM was modeled after the Freemasons; in its logo, the arm and hammer held in a fist within a square and compass were a play on the Masonic device. The OUAM soon developed a body of rituals for its members, loosely based on older fraternal organizations. Teaching charts were part of these organizations’ paraphernalia, visually transmitting the society’s beliefs and symbols. This

work is one a of series of such screens or charts illustrating American workers.

The screen's painter, Clark Vernal Eastlack, Jr., was a second-generation painter and a member of the OUAM. He also belonged to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows Meridian Sun Lodge No. 471 and was a volunteer firefighter with the Independence Hose Company.

Ralph Fasanella 1914 - 1997

American Heritage 1974

New York City, New York

Oil on canvas

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Eva Fasanella and her children, Gina

Mostrando and Marc Fasanella

2005.5.1

Ralph Fasanella became increasingly dissatisfied with American politics in the wake of the civil rights movement. **American Heritage** appears at first to be a patriotic scene at the White House, but a closer look reveals a mass funeral for the many lost souls of the era. In the forthcoming book **Ralph Fasanella: Portraits of American Life**, the artist's son Mark writes of the painting:

"I vividly remember [my father] working on [**American Heritage**] surrounded by the political ephemera of the era. Labor history and civil rights buttons and leaflets, anti-Vietnam war placards, and Kennedy assassination, as well as Watergate newspaper and magazine clippings littered the walls and surfaces of his large studio. At the center of the painting is a flag-draped coffin, presumably that of John F. Kennedy, but in many ways it is iconic of all the elaborate state funerals that are used to draw a nation together and focus attention

away from the geopolitical forces that shape it. Above the coffin, shown inside the White House, enjoying the advantage of their position and rank, are members of the military-industrial cabal manipulating international and national affairs to their financial gain. The central coffin is surrounded by many other coffins in a clock-like arrangement, from a pine box above to the coffins of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg below [and those of Bernard “Bunny” Ruck, and Martin Luther King]”.

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

Ralph Fasanella 1914 - 1997

Workers' Holiday — Coney Island 1965

New York City, New York

Oil on canvas

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Maurice and Margo Cohen

2002.1.1

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

Ralph Fasanella's New York City is a crowded, boisterous, diverse, hardworking, and hard playing place — a tough crust with a soft center. This canvas highlights Coney Island as an ideal of working-class culture. Fasanella's vision offers a happy jumble of people and amusements. The scene assumes a darker aspect as Coney Island's playful promise — a privileged escape — remains out of reach for many. The vista collapses three separate entities into a single and impossible frame: the city of tenements and churches on one side, the beach on the other, and the ocean in between.

Fasanella was raised in a largely Italian immigrant neighborhood, as his family struggled to make ends meet. He became highly political and advocated on behalf of labor unions. His mother urged him to funnel this passion, strong work ethic, and empathy with working-class values. In 1945, Fasanella began

to experience a tingling sensation in his hands. As a form of therapy, he began to draw and paint. In his minutely detailed yet increasingly monumental and sweeping scenes, he found a new outlet for his political activism and dreams of a fair shake for all in these blunt visual critiques of the United States after World War II.

Deborah Goldsmith 1808 - 1836

Mr. and Mrs. Lyman Day and Daughter Cornelia

c. 1823 - 1824

Sangerfield, New York

Watercolor and pencil on paper

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Ralph Esmerian

2013.1.9

In the early 20th century, a parcel of letters and an old leather traveling bag uncovered the history of Deborah Goldsmith, one of the few women in early 19th-century America to work professionally as an itinerant artist.

The letters detailed the intimate course of courtship, marriage, family, and untimely death. The old leather satchel revealed a number of cylindrical tin canisters holding small bladders filled with oil paints, little newspaper parcels containing powdered watercolor pigments, and handmade feather quill brushes — all artifacts of Goldsmith's unusual career.

Between 1824 and her marriage in 1832, the artist traveled among the towns and hamlets of Western New York creating portraits. Although the connection between the painter and the family of Lyman Day (1794 - 1874) is not known, Goldsmith knew most of the people whom she portrayed.

Social connections would have promoted word-of-mouth to secure future commissions.

This portrait was probably painted within a year or so of the birth of daughter Cornelia (1822 - 1904) to Lyman and Maria Preston Day (1803 - 1880) of Sangerfield, Oneida County. It is one of the earliest compositions known by the artist, who would have been only 15 or 16 years old at the time.

E. A. Hatch dates unknown

In Memory of the Bath School Tragedy 1928

Bath, Michigan

Pencil on wood

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Jacqueline Loewe Fowler

2019.9.4

In 1927, a man named Andrew Kehoe (1872 - 1927) perpetrated what remains the worst school massacre in American history when he murdered 38 schoolchildren and six adults, wounding 58 people in Bath, Michigan. This haunting and diminutive figure is a hand-carved replica of a cast bronze statue made to memorialize this event.

The small township of Bath had voted in 1922 to replace scattered one-room schools with a new, consolidated school district. Accordingly, an increase in property taxes was levied on local landowners; as a large property owner, Andrew Kehoe was heavily assessed. In 1924, he was elected to the school board as treasurer, arguing for lowering taxes and often placing himself at odds with other board members and the superintendent.

Kehoe's anger at the school continued to build over several years. Still, as an electrical engineer, he was sometimes called to assist with technical issues. For months, he had been secretly rigging the school's infrastructure with almost 1,000 pounds of

explosives. On the morning of May 18, 1927, he detonated the bombs. Although most of the dynamite failed to explode, the building's north wing was destroyed, and with it, many young lives.

Sallie Hathaway 1782 – 1851

Needlework Picture c. 1794

Probably Massachusetts or New York

Silk on silk

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Ralph Esmerian

2013.1.45

Needlework pictures like this one provide a window into the lives of early American girls whose experiences often went unrecorded in documentary archives. In the 18th and early 19th centuries, needlework ranked among the most important educational “accomplishments” for girls from well-to-do New England families. Through their hours of stitching, elementary- and high school-age needleworkers absorbed values of diligence and patience, in addition to more basic proficiencies of sewing, literacy, and numeracy—all skills that would have been considered essential to the formation of a productive and moral household, deemed to be at the center of any young girl’s future.

Sallie Hathaway was 12 years old when she created this ambitious picture. Although it is not known where the young girl was educated, a work of this complexity was likely stitched under the guidance of a ladies’ boarding school, perhaps in New York

City or Great Barrington, Massachusetts, where the Hathaway family spent part of their lives.

In her pictorial scene, the fashionably dressed figures, standing amidst flowers and rolling hills, evoke themes of abundance and delight common to many early needlework pictures. With the unusual feature of a trompe-l'œil drapery border, Hathaway has framed her work in a theatrical mode, registering her pride in her achievement.

Hosea Hayden 1820 – 1897

Folding Chair 1883 – 1896

Liberty, Indiana

Ink on horse chestnut, with rattan seat

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Abby and B.H. Friedman

1996.23.1

In 1883, Indiana farmer Hosea Hayden crafted his first chair to celebrate the 100th year of the “burth” of his father, Stephen. His craft also became his chosen forum to voice strong opinions and philosophies that were not always aligned with popular thought and the politics of the day.

