

Women's Work, a century of art by women

University of Wyoming Art Museum, 2007
Educational Packet developed for grades K-12

Introduction

Women's Work recognizes and celebrates contributions and accomplishments of women artists in the United States over the last century. Drawn from the University of Wyoming Art Museum Collection, the exhibition is not a survey or meant to be comprehensive. Rather it offers highlights of the vast accomplishments of women artists in mainstream art in the U.S.

Women artists in this collection and exhibit include:

Berenice Abbott
Helen Greene Blumenschein
Mary Cassatt
Minna Wright Citron
Linda Connor
Audrey Flack
Mary Frank
Jane Freilicher
Helen Gerardia
Laura Gilpin
Minetta Good
Gertrude Greene
Lena Gurr
Helen West Heller
Fannie Hillsmith



Minetta Good, *Columbia Heights, Brooklyn*, not dated,
lithograph, 9-1/4 x 14 inches, Gift of Works Progress
Administration, University of Wyoming Art Museum Collection

Yvonne Helen Jacquette
Susan B. Kahn
Blanche Lazzell
Kathryn Woodman Leighton
Alice Neel
Rosamond Purcell
Holly Roberts
Jaune Quick-To-See Smith
Agnes Tait
Sabina Teichman
Martha Walter
June Wayne
Hung Liu
Marjorie Organ

History

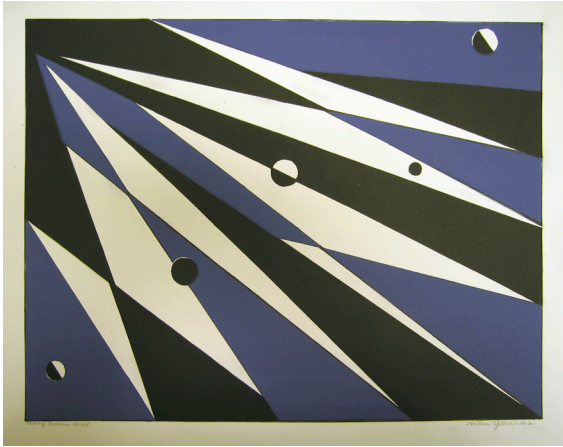
The most striking aspects of this exhibit are the influences other European and American artists had on these women artists, including the American modernists; and the connections and relationships these women artists formed with other artists, again, including some of the male artists known as modernists, whose work is also currently on exhibit in the UW Art Museum. Many of the women in this collection were supported in their creative efforts under the Federal Art Project between 1935 and 1938. Many worked for the WPA (Work Progress Administration), also.

Some examples of the influences, connections and relationships with other European and American artists:

Berenice Abbott worked as a studio assistant for fellow expatriate Man Ray, whose work is on display in the American Modernists exhibit. It was here that she learned photography and later opened a portrait studio. She photographed many artists and intellectuals living in Paris, including James Joyce, Eugene Atget, and possibly the undated portrait of Andre Gide.

Helen Greene Blumenschein was the daughter of the celebrated Taos Society artist Ernest Blumenschein and his artist wife Mary Blumenschein. The Southwestern landscape was a dominant theme of her work along with scenes of Europe, New York, and the Grand Tetons.

Mary Cassatt was influenced greatly by Edgar Degas, who saw her work and invited her to join the Impressionists. She would become good friends with Monet, Pissarro, Morisot, as well as Degas and would be the only American to exhibit in Impressionist exhibitions between 1879 and 1886. Cassatt's favored subjects were women, mothers and children. She painted them with a sense of dignity and purpose.



Helen Gerardia, *Many Moons*, not dated, lithograph, 22/25, 14 x 18 inches, Gift of Samuel S. Goldberg, University of Wyoming Art Collection

Minna Wright Citron's mentor was Kenneth Hayes Miller who taught at the Art Student's League. Miller, along with Reginald Marsh and others were known as the 14th Street School. She, also, worked under the WPA from 1935-1937.

Jane Freilicher is a representational landscape painter who was influenced by Post-Impressionism and Abstract Expressionism. She studied with Hans Hoffman at his schools in Manhattan and Provincetown.

