

THE SUMMER SESSIONS

VISITING ARTISTS AT THE
MILLS COLLEGE ART MUSEUM

1933-1952



This catalogue is published on the occasion of *The Summer Sessions 1933–1952: Visiting Artists at the Mills College Art Museum*, an exhibition organized by Dr. Stephanie Hanor and the Spring 2011 Museum Studies Workshop students, and presented by the Mills College Art Museum, June 15 through August 28, 2011.

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COVER: *László Moholy-Nagy Teaching at Mills College*, 1940, Gelatin silver print, Collection MCAM,
Gift of Eugene and Martha Bielawski in honor of their daughter, Toby Bielawski. Photo: Romeo Rolette.

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MILLS COLLEGE ART MUSEUM SUMMER SESSIONS TIMELINE

	1914	• World War I begins
	1916	• Aurelia Henry Reinhardt becomes President of Mills College
	1918	• World War I ends
	1919	• MFA program in Studio Arts begins at Mills College Bauhaus formed in Germany
	1920	• Imogen Cunningham becomes Mills campus photographer
	1925	• Mills College Art Museum founded/Roi Partridge first director
	1929	• U.S. Stock Market crashes/Great Depression begins Museum of Modern Art, New York is founded
	1930	• Diego Rivera comes to San Francisco to paint murals at The City Club and the San Francisco Art Institute
	1931	• Dust Bowl begins in United States
	1932	• Group f/64 formed and exhibits at de Young Museum
Alexander Archipenko, Guest Instructor with solo exhibition	1933	• Adolf Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany Bauhaus closes
Alexander Archipenko, Guest Instructor with solo exhibition	1934	
John Cunningham, Guest Instructor, organized <i>Design in Industry</i> exhibition	1935	• San Francisco Museum of Art founded Dr. Alfred Neumeyer becomes director of Mills College Art Museum Works Progress Administration founded
Lyonel Feininger, Guest Instructor with solo exhibition	1936	
Oskar Kokoschka scheduled to teach and exhibit, but canceled in May 1937 due to family illness Lyonel Feininger replaced Kokoschka as Guest Instructor with solo exhibition	1937	• <i>Degenerate Art</i> exhibition in Munich New Bauhaus founded in Chicago
Leon Kroll, Guest Instructor with solo exhibition Grant Wood, Thomas Hart Benton, and Eugene Speicher approached about teaching and exhibiting	1938	
Frederic Taubes, Guest Instructor with solo exhibition	1939	• World War II begins
László Moholy-Nagy, Guest Instructor with School of Design faculty Robert Jay Wolff, George Kepes, James Prestini, and Dean Rusk <i>School of Design</i> exhibition and <i>Architecture and Design from the Bauhaus</i> exhibition	1940	• Diego Rivera paints mural for Golden Gate International Exposition
Fernand Léger, Guest Instructor with solo exhibition Thomas Hart Benton, Andrea Derain, Henri Matisse, Gerald Murphy, and Amédée Ozenfant approached about teaching and exhibiting	1941	• Japanese attack Pearl Harbor
Antonio Sotomayor, Guest Instructor, part of group exhibition <i>Contemporary Art of Latin America</i> Henry Varnum Poor and Richard Neutra approached about teaching and exhibiting	1942	• Establishment of Japanese internment camps in the U.S.
José Perotti and Antonio Sotomayor, Guest Instructors	1943	• Aurelia Henry Reinhardt retires
Dong Kingman, Guest Instructor with solo exhibition	1944	
Robert B. Howard, Guest Instructor	1945	• U.S. drops atomic bomb on Hiroshima World War II ends Ansel Adams and Minor White found first art photography department at California School of Fine Arts
Reginald Marsh, Guest Instructor with solo exhibition	1946	
Clarence W. Meritt, Guest Instructor	1947	
Felix Ruvalo, Guest Instructor	1948	
Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Guest Instructor with solo exhibition	1949	
Max Beckmann, Guest Instructor with solo exhibition	1950	
Fletcher Martin, Guest Instructor	1951	
Dong Kingman, Guest Instructor	1952	

INTRODUCTION

DR. STEPHANIE HANOR

From 1933 to 1952, under the direction of noted German art historian Dr. Alfred Neumeyer, the Mills College Art Museum participated in the "Summer Sessions." Organized through the leadership of Mills College President Aurelia Henry Reinhardt, the Summer Sessions were a series of co-educational classes and workshops in a variety of disciplines—including studio art, music, French, sports, creative writing, modern dance, and child development. Through the program, a group of internationally distinguished contemporary European, American, and Latin American artists were invited to campus to teach and exhibit work.

nized the first exhibition of Feininger's work in the United States (1936) and major exhibitions by Léger (1941), Moholy-Nagy and the Bauhaus (1940), and the last major exhibition of Beckmann's work before his death (1950).

The history of the visual arts at Mills is strongly linked to the San Francisco Bay Area's rich cultural landscape and the visionary leadership of the College's founders. The Bay Area has a unique physical setting, situated at the western edge of the continent and enclosed by great expanses of desert and mountains on the east. During the nineteenth and early twentieth century this isolation provided fertile breeding ground

for a variety of political and social circles and a thriving bohemian community of creative artists who were all rugged individualists, yet often similar in their shared interest in mysticism, experimentation, and non-western cultures. This lively environment, thousands of miles removed from the more traditional cultural centers on the East Coast, set the stage for decades of artistic innovation at Mills.

The College's commitment to the visual arts is embedded in the core values of its founders Susan and Cyrus Mills. Studio art courses were part of the College's earliest offerings; and art history entered the curriculum in 1875 with a survey course required for all students. Mrs. Mills' sister, Jane Tolman, developed an art history curriculum that was unique in California and unusually far-reaching for its time. Together, their dedication to the visual arts insured its continued prominence at the College.

By the 1880s Mills had 1,000 works of art and reproductions in its collection; and when the Art Museum opened in 1925, it was one of the first college art museums on the West Coast. The Museum's first director was renowned graphic artist, Roi Partridge. Under his leadership (1925–1935) the Museum became an important center for visual arts on the West Coast. Among early exhibitions were pioneering presentations of modern paintings and photography, including works by Wassily Kandinsky, Diego Rivera, Hans Hofmann,



Fernand Léger teaching life drawing

Neumeyer, and his predecessor Roi Partridge, were pioneers in their choice of avant-garde artists, which included Alexander Archipenko, Lyonel Feininger, Fernand Léger, László Moholy-Nagy, and Max Beckmann. The exhibition *The Summer Sessions 1933–1952: Visiting Artists at the Mill College Art Museum* examines the museum's significant role in the introduction of modernist artists and their practices in the Bay Area during the period surrounding World War II. As a direct result of the program, the museum orga-

Alexander Archipenko, Ansel Adams, and Imogen Cunningham.

The 1935 arrival of the distinguished art historian from Berlin, Dr. Alfred Neumeyer, began an important new phase of development for the art department. Neumeyer was hired to direct the Museum and to teach both art history and establish the first museum studies course on the West Coast. He used the gallery as a laboratory for his students, who participated in



Lyonel Feininger exhibition at Mills, 1936

all aspects of planned exhibitions, a precedent that continues today. Advancing the collection to reflect an international and historical overview, Neumeyer used his extensive contacts in Europe to bring to Mills an exceptional array of important and sometimes controversial exhibitions of modern art.

Neumeyer's considerable contributions to the Summer Sessions were matched by other émigré faculty who helped establish Mills as a site of creative innovation and experimentation. French composer Darius Milhaud arrived at Mills in 1940, adding to the music department's international reputation. Milhaud attracted musical luminaries to Mills—such as Bela Bartók, who performed excerpts from his *Mikrokosmos* in the Concert Hall in 1941 and Nadia Boulanger and Igor Stravinsky, who lectured and performed in the Concert Hall in 1944—as well as generations of talented students including a young pianist and composer named Dave Brubeck. During the same period, composers Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison, and John Cage taught at Mills. The Summer Sessions from 1939 to 1941 featured a series of percussion music concerts, which established Mills as a center for experimental music on the West Coast. On July 18, 1940 Cage and Harrison presented a concert with staging and lighting by artists from the Chicago School of Design, including the Bauhaus painter Moholy-Nagy, who were in residence at Mills that summer.¹

Featuring important works from the Mills College Art Museum collection and archives, the exhibition contextualizes the Summer Sessions program within the historical, political, economic, and cultural

circumstances of the period, calling attention to the increased role of émigré artists as teachers and the impact of various support systems such as colleges and museums. Specifically, the exhibition and this accompanying publication explore how the artists and program operated within the larger context of the San Francisco's active visual arts community during the 1930s through 1950s, a particularly vibrant time that produced three commissioned murals by Diego Rivera (in 1930 and 1940) as well as the formation in 1932 of the influential Group f/64 photographers, some of whom, such as Imogen Cunningham, documented the Summer Sessions artists.

The exhibition includes approximately 40 paintings, photographs, prints, and drawings, as well as a selection of supporting archival documentation, and also makes extensive use of the archival materials in the College's Special Collections library, including exhibition catalogues from the period, historical exhibition installation images, photographs of the artists teaching, and original correspondence. This exhibition and accompanying digital publication provides new research on the role these artists played in Northern California, describes a vital chapter in the history of the Mills College Art Museum, and exposes new audiences to an important group of works in the Museum's permanent collection.

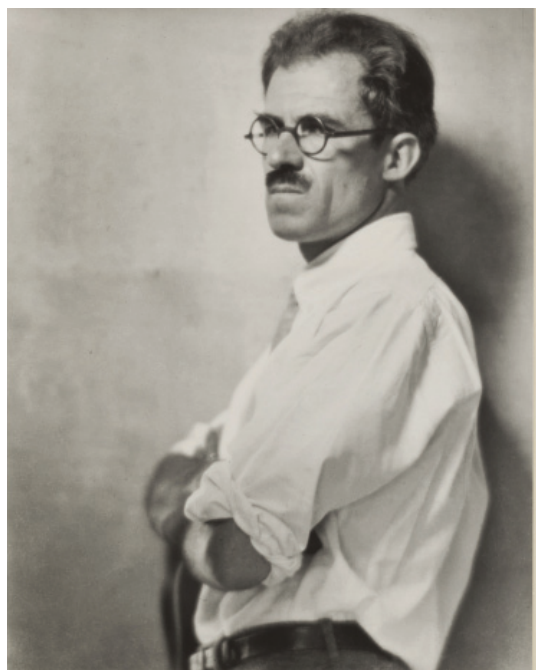
In keeping with Neumeyer's precedent of using the resources of the art museum to teach art history and curatorial practices, the exhibition is curated by the students in the Spring 2011 Museum Studies Workshop: Alyssa Ilves, Mia Malotte, Elizabeth Mauerman, Jennifer Nicholson, Meri Page, Rachel Reyes, Hazel Rogers, Mika Rosen, and Jessica Tang. Their research and writing are featured in this catalogue and bring to life the remarkable history and legacy of the visiting artist component of the Summer Sessions at Mills College.

¹ Excerpted from David Bernstein, Stephanie Hanor, and Ann Murphy, *Experiments in the Fault Zone: A Brief History of the Fine Arts at Mills College*, May 2011.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND MODERNISM IN THE BAY AREA

MERI PAGE

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the San Francisco Bay Area was home to a burgeoning number of talented artists embracing modernism. An influx of émigré artists from Europe and South America added to the cosmopolitan flavor of the region, creating an exciting time for artists to share ideas, collaborate, create, and exhibit their work. Institutions like Mills College, the University of California, Berkeley, the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, along with the patronage of local collector Albert Bender and others, played an important role in supporting and encouraging a broad range of artistic expression during this time.



Dorothea Lange, *Roi Partridge*, n.d.



Paul Bishop, *Alfred Neumeyer*, 1953

Roi Partridge and Alfred Neumeyer were instrumental in providing artists teaching and exhibition opportunities in the Bay Area. Partridge, an American printmaker, and graphic designer, moved to San Francisco in 1917 from Seattle. He began teaching at Mills in 1920, later becoming the first director of the Mills College Museum of Art (from 1925 to 1935). Married to photographer Imogen Cunningham, he was part of a large circle of avant-garde artists living and working in the Bay Area. He was also responsible for inviting noted sculptor Alexander Archipenko to teach at Mills as part of the first two Summer Sessions in 1933 and 1934. Noted

German art historian Alfred Neumeyer, who came to Mills from the University of Berlin in 1935 to direct the museum and teach art history, maintained numerous connections with European artist friends and intellectuals, inviting major artists to teach, as well exhibit their work, during his tenure at Mills.

The camera became a new and significant tool in the hands of artists during the 1910s through the 1940s. Photography was just beginning to be accepted as an art form, with significant innovations occurring during this time. Women artists quickly took to this new medium and were in the forefront of developing both fine art and documentary photography in the Bay Area.