Over the next number of years, Hayden made more than one dozen folding chairs with his own unique designs. In addition to their attenuated arthropod-like shapes and nervous energy, each of the chairs is a “journal,” defined by musings and drawings that Hayden incised into the legs, seats, backs, and undersides. The chairs must be manipulated through folding and unfolding to fully reveal lines of text and accompanying drawings that testify to his beliefs and observations.

Hayden often wrote in defense of equality and fairness and criticized blind followers of organized religion. In one chair, for instance, Hayden noted, **“Shame on Christian USA, where males are tyrants**

and knaves. / Treat females little better than slaves.”

The inscriptions on this chair include the sentiments:

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

Luke Haynes b. 1982

[Self-Portrait #7] Over Here 2013

Seattle, Washington and Los Angeles, California

Fabric, batting, and thread

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of the artist with funds from Moda, Accuquilt,
and

American Folk Art Museum purchase

2013.2.1

Luke Haynes knitted and crocheted for years before he attempted his first quilt portraits during college. These portraits were inspired by a box of fabric squares and Chuck Close's artworks. An architect by training, Haynes is comfortable with volume and perspective. As seen in this quilt, he uses this knowledge and expands it using the anamorphic technique to create illusions of space and add three-dimensionality. Haynes's approach introduces a foreground and background but no middle ground, forging what he terms a "collaboration" with his long-arm sewing machine, an accomplishment that he cannot achieve by hand.

Materiality is privileged in Haynes's work; he uses hundreds of pounds worth of fabrics, all processed from recycled clothing that he buys from Goodwill. He breaks these items into their constituent parts by cutting off the waistbands, cuffs, and other finishing elements. In this sense, each quilt is a

distillation of the randomness of these clothing lots, and each portrait is a Golem of sorts, made from something that had existed before and into which Haynes has breathed new life.

Edward Hicks 1780 - 1849

The Peaceable Kingdom 1829 - 1831

Newtown, Pennsylvania

Oil on canvas, in original painted wood frame

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Carroll and Donna Janis

2013.3.1

When Quaker artist Edward Hicks was 21 years old, he opened his own painting business. However, he was soon discouraged by the Society of Friends from pursuing worldly topics in his easel art.

Beginning between 1816 and 1818, Hicks found expression instead in the Peaceable Kingdom theme described in the Bible, a subject that gave visual representation to a core belief of the Quaker faith, denying one's base nature for the glory of God. In Isaiah 11:16, the Bible prophesies a vision of the resulting peace: "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."

Hicks' innate nature was passionate. He was anguished over rifts within the Society of Friends, which by 1827 had divided Quakers into two groups — the conservative Hicksites, named after Hicks's elderly cousin Elias Hicks (1748 - 1830), and the Orthodox, who advocated formal structure in

worship. The artist's distress at this fracture was palpable in his continual repetition of the Peaceable Kingdom theme, which he painted in 62 variations over more than three decades.

Jesse Howard 1885 – 1983

Free Thought and Free Speech! 1976

Fulton, Missouri

Paint on wood with metal frame

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Chuck and Jan Rosenak

1980.3.10

Jesse Howard left home at a young age and led a peripatetic life of odd jobs. By the early 1940s, he purchased a house and 20 acres of farmland in Fulton, Missouri. Here, he started to use the vernacular idiom of sign painting as a potent means of expressing his commentary on the state of the country, the world, and his own life.

Free Thought and Free Speech! was constructed in bitterness towards the end of Howard's life. For almost 40 years, he had been venting his religious injunctions and diatribes against government, authority, and personal slights on hundreds of hand-painted signs that he posted on his property in plain sight to the dismay of his neighbors. His signs were repeatedly vandalized, and he was harassed to the point of an unsuccessful campaign to have him institutionalized.

In this work, Howard stubbornly asserts his right to free speech and his thoughts. There is a note of

pain in his declamations; his sense of abandonment is implicit through the sacred verses he has chosen. Howard uses the medieval calligraphic device of a manicule, an icon of a pointing finger, to emphasize certain words and phrases that signal his deep hurt at his community's rejection of him: "Truth; forgotten me; [they whom I] loved have turned against me."

Clementine Hunter 1886/1887 - 1988

Playing Cards 1970

Natchitoches, Louisiana

Oil on canvas board

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Mildred Hart Bailey / Clementine Hunter Art Trust

1996.1.2

Clementine Hunter brought truth and dignity to the everyday activities of a rural southern agricultural lifestyle that was rapidly fading into history. In her largely matriarchal world, industrious women run the engine of life. This joyful painting represents a rare moment of leisure for the women in Hunter's work, more typically seen engaged in washing, fishing, or food preparation.

Hunter knew such scenes intimately from the inside. She was born into a Louisianan Creole family on Hidden Hill Plantation along the Cane River. Here the family continued the fieldwork of picking cotton and pecans that their enslaved grandparents had done. When Hunter was a teenager, they moved to Melrose Plantation in Natchitoches. By the time she arrived, it was already something of an artist's colony, known for its support of artists in multiple disciplines.

Sometime in the 1940s, Hunter tried her hand at “marking,” using some oil paint tubes that had been left behind. She went on to paint thousands of pictures, mostly in the evening hours when she was finished with work. She earned recognition for her art during her lifetime, eventually needing to distinguish idle visitors from art buyers with an admission charge of 25 cents just to look.

Elizabeth Layton 1909 - 1993

Mona Lisa 1978

Kansas

Pencil and colored pencil on paper

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Mr. Don Lambert

2014.16.2

Artmaking as a restorative act knows no boundaries of age, time, or place. For Elizabeth Layton, a 68-year-old Kansas homemaker, it was a lifesaver. Diagnosed with bipolar disorder and deep depression, Layton was introduced to the technique of blind contour drawing in an art class at the local university. Despite the challenges she faced each day, Layton's approach to artistic self-examination was uncompromising. In her drawings, she objectively contemplated her own life, circumstances, strengths, and weaknesses. Layton commented on the pressures of family, politics, poverty, morality, history, religion, and feminism; art provided a platform that gave rise to a newfound confidence and passion.

In this self-portrait as **Mona Lisa**, Layton poses as Leonardo da Vinci's model, surrounded by personal objects, such as perfume, glasses, dental implants, and a corset. The drawing includes references to the four-act play **What Every Woman Knows** by J. M. Barrie, first produced in

1908, and the album cover of Jim Nabors's **For the Good Times**, released in 1980.

Harry Lieberman 1880 - 1983

Two Dreamers c. 1966

Great Neck, New York

Oil on canvas

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of David L. Davies

2008.4.15

Harry Lieberman was born in the Polish *shtetl* of Gniewoszków. He was raised according to the tenets of Hasidism, an ecstatic practice of Judaism founded in the 18th century by the Baal Shem Tov. In 1906, Lieberman immigrated to the United States, fleeing the hardships and violence of Jewish life in Russian Poland. In New York City, he adopted a largely secular lifestyle, working in textile trading and operating a candy store on the Lower East Side.