Helen Gerardia studied at the Hans Hoffman School in Manhattan. Her hard-edged abstract prints and paintings explored such themes as time, movement, and astral bodies.

Laura Gilpin studied with Clarence H. White, who influenced her to have a pictorialist approach to her work. She placed strong emphasis on the mood her images evoked rather than the details of their subjects. She became interested in the people, history, and archaeology of the Southwest, making portraits of the people she met from a compassionate, not sentimental approach.

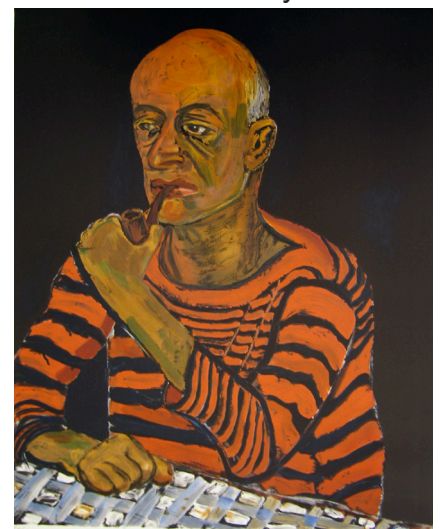
Minetta Good was an accomplished printmaker and painter, and worked in the modernist style. She created works on paper in one of the first printmaking workshops established by the Works Progress Administration.

Lena Gurr studied painting and printmaking at the Educational Alliance Art School. Her teachers at the Art Students League included Joan Sloan and Maurice Stern.

Helen West Heller produced over six hundred images in the last 20 years of her life. Under the WPA Federal Art Project, she created a number of murals.

Blanche Lazzell was a pioneering American Modernist who championed Abstract Expressionism.

Kathryn Woodman Leighton was introduced to the Blackfeet Indians in 1926 by Charles Russell.



Alice Neel, *John*, 1980, Lithograph, 73/150, 23-3/4 x 19-1/16 inches, Gift of Mr. Ernesto Ostheimer, University of Wyoming Art Museum Collection

Alice Neel is one of America's most important and influential portrait painters. She graduated from the Moore College of Art in 1925 and married the Cuban painter Carlos Enriquez.

Agnes Tait gained notoriety during the 1930s for the murals she created under the Works Progress Administration at the Bellevue Hospital in New York and for the US Post Office in North Carolina.

Sabina Teichman was a painter who received her education at Columbia University and was a member of the Provincetown Art Association.

June Wayne was born in Chicago and quit high school at the age of 15 to pursue her artistic interests. By 1935, she had her first solo exhibitions in Chicago and Mexico, and was part of a group of cutting edge writers, actors, artists, and scientists that included Saul Bellow, Richard Wright and James T. Farrell. At the end of WWII, Wayne moved to Los Angeles and became an integral part of the California art scene.

Hung Liu was born in Changchun, China and trained in the Social Realist style at the Central Academy of Fine Art in Beijing. She grew up during the Cultural Revolution. She was sent to the countryside to work in the fields before coming to the United States for graduate studies at UC/San Diego where she was exposed to the art of de Kooning and Pollock. She is a professor of painting at Mills College and her work was on exhibit last year here at the UW Art Museum.

Marjorie Organ was one of the first women cartoonists and worked for World and the New York Journal. Her work was included in the 1913 Armory Show with the other American modernists. She married the painter and modernist Robert Henri, whose work is displayed currently in the exhibit American Modernists.

Artist Statements

“The challenge for me has first been to see things as they are, whether a portrait, a city street, or a bouncing ball. In a word, I have tried to be objective. What I mean by objectivity is not the objectivity of a machine, but of a sensible human being with the mystery of personal selection at the heart of it. The second challenge has been to impose order onto the things seen and to supply the visual context and the intellectual framework—that to me is the art of photography.”

- Berenice Abbott

“I saw art as I wanted to see it. I began to live.”

- Mary Cassatt

“What I feel is to be human, what life on earth is, or might be. It is very important to me to find a vocabulary or series of images that feel strong enough to put all the feeling I have in.”

- Mary Frank

Jane Freilicher said of Hans Hoffman's teaching method:

“. . . trying to figure it out in terms of planes—a Cubist orientation . . . He gave you a sense of working over the whole surface, orchestrating the painting so you got a kind of energy going.”