Photographers Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, John Paul Edwards, Sonya Noskowiak, Henry Swift, Willard Van Dyke, and Edward Weston founded Group f/64 in Oakland in 1932. The group later included Preston Holder, Consuelo Kanaga, Alma Lavenson, and Brett Weston. Group f/64 brought together a collection of like-minded friends who sought a new approach to photography, and advocated "seeing straight."¹ There was a shift away from Pictorialism, which featured soft focused dreamy imagery, toward a straighter visual approach characterized by sharp black and white images. Some of the themes associated with modernist photography and Group f/64 were portraits and nudes, still lifes, close-up macro-style shots, images of nature, and abstraction. The group held their first exhibit in November 1932 at the de Young

Museum in San Francisco.² A portion of this exhibit was exhibited at Mills in 1936.³

Ansel Adams, in collaboration with Minor White established the photography department at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco in 1945 (which later became the San Francisco Art Institute).⁴ Faculty included Adams, White, Imogen Cunningham, Dorothea Lange, and Edward Weston. Teaching offered these artists the opportunity for income, as well as the space to develop their theories on photography. Many of the first students were GI's returning from the war and eager to resume the

1 Paul Karlstrom, *On the Edge of America: California Modernist Art, 1900–1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 246.

2 Ibid., 254.

3 Held in February, 1934 at the Mills College Museum of Art, *Photographs by Leading Photographers* featured work from the original Group f/64 exhibit, as well as works by Charles Sheeler, Margaret Bourke-White, and Bernice Abbot.

4 Stephanie Comer, Deborah Klochko, and Jeff Gunderson, *The Moment of Seeing: Minor White at the California School of Fine Arts* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006), 7.

5 Linda Gordon, *Dorothea Lange, A Life Beyond Limits* (London: W.W. Norton & Co, 2009), 49.

6 Ibid., 50.

7 *Watkins to Weston: 101 Years of California Photography, 1849–1950* (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Art in cooperation with Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1992), 121.

8 Ibid., 121.

9 Paul Berlanga, *Josef Breitenbach: Munich, Paris, New York* (Chicago: Stephen Daiter Gallery, 2003).



Imogen Cunningham, *Lyonel Feininger*, 1939

college education they had been forced to postpone when they left to serve in the military. Within this climate of turbulence brought about by two world wars, a lively cross-pollination of art, photography, and ideas occurred between the Summer Session artists at Mills and the existing Bay Area arts community.

Imogen Cunningham (1883–1976) was an important member of the West Coast fine art photography movement in the 1930s and she is best known for her sensual imagery of botanicals and nudes. A founding member of Group f/64, she taught at the California School of Fine Arts with White, Adams, Weston, and Lange. Married to Partridge, she was the official photographer for Mills during their marriage and documented many of the visiting faculty who came to teach during those Summer Sessions. Cunningham's sensitive portrait of Lyonel Feininger was taken in 1939.

Dorothea Lange (1895–1965), a close friend of Cunningham and Partridge, was a documentary photographer and photojournalist best known for her images of Depression era migrant workers and their living conditions.⁵ From 1935 to 1939, she worked on a variety of projects for the Farm Security Administration (FSA) with her husband, University of California, Berkeley economist Paul Taylor. She lived and worked in the Bay Area where she had established her own photography studio, smoothly making the transition from portrait photographer to photojournalist, and she later taught at the California School of Fine Arts. Cunningham's son Rondal Partridge worked as an assistant to both Lange and Adams as a young man, and became an accomplished photographer and filmmaker.⁶ Lange became the first woman awarded a Guggenheim fellowship for photography in 1940. She gave up the prestigious award to record the forced evacuation of Japanese Americans to relocation camps, on assignment for the War Relocation

Authority (WRA).⁷ Lange's undated portrait of Partridge was taken at Mills.

Paul Bishop (1915–1998) was another Bay Area portrait photographer who worked closely with early modernist photographers Weston, Cunningham, Adams, and Lange. During World War II he served as a photographic officer in the U.S. Navy working with Edward Steichen in a unit recording the history of the war. He later established his own portrait studio in Berkeley and had a solo exhibition at the Mills College Art Museum in 1953. Bishop's portrait of Mills College Art Museum director Alfred Neumeyer was taken at Mills in 1953. Neumeyer showed a strong commitment to exhibiting photography during his tenure at the museum.

Photographer John Gutmann (1905–1998) was a German born émigré artist known for his documentary style. He fled Nazi Germany and moved to the Bay Area in 1934. Particularly focused on urban environments, he had several solo exhibitions at the de Young Museum, and later taught at San Francisco State University where he helped to develop the art department.⁸ In 1939 he met and photographed László Moholy-Nagy, and in 1940 he met the artist Fernand Léger, who he photographed at Mills in front of his monumental painting *Composition with Two Parrots*, which was on exhibition as part of the Summer Sessions.

Josef Breitenbach (1896–1984) was an émigré artist born in Germany. He had a successful photography studio in Germany, but was forced to flee under Hitler's regime during World War II. After escaping to Paris, he was interned in France in 1939. He escaped the concentration camps when detainees were being forced into railcars and sent to Poland. He made his way to Spain, and eventually the United States in 1942.⁹ Breitenbach lived and worked in New York City where he taught at The Cooper Union School of Art and The New School for Social Research. Best known for his avant-garde and surrealist photographic works that utilized a close up camera lens and unusual framing, he was also an excellent portrait artist. He photographed many now famous artists like Bertholt Brecht, Max Ernst, James Joyce, and Lyonel Feininger. Breitenbach's portrait of Feininger was taken in New York City after the artist's participation in the Summer Sessions at Mills.

This vibrant period in Bay Area art history can be seen in the works shown in *The Summer Sessions 1933–1952* exhibit. These works illuminate a thriving artistic community created by Summer Sessions' artists collaborating with the local arts community, a convergence that fostered innovation and new forms of avant-garde art and photography in the Bay Area and beyond.

THE SUMMER SESSIONS: EARLY YEARS

MIA MALOTTE

Roi Partridge, an American etcher and printmaker, was the first director of the Mills College Art Museum (beginning in 1925), and was responsible for arranging the art programs for the College's first Summer Sessions, which began in 1933. The idea was to expose Mills students and the San Francisco Bay Area to important, innovative artists of the time, both American and European.

The Summer Sessions at Mills College began in 1933 with Alexander Archipenko as the guest instructor of the art program. At the time, he was 46 years old and already had an incredibly successful career in Europe and the United States as a Cubist sculptor. Born and trained in Kiev, Ukraine, he had exhibited in Paris in his early twenties with such artists as Picasso, Braque, and Duchamp in the Salon des Indépendants and the Salon d'Automne. Over the next twenty years, Archipenko participated in solo and group shows in the most important cities in Europe and on the East Coast of the United States. He had a solo exhibition in the 1920 Venice Biennale and opened art schools in Berlin, New York, and, later, in Los Angeles and Chicago as well.

Shortly before his visit to Mills, Archipenko became a citizen of the United States and established residency in New York. During this time he lectured and was a guest instructor at colleges in the United States, such as the Chouinard School of Art in Los Angeles and the University of Seattle, Washington, which he continued to do throughout his life.¹ In 1933, the same year that he taught at the Summer Sessions, he also taught at the Chouinard.² He returned to Mills to lead the Summer Sessions of 1934 as well, and was later included in an exhibition of abstract art at the Mills College Art Museum in 1939.³

During his career, he encountered other artists that taught at Mills. In 1922 he had an exhibition with Lyonel Feininger in Frankfurt, Germany, and in 1937 he worked with László Moholy-Nagy as the head of the modeling department of the New Bauhaus in Chicago.⁴ In 1932, Moholy-Nagy says of Archipenko, "The credit for the first conscious use of concaves in sculpture—to replace saliences—is due to



Alexander Archipenko, *Nude*, 1933

Archipenko . . . His attempt leads the observer, by its evident deviation from the customary naturalistic treatment, to a realization of the elementary possibilities of the positive-negative relations."⁵ Also in 1937, his work was included in a group exhibition in Chicago with Fernand Léger, among others.

Archipenko's *Nude* was purchased by the Mills College Art Museum for its permanent collection in 1939, several years after his visit. The etching was created, however, in 1933, the year of his visit to the first Summer Session. In a 1936 lecture on teaching, Archipenko said, "The study of the fundamentals of art does not mean that the artist should copy nature, but that he should study the essential elements of whatever kind of art he may choose to pursue. Only after the artist acquires a knowledge of these elements, and the ability to express them, will he be able to produce a work of art, be it naturalistic or creative."⁶

- 1 Katherine Jansky Michaelson, *Alexander Archipenko, A Centennial Tribute* (New York: Universe Books, 1986), 13–14.
- 2 "Chronology," *Archipenko Foundation*, www.archipenko.org/aa_chron_1930.html.
- 3 *Abstract Art*, Exhibition Folder, Mills College Art Museum Archives, 1939.
- 4 Michaelson, 14.
- 5 "Chronology," *Archipenko Foundation*.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Edan Milton Hughes, *Artists in California, 1786–1940* (Sacramento: Crocker Art Museum, 2002), 266.
- 8 Summer Sessions Guide, Mills College Art Museum Archives, 1935.
- 9 Philip Johnson, *Machine Art* (NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1934; reprint 1994), foreword.
- 10 *Design in Industry* Exhibition Folder, Mills College Art Museum Archives, 1935.
- 11 James S., Plaut, ed., *Oskar Kokoschka* (New York: Chanticleer Press, 1948), pn.
- 12 Letter from Alfred Neumeyer to Oskar Kokoschka, Mills College Art Museum Archives, May 29, 1937.
- 13 "Oskar Kokoschka," Museum of Modern Art, New York, http://www.moma.org/collection/ge/browse_results.php?object_id=117562.
- 14 book
- 15 See Stephanie Barron, *Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991).

The summer following Archipenko's visits, in 1935, California artist John Cunningham came to Mills College as the Summer Sessions guest instructor. He was an abstract landscape artist as well as a sculptor and a graphic designer. Originally from New York City, Cunningham lived near the Metropolitan Museum of Art as a child, exposing him to fine art at an early age. After attending St. Mary's College in Moraga, California, he earned his Master's degree from the University of California, Berkeley in 1928. There he met his wife, Patricia Stanley Cunningham, and together they studied in Germany and France. In 1930, in Cagnes-Sur-Mer, France, he assisted sculptor Benny Bufano, who had taught in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1920s. After returning, Cunningham and his wife settled in Carmel, California where he directed the Carmel Art Institute for almost fifty years.⁷

While at Mills College, Cunningham focused on industrial design and taught classes, gave lectures, and organized an exhibition for the art museum. He offered courses on painting, sculpture, wood sculpture, mosaics, and industrial design. His wife accompanied him to Mills College and taught a course in fashion design. At the end of July 1935, Cunningham gave a series of lectures on modern art with topics including "The Trend of Art," "Evolution of Contemporary Industrial Design," and "Art for Industry's Sake."⁸

Cunningham's theme was inspired by the exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, *Machine Art*, from the spring of that same year. This show explored ideas of geometrical beauty and featured machine-made, practical objects. Minimalistic pieces made of industrial materials tangibly demonstrated precision, harmony of proportions, and repetition of pure shapes and surfaces. A revival of classical Platonic ideas of an ultimate beauty connected mathematics with art, and fine art with the everyday.⁹ Cunningham borrowed pieces from this show as well as from other American designers for the exhibition *Design in Industry* at the Mills College Art Museum in the summer of 1935.¹⁰ Photographs from the museum's archives show some of the pieces and their installation in the gallery space. Cunningham had design perspectives from the East Coast, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Europe, and this show brought cutting-edge ideas to Mills College and the West Coast.

The first three years of the Summer Sessions at Mills College were successful and beneficial both to the students and the visiting instructors. Museum directors Roi Partridge and his successor Alfred Neumeyer reached out to the contemporary art community to invite prolific artists that would establish Mills College as an important center for art on the West Coast. Unfortunately, though, some of the artists invited were unable to come.

Oskar Kokoschka, a prominent German Expressionist, agreed in November 1936 to teach at Mills College for the summer of 1937. As the Nazi Party was gaining power, he had fled and was living in Prague with his family.¹¹ Neumeyer and Kokoschka had planned a show of his work to be held at the

Mills College Art Museum and made arrangements to have his works delivered from Europe. A press release was sent out, and the Bay Area art community was anticipating his visit to California. In the spring of 1937, there was doubt as to whether he would be able to come. Neumeyer pressed Kokoschka to make a final decision so that he could prepare accordingly. In May, Kokoschka announced that he would not be able to come to Mills College because his mother had become seriously ill. Neumeyer was disappointed and concerned about how this news would make Mills College and the museum appear.¹² Fortunately, Lyonel Feininger, a German-American abstract painter who had taught at Mills College in the summer of 1936, agreed to teach the 1937 Summer Session as well. Kokoschka was very apologetic and sent two blue crayon drawings, *Sketch of a Torso* and *Seated Figure*, as an act of contrition.