In **Two Dreamers**, which portrays a Hasid and a secular Jew, Lieberman reflected on the path he followed in his spiritual life and as an immigrant to America. On the one hand, he found his “paradise” in the successful life that he made for himself and his family, and he created his “hereafter” through the legacy of paintings that he completed before his death at the age of 103. A close reading of this painting, however, reveals the artist’s ambivalence: The area around the secular philosopher is dry and bare of any leaves, and the flower growing behind

him is the only indication of a fruitful life. In contrast, the Hasid is surrounded by green, fertile, flowering trees and watched by angels. In Lieberman's words, "You got to have both in yourself, philosopher and dreamer. Use your will to improve your life here, and keep up your home. This is how heaven helps you."

Jacob Maentel 1778 - ?

Amelia and Eliza Danner c. 1815

Hanover, Pennsylvania

Watercolor, gouache, ink, and pencil on paper

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Ralph Esmerian

2005.8.4

Jacob Maentel was a German immigrant who served in the Pennsylvania Militia and was naturalized soon after his discharge in 1815. Between 1807 and 1846, Maentel painted more than 200 watercolor portraits of neighbors in southeastern Pennsylvania and Harmony, Indiana.

With this double portrait of Amelia (1811 – 1877) and Eliza Danner (c. 1809 – 1886), Maentel employed a favorite compositional technique of placing two sitters face-to-face. He would further develop this specific visual device in his later portraits of married couples, depicting each spouse on a separate sheet of paper. Here, the symmetry of the girls' positions evokes the intimacy of their family connection, the physical gap between their bodies bridged visually by their outstretched hands and by the presence of a lively cluster of roosters.

Amelia and Eliza Danner were descended from Michael Danner, a prominent figure in the early

history of Hanover, Pennsylvania. Amelia married Jacob Wirt (1801 – 1869), noted by historians for his involvement in the Underground Railroad. Eliza never married, and census records show her living with her sister's family as an adult, suggesting the closeness of their relationship. Amelia and her husband named one of their daughters Eliza. Both sisters are buried in Mount Olivet Cemetery in Hanover.

Clara J. Martin 1882 – 1968

Presidents Quilt 1964

Mount Clemens, Michigan

Wool with painted canvas appliqué and cotton embroidery

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Marta Amundson; great-granddaughter of Clara J. Martin

2015.2.1

A banner across this quilt proudly proclaims “Clara J. Martin Age 82 July 14, 1964.” Martin had a hard life. She received little formal education and had no occupational training. After her husband was incapacitated and no longer able to work, she took to tailoring, alterations, and mending, and anything else she could do from home to support her family. Between 1916 and 1919, she is listed among the charitable recipients for boarding up to two children.

Her hardships did not prevent her engagement and participation in the democratic process. Her unique textile is constructed in the irregular crazy quilt fashion, popular when Martin was born in 1882. It includes portraits, hand-painted on canvas, of the 35 presidents who held office until 1964. Martin herself had lived through 15 presidential cycles and was eligible to vote in 10 of those elections after women earned the vote in 1919.

Sister Gertrude Morgan 1900 - 1980

New Jerusalem c. 1970

New Orleans, Louisiana

Acrylic and tempera on cardboard

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Sanford Smith and Patricia Smith

1986.21.1

Paradise a name apparently denoting heaven

Luke 23:45 – Sister Gertrude Morgan

In 1939, Sister Gertrude Morgan received a divine message directing her to leave the social norms of family, husband, job, and travel to Alabama and Louisiana to do God's work. Now self-identified as "Sister," Morgan arrived in New Orleans without any premeditated plans trusting in the Lord to show her the way. She joined forces with two women, Mother Margaret Parker and Sister Cora Williams, and together they operated a small chapel and childcare center. Morgan began to make the word of God manifest through brilliant amalgams of word and image captured in paint and pen on whatever materials were at hand. If there was no paper or cardboard, she would embellish fans, window shades, Styrofoam trays, and other unorthodox materials.

Morgan began painting numerous versions of John the Apostle's apocalyptic vision of the New Jerusalem around 1966. She often included

depictions of herself, recognizable through her white clothes. In this work, she portrays herself as the teacher or narrator of the events described in the Book of Revelation, which she holds in her hand. Morgan fills all the spaces around pictorial elements with copious biblical texts. At the lower right are the righteous risen who will join the savior in the new city: “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed,” 1 Cor. 15:51–52.

Anna Mary Robertson “Grandma” Moses
1860 – 1961

Dividing of the Ways 1947

Eagle Bridge, New York

Oil and tempera on Masonite

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Galerie St. Etienne, New York, in memory of
Otto Kallir

1983.10.1

One of 10 children, Anna Mary Robertson “Grandma” Moses was born on a rural farm in upstate New York. Her life was split between the 19th and the 20th century, encompassing the Civil War, the Reconstruction Era, the dawn of a new century, and two world wars. Informed by this remarkable timespan, her art is quietly and slyly subversive, representing the founding values of an America that existed largely in the mythos of invention and imagination while also hinting at harsh truths that lie beneath the nostalgia.

There is a disquieting undertone to this snowy scene that evokes the well-known poem **The Road Not Taken** by Robert Frost (1874 – 1963), whose life span is not dissimilar from Moses’s own. A large hearse-like sled with a single male figure diverges along a path that originates from and encircles a center of cheerful activity. Here, the landscape is dotted with the deep green of fir trees; residents

stand before their homes, cut firewood, walk dogs, and ride sleds. However, there are no people on this fork in the road. The trees have lost their leaves, and the landscape is spare and unoccupied. The lonely figure seems to be leaving life and all its connections behind on this road “less traveled by.”

Northhampton County (or Bird-in-the-Hand) Artist
Taufschein for Johannes Dottere c. 1831

Probably Chestnut Hill Township, Pennsylvania

Watercolor and ink on paper

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Ralph Esmerian

2013.1.32

Produced in Pennsylvania German communities and other areas where Germanic families migrated, embellished texts known as **fraktur** testify to the retention of cultural traditions even as immigrants traveled far from home. In Europe, fraktur works were accepted as legal documentation of births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths. They continued to fulfill a similar function in America when they were submitted as proof of birth with applications for military pensions in the post-revolutionary period.

Fraktur takes a variety of forms, from birth and baptismal certificates to house blessings, rewards of merit for students, love tokens, and small gifts. Pastors and schoolmasters produced the majority of these documents, which shared a cohesive visual language with other American Germanic decorative arts. In a convention derived from illuminated manuscripts, the symbolic and narrative pictures frequently accompanied texts, such as a biblical verse or a proverb. This example colorfully embodies the adage, “A bird in the hand is worth

two in the bush” — a saying that gave this unidentified artist his nickname.

