Josef Albers, American, born Germany, 1888–1976

*Variant One*, 1969

Screenprint

71 × 91 cm (27 15/16 × 35 13/16 in.)
frame: 75.5 × 101 × 3.2 cm (29 3/4 × 39 3/4 × 1 1/4 in.)

Gift of Hobart D. Betts III, Class of 1956
x1977-131.1

“In visual perception a color is almost never seen as it really is—as it physically is. This fact makes color the most relative medium in art,” wrote Albers in his 1963 book *The Interaction of Color*. Albers was interested in the perception of color, particularly the way that colors affect each other. According to the theory of simultaneous contrast, one color can change how we perceive the tone and hue of another when the two are placed side by side. For Albers, engagement with such ideas led to a lifelong interest in color studies, the practice of testing color juxtapositions to explore their perceptual effects. Screenprinting proved an ideal medium to test these concepts, as each plane of color is printed one at a time, allowing the artist to layer hues in myriad combinations.

- Gallery Label, 2020-01, PBL Rotation January 2020 (group chat for x1977-131.1 and x1977-131.3)

Through his work as an artist as well as an educator—he taught at the Bauhaus, Black Mountain College, and Yale University—Albers became one of the most influential figures in twentieth-century art. In 1963 he published *Interaction of Color*, presenting the theory that colors were governed by an internal and deceptive logic. Works such as these put his ideas to the test; Albers used the screenprinting process, which lays down a single plane of color at a time, to highlight the expressive variations created by juxtaposing or layering myriad hues.

- Gallery Label, 2018-04, PBL Rotation April 2018

Asante artist

*Man’s wrapper (kente)*, 20th century

Cotton, rayon, and dye

h. 332.1 cm × 229.4 cm (130 3/4 × 90 5/16 in.)

Bequest of John B. Elliott, Class of 1951
1998-697
Asante Kente cloths are made by stitching together strips of woven fabric that alternate warp- and weft-faced weave, resulting in a checkered effect. Once a royal textile whose use was carefully restricted, kente is now the national cloth of Ghana and an international symbol of pan-Africanism. Kente is draped around the body without fasteners, requiring constant readjustment or “dancing” of the cloth, allowing its patterns to be seen in constant movement. Both whole cloths and smaller patterns are named for proverbs, objects, and people. Exhibiting the skill of the weaver, named weft-faced patterns are concentrated at the cloth’s ends. This large, 27-strip men’s wrapper includes nnwótoa (“snail’s bottom”) and two variations of nkyemfrɛ (“broken pots”).

- Gallery Label, 2014-04-30, "Akan Art" Collection Theme for website

Rings were a prominent aspect of the royal regalia—rulers often wore two or more on each hand. They were worn only by chiefs, along with velvet hats trimmed with gold-leaf attachments and neck and elbow amulets. Solid or gold-leaf bracelets were worn by chiefs and the queen mother. Other items symbolized rank and prestige for members of the royal retinue. The pectoral disc, or “soul washers” badge, often identified the official who purified or “washed” the chief’s soul. At other times, these were worn by messengers, sub-chiefs, and other officials. The “linguist’s” staffs derived from silver-topped European canes introduced in the seventeenth century. Once held by the chief, they are now the insignia of office for the chiefs’ counselors and spokesmen. The complexly carved finials functioned as visual conveyors of meaning.

- Gallery Label, 2012-09, Fall 2012 African Rotation

Milton Avery, American, 1885–1965
Red Umbrella, 1945
Oil on canvas
63.5 × 106.7 cm (25 × 42 in.)
frame: 75 × 118 × 6.3 cm (29 1/2 × 46 7/16 × 2 1/2 in.)
Gift of Annalee Newman
1995-333

- Gallery Label, 2014-03, MEB rotation January 2019, (see K4-6 Rotation August 2015, K4-6 Rotation March 2014 labels for slightly longer text)

In 1944, Milton Avery abruptly shifted style, moving closer to pure abstraction without relinquishing his fundamental commitment to representation. Avery abandoned the brushy paint application and detailing of his early technique to create works with smooth, flat areas of broadly modulated, vibrant color. Texture increasingly was conveyed by scratching onto the painted surface with a sharp object, reducing the illusion of depth and calling attention to the picture plane. Avery’s new aesthetic — spare and economical — operated in tandem with his sophisticated color harmonies and subtle orchestration of hue. His formal innovations had a profound influence on a succeeding generation of American artists, including Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman, who purchased Red Umbrella in 1946.