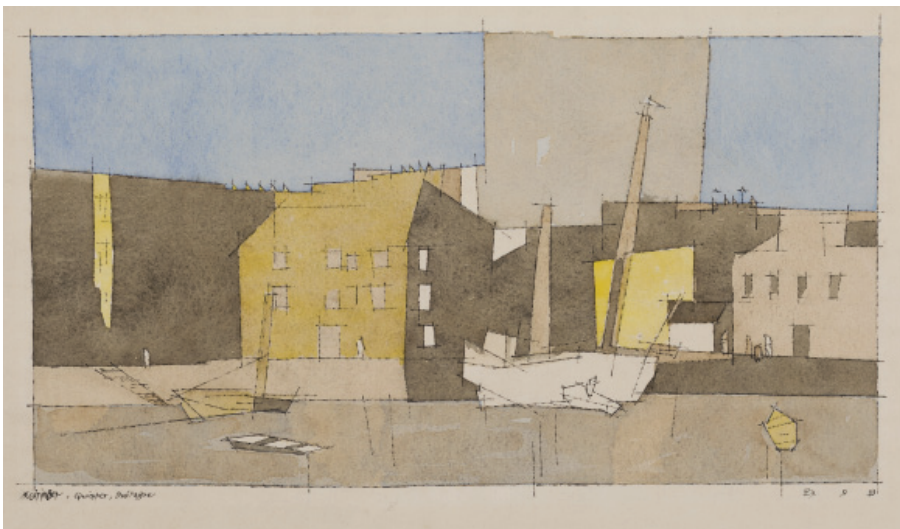
Several other works by Kokoschka were acquired by the art museum over the years. In 1938, Mrs. Edward T. Clark III gave the Mills College Art Museum an edition of a lithograph, *Girl's Head*, from 1921. In 1959, the museum purchased one of his self-portraits, a color lithograph from 1956. *The Man Raises His Head from the Grave on Which the Woman Sits*, one of seven lithographs in his series *O, Eternity* from 1911, was purchased in 1969. This series was inspired by Johannes Sebastian Bach's *Cantata Number 60*, entitled *O, Eternity, Thou Word of Thunder*. In this biographical set of prints, the artist expresses feelings about his relationship with his mistress Alma Maher, the wife of one of his colleagues. In this work, the man in the grave represents Kokoschka and Maher is the girl sitting above. Printmaking had become popularized among the German Expressionists and Kokoschka preferred the more direct method of the lithograph.¹³ His angular style was influenced by German Expressionism, but also was a result of physical and psychological injuries from World War I.¹⁴ In the same year that he had planned to visit Mills College, his works were included in Hitler's *Degenerate Art* show, which traveled throughout Germany mocking and degrading modern art.¹⁵

These first few years of the Summer Sessions were precursors for almost another twenty years of guest instructors and exhibitions, which promoted art and provided European artists with a means of escape during World War II. Archipenko and Cunningham brought new perspectives and prestige to Mills College and, although he was unable to attend, Kokoschka's invitation by Neumeyer and his initial acceptance speaks for the innovative nature of the program.

ARCHITECTURAL ABSTRACTION: THE WORLD OF LYONEL FEININGER

ALYSSA ILVES

One of the most significant events in modern European art history was the *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) exhibit that took place in Munich in 1937. In the years preceding World War II, Adolf Hitler and Nazi party leaders took on the role of regulating art exhibits and mandating what art was appropriate for display in Germany. Avant-garde artists in Germany and around Europe were severely impacted by this exhibit, which showcased modernist works as "culture documents of the decadent work of Bolsheviks and Jews."¹ The exhibit featured roughly 650 of the 16,000 works that had been confiscated by the Nazi party from German museums and artists. The exhibit was designed to contrast with an exhibition of art approved by the Nazi party made up of works portraying typical Nazi themes of heroism and duty.² Many well-known artists were affected negatively by the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition, which, in many cases, led to their displacement to safer countries.



Lyonel Feininger, *Quimper, Bretagne, 1933*

While Germany became a nearly impossible location for modernist artists to work, exhibit, or teach, parts of America opened their doors to émigré artists. Mills College was one of the doors. In particular, art historian and Mills College Art Museum director Dr. Alfred Neumeyer established connections with European artists to teach and exhibit at the Mills Summer Sessions. The Summer Sessions were comprised of seven departments offering courses and cultural enrichment. Guest lecturers, artists, musicians, dancers and others were invited each summer, from the early 1930s to the early 1950s, and students would spend

their time concentrating in the field of their choice. Sidney L. Gulick, Jr. wrote, "Having unlimited energy and diverse interests, what could a visitor do at the summer session?"³ Mills became a haven for artists and an innovative center for the arts.

Lyonel Feininger was one of the many artists who came to Mills during the Summer Sessions. Feininger was an American-born artist and musician who moved to Germany at a young age to study music. He quickly changed his focus to painting and studied art in several countries. His style was comprised of expressionist line quality and an illustrative cartoon technique. He worked mostly in watercolor, ink and graphite. Feininger is most well known as one of the members of *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider) group of artists. These artists were not organized by a school, like members of the Bauhaus, but they exhibited together based on similarities of style, mostly a shared interest in Expressionism and graphic design. Feininger's work fit within the interests of *Der Blaue Reiter* because of his use of color and intersecting expressionistic lines. Feininger exhibited with them in their final show in 1913 before the group disbanded at the commencement of World War I.

Later, Feininger was involved in a successor group called *Die Blaue Vier* (The Blue Four). They were more interested in exhibiting with one another because of their friendships rather than their similar styles, and it is interesting to note that none of the members were natives of Germany. The Blue Four group has been described as "the spearhead of German Modernism" by art critic, and future professor of Mills College, Alfred Frankenstein. Feininger was also a major figure in the Bauhaus movement and was one of the first teachers after the school's founding in 1919. Most of the members of the Blue Four joined the staff at the Bauhaus. Feininger taught a class that combined drawing and painting and was also in charge of the graphic workshop and letterpresses. He stopped teaching in 1924, before the Bauhaus moved privately to Dessau in 1925, but continued to work on staff until 1933 when he and his wife moved to a safer part of Germany.⁴

Feininger was one of the many artists whose work was displayed in the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition. In an attempt to save his work, and his life, he and his wife relocated to the United States, by way of Mills. In 1936, Feininger was invited to teach at the Summer Sessions and exhibit at the Mills College Art Museum. His solo exhibition, simply titled *Exhibition Lyonel Feininger*, consisted of 112 works, including oil paintings, watercolors, drawings, and prints. This was

his first West Coast solo retrospective, and one of the first times his art was displayed in the United States. Noted art critic Alfred Frankenstein attended the opening of the exhibition and wrote a detailed article of his impressions of the works and his experience in the gallery. Showcasing his knowledge of Feininger, and his absolute praise for the man as an artist, Frankenstein analyzed the stylistic qualities of many pieces in the exhibit. One of the most interesting comparisons that Frankenstein makes is the curator's choice to put the earliest piece and the most recent piece in the retrospective next to one another.⁵ The earliest work, from 1907, is a violent work that "destroys objective reality" according to Mrs. Feininger who, alongside her husband, led a tour through the works in the gallery.⁶ Frankenstein describes the latest piece as, "A lyric abstraction based on motifs of the natural world, but without reference to it."⁷

In 1937, Feininger and his wife decided to move permanently to the United States, a process that was made easier with the help of Neumeyer and Mills College. Originally, artist Oskar Kokoschka was scheduled to teach and exhibit in 1937, but cancelled in May due to a family illness. Neumeyer wrote a letter to Feininger re-inviting him to the Summer Session: "Last summer we enjoyed so greatly having you in our Summer Session group that this year we invite you to return to us."⁸ When Feininger agreed to teach again at the 1937 Summer Sessions, a joyful press release was sent out to all of Mills. "Lyonel Feininger is coming back!" states Sidney L. Gulick, Jr., "Last summer, every student working with him signed a petition asking for his return. Now you can take advantage of it. Will you be here?"⁹ In a letter from Feininger he expresses concern in coming to the United States, and trying to get his affairs in order: "I may have to swear to the correctness of their having been painted by myself, 'in Germany.' There is so much red-tape, now-a-days."¹⁰ Feininger's second exhibition at Mills contained an even larger number of pieces, including his most recent work to date.

During the run of the exhibition, Neumeyer gave an outstanding lecture praising Lyonel Feininger and defining modern art in its time, stating, "Surrounded by his paintings, one feels himself taken away into a land of sublime, even remote sensations."¹¹ Feininger's work exudes confidence in line quality and holds a strong presence in any space. These are the feelings Neumeyer wanted to exact in his lecture: passionate emotions. In his talk, Neumeyer asks a question about Feininger's work, "Why it was necessary to break nature into pieces, why this transformation and even distortion of reality?"¹² Neumeyer's answer becomes a detailed explanation and definition of modern art, the advent of the camera and the fast-paced changes in

the world of art: "Photography can fulfill the purpose of exact statements much better than painting ever can."¹³ Although the new technologies of the time seemed to be changing the art world, Neumeyer explains that painters like Feininger see past the technology to improve more traditional forms of art. Instead of working with realistic styles, modern artists analyze techniques to abstract an image on a canvas.



Lyonel Feininger, *Lübeck (II)*, 1934

Emotions and opinions are more prevalent in non-photographic works by modern artists who abstract realism intentionally.¹⁴

Feininger's art is primarily concerned with the abstraction of space. He works with two major subjects, the sea and the cityscape. When it comes to the cityscape, Feininger takes on a more expressionistic style, concentrating mainly on the form of his line and the execution of perspective in his works using color and space. This style is present in *Lübeck II*, a piece that is closer to a realistic view of a German town than most of his other works. His seascapes, however, seem more gentle and personal, much like *Quimper Bretagne*. These works have a characteristically rough line quality, and they are ripe with gentle blues and other colors that are pleasing to the eyes. Neumeyer states that Feininger's works have an "architectonic character [which] appeals to the architectonic tendencies of his design."¹⁵ This stylistic choice is especially present in his work *Lübeck II*. Feininger employs a sketchy line quality in the piece that causes the viewer to see it as a blueprint, even though it is a

landscape. One of the more appealing aspects of Feininger's work is that his style remained consistent during his life's work. Although the two pieces mentioned above were painted within a year of one another, they are strong examples from Feininger's style in the middle of his life. These works are exemplary of his fully developed and matured style. They demonstrate how the majority of Feininger's work developed when he began, and how his work would be in the future.

Feininger showed his strengths as an artist in one of the most difficult times to be an artist. He was degraded in the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition and had to flee from Germany to save his art. He writes, "When I left my things in Germany, it was with the definite idea of winning my way in America without the assistance of past 'triumphs' obtained in another country."¹⁶ Mills College played a key role in helping him move to America, and he remained close friends with Dr. Alfred Neumeyer for the remainder of his life. While much has been written about Lyonel Feininger, and many beautiful things were said about him in his lifetime, his true emotions are seen through his beautiful architectonic abstractions.

1 "Degenerate Art," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, accessed April 11, 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/155950/degenerate-art>.

2 Ibid.

3 Sidney L. Gulick, Jr., "A Visitor Looks At the Summer Session," *Mills Quarterly* 19.1(1936): 10-12.

4 Mrs. Lyonel Feininger, Letter to Alfred Frankenstein, Mills College Art Museum Archive.

5 Alfred Frankenstein, "Impressions of the Feininger Exhibition Installed at Mills," *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 1936).

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Alfred Neumeyer, Letter to Lyonel Feininger, May 5, 1937, Mills College Art Museum Archive.

9 Sidney L. Gulick, Jr., Letter to Mills College, June 2, 1937, Mills College Art Museum Archive.

10 Lyonel Feininger, Letter to Alfred Neumeyer, June 19, 1937, Mills College Art Museum Archive.

11 Dr. Alfred Neumeyer, "The Art of Lyonel Feininger," Lecture transcript, July 18, 1937, Mills College Art Museum Archive.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Feininger, Letter To Alfred Neumeyer.

ARTISTS OF NOTE: FREDERIC TAUBES, YASUO KUNIYOSHI, AND HENRI MATISSE

MIKA ROSEN

Artists Frederic Taubes, Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Henri Matisse provide insight into the workings behind the Summer Sessions program that Mills College held from 1933–1952. Frederic Taubes taught at the 1939 Summer Session and Yasuo Kuniyoshi taught ten years later in 1949. Henri Matisse was invited to come in 1941, but had to decline the offer. Nevertheless, because of the emphasis on modern art at the Mills College Art Museum during the Summer Sessions, the museum was able to acquire five lithographs from Matisse for its collection.



Frederic Taubes, *Figures on the Shore*, n.d.

Though he is not as well known today, during his lifetime, Taubes was a prominent figure in the art world and familiar to a general public. Born in Poland to prosperous parents who saw and fostered his talent for painting and drawing at a very early age by giving him access to private art instruction, Taubes was a voracious student of the arts. He took instruction at the Bauhaus in 1920 and then embarked on a world tour that led to his immigration to the United States and his setting up a home in New York. Taubes became famous in the following years as a society portraitist and his work was acclaimed by critics, who stated, "His painting always stressed an attractive sensuous quality of color and brush work," and deeming him a "master technician."¹ He was invited

to the Summer Sessions in 1939 amid excitement of his status in the art world and was given a solo exhibition at the Art Museum. *Figures on the Shore* is one of the pieces that was included in his solo exhibition. Taubes became close friends with the director of the Art Museum, Alfred Neumeyer, through their correspondence and was on the board of the Summer Sessions for several years after his participation.