Ellen Ogden 1795 – 1870

Ogden Family Mourning Piece 1813

Probably Litchfield, Connecticut

Watercolor and ink on silk, with original reverse-painted eglomisé mat in original gilded wood frame

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Ralph Esmerian

2013.1.42

Ellen Ogden created this mourning piece in 1813 when she was 12 years old. Standing back from her parents, who are absorbed in their grief, Ogden represents herself as the only surviving child among the graves of her six siblings. Her work poignantly captures the realities of mortality in early American life, memorializing childhood deaths that were at once staggering and common.

Based on its similarities to other documented works, Ogden's mourning piece may have been made at Sarah Pierce's Litchfield Female Academy. This innovative school was located more than 50 miles northwest of the Ogdens' home in coastal Fairfield, Connecticut. Attendance would have required young Ellen to board in town, perhaps with a local family, as was common among students. The level of independence and composure required for such a journey speaks to the high expectations for a child's maturity during this period.

John Jacob Omenhausser 1832 – 1877

Sketchbook: Point Lookout Prison c. 1864 – 1865

Point Lookout, Maryland

Ink and watercolor on paper with leather binding

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Ralph Esmerian

2013.1.40

In June 1864, Confederate soldier John Jacob Omenhausser was captured near Petersburg, Virginia, and transferred to the infamous Union prison camp at Point Lookout in Maryland. By occupation, he was a candymaker, but at heart, Omenhausser was a journalist. In a series of sketchbooks, Omenhausser documented events and situations as he wryly observed them. The quick drawings create a firsthand record that gives insight into the dynamics of daily life within the camp.

Point Lookout was intended to hold 10,000 prisoners. However, that number soon doubled, adding to the misery of inadequate shelter, lack of clothing, blankets, rations, and acts of violence perpetrated on the inmates by the guards. Still, inmates were allowed to fish on the bay to augment their meals, and a few received money and amenities from family members.

Omenhausser may have received such extras from his northern relatives, allowing him to procure

paper, watercolors, pen, and ink. He may also have used his sketchbooks as a medium of exchange with Union officers as the extant examples are inscribed to camp overseers. Omenhausser was imprisoned at Point Lookout for nearly a year, through June 1865, when he took the requisite oath of allegiance and was released.

Lureca Outland 1904 - 2008

Wedding Ring Interpretation Quilt 1991

Boligee, Alabama

Cotton, wool, and synthetics

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Museum purchase made possible in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, with matching funds from The Great American Quilt Festival 3

1991.13.5

Lureca Outland was 104 years old when she died in 2008. Although she lived long enough to glimpse the hope of America's first African American presidential candidate, she was born early enough to experience the aftermath of the Reconstruction Era while growing up in and around Boligee, Greene County, Alabama.

Outland was raised in a log house without electricity. She worked in the cotton fields for 75 cents a day; formal schooling was only possible when the harvest was done. She learned to quilt as a youngster: "I quilted the tops my mother pieced. Some were filled with cotton left from ginning; others were filled with worn-out clothing...We would piece up pants and dress pieces. Those quilts were not fancy like they are now. We used to piece up strip quilts. My mother knew some pattern quilts."

It was not until Outland's five children were grown that she was able to fully explore her creativity in patterns that are often riffs on traditional blocks. Her colorful variation on the well-known double-wedding ring quilt pattern makes use of squares and straight lines rather than circles.

Emma Rebecca Cummins Blacklock Snively Crosier Pauling 1848 - 1923

Crazy Trousseau Robe 1882 - 1900

Possibly McCammon, Idaho

Silk and lace, with silk cording and metallic and silk embroidery

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of the family of Emma K. Lentz

1990.8.1

This trim and elegant robe, pieced in the crazy patchwork that was popular during the last quarter of the 19th century, was made by an unusual woman whose life was as irregular as the patches that she expertly stitched together. Emma Rebecca Cummins lived variously in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Utah, Wyoming, and Idaho. She married four times, braved life on the frontiers, and became one of the first women telegraphers in the American West.

At the age of 14, Cummins married a French Canadian named Blacklock, who treated his child bride so cruelly that his own family paid for her return from Canada to Pennsylvania. With her second husband, Dr. George Snively, Emma moved to Utah, where she was hired as a telegrapher by the Western Union Company.

However, stability was short-lived: in 1874, "Doc" Snively was killed in a bar brawl. It is unknown when Emma married her third husband, but in 1880, she

was divorced and back in Pennsylvania. In 1893, Emma married for the fourth and last time. In the intervening years, she returned to Utah, where she served as a cashier and a postmaster.

In 1900, after a life of adventure, lived mostly on her own terms, Emma Cummins Blacklock Snively Crosier Pauling died at home in Pennsylvania with her family at the age of 75.

Sheldon Peck 1797 – 1868

Increase Child Bosworth and Abigail Munro

Bosworth Simonds 1840

Dundee, Illinois

Oil on canvas

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of the families of Abbie Louise Bosworth

Williams and Eleanora Bosworth Black

2016.3.1, 2

Increase Child Bosworth (1812 – 1888) and Abigail Munro Bosworth Simonds (1809 – 1883) descended from a family with deep roots in the American colonies. The siblings were born in Greenfield, New York; however, as did many families in the early years of the 19th century, they migrated west, settling in the pioneer communities of Illinois.

A successful merchant and banker, Increase was also remembered as a fond and playful grandfather and his sister Abigail as a gentle, loving presence. Both were portrayed by the artist Sheldon Peck, who, like the Bosworths, had migrated from western New York State. The portraits feature magnificent trompe-l'œil frames directly painted on canvas. This was a visual device that Peck used for a finished effect without the additional cost of the framing. The portraits were painted just after the new technology of photography was introduced

into America, ultimately replacing painted likenesses.

In addition to his painting activities, Peck was an influential and proactive member of his community. He hired the first schoolmistress to operate out of the summer kitchen of the Peck farmhouse and was also an ardent abolitionist whose home was a station on the Underground Railroad.

Sheldon Peck 1797 – 1868

David and Catherine Stolp Crane c. 1845

Aurora, Illinois

Oil on canvas

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Ralph Esmerian

2013.1.17

The Stolps and the Cranes were families of Dutch descent living in rural New York in the early 19th century. Attracted by tales of fertile lands and deep forests, they migrated west, where they would be counted among the pioneer families of Aurora, Illinois, in 1834, the year the town was first settled.

Almost a decade later, the Cranes commissioned this impressive family portrait. They hired a local artist, Sheldon Peck, who had also migrated from western New York, thus sharing their experience, culture, and values.

Although photography was available by this time, painted portraiture still held a level of cachet, a measure of success that the daguerreotype could not yet claim. Further, an artist like Peck could offer the luxury of scale and color befitting such a significant venture while still borrowing the modern aesthetic of the studio photographic portrait. Additionally, the grain-painted trompe-l'œil frame provided a finished portrait that was ready to hang without further expense.

