

*Higher Ground*  
Gallery Guide

## Introduction


***Higher Ground: A Century of the Visual Arts in East Tennessee*** traces the evolution of artistic activity in Knoxville and its Appalachian environs from roughly the 1860s to the 1980s. Many of the featured artists spent their entire lives and careers in the area, while some moved away to follow their creative ambitions. Others came from outside the region, attracted by its natural beauty, as the wealth of landscape imagery in this exhibition attests. Together, these artists' works form the basis of a visual arts tradition that is both compelling and largely unheralded.

The exhibition's narrative is organized into broad thematic sections.

**Grand Ambitions: Forging an Arts Community** addresses the early formation period of a community of professional artists and their dialogue with contemporary currents in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. **Shaping a Regional Identity: Mountain Vistas and Urban Life** includes visual representations of a complex and changing region by homegrown and visiting artists created over the course of the twentieth century. **Beauford and Joseph Delaney: Expatriate Masters** celebrates the achievements of the immensely talented brothers who left their Knoxville hometown in the 1920s and, while following divergent paths, eventually earned national and international acclaim. **The Knoxville 7** celebrates the adventurous works produced by a group of progressive artists united by their common interest in cultivating modernism in East Tennessee during the 1950s and 1960s. **Bessie Harvey** is dedicated to the self-taught visionary artist who achieved widespread national recognition only at the end of her life, late in the twentieth century.

**Higher Ground** documents a turbulent period that saw the  
coalescence, flourishing, decline, and re-creation of intentional,  
self-aware communities of professional artists and the artworks those  
communities produced. As new findings about East Tennessee's rich  
visual legacy come to light, this permanent but ever-changing exhibition  
will evolve to incorporate new voices and new perspectives. **Currents:**  
**Recent Art from East Tennessee and Beyond**, on view one floor above,  
explores what has happened locally, regionally, and internationally since  
the fertile years covered by **Higher Ground**, as new generations of artists  
build on the rich legacy presented here and beyond.



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**James Cameron** (Greenock, Scotland 1816-1882 Oakland, California)

***Belle Isle from Lyons View, 1859***

Oil on canvas, 30 x 42 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2013 purchase with funds provided by the Rachael Patterson Young Art Acquisition Reserve, Clayton Family Foundation, Knoxville Museum of Art's Collectors Circle, Guild of the Knoxville Museum of Art, Townes Osborn, June & Rob Heller, Alexandra Rosen & Donald Cooney, John Thomas, Laura & Jason Bales, Mrs. M. Blair Corkran, Jayne & Myron Ely, Kitsy & Lou Hartley, and Sylvia & Jan Peters

Scotland-born James Cameron was one of the first professional painters in East Tennessee. According to Cameron scholar Frederick Moffatt, the artist first painted this dramatic Knoxville overlook while visiting Knoxville in August of 1856 and created at least three later paintings based on this same view, each with minor variations. This canvas is the largest of the four known versions. It was once owned by Adolph Ochs (1858-1935), legendary American newspaper publisher and owner of The New York Times, who spent much of his youth in East Tennessee.

## Grand Ambitions: Forging an Arts Community

Knoxville's emergence by the late nineteenth century as an important regional center for transportation, commerce, manufacturing, and extractive industries made the burgeoning city big enough and wealthy enough to support a community of professional artists. Most of these sophisticated, accomplished, and well-traveled artists were born in the Knoxville area and, except for periods of training and travel, spent their lives here. They worked, taught, and organized exhibitions and art groups as part of a concerted effort to create a vibrant fine-arts scene. They were conversant with artistic developments in the wider world, and believed sincerely that art was essential to the cultural transformation of communities in the region. Through their creative endeavors and sense of place, they self-consciously sought "higher ground."