Taubes was a student of the arts in addition to being a teacher and he studied ways of mixing his own oil paints, saying, "If Titian walked into my studio today he would feel at home. He would see me mix my own paints like he did 400 years ago."² The acquisition of his painting *Figures on the Shore* drew much attention to both the college and Taubes himself, since the work had recently been featured in *Life* magazine. In *Figures on the Shore* the body becomes landscape as the statuesque figures in the foreground of the painting echo the curvature of the hills in the background. Women, with their swept hair and sharp bones yielding to round hips, are found in much of his figurative work. *Figures on the Shore* is typical of Taubes' expressionist tendencies, and it is possible that what he rendered in paint was a feeling of alienation from women, as well as a dark desire to consume them, as the surrounding cloud does.

Bought several years after Taubes' tenure at the Summer Sessions, *Julia* is unlike the majority of Taubes' work, which was primarily done in oil paints. In this work, the artist uses etching and aquatint techniques. The process involves clearing away an acid resistant coating from a metal plate to allow the acid to bite the metal in the artist's desired form. It is called aquatint, not because the etching was made using water, but instead because it appears to look like watercolor. In *Julia*, the face is not bathed in light, instead, there are shades of grey in this piece, lending it depth and character.

Yasuo Kuniyoshi was born to a middle class businessman in Okayama, Japan in 1893. As a child he had limited access to art, but was "much stirred by it" when he encountered drawings in his friends' houses.³ He



ABOVE Frederic Taubes, *Julia*, n.d.
BELOW Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *Ingenmyoo*
(*Little Pond*), n.d.

was always curious about the United States and studied Western tourists in Japan. At the young age of thirteen Kuniyoshi told his father that he wished to go to the United States to try his luck in what he thought would be a land with gold on the streets. He went through the public school system and was noticed for his immense talent by one of his teachers who saw him draw a map of China, in addition to other sketches.⁴ He put himself through art school, learning a number of different methods of creating visual art. The year before Yasuo Kuniyoshi came to Mills College he was the first living artist to be awarded a major retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art.⁵

As a Japanese-born American, Kuniyoshi was labeled an enemy alien shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, but was not interned due to the fact that he was in New York at the time. Nevertheless, his paintings took on a more political slant away from the naïve scenes that he had created in his early work. *Ingenmyoo* (*Little Pond*) was a gift to the Mills College Art Museum from Albert M. Bender in 1943, six years before Kuniyoshi taught at the Summer Sessions. The work is a silk-screened print called a serigraph to distinguish it from industrialized silk-screening. Serigraphy requires an artist to individually apply each of the different colors to the paper. *Ingenmyoo* (*Little Pond*) is not typical of Kuniyoshi's work, in that it features no figures and is a serigraph rather than an oil painting, ink draw-

ing, or lithograph, which were more common among his works.

In addition to the work with Taubes and Kuniyoshi, Neumeyer reached out to Henri Matisse to join the Summer Sessions. In one short letter written by Matisse's son Pierre (who handled his father's affairs in the United States,) Pierre explains that his father could not come to the Summer Sessions due to "developments abroad," a circuitous manner of acknowledging that the World War II German occupation of France was underway.⁶ Though Matisse had a visa to go to Brazil, he felt he would be a deserter to leave his country in a time of war. Matisse was a member of an artistic community that was supported and encouraged by collectors Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas. Stein lived in Oakland from 1878 until she attended college, after which she moved to Paris with her brother to follow their passion for the arts. Remaining in California was her eldest brother Michael Stein who, when their parents died, assumed the role of father figure as well as executor of the estate.⁷ His wife Sarah Stein was an admirer of Matisse's work and was sent numerous lithographs by Matisse himself, three of which she gifted to the Mills College Art Museum. Albert M. Bender, an extraordinary patron of the arts whose support and dedication helped establish both the Mills College Art Museum and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gave the other two pieces of Matisse's work that are in the Mills College Art Museum's collection.

The invitation of the artists Frederic Taubes, Henri Matisse, and Yasuo Kuniyoshi is an indication of the ambitions of the Summer Sessions. Each artist was held in high esteem during his lifetime. It is clear that the Summer Sessions both bolstered the College's profile and showed the school's willingness to promote the avant-garde. By the end of the Summer Sessions Mills College was only one hundred years old and already it had forged its name as a place of possibility on the cutting edge of the arts, focusing on teaching promising young artists and attracting only the best artists of the time to its Summer Sessions.



1 Excerpts from reviews, Mills College Art Museum Archives, 1937–1938.

2 "Like An Old Master Taubes Makes His Own Paints," *Life* 8, no. 3 (January 15, 1940), 38–41.

3 Lloyd Goodrich, *Yasuo Kuniyoshi* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948).

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Pierre Matisse, Letter to Alfred Neumeyer, Mills College, F. W. Olin Library Special Collection, September 27, 1940.

7 "Gertrude Stein," *Dictionary of American Biography*, Gale Biography in Context, accessed May 5, 2011.

LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY AND THE 1940 SUMMER SESSIONS

ELIZABETH MAUERMAN

The Mills College Summer Session of 1940 concentrated primarily on the influential presence of works and artists from the Bauhaus School of Design. The two exhibits displayed at the Mills College Art Museum during that summer were both related to the Bauhaus school and movement, and the featured guest instructor for that summer was Bauhaus professor László Moholy-Nagy. He brought with him other faculty and students from the then current center of the Bauhaus school in Chicago. One of these instructors was Gyorgy Kepes. The visiting professors' works were first shown at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and then moved to the Mills College Art Museum for the month of April, in anticipation of the Summer Sessions.

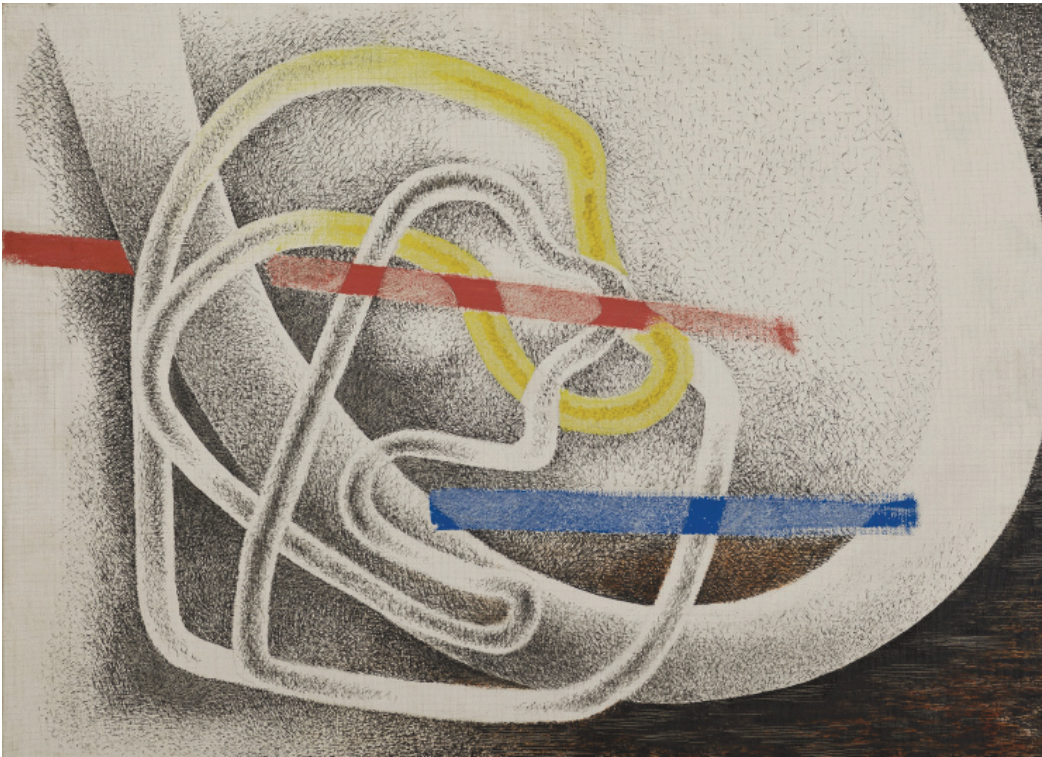
to fuse architecture, painting, sculpture, and other art forms in their work. They were urged to create functional items for everyday use that integrated an artistic aesthetic. Following an introduction to Bauhaus theory, students at the institution entered more specialized areas of study, including cabinet making, textiles, metalworking, furniture making, and topography. "Bauhaus" eventually became a general description for functional designs that incorporate an artistic element, a concept that became widely influential in modern art and architecture.

Gropius also sought to destroy the hierarchal social construct within art, and the Bauhaus in Germany was also known for its left-leaning political perspectives. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, the political climate in Germany was consistently becoming more conservative. Following the elections in 1932 and the ascent to power of the Nazis, the Bauhaus was dissolved in 1933.

Due to mounting authoritarian and political pressures in Germany during the late twenties and thirties, hundreds of prominent artists and academics, not to mention countless members of other demographic groups, were suddenly placed in situations requiring them to leave Europe. With the onset of World War II, many creative professionals sought and found institutions within the United States to accept them as faculty in order to obtain visas to the United States and also to justify to European officials their sudden need to leave Europe. Such professors and artists included many of those who had taught at the Bauhaus: Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, and László Moholy-Nagy.

While Gropius went to teach at Harvard University, Moholy-Nagy took another route; he became the founder and director of the New Bauhaus in Chicago in 1937. One year later, it was

renamed the School of Design. Moholy-Nagy's goal for this institution was similar to that of the original Bauhaus in Germany: he encouraged students to experiment with new materials, techniques and forms with guidance in the classroom.² The presence of natural science, photography, as well as better training in mechanical techniques distinguished this institute from the original Bauhaus. Despite these changes in the curriculum, the School of Design continued and extended Bauhaus



László Moholy-Nagy, *CH XI*, 1939

German architect Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus in 1919. First established in the German city of Weimar, the school moved to Dessau in 1925, where their main building, designed by Gropius, became an influential example of modernist architecture. Gropius' objective for the institution was "to reimagine the material world to reflect the unity of all the arts."¹ Bauhaus design sought to combine fine arts with design and industry, encouraging students



László Moholy-Nagy, *Marseille Procession*, 1929

theories and educated students who would collectively become a prominent force in design. The school is considered today to be a world leader in modernist design.

Moholy-Nagy created art using a wide range of media. He was known for his work as a painter, inventor, photographer, sculptor, filmmaker, typographer, and stage designer. He was also a gifted classroom instructor and theorist. Born László Weisz in Hungary, he abandoned the Jewish surname Weisz after his father abandoned the family. He adopted the surname Moholy-Nagy as a combination of Nagy, the surname of a family friend and Moholy, a reference to the region of his birth. Moholy-Nagy attended law school, but abandoned the profession in favor of painting following World War I. Gropius invited Moholy-Nagy to join the faculty at the Bauhaus school in Weimar in 1923, where he was one

of the primary forces behind the development and refinement of Bauhaus theories.³ Though influential in much of his work, Moholy-Nagy was instrumental in the development of modern photography, graphic design and kinetic sculpture. Moholy-Nagy left the Bauhaus in 1928, due to political pressure, moving to Berlin to work as an independent designer. He moved again, this time to London in 1935 and finally immigrated in 1937, settling in Chicago and founding the New Bauhaus.⁴

Moholy-Nagy was invited to be a visiting professor for the 1940 Summer Sessions. The director of the Mills College Art Museum at the time was Alfred Neumeyer, a prominent figure in his own right, who was also one of the artists, educators, and academics who fled, en masse, from Germany a few years earlier. Therefore he had several connections with artists

who he later invited to the Summer Sessions at Mills. Neumeyer extended an invitation to Moholy-Nagy, asking him to bring along a few professors and/or students from his School of Design in order to teach over the summer. Moholy-Nagy cordially accepted, and he and his wife Sibyl drove from Illinois with his teaching supplies to Oakland California.

Attendance at the 1940 Summer Sessions was, possibly, the highest in the program's history. Moholy-Nagy's presence was much anticipated, and several students went to the School of Design in order to study with him after that summer. While at Mills, he taught Basic Workshop, Photography, and gave a seminar on "Contemporary Problems in Art." Several pieces of his work, along with other works by other faculty from the School of Design, were shown at the Mills College Art Museum during the summer of 1940. While there were other disciplines taught at Mills that summer, the main focus of the program was on Moholy-Nagy.