John Perates 1895 - 1970

Saint Matthew 1938 - 1970

Portland, Maine

Paint and varnish on wood

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Robert Bishop

1992.10.6

John Perates 1895 - 1970

Saint John 1938 - 1970

Portland, Maine

Paint and varnish on wood

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin C. Braman

1983.12.1

John W. Perates was born in the Greek town of Dardio (renamed Amfiklia in 1915), near the ancient city of Delphi. He learned woodworking skills from his grandfather, who also taught him to read and write. In 1912, Perates arrived in New York, and from there, he made his way to Portland, Maine.

These two panels depict Saint Matthew and Saint John, authors of the Gospels. The carved frames introduce decorative elements from New England moldings. Still, the flattened scheme, set within an arched architectural space under the canopy of heaven, is similar to carved ivories from Eastern orthodoxy. Perates retains many of the conventions

of Byzantine icons. Usually carved in relief, rather than as fully dimensional sculptures, each element was canonical and highly symbolic, including personal attribute, pose, and appearance.

Saints Matthew and John are depicted as scribes, each holding a quill pen used to inscribe the book of truth lying upon a writing stand. The men are bathed in the light of the all-seeing eye of God as they engage in His work. The images include the attributes associated with each figure: the winged man of Matthew and the Eagle of John. The crosses bear the Greek letters Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, referring to God's assertion in Revelation.

Nan Phelps 1904 - 1990

Finishing the Quilt 1980

Hamilton, Ohio

Oil on canvas

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Robert Phelps in loving memory of his wife,

Nan Phelps

1992.18.1

Nan Phelps contemplates the humble beauty and familiarity of a scene enacted innumerable times through generations of women. Gathered around a quilting frame, confident and competent, women of all ages form a circle of community whose continuity is ensured by the presence of a young pregnant woman. It is difficult not to draw comparisons with Grandma Moses, whose memory paintings of an earlier generation evoked similar emotions of an enduring yet changing landscape.

The serenity and constancy of the scene belie the harsh narrative of Phelps's own life. The second of 11 children and born into an impoverished family in Kentucky, she was forced to leave school after the eighth grade to care for her brothers and sisters. She entered into an abusive marriage at age 15 and, after three years, fled with her two children to Hamilton, Ohio. In 1929, she met and married her second husband, Robert Phelps, and bore three children. Phelps began to paint during the 1930s

and gained recognition in the post-war years of the 1940s. Like Grandma Moses, her expressive scenes revealed the small pleasures of the everyday and provided a sense of calm stability in turbulent times.

Ammi Phillips 1788 – 1865

Three Children of Henry Joslen Carter 1860

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

Oil on canvas

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Cynthia K. Easterling in honor of her
grandmother Grace E. Carter

2012.5.1

Rural portraitist Ammi Phillips painted for more than five decades, from the years of the young United States to the aftermath of the Civil War. Responding over time to his patron's shifting desires, the artist's work gave visual form to the expanding aspirations of land-owning families, living primarily in the border areas of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York.

This picture portrays the three children of Henry Joslen Carter, the descendant of a prominent local family who ran a small boarding school for boys in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Depicted here in an unusual triple portrait, Anna Electa, Mary Adele, and John Calvin Calhoun Carter are presented as dignified yet fresh-faced, capturing their youth's promise and the closeness of their family ties.

Beneath the surface of the painting are traces of more melancholic histories: not pictured is another son, Thomas, born to the Carters in 1852 but no longer living at the time of the portrait. In addition,

according to family history, Anna Electa Carter was born with a cleft palate, only barely discernible in the contours of her face. Despite the prejudices associated with physical differences during this period, she would marry and have three children of her own.

William Matthew Prior 1806 - 1873

Heavenly Children c. 1850

Probably Massachusetts

Oil on board

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Valerie and Robert Goldfein

2016.18.1

William Matthew Prior is best known for a reductive approach to portraiture, accommodating the finances of his individual clients through a sliding price scale. Prior had the proven ability to paint formal, academic portraits for those who had the means and desire; for a reduced fee, he also created the spontaneous and gestural portraits for which he is most admired and recognized today.

Prior was a man of strong beliefs, among them the ability to make meaningful contact with the deceased. The artist was no stranger to death, having lost his first wife and six of their children. About 1850, he began to paint portraits from "spirit effect," including his brother, Barker, who had perished at sea in 1815.

There was already a strongly established tradition of posthumous portraiture painted based on corpses or from memory. However, Prior promised a true likeness of loved ones painted from the actual spirit of the deceased. This portrait uses the trope of heavenly clouds that was popular in

portraits of deceased children. Such references helped grieving parents to hold strong in their belief that their child's innocence earned them a reward in the world to come, and that their spirits would be accepted into the kingdom of heaven.

Martín Ramírez 1895 – 1963
(Horse and Rider) c. 1948 – 1963
Auburn, California
Crayon and pencil on pieced paper
American Folk Art Museum, New York
Gift of David L. Davies and Jack Weeden
2013.4.1

A struggling rancher from Jalisco, Martín Ramírez moved to the United States in 1925 in search of better work opportunities, leaving his wife and children behind. He found jobs working for the railroad, but the Great Depression left him unemployed and homeless. Ramírez was arrested in Sacramento in 1931 and spent the last 32 years of his life in various mental hospitals — notably, at the Dewitt State Hospital from 1948 until his death in 1963.

Ramírez began drawing in the mid-1930s, but his 450 surviving works were created mainly during the period from 1950 to 1956. Though he used some conventional materials such as crayons, watercolor, and ink, he also crafted mixtures with crushed crayons and colored pencils, pink matchstick heads, charcoal (from used matchsticks), and shoe polish, all diluted with fruit juices, saliva, and sometimes phlegm. His

fastidious technique shows that the process of making was essential for him.

Ramírez's oeuvre features repetitive motifs including his signature wave-like lines or stripes, hypnotic and vibrant in their illusion of depth, space, and movement. He also depicted multiple horses and riders, as well as trains emerging from tunnels, boats, trucks, and cars — means of transportation that suggest a desire to escape the immobility of his hospitalization.

John Rasmussen 1828 – 1895

John Van Reed Evans Homestead and Farmscape

c. 1879 – 1886

Berks County, Pennsylvania

Oil on zinc-plated tin

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Ralph Esmerian

2005.8.15

In the last quarter of the 19th century, the idyllic world portrayed in this scene presents a snapshot of Berks County, Pennsylvania, capturing the bustle of modern transportation alongside the traditional seasonal activities of a prosperous working farm and its beautiful patchwork of fields.

John Rasmussen, the artist of this composite vision, was living in very different circumstances when he painted this optimistic scene. He had traveled to the United States from his native Germany in 1865 and found work as a painter and house painter in Reading, Pennsylvania. However, on June 5, 1879, widowed, crippled with rheumatism, and debilitated by chronic alcohol abuse, Rasmussen was committed to the Berks County Almshouse, where he would live out the rest of his life.

While in residence, Rasmussen put his professional skills to use by painting scenes of the almshouse and other local landscapes. In these works, he

closely followed the prototype innovated by Charles C. Hoffmann (1820 - 1882), a fellow German immigrant who overlapped in residence at the almshouse with Rasmussen for a few years before Hoffmann's death.