- Handbook Entry, 2013
Jennifer Bartlett, American, born 1941

Two Houses, Thin Lines, 1998
Oil on canvas
177.8 x 177.8 x 6 cm (70 x 70 x 2 3/8 in.)
Gift of RBS Sempra Commodities LLP
2015-6729

In Two Houses, Thin Lines, Bartlett combined grids and houses, two visual structures that have recurred in her practice since the mid-1960s. A landscape, whose motifs have been reduced to their elemental language of visual forms, emerges from a pattern of thin, primary-colored perpendicular lines. Rather than depict a specific place or setting, Bartlett’s work interrogates the foundational tenets of painting; the formal logic of the grid—the systematic basis for landscape painting—is transformed through obsessive repetition into an exploration of color, perspective, and perception.

- Gallery Label, 2019-08, MM rotation August 2019

In Two Houses, Thin Lines, Bartlett combined grids and houses—the two visual structures she has carried through her practice since its early days in the mid-1960s—using only primary colors and reducing her subject to its elemental language of visual forms. Bartlett’s work merges techniques from minimalism and conceptualism, rigorously adhering to the visual equations she establishes. In this work, a landscape emerges from a pattern of thin skeins of color, applied in a web of intersecting perpendicular lines. However, more than depicting a specific place or setting, Bartlett’s landscape interrogates the foundational tenets of painting: she uses theories of color, perspective, and perception to investigate the depiction of the natural world.

- Special Exhibition, 2017-09-15, Making History Visible

Mary Lee Bendolph, American, born 1935

Printed by Paulson Fontaine Press

To Honor Mr. Dial, 2005
Color soft-ground etching with aquatint and spitbite aquatint
plate: 116.1 x 70.4 cm (45 11/16 x 27 11/16 in.)
sheet: 140.6 x 90.8 cm (55 3/8 x 35 3/4 in.)
frame: 147.6 x 97.5 x 6.7 cm (58 1/8 x 38 3/8 x 2 5/8 in.)
Museum purchase, gift of the PECO Foundation
2019-92
Bendolph is a member of the Gee’s Bend quilters, a tightly knit multigenerational group of women sewers from a rural African American community in Alabama, many of whom trace their descent to former slaves from the nearby Pettway plantation. The first print made by Bendolph, To Honor Mr. Dial recalls the “housetop” quilting pattern, in which scraps of different fabrics are pieced at right-angles around a central shape, creating a kaleidoscopic arrangement of colors. The work pays tribute to Bendolph’s friend, the self-taught artist Thornton Dial. Bendolph and Dial supported each other’s interest in salvaged materials: Dial sent old clothes to Bendolph, who would send back zippers, belt loops, and other parts of clothing that could not be used in quilting; Dial incorporated these into his assemblage works.

- Gallery Label, 2019-07, PBL rotation July 2019

Arthur Dove, American, 1880–1946

Sunrise, Northport Harbor, 1929

Oil on canvas

38 x 51 cm (14 15/16 x 20 1/16 in.)
frame: 41 x 53.7 cm (16 1/8 x 21 1/8 in.)
Gift of John S. McGovern, Class of 1926

Sunrise, Northport Harbor depicts an area on Long Island’s North Shore favored by Dove. Completed in 1929, the piece epitomizes the artist’s newly evolved vocabulary of swelling curvilinear forms of modulating color. An early adopter of abstraction among American artists, Dove alternated his imagery between representational and nonrepresentational modes, unified by a common aesthetic of repeated interlocking shapes used to convey the interconnectedness of life and the potential of nature as a generative force for artistic inspiration.