At the heart of East Tennessee's earliest artistic community was Knoxville native and artistic pioneer **Lloyd Branson** (1853–1925), who made his living doing portraits, but pursued landscape and genre painting as well. The most talented East Tennessee painter of her generation, Branson student **Catherine Wiley** (1879–1958), pursued studies in New York before returning home to invigorate Knoxville's cultural community as an arts leader and master Impressionist. **Hugh C. Tyler** (1888–1976), a studio mate of Branson's, produced dramatic seascapes, shadowy landscapes, and decorative mural paintings. He was also noteworthy as the uncle of writer James Agee and the first instructor of renowned Knoxville-born painter Beauford Delaney (1901–1979). The evolution of East Tennessee's arts community accelerated with the founding in 1902 of the

Nicholson Art League, which organized some of the South's largest art exhibitions to date. These extensive and ambitious events served as high-profile vehicles for promoting the city as an up-and-coming regional center of commerce and culture.

Today, few people are aware that a cohort of talented Black artists flourished in the years before World War I and who exhibited as a group in the great Knoxville expositions held in 1910, 1911, and 1913. Much of the output of these early, forgotten pioneers has been lost or yet to be discovered.

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Ms. Melanie C. Wood





**Hugh C. Tyler** (Kalamazoo, Michigan 1885-1976 South Kent, Connecticut)

***Untitled (Mediterranean Cove)***, 1914

Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2020 purchase with funds provided by Sasha & Charlie Sealy

Hugh Tyler came to Knoxville in 1891 when his family relocated to be near the source of the marble processed by his father's machine company. He produced Impressionist-inspired canvases such as *Mediterranean Cove* as well as elaborate, hand-painted decorations for local buildings. Tyler won a top award for "best collection in the Appalachian region" at the 1913 National Conservation Exposition held at Knoxville's Chilhowee Park, one the largest exhibitions of art in the South. Perhaps best known as the uncle of famed writer James Agee, Tyler lived most of his adult life in Greenwich Village with several family members including Agee. The two were very close, and the character Andrew in "A Death in the Family" is based on Hugh Tyler. Tyler is also noteworthy as having given Beauford Delaney his first lesson in drawing and painting.



**Albert Milani** (Carrara, Italy 1892-1977 St. Petersburg, Florida)

***Column Capital***, circa 1930

Tennessee marble, 15 x 20 x 14 inches

Vestal Arts and Heritage

Milani was a talented marble sculptor from Carrara, Italy who settled in Knoxville after 1913. He began working for the Candoro Marble Company in 1927 and created decorative marble sculpture for buildings around the country. Milani usually used imagery from classical antiquity interpreted in a sleek, modern Art Deco style. One of the sculptor's major projects in Knoxville was carving the eagles on the façade of the Knoxville Post Office in 1934. Candoro Marble Company in South Knoxville played a major part in the city's history as a marble producer for the entire nation. Its main office and showroom, designed by Knoxville architects Barber and McMurtry, was built in 1923 to showcase the quality and craftsmanship of locally produced Tennessee marble and has recently been restored.



**Lloyd Branson** (Union County, Tennessee 1853-1925 Knoxville)

***Hauling Marble (The Toilers)***, 1910

Oil on canvas, 42 x 61 inches

McClung Museum of Natural History and Culture, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Enoch Lloyd Branson was one of the most talented and versatile East Tennessee artists of his era. Under his lasting influence, the local art scene reached a new level of activity and quality. After completing artistic studies at the National Academy of Design in New York in 1878, he returned to Knoxville and established a successful portrait painting business with photographer Frank McCrary at 130 Gay Street. Branson devised a method of producing vivid portraits based on photographs, which provided his primary income as an artist. However, he earned greatest recognition for heroic genre scenes such as *Hauling Marble*, which portrayed East Tennessee's thriving marble industry. The painting won the gold medal at the Appalachian Exposition of 1910. In addition to his studio work, Branson was active as an art teacher, training and inspiring a new generation of talent including Catherine Wiley, Adelia Lutz, and Beauford Delaney.