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

Polly Ann (Jane) Reed 1818 - 1881

Gift Drawing: A Reward of True Faithfulness

From Mother Lucy To Eleanor Potter 1848

New Lebanon, New York

Watercolor and ink on paper

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Ralph Esmerian

2013.1.52

Many communal societies have been established in the United States, but none have been as significant or enduring as the Shakers. The first Shakers left England for America in 1774, under the charismatic leadership of Mother Ann Lee (1736 - 1784).

Followers viewed Lee as “Holy Mother Wisdom,” the female aspect of the duality of God accepted by the Shaker faith.

Receptiveness to vision and prophecy was fundamental to the Shakers’ beliefs. Gift drawings, like this one, were manifested at a time of growing doubt, as the first generation of Shaker leaders had died, and the new generations had lost touch with the source of belief and inspiration.

Beginning in 1837, an intense religious revival swept through the Shaker villages. During this period, visionary phenomena — including messages, songs, dances, and drawings — were received and recognized as “gifts,” believed to be sent by deceased Shaker elders, celestial beings, and

others. A little more than 200 gift drawings survive, all but a few the work of women at the Shaker villages in New Lebanon, New York, and Hancock, Massachusetts. Polly Ann (Jane) Reed made at least 27 such drawings over the course of an 11-year period.

Nellie Mae Rowe 1900 – 1982
**Untitled (Nellie Mae in Her Garden or
Conversation II)** 1979

Vinings, Georgia

Crayon, felt-tip marker, pen, and watercolor on
paper

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Judith Alexander

1997.1.8

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

Nellie Mae Rowe was a brilliant traveler of the imagination whose inner eye contemplated a lush world teeming with saturated color, organic flowing forms, and spiritual reverberations. Her father was a basketmaker and ironworker, and her mother was a quiltmaker. Rowe's own artistic nature was evident early in life when, as a child, she fashioned dolls from the family's laundry.

A devout woman, Rowe was married at 16, later widowed, and remarried. She was employed much of her life as a domestic worker. After the death of her second husband, Henry Rowe, she began to embellish her home and yard — her “playhouse” —

with sculptures, drawings, and hand-made dolls to dispel the encroaching loneliness. She used conventional and unorthodox materials such as chewing gum, clothing remnants and T-shirts, wigs, costume jewelry, Magic Markers, and jewel-tone crayons.

Rowe's works in the last years of her life hint at her impending death. There is a sense of freedom — or escape — from pain and worldly considerations as Rowe strives to rise above her physical self or nestle within her spiritual doppelgänger. At the end of her life, Rowe's mood evolved from puzzlement and worry to acceptance and even joy at the prospect of entering a wonderful "promised land."

Jean-Marcel St. Jacques b. 1972

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

New Orleans, Louisiana

Wood, nails, and antique hardware on a plywood backing

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Jean-Marcel St. Jacques, LLC

2014.18.2

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

Jean-Marcel St. Jacques is a 12th-generation Afro-Creole. St. Jacques was raised in Richmond, California, a small city in the Bay area, where many black families like his own settled after they fled Louisiana and Texas to escape racial oppression between the 1940s and 1970s. Sixteen years ago, St. Jacques returned to Louisiana inspired to reconnect with the land of his ancestors.

In the wake of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, St. Jacques began to make art with wood salvaged from his damaged home in the Tremé, a New Orleans neighborhood. Many of his pieces take the form of “wooden quilts,” patchwork constructions of strips of wood reclaiming and transforming the stories of those lives touched by Katrina.

According to the artist:

My great-grandmother made patchwork quilts.

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

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

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

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

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

Kevin Sampson b. 1954

Blue Meat 2000

Newark, New Jersey

Mixed media with found objects and bone

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Evelyn S. Meyer

2005.10.5

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

Sampson entered the Scotch Plains, New Jersey, police force as an officer and then a detective. Here he became the first African American uniformed police composite sketch artist in the country. In

1993, Sampson moved to Newark, left the police, and devoted himself to reclaiming his identity through alternative means: artmaking. He began to use the material of urban decay in artmaking, which became an act of healing for him. Now a retired police officer living in Newark, Sampson continues to collect ephemera and discarded objects from the streets to create sculptural portraits, memorials, and tributes, as well as monumental and powerful expressions of social action against the sacrifice of humanity in the cogs of corporate America.

John “Jack” Savitsky 1910 – 1991

Monday Morning 1966

Lansford, Pennsylvania

Oil on board

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Arnold Fuchs

1978.8.2

As the pre-dawn light fills the sky, a line of men makes the long trek to the anthracite coal mines that were the mainstay of the Pennsylvania economy. They carry their lunch, water in tin pails, and pickaxes to pry coal from the underground. Each figure has visored headgear with a lamp and a heavy blue uniform that affords protection from the chill and dank. The men were loaded into carts on tracks and lowered into the depths of the mine, where they labored for hours, mindful of trapped gases and other dangers.

John “Jack” Savitsky was born in Silver Creek, Pennsylvania. Like his father, he worked in the mines for 35 years, starting as a slate picker at 12 and graduating to the mines at 15. Savitsky attended public school through the sixth grade. His years in the mines took their toll; he developed black lung, emphysema, diabetes, and heart disease. When the mine closed in 1969, he retired and started to draw and paint the deceptively cheerful and cartoonlike autobiographical scenes.

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

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

Judith Scott 1943 – 2005

Untitled (Pink Figure) c. 1990s

Oakland, California

Yarn and Fabric with unknown armature

American Folk Art Museum

Gift of Creative Growth Art Center, Oakland,

California

2002.21.3

One night, in Columbus, Ohio, inseparable seven-year-old twins Joyce and Judith Scott fell asleep “curled together, like soft spoons” in the bed that they shared. In the morning, Judith was inexplicably gone, and Joyce was alone. In 1950, there were few options available to families who had children with developmental disabilities. Judith — born with Down Syndrome and, unknown to her family, also deaf — was sent to a state institution where the conditions were deplorable, and indifference was extreme.

Remarkably, Judith Scott survived in this environment for 35 years before her now-adult sister was able to take guardianship of her. Joyce brought her beloved twin to live with her in California, where she enrolled Judith in Oakland’s Creative Growth Arts Center, founded to encourage creative expression among those who were intellectually, physically, or developmentally disabled.

Judith Scott was not responsive until 1987 when visiting fiber artist Sylvia Seventy opened a new world of color, tactility, and communication. Until she died at the age of 62 — entwined in her sister's arms — Scott devoted hours each day to knotting, webbing, weaving, and wrapping, using various fibers and materials. Her vital, cocoon-like works seem on the verge of metamorphosing into some remarkable life form, yet they will forever remain timeless, totemic, and inscrutable.