While his overall experience that summer was a positive one, it ended abruptly when Moholy-Nagy became ill after being bitten by a dog. He nonetheless thoroughly enjoyed his time at Mills, as his wife Sibyl wrote in Moholy-Nagy's biography. In describing their time spent in San Francisco, Sibyl wrote "For the first time since we had left Europe, the atmosphere of a city seemed filled with an enjoyment of nonmaterial values—art, music, theatre—not as demonstrations of wealth and privilege, but as group projects of young people and of the community."⁵ Following the Summer Session, Moholy-Nagy sent a gracious thank you note to Neumeyer for arranging the summer program, who responded in kind. This was the beginning of a correspondence that lasted until Moholy-Nagy's death in 1946. Before leaving for the summer, he sold his painting *CHXI* to the Art Museum where it now resides in the permanent collection.

Considering the wide range of media Moholy-Nagy worked with throughout his career, it comes as no surprise to learn that his own artistic style developed over time. The one design consistency that emerged within his work was his lifelong interest in exploring the different uses of space. His stylistically abstract works were conceptually innovative, and this specific aspect of his work is seen in *CHXI*. He focused on curved geometric shapes and primary colors for this painting, deliberately leaving the work obscure so the viewer may develop his or her own interpretation of the work. The painting maintains a naming convention commonly utilized by Moholy-Nagy, using letters and numbers to generate titles that are similar to inventory or manufacturing codes. This convention reflects his continued



Gyorgy Kepes, *Window*, 1938

1 Alexandra G. Winton, "Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History | The Metropolitan Museum of Art." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*, accessed April 5, 2011, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/bauh/hd_bauh.htm.

2 "The New Bauhaus/Institute of Design—A Legacy for Chicago," *Chicago Bauhaus & Beyond*, accessed April 5, 2011, <http://www.chicagobauhausbeyond.org/cbb/mission/newBauhaus.htm>.

3 "Nagy," *Chicago Tribute Markers of Distinction*, Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, accessed April 6, 2011, <http://www.chicagotribute.org/Markers/Nagy.htm>.

4 "Laszlo Moholy-Nagy" <http://www.iconofgraphics.com/Laszlo-Moholy-Nagy/>

5 Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, *Moholy-Nagy: Experiment in Totality* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T., 1969).

6 "Biography of Gyorgy Kepes | Kepeskozpont.hu," Complex Cultural Research, accessed April 7, 2011, <http://www.kepeskozpont.hu/en/biography-of-gyorgy-kepes/>.

interest in the Bauhaus conception of melding art and industry. The curves utilized in the foreground also reflect the direct human impact on the subject by their varying rates of curvature, indicating handwork. This handwork is superimposed on larger, more evenly curved and complex surfaces, indicating the greater precision obtained in machine work. This tension between art and industry, with the resulting impact on humans interacting with technology, is one of Moholy-Nagy's characteristic themes.

Gyorgy Kepes came to Mills with Moholy-Nagy the summer of 1940. Born in Hungary in 1906, Kepes first studied painting in Budapest. Moving on to filmmaking, Kepes settled in Berlin where he joined Moholy-Nagy's design studio. When Moholy-Nagy moved to Chicago and opened the New Bauhaus, Kepes accompanied him and became a professor and head of the Light and Color department.⁶ He taught in Chicago from 1937 to 1943. During this time, he developed his theories on design and visual organization, which essentially became foundational theories of visual communication. In 1947 he accepted an offer to teach at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he developed and introduced a program on visual design. He taught at MIT until his retirement in 1974. Over his lifetime he worked with numerous influential artists, first from the Bauhaus and the expressionist movements, and later expanding to a wide variety of artists who sought to combine art and science. In addition to Gropius and Moholy-Nagy,

these colleagues included designers Charles Eames and Buckminster Fuller as well as filmmaker Martin Scorsese.

When Kepes accompanied Moholy-Nagy to teach at the 1940 Summer Sessions, they came with four other professors from the School of Design (by then renamed the Institute of Design). Kepes led the Color Workshop over the summer. His work was also displayed in the exhibits at the Mills College Art Museum over the summer along with other artists from the Institute of Design.

Though not acquired during the summer of 1940, the Mills College Art Museum has two prints by Kepes in its permanent collection. The first is *Contrasts II*, created in 1948 and given to the Museum in 2004. This gelatin silver print draws on his interest in the depiction of light. This abstract piece keeps the eye moving across the print, maintaining interest with its various shapes and linear qualities. Technically, the piece is comprised of the image of a lined surface, above which is a direct image of a light source. The surface shows numerous direct and indirect reflections of the light source, yielding a wide variety of contrast intensities. Onto this field are imposed convoluted black objects that starkly contrast with the subtle reflective images of the background. The interplay between shadow and light was consistently a main focus in his work, and that interest is clearly demonstrated in this piece.

The other Kepes piece the museum owns is entitled *Window*, and was created in 1938. Also a gift to the museum in 2004, this piece is a gelatin silver print, but visually a striking departure from *Contrasts II*. Although both works are abstract in nature, *Window* has more definite geometric shapes and denser lines. *Window* also has a flowing sense of fluidity about it, much like one might observe in a painting. *Contrasts II*, on the other hand, has more sharply defined shapes and contrasts, more like those observed in photographic images. *Window's* black and white contrast is also more extreme with its strong white linear qualities and lacks the subtle gradations of light found in *Contrasts II*.

The 1940 Summer Sessions were, undoubtedly, among the most successful sessions ever convened at Mills. The guest faculty included some of the most luminary artists of the time. These artists, originating at the Bauhaus School and its successors, were at the forefront of the movement to integrate art with science, were the creators of the modern fields of graphic art and photography, and remained tremendously influential throughout the second half of the twentieth century.



Darius Milhaud, Fernand Léger, and André Maurois
in Mills College Art Museum, 1941

FERNAND LÉGER: THE MECHANICS OF MODERNISM

JENNIFER NICHOLSON

Fernand Léger (1881–1955) was born in rural France to a working-class family who raised cattle. After demonstrating a talent for drawing, he served a two-year apprenticeship in an architect's office in Caen. He moved to Paris in 1900 where he worked as an architectural draftsman and later as a retoucher of photographs. In 1903 he enrolled in the Paris School of Decorative Arts and also began to study as an unofficial student with two professors from the École des Beaux-Arts. Léger's career, spanning more than fifty years, began "within the orbit of late Impressionism."¹ He rented a studio at La Ruche (The Beehive), an artist settlement on the fringe of Montparnasse where avant-garde tendencies were active. Although Impressionism and Fauvism were significant influences, he abandoned those styles for a more unique and distinct artistic expression found in Cubism. At the 1911 Salon des Independents, Léger was recognized as one of the leading Cubist artists.

While Cubism freed the painter from a responsibility to realism, he was determinedly interested in materialism and empirical observation. Thus began a long and prolific career in which he experimented with a variety of styles, from figuration to abstraction, as a means of exploring subjects such as the human body and physical activity, the machine and the urban environment, and the public experience of the industrialized world. In contrast to the typical modern artist's critique or rejection of life in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, "Léger offers the most sustained twentieth century statement of vigorous, optimistic acceptance of the often lamented realities of our mechanized environment."² Cubism for him was a means of transforming the relationship of the human and mechanical into something positive and beautiful. His pictorial language involved a process of reduction and regularization as a result of seeing the world in terms of basic architectonic shapes juxtaposed in a tapestry of contrasting color, curved and straight lines, and solid and flat planes.

After serving as a military engineer in World War I, Léger's interest in social and political issues fueled his concern for making art accessible to the working classes. While continuing to exhibit paintings, he also explored other forms of creative expression including book illustration, theater-set design and film. A subtle stylistic and compositional transformation occurred during this period in which he painted "large fragments of incomplete objects rather than small



Fernand Léger, *Study for Les Plongeurs "The Divers,"* 1941

fragments of complete objects."³ This visual tool enabled him to portray the complexity and unity of the urban experience where human inhabitants had become impersonal elements in the industrialized landscape. Again, Léger's interpretation of the "machine" of modern society was presented with optimism. He emphasized the city's potential for order and beauty rather than confusion and ugliness. *Landscape*, 1921 demonstrates through the use of "purified shapes, flat poster colors, and impersonal smoothness of brushwork, that he found a rich harmony in the very aspects of mass production and anonymity that are the targets of many critics of the contemporary industrial society."⁴

By the 1930s, Léger began to transform his pictorial vocabulary and introduce non-mechanical forms found in nature. This biomorphic style came to dominate his arrangement of irregular forms with the same precision and detachment that characterized his machine compositions. The introduction of freer contours and looser spaces accompanied themes that reflected his interest in physical activity and movement. While still intrigued with technology and machinery, more important characters now took center stage: humans. Léger's interest in social equality and the dynamics of

1 Robert Rosenblum, *Cubism and 20th Century Art* (New York: H. N. Abrams), 134.

2 Ibid., 133.

3 Ibid., 136.

4 Ibid., 153.

5 Peter Selz, "The Impact from Abroad: Foreign Guests and Visitors," *On the Edge of America: California Modernist Art, 1900–1950*, ed. Paul J. Karlstrom (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 108–109.

6 Ibid., 113.

7 Ibid., 114.

8 Letter to Alfred Neumeyer, Museum Archives in the Special Collections, F.W. Olin Library, Mills College, July 22, 1941.

9 Visiting Artists at Mills, Mills College Art Museum Archive.

10 Peter Selz, *On the Edge of America*, 114.

11 Document describing Summer Session of 1941 and information about Léger's painting classes, Mills College Art Museum Archive.

12 Annual Report May 1941–42, Museum Archives in the Special Collections, F.W. Olin Library, Mills College.

13 Ibid.

14 Letter from Alfred Neumeyer to Dr. Van Derpool, University of Illinois, Mills College Art Museum Archive, October 30, 1941.

15 Letter from Dr. Van Derpool to Alfred Neumeyer, Mills College Art Museum Archive, November 5, 1941.

movement inspired his studies of acrobats, cyclists, divers, and builders. He began to paint a series that showed different groups of people in action. The series *Les Plongeurs* (*The Divers*), 1941–42, was inspired by observations prior to Léger's arrival in the United States during World War II.

Léger was no stranger to the United States. He had made three trips in the 1930s, primarily to New York. His extended stay from 1941–1945 was a direct result of the tumultuous political and social circumstances in Europe during World War II. The German occupation of Poland, the northwestern coastal region of Europe, and France prompted a large wave of immigration to the United States but soon enough the door was closed due to racial and cultural tensions awakened by the existing composition of the American population. In the years between 1880 and 1924, "half of all of those who ever immigrated to the United States arrived."⁵ While most immigration was subject to quotas established in the National Origins Act of 1924, a small group that included academics and their immediate families were issued visitor visas. Employment or proof of financial support was required for entry. As a result, several important European artists came to the Bay Area.

Dr. Alfred Neumeyer, a noted German academic, was offered professorship at Mills College in Oakland in 1935, "becoming the first trained art historian to teach the discipline on the West Coast."⁶ In the year following his appointment he became the director of the Mills College Art Museum and consequently began the art component of the Summer Sessions. Léger was invited to teach for six weeks during the Summer Session of 1941. An exhibition of his work at the Mills art museum coincided with his stay and from there it traveled to the San Francisco Museum of Art.

Léger's previous travels to the United States inspired a fascination with the audacity of American artistic and scientific ingenuity. In *Architectural Forum*, he stated that the U.S., "Is not a country. . . it's a world. . . In America you are confronted with a power in movement, with a force in reserve without end. . . One has the impression that there is too much of everything."⁷ He traveled by bus across the vast stretch of country from New York to Oakland in the summer of 1941. With the aid of an interpreter, Léger taught drawing and painting classes to Mills students and community members. A correspondence written to Dr. Neumeyer while he was away on vacation stated, "students were happy with Léger, for he is amiable and generous with his criticism. He sits in the little office off the painting room, drawing arms and legs, figures and faces on many sketches of his own, welcoming anyone who comes to the door with work for criticism."⁸ Speaking little or no English, he found the Mills students "*magnifique*."⁹ During his tenure, Léger produced numerous sketches and drawings for *The Divers* series, a body of work that occupied much of his first two years in the United States.