“I never had the feeling I'd be able to make a living . . . All I ever thought about was how to be a good painter, period.”

- Fannie Hillsmith

Hung Liu, who is internationally known for her large-scale paintings inspired by photographs, says that she strives to give the photograph “another life through my interpretation, through my hand.”

Lesson Overview

Students will learn about the art created in the exhibit Women’s Work. They will explore the history, culture, works, artist techniques, and influences of several of the women artists from the twentieth Century selected for this particular exhibit.

Students will explore the history and culture of the artists they study. They will explore how the artists were influenced and mentored by other artists of their time. They will study the different techniques these artists used in their work, whether photographs, various types of prints, and paintings. They will explore the backgrounds of the artists they study and their connections to each other, if any. They will learn about the education and experience that led them to do their kind of art work.

Students and teachers will consider the concepts behind the art work. They will discuss the artists’ European and American influences on their work and how their work became the new American art of the 20th Century. They will discuss the techniques used in the creation of their art work. They will discuss the influence of their individual life and times that gave inspiration to their work.

In the Shelton Studio students will be given the opportunity to try their skills at drawing, painting, or print making in similar styles of their favorite artists’ work. They will be given the opportunity to experiment with different art making techniques. Students and teachers will start conversations about the work of the Women of the 20th Century, the culture and history, influences and techniques. They will be given the opportunity to continue their conversations in their home classrooms and schools.

Students and teachers may research and engage in conversations about the exhibit Women’s Work before arriving at the art museum, using study guides (available on-line) to explore ideas. While here they will spend time in the galleries closely observing the work, discussing it, writing about it, and even sketching it. They will begin conversations about the theories behind the work which will lay the groundwork for future opportunities to pursue these ideas in their home classrooms and schools.

Essential Questions

Grades K-12

- What is art?
- What is modern or 20th Century art?
- How can the history of a land and people influence an artist?
- How can the culture/society of a place influence an artist?
- How can social issues and politics of a place and time influence an artist?
- How can artists have such a huge impact on each other’s art work?

Grades 6-12

- What is 20th Century art?
- What is the difference between 20th Century art and 19th Century art? Historically? Culturally? Socially and politically? Intellectually? Philosophically?
- Is it possible for artists who live and work closely together to inspire and challenge each other?
- Is it possible for artists who have been so influenced by mentors in art to ever really create art

that is new and original?

Art Questions to Consider

Grades K-6

- When viewing your favorite images, what do you see?
- What kinds and types of marks, lines, and images do you see?
- What shapes and forms do you see?
- What colors, shades, light and shadows do you see?
- Which of all of the photographs, paintings and prints is your favorite or favorites?
- Which artist appeals to you the most? Why?
- What ideas and feelings are you left with after observing these prints, photographs, and paintings closely?
- Which of the photographs, prints and paintings are most realistic?
- What and who are the subjects of the images you are viewing?
- How are these images the same and how are they different?



Martha Walter, Beach at Bass Rocks, not dated, oil, 8-1/2 x 10-1/2 inches, Friends of the Art Museum and the National Endowment for the Arts, University of Wyoming Art Collection

Grades 6-12

- What techniques and styles can you name in your favorite photographs, prints and paintings?
- What conceptual ideas behind the work can you name and discuss, for instance: abstract, expressionistic, impressionistic, realistic, modernist, surrealistic, cubism, etc.
- Can you discuss what political, social, cultural, historical and intellectual ideas are influencing your favorite artists?

Pre-visit Activities

In order to prepare students for their museum visit and extend learning possibilities, we suggest that teachers and students consider the following activities:



Jaune Quick-To-See Smith, Cheyenne Series #98, not dated, mixed media, 30 x 22 inches, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Dean, University of Wyoming Art Museum Collection

- Students will read and research about Women artists from the 20th Century in art magazines, books at the library and on the internet.
- Students will research information on individual artists of their choice.
- Students will explore different artist's techniques in creating their works.
- Students will explore different concepts of art in the 20th Century in America.