Lorenzo Scott b. 1934

The Dining Room Lady 1990

Atlanta, Georgia

Oil on canvas

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Harvie and Charles Abney

2017.17.1

Formal rooms for dining were introduced during the 19th century and represented a family's taste and attainment. So-called dining room pictures, still life paintings of overflowing fruit and flowers, became popular as symbols of comfort. Lorenzo Scott's **The Dining Room Lady** relies on that history of association for the qualities of refinement that he wishes to bestow upon this beautiful woman with golden eyes. He uses his conversance with early Western European art traditions to evoke queenly attributes: the neck ruff, jeweled headband, and gold-encrusted gown. His knowledge of Elizabethan, Renaissance, and Baroque art was not gleaned through formal study but rather through his keen observations of art in museums and books. He also experimented with available materials to learn to layer and glaze.

Scott was born in West Point, Georgia. His family, devout Southern Baptists, moved to Atlanta when he was an infant. During the 1960s, he moved to New York City, where he frequently visited the

Metropolitan Museum of Art and enjoyed the work of sidewalk artists in Greenwich Village. When he returned to Atlanta around 1970, he supported himself as a construction worker and house painter. He began to paint, incorporating the religious and historical themes and visual and technical approaches that he so admired.

Ruth Whittier Shute 1803 - 1882

Dr. Samuel Addison Shute 1803 - 1836

Frederick Buxton c.1831

Lowell, Massachusetts

Watercolor, gouache, pencil, and ink on paper with applied gold foil

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Ralph Esemmerian

2005.8.6

The year this watercolor was made, the recently incorporated mill town of Lowell, Massachusetts, was just at the beginning of an astounding period of growth, at the center of the United States' rapid industrialization. Within this bustling atmosphere, a widowed mother, Phebe Buxton, found the means to support her young family by keeping a local boarding house. Although our knowledge of their biographies is limited, we can be sure that the lives of Buxton and her children — including six-year-old Frederick — would have been shaped by the daily activities of the mill and the resident mill workers, many of them young women experiencing independence for the first time.

The faces of some of these young women, as well as those of Phebe and Frederick Buxton, might have gone entirely unrecorded, but for the work Ruth Whittier and Dr. Samuel Addison Shute, who offered their reasonably priced services as itinerant

portraitists to the ready markets of booming mill towns like Lowell. The married couple formed an unusual artistic collaboration. Their respective roles in this partnership are indicated on a small number of portraits inscribed: “Drawn by R.W. Shute / and / Painted by S.A. Shute.” A handwritten note discovered inside a Lowell directory indicates that Samuel Shute lived at the Buxton boarding house in the 1830s, providing a likely context for Frederick Buxton’s portrait.

Daniel Steele dates unknown

Tunebook 1821

Eastern United States

Watercolor and ink on paper

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Museum purchase with partial funds provided by Becky and Bob Alexander, Lucy and Mike Danziger, Jane and Gerald Katcher, Donna and Marvin Schwartz, Kristy and Steve Scott, and an anonymous donor

2014.1.1

The name Daniel Steele is inscribed in this remarkable illustrated and illuminated tunebook. Although Steele has not been identified, based on the psalm tunes contained in these pages, he was of Scotch-Irish heritage. The tunebook contains 10 of the 12 traditional tunes used in the 1650 Scottish Psalter, the metrical version of the psalms in which singing constituted a primary feature.

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

This booklet includes several drawings that apparently derive from English and Irish sources, such as a depiction of Springhill Castle in Ireland. Another page illustrates the “Moon and Seven Stars,” which may refer to the jig tune played by American patriots as they burned a British warship in the harbor of Warwick, Rhode Island, in 1772. A page of particular note shows a figure in the guise of a plague doctor, wearing the characteristic mask in the form of a beaked bird and carrying a scythe, a symbol of death.

Ionel Talpazan 1955 - 2015

Untitled 1994

New York, New York

Marker on paper

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of the artist

1994.8.2

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

In 1987, Talpazan escaped Romania by swimming across the Danube into what was then Yugoslavia. He lived in a refugee camp in Belgrade, operated by the United Nations, and was eventually granted asylum in the United States, becoming a citizen shortly before his death in 2015. Talpazan struggled in New York, finding it difficult to make ends meet, sometimes living on the street or in subsidized

housing. But his vision and mission endured such obstacles. A seeker and traveler, Talpazan used his art to ponder the universe: “My art shows spiritual technology, something beautiful and beyond human imagination, that comes from another galaxy.”

Luis Tapia b. 1950

Noah's Ark 1976

Santa Fe, New Mexico

Cottonwood and paint

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Elizabeth F. Wecter, Animal Carnival, Inc.

1985.20.37

Born and raised in a small rural area just outside of Santa Fe, Luis Tapia taught himself how to carve wood by looking to the traditional religious figures known as *santos*. As he developed creatively, Tapia went beyond the typical forms of saints and angels to explore other themes, including this brightly decorated Noah's Ark, made when he was in his mid-20s. Still sculpting today, the artist's range has expanded to encompass human figures, objects, and vignettes. Fusing aspects of tradition with a contemporary sensibility, and combining expressions of humor and dignity, many of his works investigate Chicano identity.

In discussing his career, Tapia notes that he was inspired by Chicano activism in the late 1960s and 70s. "There I was on the streets chanting '¡Viva la raza! ¡Viva la raza!' And I come to realize that I really didn't know anything about mi raza... even though I was living the life of mi raza. So, I started

to research my own culture, that's when I fell upon the santero tradition...and that's how it all began.”

Jessie B. Telfair 1913 - 1986

Freedom Quilt 1983

Parrott, Georgia

Cotton, with pencil

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Judith Alexander in loving memory of her sister, Rebecca Alexander

2004.9.1

The concept of a freedom quilt can be traced at least as far back as the Civil War when women were urged to “prick the slave-owner’s conscience” by embroidering antislavery slogans and images into their needlework. One hundred years later, Jessie Telfair’s freedom quilt was born of the civil rights movement opposing a history of inequality, subjugation, and violence.

In 1963, Jessie Bell Telfair attempted to register to vote, and as a result, she lost her job as a cook at Helen Gurr Elementary School in Parrott, Georgia. Telfair had learned to quilt from her mother. After the trauma of losing her job, members of the civil rights group known as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee encouraged her to use her talent to frame a response to these overwhelming events.

It was not until 1983 that Telfair made several freedom quilts. These works stand witness to the civil rights era and the artist’s experience through

the powerful invocation of a single word:
FREEDOM. The horizontality of the word, along
with the choice of the colors red, white, and blue,
mimic the stripes of the American flag.

Nick Quijano Torres b. 1953
Memories of the Veteran 1984
Old San Juan, Puerto Rico
Lacquered gouache on paper
American Folk Art Museum, New York
Gift of Dorothea and Leo Rabkin
1984.2.1

Nick Quijano Torres appreciates the universal appeal of small moments that communicate on a deeply personal level. He paints his life: born in New York City to Puerto Rican parents, Quijano Torres spent his summers on “La Isla del Encanto,” the enchanted island, through elementary school, when the family returned full-time to the island. Quijano Torres calls his paintings “collages” of memories from childhood.