In his leisure time, Léger found inspiration for *The Divers* series at the Mills swimming pool. He found that the sense of contrast in movement and possibility

inherent in American culture was enacted in the social setting on the Mills College campus. The study for *The Divers* that he gifted to the Mills Art Museum in honor of his stay, captured the essence of the school's vitality and importance in the community and is preserved as a link in his artistic process. Léger stated in *Architectural Forum* that, "In America I painted in a much more realistic manner than before. I tried to translate the character of the human body evolving in space without any point of contact with the ground."¹⁰

The Mills exhibition catalogue displayed Léger's well-known *Composition with Two Parrots* 1935–39 on the cover. In the exhibition announcement, Dr. Neumeyer wrote, "He, together with Picasso, Matisse, Bracque, and Derain is responsible for a new vitality in contemporary art—an intensification of color and a deeper understanding of formal relationships which have become basic elements of our aesthetics."¹¹ Thirteen hundred people turned out for the Léger exhibition at the Mills Museum, the highest attendance of any exhibit that year.¹² He gave two lectures: one at Mills entitled "Modern Art" (ninety-four in attendance) and an illustrated version at the San Francisco Museum of Art entitled "the Origin of Modern Art."¹³

In October of 1941 when Léger returned to the East Coast, he wrote to Dr. Neumeyer expressing his interest in obtaining a one-year teaching commitment at a college or university. Dr. Neumeyer corresponded with several of his colleagues in Illinois, Washington, and Massachusetts on Léger's behalf stating, "It was one of the most rewarding experiences in my relationship with artists and their work to be in contact with this man for six weeks."¹⁴ Academic jobs were scarce and educational institutions had to consider their community's view of modern art. In a response to Dr. Neumeyer's letter, Dr. Van Derpool of the University of Illinois wrote, "I think I ought to say, confidentially, that our general university faculty and the townspeople are so conservative in their point of view in art that I am afraid a meeting point for sympathetic contacts between them and the artist would be almost impossible to establish."¹⁵

Léger continued to work on the East Coast for the duration of his stay in America and created a number of major works, some of which resulted in commissions including designs for Nelson A. Rockefeller's residence in New York and the ten-meter-wide mural on Long Island, *Les Plongeurs*, commissioned in 1942 by the architect, Wallace K. Harrison. He influenced many New York School painters and administered a lectures series at Yale entitled "Color in Architecture." Toward the end of his career in France, Léger became increasingly involved with large-scale public artworks and created mosaics, stained glass windows, and murals. Although he would not return again to the U.S. in his lifetime, Léger's optimistic observations of contemporary society and our culture, and the charming, meaningful impression made upon the Mills College teachers, students, and community has served to enrich our historical artistic heritage.

SUMMER SESSIONS 1942–1943: ANTONIO SOTOMAYOR AND JOSÉ PEROTTI

JESSICA TANG

Historically Mills College has been an academic oasis for European artists. In 1935 Alfred Neumeyer, a German refugee scholar in art history, was offered a position teaching and as director of the Mills College Art Museum. Between the early 1930s and late 1950s Neumeyer invited artists to teach at Mills College during the summer in a program appropriately named the *Summer Sessions*. Intimately involved with the art scene in Berlin, Neumeyer offered teaching opportunities to fellow European artists who were trying to escape the difficulties of World War II.



Antonio Sotomayor, *Untitled*, n.d.

In 1942 and 1943 Neumeyer invited Antonio Sotomayor and José Perotti, two Latin American artists to teach at the Summer Sessions. Unlike some of the other European artists involved in the program, Sotomayor and Perotti were not escaping from World War II; instead Sotomayor and Perotti came to the Bay Area as a means to further their artistic career. The Mexican Muralist movement was flourishing and inspired Sotomayor and Perotti in both subject matter and style. The popularity of artists like Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo during this period in addition to Sotomayor and Perotti, helped to bring more awareness of Latin America art to the Bay Area and the United States.

In the summer of 1942 Alfred Neumeyer invited Sotomayor to teach at Mills. Antonio Sotomayor was

born in Bolivia and was educated at the Escuela de Belleas Arts in La Paz and studied at the Hopkins Institute of Art in San Francisco when he moved to the area in 1923. Diego Rivera had arrived in San Francisco in 1930 to paint murals and frescos in the San Francisco City Club, the San Francisco Art Institute, and San Francisco City College in the Ocean Avenue neighborhood. As a result, the Bay Area built a collective interest in Latin America Arts. During his lifetime in San Francisco Sotomayor spent much of his time creating caricatures of famous San Francisco celebrities and other local artists like percussionist Lou Harrison.¹

In the summer before he taught at Mills, Sotomayor exhibited his caricatures at University of Chicago's Contemporary Art Museum. In his statement on the exhibition Sotomayor explains how a "true caricaturist makes use of exaggeration and distortion as the tools with which to show the outward physical signs of the inward spiritual character of the subject."² Sotomayor's use of simple gestures helps to portray the creative spirits of many of his subjects. For example, his series, "Twelve Musical Caricatures by Antonio Sotomayor" contains drawings of musicians such as French-born American conductor Pierre Monteux, African American singer Mariam Anderson, and Hungarian violinist Joseph Szeti. These stylized portraits capture the emotional intensity of each individual.

In addition to his caricatures, Sotomayor was also known for his paintings and murals. By the late 1930s, a few years after Diego Rivera arrived in San Francisco to paint his murals, Sotomayor also became a muralist for the city. He was commissioned to paint murals in the Cirque room at the Fairmont Hotel as well as a panel of murals in the Grace Cathedral in San Francisco's Nob Hill.³ Sotomayor drew inspiration from Rivera's murals and painting, and this influence is more evident in Sotomayor's pieces of indigenous women and children. Rivera's style in portraying indigenous women with children, flowers, or in activities of labor is characterized by an emphasis on simple geometric shapes and the broad, flat use of vivid colors stylistic characteristics are also reflected in Sotomayor's pieces.

During Sotomayor's time at Mills he taught classes in Latin American art along with Neumeyer and José Perotti. In addition to teaching, Sotomayor continued to work on new pieces, several of which were given to the Mills College Art Museum. The museum currently has three pieces by Sotomayor: *Untitled*, *Andean Woman and Child*, and *Portrait of Darius Milhaud*.



Antonio Sotomayor, *Andean Woman and Child*, n.d.

Untitled resembles Rivera's subject and style the most. Sotomayor uses broad colors and simple, rounded shapes to enhance the curves on the woman's body. The gaze of the woman, as in several of Rivera's pieces, is directed away from the viewer in an almost secretive and private manner. In *Andean Woman and Child*, Sotomayor uses the same subject but the style begins to lean towards his more gestural caricature style, with simple black outlines. The only color in the piece is the skin tone of the woman and child, perhaps hinting at the ethnic or political issues of native Peruvian people. Lastly, in *Portrait of Darius Milhaud*, Sotomayor continues with his general series of caricatures of famous individuals. Darius Milhaud was a well-known composer and professor at Mills. Milhaud helped to establish the music classes and visiting musicians for the Summer Sessions. Some of his students, like Phillip Glass, Irwin Beadell, Steven Geliman, and Ben Johnston, later became famous in their own field.

In the following Summer Session in 1943, Sotomayor was joined by fellow Latin American artist José Perotti. Born in Chile, Perotti studied sculpture at the Chilean School of Fine Arts and later studied at the Academia de Bella Artes de San Fernando (School of Fine Art) in Madrid, Spain in 1920 and 1921. Prior to his experience at Mills, Perotti was one of the founding members of Grupo Montparnasse, a group of Chilean artists that formed in 1922 and experimented with new trends and emerging art movements like Cubism and Expressionism. Perotti became the sculpture professor at the

School of Fine Art in Madrid and the Director of the School of Applied Art in 1929, and traveled to Germany to study color and sculptural techniques with metal and ceramics in 1937.⁴

Like Sotomayor, Perotti came to Mills with experience handling multiple mediums. He excelled in sculpture whereas Sotomayor focused on painting and illustration. Regardless of their different techniques, both Sotomayor and Perotti were part of the growing Latin American art movement in the Bay Area. Although not as well known to San Francisco audiences as Rivera, Sotomayor and Perotti provided an early pioneering emphasis on Latin American arts at Mills College. During his time at Mills, Perotti worked with Sotomayor teaching contemporary Latin American art.

The Mills College Art Museum received Perotti's painting on paper entitled *Praying Women* in 1943. In

this piece, Perotti uses deep colors in contrast to the pale clothing of the praying women. The space in between the women and the direction of their gaze seems to subtly hint at a cross shape and brings the eye to the center where there is a cross. As some of Rivera and Sotomayor's works, in this piece the subjects are not looking at the viewer. Their gaze is solely on their religious faith and the composition reflects the snapshot quality of people that is characteristic of many political murals.

While Perotti and Sotomayor were teaching at Mills, Perotti's wife, Amanda Perotti spent her time teaching art to children and lectured about modern art. During their time at Mills, Sotomayor and Perotti helped to bring more awareness of Latin American art to the campus and the Bay Area. The courses offered by Sotomayor, Perotti, and Amanda Perotti helped to broaden and bring the history of the Mexican muralist movement history into Mills College.

When the summer was over, Sotomayor and the Perottis went their separate ways. Sotomayor continued creating illustrations for books such as *Best Birthday* by Quail Hawkins in 1954; *Relatos Chilenos* by Arturo Rioscco in 1956; and *Stan Delaplaine's Mexico* by Stanton Delaplaine in 1976; he later wrote two children's books: *Khasa Goes to the Fiesta* and *Balloons: The first Two Hundred Years* in 1972.⁵ Sotomayor stayed in San Francisco with his wife Grace and continued to paint and illustrate until he

passed away from cancer in 1985 at the age of 82. When Perotti left Mills he left the country to teach at the School of Applied Arts at the University of Chile and later passed away in Santiago, Chile in 1956.

Having a mixture of European and Latin American artists visit and teach at Mills helped enrich the campus with an innovative and culturally diverse artistic history. Through the foresight of Alfred Neumeyer, these artists contributed to the growing modernist art collection at the Mills Art Museum. While Sotomayor and Perotti may not be as well known to general audiences as other Summer Sessions artists, their presence was significant in bringing the Latin American arts to Mills College and the Bay Area.



José Perotti, *Praying Women*, 1943

1 "Lore Playing his Percussion Instruments," Mills College Library Special Collections.

2 "Antonio Sotomayor Caricatures," The Renaissance Society at The University of Chicago, Tuesday March 22, 2011. <http://www.renaissancesociety.org/site/Exhibitions/Essay.611.html>

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REGINALD MARSH AND THE AMERICAN REGIONALISTS GRANT WOOD AND THOMAS HART BENTON

HAZEL ROGERS



Reginald Marsh, *Swimming off the Hudson*, 1940

Reginald Marsh, Grant Wood, and Thomas Hart Benton, born within a decade of one another, represent three of the most influential American artists of the early twentieth century. Benton and Wood, although immeasurably different in style, are two of the best-known American Regionalists, with Benton credited as the forerunner of this movement. Regionalism truly began in the 1920s as a politically charged artistic movement that sought to represent the rural working class and poor.¹ This movement was socially progressive, and reflected isolationist attitudes apparent in the United States between the world wars.² These two artists, along with Reginald Marsh, were recognized as starting the realist movement that sought to look directly at the world around them and represent the people they saw in their immediate environment. Wood and Benton depicted scenes of the rural American mid-west—Iowa for Wood, and Kansas and Missouri for Benton—while Marsh preferred the urban scenes of New York.³

Rural life was familiar to Wood, who joked that, “I realized all the really good ideas I’d ever had came to me while I was milking a cow. So I went back to Iowa.”⁴ Wood’s father had died early, leaving the 10-year-old boy to help his mother feed her four children whatever

way he could, primarily as a farm hand and gardener or a country school teacher before he moved to Chicago to take night classes at the Art Institute, while working as a craftsman and jewelry designer by day.⁵ Benton, hailing from Neosho, Missouri, “a circumstance he has been at great pains not to conceal” his friend Thomas Craven remarked, had a far less rural upbringing.⁶ While he grew up painting Indians and railroad trains, and even met Buffalo Bill Cody, Benton’s father was a prominent lawyer who served under President Cleveland as U.S. Attorney for the Western district of Missouri and went to Congress for five terms.⁷ Marsh, in stark contrast, was born in 1898 in Paris to American artists.⁸ Hailing from a privileged background, he was sent to Yale University, graduating in 1920. All three studied in Europe, Wood making a total of four trips to further his study of painting and Marsh going abroad once to study the work of Rubens, Rembrandt, and Michelangelo.⁹ Benton traveled once to Paris in 1909 where he encountered modernist painting but was repulsed by the lack of realism in that artistic movement.¹⁰ He returned with new perspective on creating art and focused his efforts on the portrayal of American life.¹¹



Reginald Marsh, *Coney Island Beach, 1939 #1, 1939*

It was World War I that really opened Benton's eyes to the scenic possibilities of regionalism. Working as an architectural draftsman in the Navy during the war, he read American history during his free time and sketched. He was looking for subject matter at the time, and he found it in the American pastoral scene. Wood served as a camouflage designer for the Army until his mother fell ill in 1919 and he returned home.¹² While he returned to Europe in 1925–26, it was during the years following World War I that Wood developed his interest in the rural scenes into an artistic style.¹³ Marsh, however, was introduced to the idea of using the people around him as subjects for his work in 1927 and 1928 by friends in the "14th Street School" in which he was a participant.¹⁴

While Marsh himself was hardly affected by the Great Depression in 1929 (although he lost money during the stock market crash, he was able to earn an income from his stocks as well as an inheritance) he was interested in how the Depression affected his subject matter.¹⁵ He did several series of his favorite subjects: crowds at Coney Island, the Hudson River and New York Harbor, and people on the street and in theatres, recording how the scenes changed throughout the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁶ As a social realist, his work was similar to the regionalists in that he attempted to represent his subjects accurately. However, social realism differed in that it focused on urban scenes and often had a social agenda, such as to depict underrepresented groups or protest governmental action.¹⁷

Regionalist art became extremely popular after the stock market crash because of the reassuring images it portrayed.¹⁸ Grant Wood's work, however, rarely reflects the Depression-era gloom that overtook the country. Instead, his scenes represent busy farms and rolling landscapes without reflecting the poverty and fear of the 1930s.¹⁹ Simultaneously, he asserted that the Great Depression was beneficial to American artists who had to rely upon training in their homeland, rather than being able to afford to travel abroad, which promoted a stronger American artistic tradition rather than relying on European training.²⁰ Thomas Hart Benton was greatly involved with relief efforts that used art, such as the Depression-era murals common across the United States, however, his images were equally unrepresentative of the Depression-era poverty and continued the regionalist tradition of uplifting imagery.²¹

For the regionalists, World War II marked an end to their popularity as the images produced by European abstractionists gained critical attention. Critics began to call Benton and Wood's art "provincial and nationalistic" and compared Wood's style to that of an illustrator.²² Marsh, however was at the top of his game, and although he would die in 1954, his popularity was ever growing, contributing to his invitation to teach and exhibit work at Mills College in 1946.