**Lloyd Branson** (Union County, Tennessee 1853-1925 Knoxville)

***Ellen McClung***, 1920

Oil on canvas, 59 5/8 x 47 1/2 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 1999 gift of Dr. & Mrs. Aubra Branson

Lloyd Branson was known for portraits of prominent local citizens that were often dashed off quickly in dark tones. This exceptional full-length likeness, more in the vein of grand eighteenth-century English portraits, depicts a fashionable Ellen McClung Berry (1894-1992) as she looks out toward a sweeping view of the Smoky Mountains from her home on Circle Drive, now in the center of the University of Tennessee Knoxville campus. She and her husband, Thomas Berry, were major patrons of the arts in Knoxville.





**Lloyd Branson** (Union County, Tennessee 1853-1925 Knoxville)

***Going Home at Dusk***, 1920

Oil on board, 43 3/4 x 51 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2010 purchase with funds provided by Kay & Jim Clayton, Martha & Jim Begalla, Ann & Steve Bailey, Patricia & Alan Rutenberg, Townes Osborn, and Sylvia & Jan Peters

*Going Home at Dusk* is a late work in which Branson uses loose dabs of bright pigment and broad areas of thin paint to suggest a luminous, humid evening on an East Tennessee farm. Branson's emphasis on dramatic atmospheric effects represents his occasional interest in exploring Impressionist painting techniques.



**Catherine Wiley** (Coal Creek [now Rocky Top], Tennessee 1879-1958  
Norristown, Pennsylvania)

***Morning Milking Time***, circa 1915

Oil on canvas

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2012 joint purchase of the Calvin M. McClung Historical Collection, Knox County Public Library, and Knoxville Museum of Art with funds provided by the C. M. McClung Collection Endowment, Natalie & Jim Haslam, Ann & Steve Bailey, Ellen “Sis” Mitchell, Kay & Jim Clayton, Laura & Jason Bales, Patricia & Alan Rutenberg, John Z. C. Thomas, and Kimbro Maguire & Penny Lynch

Anna Catherine Wiley was one of the most active, accomplished, and influential artists in Knoxville during the early twentieth century. She taught art at the University of Tennessee, helped organize area art exhibitions, and was a driving force in the Nicholson Art League, an important local art association. Wiley studied with Frank Dumond at the Art Students League in New York and spent summers in New England working with Impressionist Robert Reid. She returned to Knoxville following her studies and brought with her a mastery of Impressionism. Wiley specialized in plein air scenes of women and children.

Although best known for depictions of women and children, Catherine Wiley here portrays a male caretaker at Wolf Creek Inn, Del Rio, Tennessee. This painting reflects the Knoxville artist’s mastery of Impressionism, and her ability to use vibrant color and bold brushwork to convey the heat and light of the morning sun as it falls on the Smoky Mountain landscape.





**Catherine Wiley** (Coal Creek [now Rocky Top], Tennessee 1879-1958 Norristown, Pennsylvania)

***Untitled (Woman and Child in a Meadow)*, 1913**

Oil on canvas

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2012 purchase with funds provided by Ann & Steve Bailey, the KMA Collectors Circle, Martha & Jim Begalla, Betsey Bush, Joan & Victor Ashe, Lane Hays, Lindsay & Jim McDonough, Dorothy & Caesar Stair, Nancy & Charlie Wagner, Sylvia & Jan Peters, Patricia & Alan Rutenberg, Barbara & Steve Apking, Mary Ellen & Steve Brewington, Jayne & Myron Ely, Cathy & Mark Hill, Donna Kerr, Melissa & Tom McAdams, Townes Osborn, Alexandra Rosen & Donald Cooney, John Thomas, Stuart Worden, Marie & Bob Alcorn, Jennifer Banner & James Schaad, Barbara & Bernie Bernstein, Arlene Goldstine, Stevens & Greg Hall, Kitsy & Lou Hartley, Ebbie & Ronald Sandberg, and Joseph Trahern, Jr.