- Gallery Label, 2019-07, PBL Rotation July 2019
- Gallery Label, 2018-09, MEB Rotation September 2018
- Gallery Label, 2016-01, K4-6 Rotation March 2014, K4-6 Rotation January 2016
Although renowned for his production, around 1910, of perhaps the earliest abstract works by an American, Arthur Dove alternated his imagery between representational and nonrepresentational modes, unified by a common aesthetic of repeating, often interlocking, shapes that reveal his belief in the essential movement and interpenetration of life. Completed in 1929, *Sunrise, Northport Harbor* depicts an area on Long Island’s North Shore favored by the artist, rendered in the vocabulary of swelling, curvilinear forms of modulating color then characteristic of his work, through which he sought to portray a nonautonomous perception of nature. The painting was exhibited at An American Place, the Manhattan gallery run by the photographer and influential promoter of American Modernism Alfred Stieglitz, who championed Dove’s work from the beginning of his career.

- *Handbook Entry, 2013*

El Anatsui, Ghanaian, born 1944; based in Nigeria

*Another Place*, 2014

Found aluminum and copper wire

283.2 × 284.5 cm (111 1/2 × 112 in.)

Museum purchase, Fowler McCormick, Class of 1921, Fund and Sarah Lee Elson, Class of 1984, Fund for the International Artist-in-Residence Program at the Princeton University Art Museum

2015-6689

This shimmering, opalescent scrim is composed of hundreds of bottle tops collected by the artist. Removed from alcoholic beverage containers of local distilleries, these caps proliferate by the thousands in Nigerian junk depots. For the artist, the caps represent rampant consumerism and waste, as well as the legacy of slavery. Alcohol was among the commodities imported to Africa by Europeans as part of economic networks that facilitated the transatlantic slave trade. By stitching these found materials together with copper wire, the artist transformed them into an exquisite tapestry that recalls the intricate patterns of kente cloth and its significance as a symbol of status, luxury, and community affiliation in West African traditions. Pliable and undulating, *Another Place* takes on a new form each time it is installed.

- *Gallery Label, 2020-01, MM rotation January 2020, (see Migration and Material Alchemy: Marquand Mather Rotation-January 2018 for similar label)*

This shimmering, opalescent scrim of metal is composed of hundreds of ordinary bottle tops collected by the artist El Anatsui. Removed from alcoholic beverage containers, these caps proliferate by the thousands in junk depots in Nigeria, where they symbolize the local manifestation of a global problem involving waste, consumption, and recycling. Their banal, degraded origins are at odds with the exquisite visual effects Anatsui is able to extract from them. In *Another Place*, the artist deftly choreographs color, shape, reflection, and opacity to produce a stunning abstract design, one that is reminiscent of both an aerial view of an imaginary landscape and textile forms and patterns. Pliable and undulating, *Another Place* tends to bulge, sag, and drape depending on how it is installed. This variability is intended by the artist so that the work is adapted each time it is installed in a process of ongoing change and collaboration.

- *Gallery Label, 2017-04, MM Rotation April 2017, MM_UVR_Rotation_Oct2015*
Helen Frankenthaler, American, 1928–2011  
Printed by Chiron Press, New York  
Published by Helen Frankenthaler, American, 1928–2011  
*Untitled*, 1967  
Color screenprint  
65.4 × 45.4 cm (25 3/4 × 17 7/8 in.)  
frame: 87 × 66.4 × 4.8 cm (34 1/4 × 26 1/8 × 1 7/8 in.)  
Gift of the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation  
2019-77

Among printmaking techniques, screenprinting has the distinction of creating the most graphically uniform, clean-edged color planes, as seen here, where Frankenthaler used the stencil-based process to produce brightly colored bands. Comparison with the modulated, aqueous areas of color in the nearby pochoir print *Green Likes Mauve* reveals the artist’s early explorations of various printmaking processes to find visual equivalents to the effects she achieved in her paintings.  
*Special Exhibition, 2019-06-29, Helen Frankenthaler Prints: Seven Types of Ambiguity*