Marsh, along with Wood and Benton, was invited to Mills, possibly as part of an effort to increase the presence of American artists involved in the Summer Session program. Especially during World War II, when

the Summer Sessions sometimes served as a way to help European artists fleeing war-torn Europe, American artists were somewhat underrepresented. Additionally, since international travel was more expensive, a consideration throughout the 1930s, American artists would have been a more cost-effective choice, as well as contributed to national economic health.

Benton was invited for 1938 and 1941, but was unable to attend. Between those years, his lithograph *Shallow Creek* was acquired by the Mills College Art Museum. This piece is something of an exception for Benton, because he was considered primarily a painter. Later, though, Benton turned *Shallow Creek* into a color painting, more in keeping with Benton's body of work. The flowing lines, especially evident in the clouds and trees of this picture, are very characteristic of Benton's work, and give this piece its strong feeling of movement. Waterways were one of Benton's favorite subjects; he wrote, "There is something about flowing water that makes for easy views. Down the river is an immense sense of freedom given to those who yield to it."²³

Grant Wood was invited for the 1938 Summer Session, but, like Benton, was unable to attend. In 1940, his lithograph *Fertility* was added to the Mills College Art Museum collection. *Fertility* is exemplary of Wood's work, including a farmhouse very similar to ones depicted in his other pieces, including his famous painting *American Gothic*. The pastoral landscape includes Wood's favorite subject: farms and farm life. The lush landscapes and geometric shapes represent Wood's distinctive style.

Marsh's summer at Mills included an exhibit in the Mills College Art Museum. Alfred Neumeyer, director of the museum at the time, had suggested the exhibit to Marsh after his

involvement in the Summer Sessions had been secured. Marsh agreed and directed arrangements through his dealer.²⁴ From this exhibit, the Art Museum purchased two pieces, *Coney Island Beach* and *Swimming off the Hudson*.²⁵

Coney Island Beach is an etching, one of many works on a favorite subject of Marsh's: the crowd at Coney Island's beach. This crowd featured a class of people to which Marsh did not belong. However, as Marsh liked to say "well bred people are no fun to paint."²⁶ *Coney Island Beach* exhibits a baroque simile: the poses of the bodies, half-clothed, in partially twisted positions, as well as the triangular shape they form as a group is reminiscent of scenes found in baroque period pieces. This baroque borrowing is exemplary of Marsh's work, as is his depiction of a crowd, one of his favorite subjects. However, the fact that this crowd is on the beach in Coney Island, rather than a cathedral wall, exhibits Marsh's unique sense of humor. Additionally, this piece is exemplary of Marsh's social realist style: the crowd at Coney Island Beach was a familiar sight, any family might go to a beach or lakeshore for a weekend outing, thus Marsh's mundane subject makes his perspective exceptional.

Swimming off the Hudson, an ink and wash drawing on paper, is a somewhat more complicated piece. In the 1920s and 1930s, Reginald Marsh became part of the "14th Street School," a group of New York-based artists who worked closely together, that included Isabel Bishop and Kenneth Hayes Miller, to whom Marsh was particularly close. Marsh traveled extensively with Bishop in Europe after the School dissolved, and it was Bishop who wrote the forward to Marsh's posthumous catalog published by his friends.²⁷ Kenneth Hayes Miller introduced Marsh to the idea of using

other media besides pencil in his sketches. Previously, Marsh had considered himself a draughtsman; he even worked as an illustrator for *The Daily News*. As Marsh later said, "Painting seemed to me then a laborious way to make a bad drawing . . ." Also from Miller, Marsh had learned to turn his eyes to the city around him, to sketch everyday scenes and turn them into art. *Swimming off the Hudson* is an example of a scene Marsh might have witnessed every day in New York. The Hudson River, however, may also have had a personal resonance for Marsh, considering his friendship with Isabel Bishop. As Bishop recounted, "Once I jumped into the Hudson River in the middle of the night—but my body just wouldn't die. It began to swim."²⁸ One cannot help but wonder if Marsh's view of the Hudson, considering his friend's suicide attempt in 1926, could have colored his interpretation of the river in this piece.

American Regionalism, the movement to which Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood ascribed, and Social Realism, which best describes Reginald Marsh's work, were two strong art movements of the 1920s through the 1950s. While regionalism especially lost some popularity, it persevered to become a common part of the American cultural scene we know today: from the famous *American Gothic* to murals in post offices and city halls across the country. Through the Summer Sessions, Mills College attempted to provide its students with a varied, but quality education in the arts. The classes Reginald Marsh led and the exhibit he displayed helped achieve this while adding an American perspective to the collection of artists already involved in the Summer Sessions.

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17 James G. Todd, Jr., "Social Realism," *Museum of Modern Art*, accessed April 11, 2011, http://www.moma.org/collection/theme.php?theme_id=10195.

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19 Sullivan Goss, "Reginald Marsh."

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21 Thomas Hart Benton, "Interview with Thomas Hart Benton," *Harry S. Truman Library and Museum*, accessed April 8, 2011, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralist/benton.htm>.

22 Sullivan Goss, "Reginald Marsh."

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25 Alfred Neumeyer, "Letter Regarding Acquisition of *Coney Island Beach*," Mills College Art Museum Archive.

26 Marilyn Cohen, *Reginald Marsh's New York*, 14.

27 Norman Sasowsky, *Reginald Marsh: Etchings, Engravings, Lithographs* (New York, N.Y.: Praeger, 1956).

28 Helen Yglesias, *Isabel Bishop* (New York, N.Y.: Rizzoli, 1989), 13.



Max Beckmann, *Portrait of a Woman*, n.d.

BECKMANN TO OLIVEIRA: LASTING EFFECTS OF WARTIME GERMANY

RACHEL REYES

The Second World War greatly impacted not only the political landscape of Germany, but the artistic landscape as well. The First World War left Germany in disarray, as the Treaty of Versailles forced Germany into accepting responsibility for the war, with Germany required to entirely disarm and pay reparations to affected parties. Left bankrupt as a country and on the whole without strong leadership, Germany was left to shame. Uniquely affected by this situation, the German public's discontent led to the rise of fascism, and most notably, the Nazi party led by Adolf Hitler in the early 1930s.¹ The rise of the Nazis came not only with a goal to purify the race of the country, but to purify art as well, with a strong distaste for modern art that caused many German and other European artists to flee Europe.²

Max Beckmann (1884–1950) was one of these negatively affected artists. Before World War II, he found artistic success in his thirties and forties during the years of the Weimar Republic that was established after World War I. Beckmann taught art at the Städelschule Academy of Fine Art in Frankfurt. During this time he received many prestigious awards, while major European institutions collected his work. Beckmann was one of most nationally renowned German artists of the time. Before enlisting in the German army in 1914, Beckmann was known for his mostly impressionist output, including landscape scenes of beaches and seascapes, influenced by his trip to Paris at the age of nineteen. The war drastically impacted his style as much of his artwork became noticeably expressionistic in nature.³

1937 marked the year the Nazis organized the *Degenerate Art* exhibition in the House of German Art in Munich, which was designed to be the new site for German art, housing only Nazi-approved work.⁴ Hundreds of Beckmann's works were exhibited here alongside many fellow German artists. This official Nazi disgust with modern or "decadent" art translated into a mass exodus of German artists to various other European countries.⁵ Beckmann himself fled to Amsterdam for ten years during a period of self-exile before going to the United States.⁶

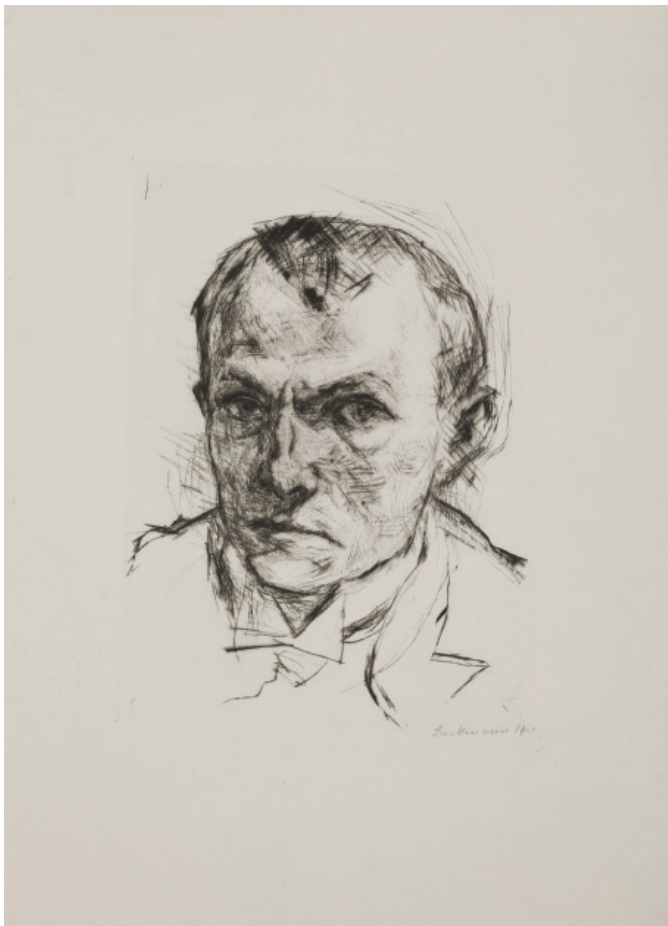
In 1948 a sixty-year old Beckmann found himself in New York, teaching at the Brooklyn Museum. He made his way to Washington University in St. Louis,



Max Beckmann, *The Bridge*, 1922

Missouri, and eventually ended up on the West Coast, teaching in the summer of 1950 at Mills College during the Summer Sessions.

Beckmann brought much of the work he produced in Amsterdam to the United States, and this work possessed a depth not present with his previous work. *Hell*, a portfolio of lithographs that conveys his disdain for the political climate of Germany, is amid some of his most famous work. The wars drastically changed the subject matter of Beckmann's sketches and paintings from peaceful landscapes to more emotionally charged subjects. Beckmann assumed that joining the medical corps during World War I would allow him some distance from the terrors of war. On the contrary, he found himself intimately interacting with the wounded and dying. As many artists do, Beckmann found solace in his sketchbook.⁷ This cathartic expression served as inspiration for his post-war artwork, which is simultaneously stoic and emotional. Some of this work, made during the periods of the first and second World Wars, is in the Mills College Art Museum's permanent collection. Several pieces were acquired during his solo



Max Beckmann, *Self Portrait*, 1914

exhibition at the College, which was ultimately his last before his death at the end of 1950.

Three of the four Beckmann pieces in the museum's collection are drypoints. This is the simplest form of intaglio, which is the method of incising lines into tablets made of various media including wood or copper plates.⁸ The main appeal of drypoint for Beckmann is the thick, imposing lines created by this technique which lend themselves to drawing emotion from a viewer. A major drawback is the limited quantity of prints that can be made from the original. Many artists preferred woodcuts as an alternative, as many prints could be made from the original, generating a larger profit. However, Beckmann utilized the technique for purely stylistic purposes. Both techniques have a long history in Beckmann's native Germany; printmaker Albrecht Dürer made the method of woodcut famous and worked in drypoint as well.

Among the various pieces in the collection is *Self-Portrait*, 1914. One result of an engraving done directly onto a copper plate is very distorted lines that conjure up very raw emotions. Because little to no changes can be made to drypoints, each stroke of the hand has to be deliberate, producing agitated, aggressive lines. Beckmann's exclusion of color leads one to assume his drypoints are meant to be privately studied, not displayed on walls, as the finished product is fairly simple.⁹ There is a haze over this self-portrait; Beckmann could have used a woodcut method, which he was skilled at, that produces cleaner-cut lines, but

he did not. Additionally, this choice of method forces the viewer to consider that 1914 was the year was when the First World War started, possibly creating a compromised view of Germany that was not clear to the artist at the time. Furthermore, the cross-hatching pattern on Beckmann's face creates deep shadows that almost appear sinister as his eyes stare off to the side of the print. Self-portraiture is a practice Beckmann consistently refined throughout his career.