*Untitled (Woman and Child in Meadow)* represents Impressionist painter Catherine Wiley at the height of her career. Evidence suggests the artist selected this canvas for inclusion in Knoxville's 1913 National Conservation Exposition, which featured one of the largest art exhibitions in the region. In a review of the 1913 exposition's art display, one *Knoxville Journal & Tribune* critic wrote that "Miss Catherine Wiley's work has attracted general comment and praise. She has three pictures on exhibition, two of which are new examples of her art. The most pleasing of the three is a study of a woman and child out-of-doors. The figures are sitting in strong sunlight, while a dark wooded hillside forms the background. The piece is strongly handled, and shows originality and force."





**Catherine Wiley** (Coal Creek [now Rocky Top], Tennessee 1879-1958  
Norristown, Pennsylvania)

***Woodland Scene***, 1913

Oil on canvas, 40 x 28 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2020 gift of the Edwin Packard Wiley family

Beyond her idyllic figurative paintings, Catherine Wiley occasionally turned her attention to capturing the beauty of East Tennessee's natural environment.





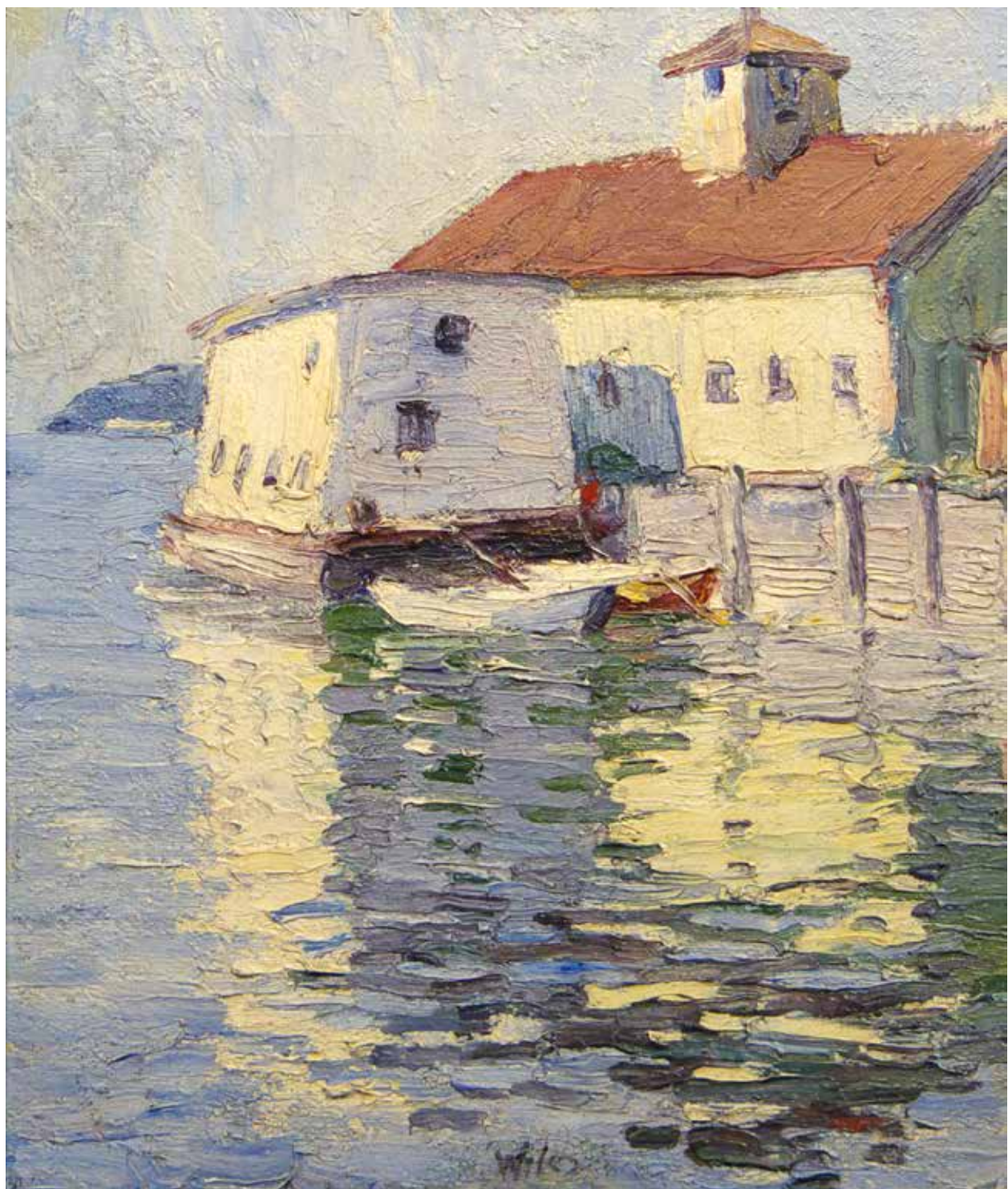


**Catherine Wiley** (Coal Creek [now Rocky Top], Tennessee 1879-1958  
Norristown, Pennsylvania)

***Young Woman with Parasol Reading***, circa 1915

Oil on canvas, 36 1/2 x 25 5/8 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2020 gift of the Edwin Packard Wiley family