In this scene, he depicts himself standing on the right side of his beloved grandmother, on the left of whom sits his sister. The three figures are connected through the children’s trusting touch. A portrait of his uncle Juan, a veteran, hangs above the family grouping, a gentle reminder of Puerto Rico’s steadfast contribution to safeguarding the American way of life. Invoking people from his past and present, Quijano Torres views his art as a corrective, speaking to the experience of his

mixed-race culture that he found was missing in art museums.

Letta Vanderhoof 1861 – 1950

Betty 1897

Coldwater, Michigan

Martha Ann 1923

Woodsworth, Wisconsin

Oil on muslin; with cotton dresses, undershirts, and slippers; and wool socks; stuffed with sawdust

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Wendy Lavitt

2017.22.1 and 2017.22.2

A distance of 26 years and more than 200 miles separate the making of cloth dolls *Betty* and *Martha Ann*. Letta Vanderhoof made the first doll for her daughter Emily's seventh birthday on October 14, 1897; she made the second for her granddaughter Barbara's seventh birthday on June 19, 1923.

Crafted with equal care, nothing hints of their distance in time and space. Together the two dolls tell a story of generations and unwavering affection despite the vagaries of life. **Betty** and **Martha Ann** were cherished within the family as they moved variously to Sarasota, Florida; Chicago, Illinois; Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, Michigan; Las Cruces, New Mexico; and Woodsworth, Wisconsin.

Letta Miller married Charles Vanderhoof in September 1889. Their first and only child, Emily, was born almost exactly one year later. In 1912, Letta Vanderhoof filed for divorce on the grounds

of cruelty and non-support. Relocations and hardships marked the ensuing years as Letta supported herself through her dressmaking skills, appearing in city directories as “dressmaker” and “seamstress.”

In 1916, the recently married Emily bore her first child, Barbara, for whom **Martha Ann** was made. Later census records show that Emily’s household also included her mother, Letta, who continued to live with her daughter and her family until her death at the age of 84.

Eugene Von Bruenchenhein 1910 – 1983

Untitled (Outdoor Guardian Head) 1960

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Concrete

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Lewis and Jean Greenblatt

2017.25.1

“Create and be recognized,” commanded a sign that Eugene Von Bruenchenhein hung in his basement studio — both a direction and an affirmation. Von Bruenchenhein created 1,080 paintings and thousands of photographs, drawings, cement masks, sculptures, ceramics, and poetry over a 50-year period, between the late 1930s until his death in 1983. Though he is recognized today as a self-taught master and polymath, such praise eluded him during his lifetime. Yet Von Bruenchenhein had no choice but to create. He was compelled by what he dubbed his divine “genii” who looked over his shoulder and an unwavering belief in his prodigious talents and unique destiny.

Born in Marinette, Wisconsin, Von Bruenchenhein was raised by his father and stepmother, Elizabeth Mosley, a schoolteacher, artist, chiropractor, and author of treatises on evolution and reincarnation. Her unorthodox teachings and interest in the natural world had a profound influence on the

young Eugene. Throughout his creative career he was idiosyncratic in his techniques, manipulating paint with his fingers, firing clay pieces in his kitchen oven, and constructing delicate thrones and towers using leftover bones from fast food meals. Ultimately, every corner of Von Bruenchenhein's small childhood home in Milwaukee was filled with his art, writings, and recordings, a household that he shared with his adored wife, Marie.

Franklin Wilder 1813 - 1892

A Political Explanation 1878 - 1882

State Hospital at Northampton, Massachusetts

Ink and pencil on paper

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Kendra and Allan Daniel

2004.28.1

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

—Franklin Wilder

Franklin Wilder's drawings voiced impassioned indictments of institutional injustice and violence, reflecting the sense of rage and powerlessness brought upon him by his own life experiences.

As a yeoman farmer with few labor resources outside his own family, Wilder struggled to manage the large Massachusetts farm he received as part of a family inheritance. In 1842, the farm burned. Two years later, Wilder's property and others nearby were seized by a powerful textile corporation, effectively destroying the agrarian way of life that had persisted in this small corner of the state.

In September 1855, Wilder was jailed over a dispute involving property rights. His incarceration, the loss of his family legacy, and other calamitous events proved too much. That same year, he suffered "delusions and insanity" and was committed to the Massachusetts State Hospital. He would spend the rest of his life institutionalized. He became very religious, spending his time reading the Bible, interpreting the Scriptures, and writing.

Joseph Elmer Yoakum 1890 - 1972

**Mt. Magazine Point in State near Town of Havana,
Arkansas 1967**

Chicago, Illinois

Ballpoint pen, crayon, colored pencil, and pastel on
paper

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Blanchard-Hill Collection, gift of M. Anne Hill and
Edward V. Blanchard, Jr. 1998.10.73

Joseph Elmer Yoakum was a visual fabulist, and, in the tradition of the best storytellers, it is often impossible to distinguish between truth and invention. His colorful life needed no embellishment. Yoakum seemed to delight in confounding facts, variously claiming that he was born in 1888 or 1889 rather than 1890; on Navajo land near Window Rock, Arizona, rather than Ash Grove, Missouri; and that his mixed African American heritage included Navajo blood rather than Cherokee.

Yoakum's biography comprised grand American themes that later informed his drawings: wanderlust, adventure, war, and independence. In addition to stints with the circus, working for the railroads, and taking to the sea, Yoakum would also find time to marry, start a family, and serve in World War I. By the 1920s, the artist ceased his wandering and settled in Chicago. But it was not until 1962 that

he devoted his time to elaborate and fanciful visual scenes that drew upon his rich reserves of memory and experience.

Yoakum's landscapes constitute a new sublime, acknowledging the insignificance of man against the awe-inspiring power of nature but also noting the particularity of experience. He evokes the legacy of geological illustrations that used undulating and geometric line engravings with delicate handwashes of transparent color to distinguish types of layers and their various formations.

Joseph Yoges 1878 – after 1957

Tramp Art Clock 1930s

Detroit, Michigan

Wood boxes and crates, with commercial clock

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Tony Proscio and Peter Borrell

2019.20.1

From about the 1880s through the 1940s, making objects from recycled wood boxes and crates became a popular pastime, especially among men. The Revenue Act of 1865 had mandated the use of wooden boxes to pack cigars and tobacco but did not permit the boxes to be reused. An enormous amount of raw material became freely available to those with the talents and imagination to use it.

The name “tramp art” was applied to this type of work that became associated in the popular imagination with an itinerant lifestyle and the act of whittling to fill time. In truth, many men living in stable households — often immigrants — practiced the art. Surfaces were built up in graduated layers. In each layer, the edges were notched in a repeating V-shape, a widespread chip-carving technique throughout many areas of Europe.

The maker of this clock, Joseph Yoges, was born in Lithuania and immigrated to the United States in 1910. Yoges was living in Detroit in the 1930s when he fashioned two ornate clocks, a large cabinet, and

a more typical jewelry box. The four works, including this tall clock, were proffered to his landlord in lieu of rent during this time of economic hardship and depression.