Beckmann's *Schiessbude*, or *Shooting Gallery Girl*, 1921, is a stylized portrayal of a woman. This drypoint is part of a ten-piece plate series, *The Annual Fair*, which documents carnival life.¹⁰ Standing upright holding a gun, she is staring outside the border of the paper, not directly at the viewer. Taken out of context, this drypoint piece can feel odd in subject matter—why she is holding a gun and where she is exactly can be a mystery. Beckmann's etching techniques appear polished and cleaner by this time, as shown by the curving lines of the target and dog behind the woman.

Beckmann's *The Bridge*, 1922 is the third drypoint in the museum's collection. This piece is done from an interesting perspective, as it is not quite aerial but not quiet one-point. The bridge seems to be floating off the page as the horizon is rather high up, with the floor tilted upward. The quick, deliberate strokes used to etch lines into the copper plate are reminiscent of both *Schiessbude* and *Self-Portrait*, each thin line stacking against another to create a thick, impressive line. The lines on the bridge seem to be vibrating and pulsing. Only one person is visible, toward the bottom of the print, behind a carriage with a horse at the front. Housing and a church occupy the background of the painting, leaving little room for sky. The undefined lines created by the drypoint technique give this piece an ethereal feel.

The only piece by Beckmann in the Museum's collection not done in drypoint is *Portrait of a Woman*, which was executed in woodcut. The woman's face stares at the viewer hauntingly. It is not known who this woman is or what date this work was made. Nonetheless, this woodcut portrait allows the viewer to see the portraiture talent that Beckmann was revered for. Similar to his self-portrait, this woman is not placed into any sort of setting. She is posed, eyes outward, and Beckmann has rendered her likeness to his viewer. Unlike many of his fellow German Expressionist artists, Beckmann did not start depicting abstract forms. Beckmann allowed the emotion and energy to effect the "real" forms he chose to portray. Both intaglio techniques allowed Beckmann to express entire moods through the motion his hands took while scraping into copper or wood. It was with this heavy conviction in the power of lines to both convey and conjure emotion that he taught at Mills College.

Beckmann's time at Mills during the Summer Sessions in 1950 was at the end of his life. This period served as his last time teaching as well as his last major exhibition. One of Beckmann's students that summer, Nathan Oliveira, went on to become one of the most respected and prominent artists in the Bay Area,



Max Beckmann exhibition at Mills, 1950

1 Alison Kitson, *Germany, 1858–1990: Hope, Terror, and Revival* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

2 Henry Grosshans, *Hitler and The Artists* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1983).

3 Peter Howard Selz, *Max Beckmann: The Self-Portraits* (New York: Gagosian Gallery, 1992).

4 Grosshans, *Hitler and The Artists*.

5 Ibid.

6 Stephan Lackner, *Max Beckmann* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1977).

7 Peter Selz, *Max Beckmann*.

8 "The Printed Image in the West: Drypoint," *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, accessed April 9, 2011, www.met-museum.org/toah/hd/drpt/hd_drpt.htm.

9 Peter Selz, *Max Beckmann*.

10 Ibid.

11 Thomas H. Garver and George W. Neubert, *Nathan Oliveira: A Solo Exhibition 1957–1983* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1984).

12 Kenneth Baker, "Nathan Oliveira—Giant on Bay Area Art Scene," *San Francisco Chronicle* November 10, 2010.

learning not only line technique from Beckmann, but the position of artist in the world.¹¹

Oliveira (1928–2010) attended the California College of the Arts (CCA), and took Beckmann's summer course at Mills College. He was highly influenced by Beckmann's unique ability to posit humans in uninhabited spaces.¹² Oliveira became a teacher himself at CCA and Stanford University.

Oliveira's 1957 lithograph *Man and Child* is a testament to the difficult times faced by families in the late 1950s. As the title explains, a languid man is holding a child in his arms. Oliveira has very deliberate, quick movements, and much of the man's face is covered in shadow. The rendering of the facial features strongly echoes Beckmann's early drypoint self-portraits. The man is gripping his child, but the child seems to be slipping out of his frail arms. The viewer cannot clearly make out either of these individual's faces. There is both a sense of urgency and calmness surrounding this piece as well, a result of drypoint seen in both Beckmann and Oliveira's work. There is no background for the viewer to posit these figures, and because of this, one is lead to believe these figures could be anywhere in the world. The relevance of Oliveira's piece is, unfortunately, still applicable today in a world with two wars abroad and several domestic social wars. Oliveira's work has much to do with the burden and raw emotion Beckmann carried into his work, specifically his oil paintings. The quick, fast paced movement that can be felt by

stationary, two dimensional objects is unique to both teacher and student.

As unfortunate as both World Wars remain in history and modernity, the subsequent European artistic diaspora that resulted from the rebuke of modern art proved to be a silver lining. The United States received an influx of European talent from which to draw inspiration. Beckmann's time at Mills College served the Bay Area long after his death, as his talent and passion lived on in Oliveira's work and professional instruction. Surely the students of Oliveira will learn from two generations of artists living under war and economic disparity that will influence the art they will produce under similar conditions.

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Alexander Archipenko
(American, born Ukraine, 1887–1964)
Nude, 1933
etching
Collection MCAM Susan L. Mills Fund, 1939.86

Max Beckmann
(German, 1884–1950)
The Bridge, 1922
drypoint
Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1941.154

Max Beckmann
(German, 1884–1950)
Self Portrait, 1914
drypoint, edition of 50
Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1953.262

Max Beckmann
(German, 1884–1950)
Portrait of a Woman, n.d.
woodcut
Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1940.96

Max Beckmann
(German, 1884–1950)
Schiessbude (Shooting Gallery Girl), 1921
etching and drypoint
Collection MCAM, 1951.25

Thomas Hart Benton
(American, 1889–1975)
Shallow Creek, n.d.
lithograph
Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1940.50

Paul Bishop
(American, 1915–1998)
Alfred Neumeyer, 1953
gelatin silver print
Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1953.139

Josef Breitenbach
(German, 1896–1984)
Lyonel Feininger, NY 1943, 1943
Ferrotyped gelatin silver print
Collection MCAM, Gift of Peter Jones, 2003.2.3

Imogen Cunningham
(American, 1883–1976)
Lyonel Feininger, Painter, 1939
gelatin silver print
Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1957.70

Andre Derain
(French, 1880–1954)
Woman with Long Black Hair, 1927
lithograph, edition 10 of 100
Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1956.140

Lyonel Feininger
(American, 1871–1956)
Lübeck (II), 1934
watercolor and ink on paper
Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1936.6

Lyonel Feininger
(American, 1871–1956)
Quimper, Bretagne, 1933
watercolor and ink on paper
Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1937.140

John Gutmann
(American, born Germany, 1905–1998)
Fernand Léger, 1940
vintage gelatin silver print
Collection MCAM, Gift of John Gutmann in memory of Dr. Alfred Neumeyer, 1998.7.11

Robert B. Howard
(American, 1896–1983)
Landscape, 1924
watercolor on paper
Collection MCAM, Gift of Mrs. J. J. Gottlob through Albert M. Bender, 1925.128, Box 694

Robert B. Howard
(American, 1896–1983)
Mission, 1922
watercolor on paper
Collection MCAM, Gift of Mrs. J. J. Gottlob through Albert M. Bender, 1926.34

Robert B. Howard
(American, 1896–1983)
Conclave, 1944
pastel on paper board
Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1945.80

Gyorgy (George) Kepes
(Hungarian, 1906–1994)
Contrasts II, 1948
gelatin silver print
Collection MCAM, Gift of Connie and Stephen Wirtz, 2004.29

Gyorgy (George) Kepes
(Hungarian, 1906–1994)
Window, 1938
gelatin silver print
Collection MCAM, Gift of Connie and Stephen Wirtz, 2004.36

Dong Kingman
(American, 1911–2000)
Station #3, 1938
watercolor on paper
Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1938.108

<p>Dong Kingman (American, 1911–2000) <i>Moving Moon</i>, 1944 lithograph, edition 17 of 25 Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1944.91</p>	<p>Reginald Marsh (American, 1898–1954) <i>Swimming off the Hudson</i>, 1940 ink and wash on paper Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1946.27</p>	<p>Henry Varnum Poor (American, 1887–1970) <i>Landscape with Sun</i>, n.d. etching Collection MCAM, Gift of Albert M. Bender, 1925.6</p>
<p>Dong Kingman (American, 1911–2000) <i>Chinatown, San Francisco</i>, 1946 watercolor on paper Collection MCAM, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Anthony White, 2006.40</p>	<p>Reginald Marsh (American, 1898–1954) <i>Coney Island Beach, 1939 #1</i>, 1939 etching Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1946.28</p>	<p>Antonio Sotomayor (Bolivian, 1902–1985) <i>Untitled</i>, n.d. watercolor and ink on paper Collection MCAM, Gift of Mrs. M.C. Sloss, 1945.60A</p>
<p>Oskar Kokoschka (Austrian, 1886–1980) <i>Seated Figure</i>, 1937 blue crayon on paper Collection MCAM, Gift of the artist, 1938.91</p>	<p>Fletcher Martin (American, 1904–1979) <i>The Riders</i>, c. 1950 gouache on paper Collection MCAM, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Anthony R. White, 2011.2.6</p>	<p>Antonio Sotomayor (Bolivian, 1902–1985) <i>Andean Woman and Child</i>, n.d. watercolor on paper Collection MCAM, Gift of Mrs. M.C. Sloss, 1945.107</p>
<p>Oskar Kokoschka (Austrian, 1886–1980) <i>The Man Raises His Head from the Grave on Which the Woman Sits</i>, from the series <i>O Eternity</i>, 1918 lithograph, edition of 125 Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1969.123</p>	<p>Henri Matisse (French, 1869–1954) <i>Nude</i>, c. 1920 lithograph, edition 5 of 50 Collection MCAM, Gift of Mrs. Michael Stein, 1946.2</p>	<p>Antonio Sotomayor (Bolivian, 1902–1985) <i>Portrait of Darius Milhaud</i>, n.d. woodblock or linoleum print Collection MCAM, Gift of Professor Isabel Scheville, 1983.1</p>
<p>Leon Kroll (American, 1884–1974) <i>Girl on Red Sofa</i>, c. 1945 serigraph Collection MCAM, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Anthony R. White, 2011.2.3</p>	<p>Henri Matisse (French, 1869–1954) <i>Nude by Mirror</i>, c. 1923 lithograph, edition 6 of 50 Collection MCAM, Gift of Mrs. Michael Stein, 1946.4</p>	<p>Frederic Taubes (American, born Poland, 1900–1981) <i>Figures on the Shore</i>, n.d. oil on canvas Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1939.31</p>
<p>Yasuo Kuniyoshi (American, born Japan, 1893–1953) <i>Ingenmyoo (Little Pond)</i>, n.d. serigraph Collection MCAM, Gift of Albert M. Bender, 1943.25</p>	<p>László Moholy-Nagy (Hungarian, 1895–1946) <i>CH XI</i>, 1939 oil on canvas Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1940.181</p>	<p>Frederic Taubes (American, born Poland, 1900–1981) <i>Julia</i>, n.d. etching (aquatint) Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1948.155</p>
<p>Yasuo Kuniyoshi (American, born Japan, 1893–1953) <i>Nude Leaning Over</i>, c. 1950 soft graphite on paper Collection MCAM, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Anthony R. White, 2011.2.4</p>	<p>László Moholy-Nagy (Hungarian, 1895–1946) <i>Marseille Procession</i>, 1929 vintage silver print Collection MCAM, Gift of Susan Herzig and Paul Hertzmann, San Francisco, CA, 2010.32</p>	<p>Grant Wood (American, 1891–1942) <i>Fertility</i>, n.d. lithograph Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1940.52</p>
<p>Dorothea Lange (American, 1895–1965) <i>Roi Partridge</i>, n.d. gelatin silver print Collection MCAM, Art Gallery Gift Account, 1984.12</p>	<p>Nathan Oliviera (American, 1928–2010) <i>Man and Child</i>, 1957 lithograph, edition 4 of 10 Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1957.76</p>	
<p>Fernand Léger (French, 1881–1955) <i>Landscape</i>, 1921 screenprint Collection MCAM, Gift of Raymond and Raymond, San Francisco 1953.1</p>	<p>José Perotti (Chilean, 1898–1956) <i>Praying Women</i>, 1943 watercolor, pencil and crayon on paper Collection MCAM, Susan L. Mills Fund, 1943.118</p>	
<p>Fernand Léger (French, 1881–1955) <i>Study for Les Plongeurs "The Divers"</i>, 1945 ink on paper Collection MCAM, Gift of the artist, 1941.103</p>	<p>Henry Varnum Poor (American, 1887–1970) <i>Landscape</i>, 1912 oil on wood Collection MCAM, Gift of Elizabeth E Ross, 1976.22</p>	

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