**Catherine Wiley** (Coal Creek [now Rocky Top], Tennessee 1879-1958  
Norristown, Pennsylvania)

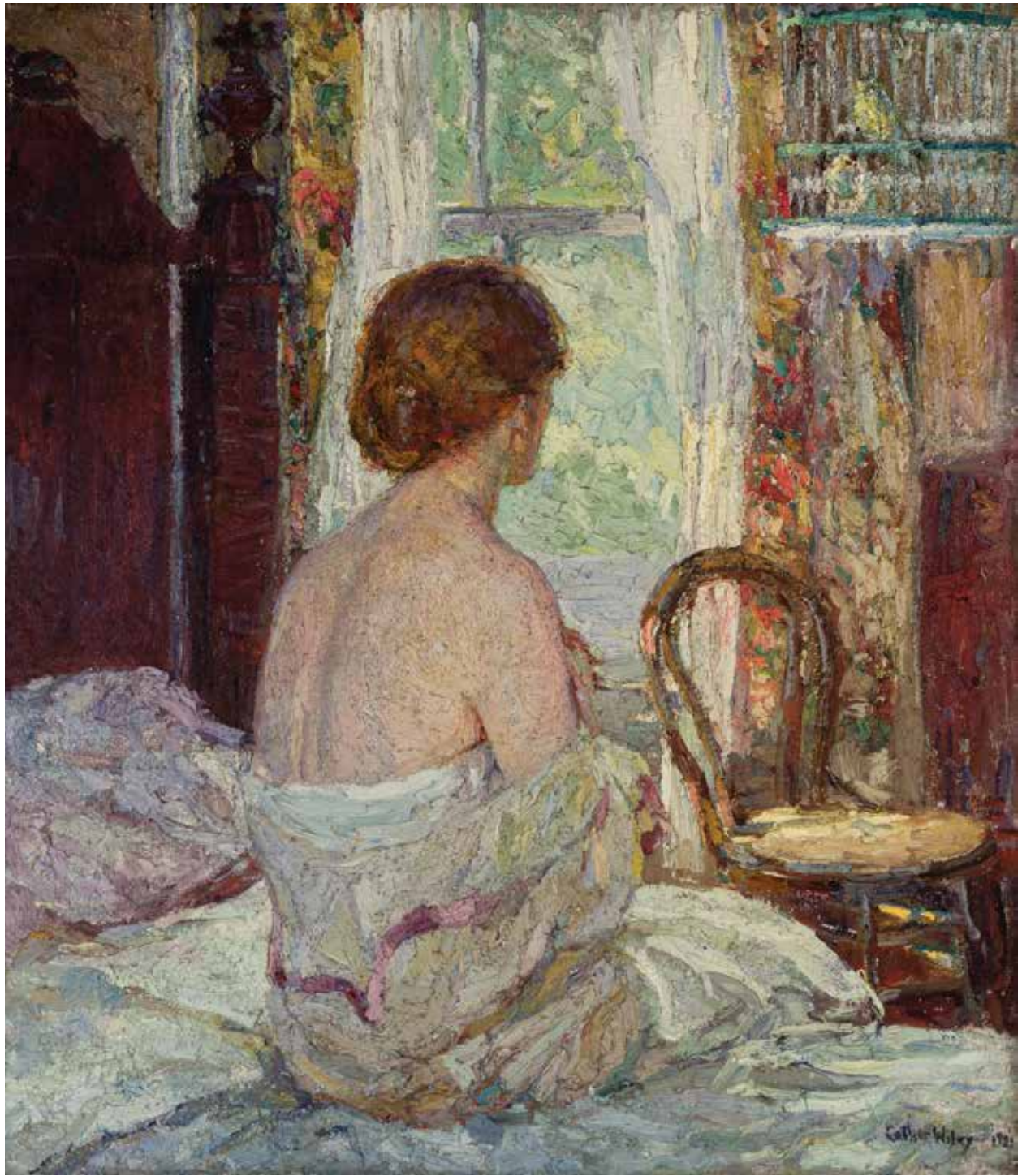
***Boats and Water***, circa 1915

Oil on canvas, 16 x 14 3/4 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 1972 gift of the Wiley Family in memory of Catherine Wiley

A hallmark of Catherine Wiley's late work is her increasingly thick and expressive application of paint. Wiley's composition presents a contemplative interior scene in which she uses impasto brushwork and a brilliant color palette to convey the dazzling effects of direct and reflected light. Wiley's promising career came to an end in 1926 when she was confined to a mental institution outside Philadelphia, where she remained until her death many years later.





**Catherine Wiley** (Coal Creek [now Rocky Top], Tennessee 1879-1958  
Norristown, Pennsylvania)

***Morning***, 1921

Oil on canvas, 47 x 41 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 1972 gift of the Women's Committee of the Dulin Gallery  
of Art

Anna Catherine Wiley was one of the most active, accomplished, and influential artists in Knoxville during the early twentieth century. She taught art at the University of Tennessee, helped organize area art exhibitions, and was a driving force in the Nicholson Art League, a prominent local art association. Wiley studied with Frank Du Mond at the Art Students League in New York and spent summers in New England working with Impressionist Robert Reid. She returned to Knoxville following her studies and brought with her a mastery of Impressionism. Wiley specialized in scenes of women amid their daily lives rendered in thick, brightly colored pigment. *Morning* features a more expressive variety of brushwork often seen in her late paintings.





**Adelia Lutz** (Jefferson County, Tennessee 1859-1931 Knoxville)

***Untitled***, 1890

Oil on canvas, 11 3/4 x 9 5/8

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2021 gift of Diana & Robert Samples

After completing art training at the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.; the Pennsylvania Academy; and in Europe; Lutz returned to Knoxville and commenced a career painting portraits, landscapes, and flower studies. Along with fellow Nicholson Art League members Branson and Catherine Wiley, she participated in and helped organize the art exhibitions featured at the Appalachian Expositions of 1910 and 1911 and the National Conservation Exposition of 1913. While many of her paintings feature Knoxville subjects, Lutz bases this composition on *The Gilded Age* by French painter Charles Joshua Chaplin (1825-1891).