Wassily Kandinsky, Russian, 1866–1944  
*Promenade (Sketch)*, 1903  
Oil on canvas  
50.8 x 70.5 cm (20 x 27 3/4 in.)  
frame: 70.5 × 90.5 × 8.5 cm (27 3/4 × 35 5/8 × 3 3/8 in.)  
Bequest of Sophie Goldberg Bargmann and Valentine Bargmann y1990-30

Kandinsky taught art in Munich, where Gabriele Münter was one of his students. By 1903 a secret romance had developed between the married teacher and his pupil. When he took his students to the village of Kallmünz to paint outdoors, Münter joined him; she remained his companion until 1914. This sketch from the summer of 1903 may be a document of their relationship. With Kallmünz in the background, a lady in medieval dress walks on a stone parapet followed by a page. Although Kandinsky abandoned medieval subject matter for Expressionism and later became a pioneer of abstraction, he retained the proclivity for vivid colors already evident in this early sketch.  
*Gallery Label, 2014-03, K4-6 Rotation March 2014*
Kandinsky studied and taught art in Munich, where Gabriele Münter was one of his students. By 1903 there was a secret romance between teacher and pupil, although he was married. When he took his students to the village of Kallmünz to paint outdoors, Münter joined him. They remained companions until 1914. This sketch from the summer of 1903 may be self-referential. With Kallmünz in the background, a lady in medieval dress walks on a stone parapet followed by a page. That summer Kandinsky gave Münter the drawing *Night [Walking Woman]*, of a lady in medieval garb—his first gift to her. Kandinsky abandoned medieval subject matter for Expressionism, but he retained his proclivity for the vivid colors already evident in this early sketch.

- *Handbook Entry, 2007*

Jacob Lawrence, American, 1917–2000

Printed at Ives-Sillman Publications

*The 1920’s...The Migrants Arrive and Cast Their Ballots*, 1974, printed 1975

Color screenprint

plate: 81.2 x 63.2 cm. (31 15/16 x 24 7/8 in.)
sheet: 87.3 x 66 cm. (34 3/8 x 26 in.)
Gift of Lorillard, a Division of Loews Theatres, Inc.
x1976-286

Sol LeWitt, American, 1928–2007

*Untitled*, 1982

Acrylic on wood

30.5 x 61.0 x 61.0 cm (12 x 24 x 24 in.)
Museum purchase, Fowler McCormick, Class of 1921, Fund 2006-85

LeWitt was a pioneer of both Minimalism and Conceptualism, two key artistic developments of the 1960s and ’70s. Minimalism emphasized geometry and modularity while Conceptualism privileged ideas over objects and process over product. LeWitt based the proportions of these "structures" on the randomly chosen ratio of 1:8.5, which dictates the correlation between the line and space of the cubic units. This technique was intended to relieve the artist from having to express a personal subjectivity, said LeWitt—“The idea becomes the machine that makes the art.”

- *Gallery Label, 2019-07, PBL rotation July 2019*
LeWitt was a pioneer of both Minimalism and Conceptualism, two key artistic developments of the 1960s and 1970s. Minimalism emphasized geometry and modularity, while Conceptualism privileged ideas over objects and process over product. Methodical, austere, and emotionally restrained, LeWitt's sculptures generally consist of three-dimensional grids whose proportions are based on those of the smallest individual unit and whose overall configuration is deduced from predetermined ratios and formulas. Such a technique was intended to relieve the artist from having to express a personal subjectivity. Despite the complex mathematical calculations it entailed, this approach was too intuitive, absurd, and compulsive to merit the term logical. "Conceptual artists," LeWitt wrote in 1969, "are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach."