Museum Activities

Part 1 – Time frame: 45 minutes

Gallery

- Students will closely observe the works of the Women artists of the 20th Century in America from the exhibit Women's Work.
- They will identify lines, shapes, forms, patterns, repetition, color, light and shadow, technique and style in the existing work.
- Students will discuss what they see with museum educators.

- They will explore the artists' photographs, prints, and paintings in relationship to the new American art of the 20th Century and how being women in that time and place relates to their art.
- They will explore the concepts behind the art work in the exhibit.
- Using worksheets, students will respond in writing or drawing to the work they see by recording their observations and their own thoughts about the work.
- Students will answer questions on a museum worksheet.
- Students will engage in discussions about their observations and their answers and sketches with one another and with the teachers.

Part 2 – Time frame: 45 minutes (minimum)

Shelton Studio

The following projects may be considered individually, or combined, or museum staff will work with teachers to develop specific projects which support ongoing classroom work.

- Students will select their favorite image in the exhibit.
- Students will explore the techniques used in the making of a print or painting in a style modeled after their favorite artist's work.
- Students will create a print or a painting in the Shelton Studio with the help of the museum educators.

Post-visit activities

We have found that students achieve maximum benefit from a museum visit when time is scheduled for post-visit activities. Here are some suggestions:

- Students discuss or write about their museum experiences, reviewing what they learned, what has special meaning for them, how they will use new information and skills.
- Students continue to research the works of one of their favorite artists in this exhibit and the concepts behind their work (an essay, art work, research paper).
- Students continue to create their own series of prints or paintings to explore the techniques and concepts behind the kinds of images they selected at the exhibit.

Prerequisite skills/knowledge

Museum staff will work with teachers to ensure that all projects are age and skills appropriate. At the very minimum:

- Students should have some familiarity with sketching and drawing objects
- Students should be able to identify lines, shapes and colors.
- For junior high and high school students:
Students should know something about the history, culture, and political/ social climate of the second half of the 20th Century.

Suggested use in the curriculum

The study of the Women's Work exhibit, plus the historical knowledge gained from studying the work and time frame of these works from the 20th Century ties to multiple curricular areas including, art, writing, reading, history, social studies, geography, journalism, photography, and philosophy. Museum staff will work with teachers to address specific Wyoming Teaching Standards and to align museum projects and studies with ongoing classroom curricular units.

Some recommended resources

These are just a few of the many resources available. We welcome other suggestions that teachers and students find helpful which can be added to this list.

- UW Art Museum website:
- Exhibition descriptive materials (contact the museum education program for more information)
- Research on the internet about individual artists named in the exhibit. See list in this guide under Introduction.
- American Women Modernists, The Legacy of Robert Henri, 1910-1945, Brigham Young University Art Museum, 2005
- American Women Artists: The 20th Century, Elsa Honig Fine, 1989
- The Remarkable Lives of 100 American Women Artists (Twentieth Century Women), Brooke Bailey, 1994
- North American Women Artists of the 20th Century: A Biographical Dictionary (Garland Reference Library of the Humanities), Jules Heller and Nancy G. Heller, 1995
- At Home in the Studio: The Professionalization of Women Artists in America, Laura R. Prieto, 2001
- Research on the internet about artist techniques in print making, photography and painting

Materials to be supplied to each student

Materials for selected Shelton Studio projects are provided by the art museum.

Assessments and documentation of museum tour and studio experiences

In order to ensure that our museum tour program is meeting the needs of teachers and students, we ask that participants complete evaluation surveys. Surveys will be distributed to teachers and students, but they are also available on-line as a pdf file to be downloaded, or they may be requested via e-mail (wbredehoft@uwyo.edu).

1. Students will self-assess using a quick survey that asks them to consider their response to the gallery discussions and research, and their studio experience.
2. Teachers will assess the overall visit by completing a quick survey that asks for their observation and assessment of students' experiences, as well as assessment of the overall process of the museum visit.
3. Museum staff and artists/teachers will record their observations and assessments.
4. When studio time permits, we will ask students to briefly discuss their art work completed in the Shelton Studio visit.
5. Museum staff may take photographs of students and teachers to document the learning taking place and the work produced during a museum visit. These are available upon written request to teachers who would like to use them as art of teaching and student portfolios.