**William Gilbert Gaul** (Jersey City, New Jersey 1855-1919 Ridgefield Park, New Jersey)

***Those Dreary Days***, circa 1890

Oil on canvas, 25 x 33 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2022 purchase with funds provided by Nancy & Charlie Wagner

Gilbert Gaul achieved national fame as a painter of Civil War battle scenes, which he recreated with great accuracy. Spending much of his later career in McMinnville, Tennessee, he maintained a studio in Nashville filled with uniforms and arms that served as references to ensure the historical accuracy of each painting. At the 1910 Appalachian Exposition in Knoxville, Gaul won a gold medal for his Civil War painting *The Firing Line*. *These Dreary Days*, also a Civil War subject, depicting a quartet of Union soldiers, exemplifies Gaul's versatility as a painter of figures, landscapes, and still-life imagery.

## Shaping a Regional Identity: Mountain Vistas and Urban Life

After decades of soaring aspirations and significant accomplishments, East Tennessee's art scene became less cohesive after the mid-1920s. Nevertheless, the community of local and visiting artists produced significant works. **Charles C. Krutch** (1849–1934) was one of the area's first painters to focus on the Smoky Mountains, and one of several artists whose images garnered public support for the site's designation as a national park. Chicago-based painter **Rudolph Ingerle** (1879–1950) returned to the Smokies regularly to capture its scenic grandeur. Regionalist **Thomas Hart Benton** (1889–1975) made a visit to the area in 1928 recorded in his painting *Cradling Wheat* and its lithographic edition. Knoxvilleians **Charles Griffin Farr** (1908–1997) and **Joseph Delaney** (1904–1991) painted scenes of their hometown decades after moving away.

Groundbreaking photographers also contributed to East Tennessee's visual-arts legacy. Images of the region by Knoxville-based **James E. ("Jim") Thompson** (1881–1976) reached a wide audience in national publications. Landscape photographer **Ansel Adams** (1902–1984) captured the Smokies during a documentary visit in the fall of 1948. Color photography pioneer **Eliot Porter** (1901–1990) visited the Park several times and took dozens of vibrant images. Working for the Tennessee Valley Authority, **Lewis Wickes Hine** (1874–1940) documented communities that were soon covered by the rising waters of TVA lakes, and was succeeded by **Charles E. Krutch** (1887–1981), nephew of Smokies painter Charles C. Krutch.

Remarkably, Knoxville's hardscrabble underclass seemed to invite as much attention from prominent visiting artists as did its mountain vistas. French photographer **Henri Cartier-Bresson** (1908–2004) recorded downtown Knoxville's lively Market Square area in 1947. New York photographer **Danny Lyon** (b. 1942) visited Knoxville in 1967 and depicted it during a time of social and economic unrest. Photographer **Walker Evans** (1903–1975) is linked to the area through his collaborative work with Knoxville native James Agee and his influence on Knoxville-based **Baldwin Lee** (b. 1951), Evans's former darkroom assistant, who traveled across the South documenting the daily lives of African Americans living in some of the country's poorest counties.

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**Thomas Campbell** (Beverly, Yorkshire, England 1834-1914 Maryville, Tennessee)

***Untitled***, circa 1900-1914

Watercolor on paper, 10 x 6 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2010 gift of Dyllis Blair Highland

After spending most of his career as a missionary, Thomas Campbell came to East Tennessee in 1893 to focus on landscape painting. This untitled composition represents an intimate scene of local pastoral life for which he became known.