- Gallery Label, 2018-04, PBL Rotation January 2019, PBL Rotation April 2018

As a pioneer of Conceptual art, LeWitt privileged ideas over objects and process over product. LeWitt developed his ideas in three-dimensional sculptures he deemed "structures." These austere works generally consist of open grids rather than solid cubes. Theoretically, they peel back the skin of traditional sculptures to reveal their underlying skeletons. LeWitt based the proportions of these "structures" on the randomly chosen ratio of 1:8.5, which dictates the correlation between the line and space of the cubic units. Such a technique was intended to relieve the artist from having to invent and compose, but instead of being logical, the approach was intuitive, compulsive, even absurd. "Conceptual artists," LeWitt wrote in 1969, "are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach."


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- Gallery Label, 2010-10

Sol LeWitt made vital contributions to both Minimalism and Conceptualism, which dominated the artistic landscape of the 1960s and 1970s. Minimalism emphasized geometry and modularity, while Conceptualism privileged ideas over objects and process over product. Methodical, austere, and emotionally restrained, LeWitt’s sculptures generally consist of three-dimensional grids whose proportions are based on those of the smallest individual unit and whose overall configuration is deduced from predetermined ratios, as in the case with Untitled, created for LeWitt’s friend, the artist Fred Sandback. Such an approach was intended to relieve the artist from having to invent, compose, and express. Despite the complex mathematical calculations it entailed, though, this technique was too intuitive, absurd, and compulsive to merit the term logical. "Conceptual artists," LeWitt wrote in 1969, "are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach."

- Handbook Entry, 2013
Frank Stella, American, born 1936
River of Ponds II, 1969
Acrylic on canvas
306 × 307 × 7.9 cm (120 1/2 × 120 7/8 × 3 1/8 in.)
Gift of Paul W. H. Hoffmann, Class of 1947, and Camille Oliver-Hoffmann
1995-141

As an undergraduate at Princeton University, Frank Stella took classes in studio art but majored in history, writing his senior thesis on medieval Irish, Carolingian, and Ottonian art. After graduating in 1958, Stella moved to New York City and devoted himself to making art. River of Ponds II belongs to his Protractor series, characterized by monumental scale, a strident palette, and forms inspired by tools for measuring angles and curves. In this case, Stella used a range of unmixed acrylic paints, with variations in hue and intensity creating a sense of optical play: some elements in the painting appear to project out, while others appear to recede. Separated by thin pencil lines, the bands of color comprise a network of interwoven shapes, which in turn form three nested squares.


River of Ponds II belongs to Frank Stella’s Protractor series (1967–69, with additional works until 1971), characterized by monumental scale, a strident palette, and forms inspired by protractors, circular or semicircular tools for measuring angles and curves. In this case, Stella used a range of unmixed or "pure" acrylic paints; variations in hue and intensity create a sense of optical play. Some elements in the painting appear to project, while others seem to recede. Separated by thin pencil lines, the bands of color comprise a network of interwoven shapes, which in turn form three nested squares. As an undergraduate at Princeton University, Frank Stella took classes in studio art, but he majored in art history, completing his senior thesis on medieval Irish, Carolingian, and Ottonian art in 1958. Later that same year, he moved to New York and began the Black Paintings that launched his career. Stella’s innovative use of flat, ready-made colors, austere shapes, and deductive compositions exerted a formative influence on Minimalist sculpture.

- Handbook Entry, 2013

White Mountain Redware, Fourmile style
Bowl with geometric designs, A.D. 1325–1400
Ceramic with red, white, and black slips
h. 11.4 cm., diam. 26 cm. (4 1/2 x 10 1/4 in.)
Museum purchase, Mary Trumbull Adams Art Fund
2013-12
A late phase in the tradition known as White Mountain Redware, Fourmile pottery typically presents abstract geometric designs in the interiors of bowls outlined in white slip on a red slip ground, with forms filled in with a distinctive glittery black slip made of lead, copper, and manganese. This bowl’s painted interior incorporates motifs likely to have held symbolic meaning but difficult to interpret today. A central motif may represent a moth or butterfly. Some consider it a reference to the Aztec fire-deity Xiuhtecuhtli, although it may also allude to the region’s local mythology. It is possible that the stepped triangles above refer to architecture or possibly to clouds.

- Gallery Label, 2015-02, 2015 AAA Reinstallation WC7 Native North America