**James E. Thompson** (Knoxville 1881-1976 Knoxville)

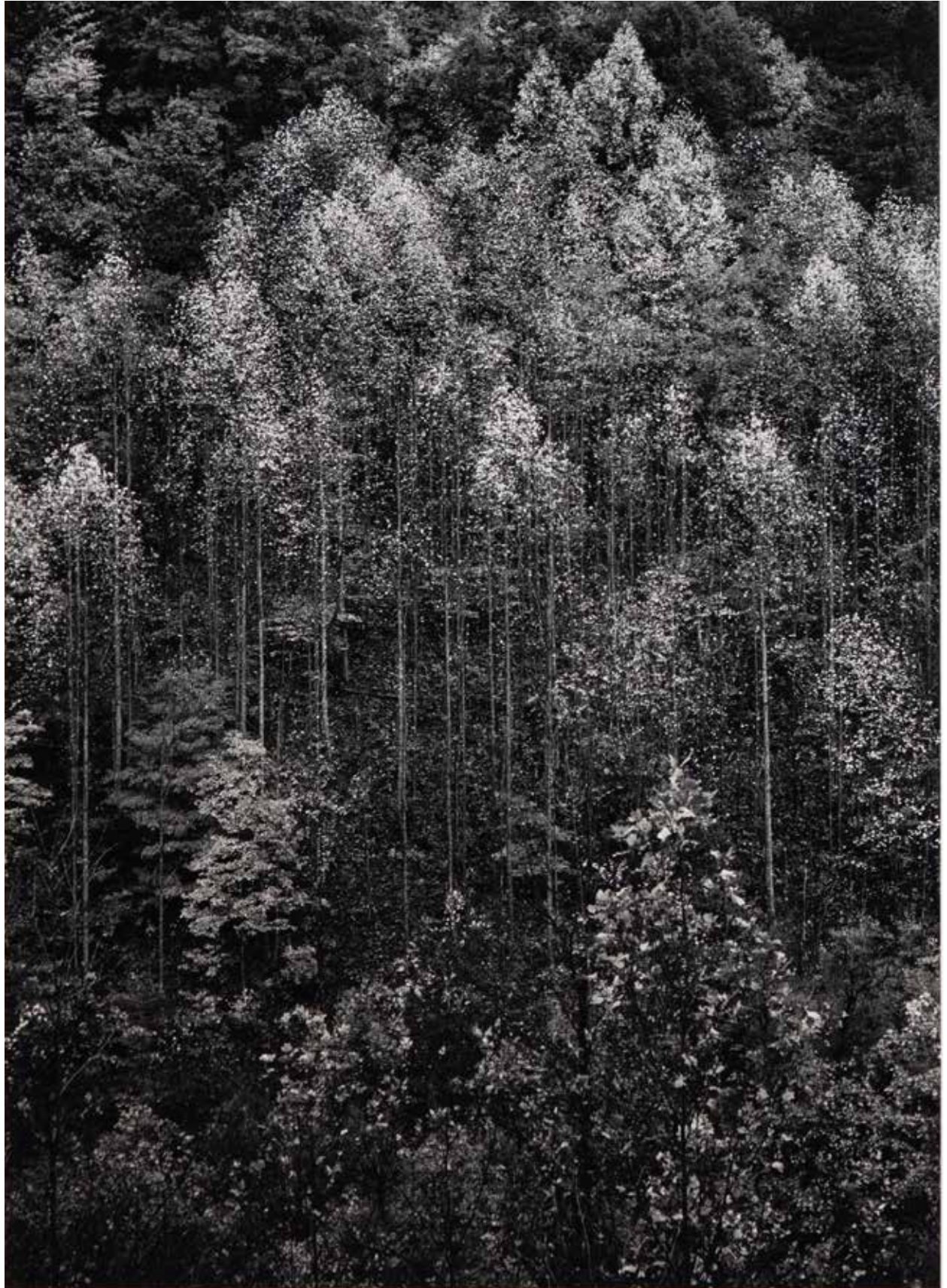
***Chimney Tops***, 1924

Gelatin silver print on paper, 22 3/4 x 21 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2015 purchase with funds provided by Ellen R. "Sis" Mitchell

Pioneering photographer James (Jim) Thompson tirelessly captured East Tennessee's urban and rural landscape. Frequently joined by his brother Robin and fellow photographer Albert "Dutch" Roth, Thompson ventured deep into the Smokies on extensive photographic expeditions. His publications extolling the mountain range's grandeur, and proved instrumental in helping establish the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.





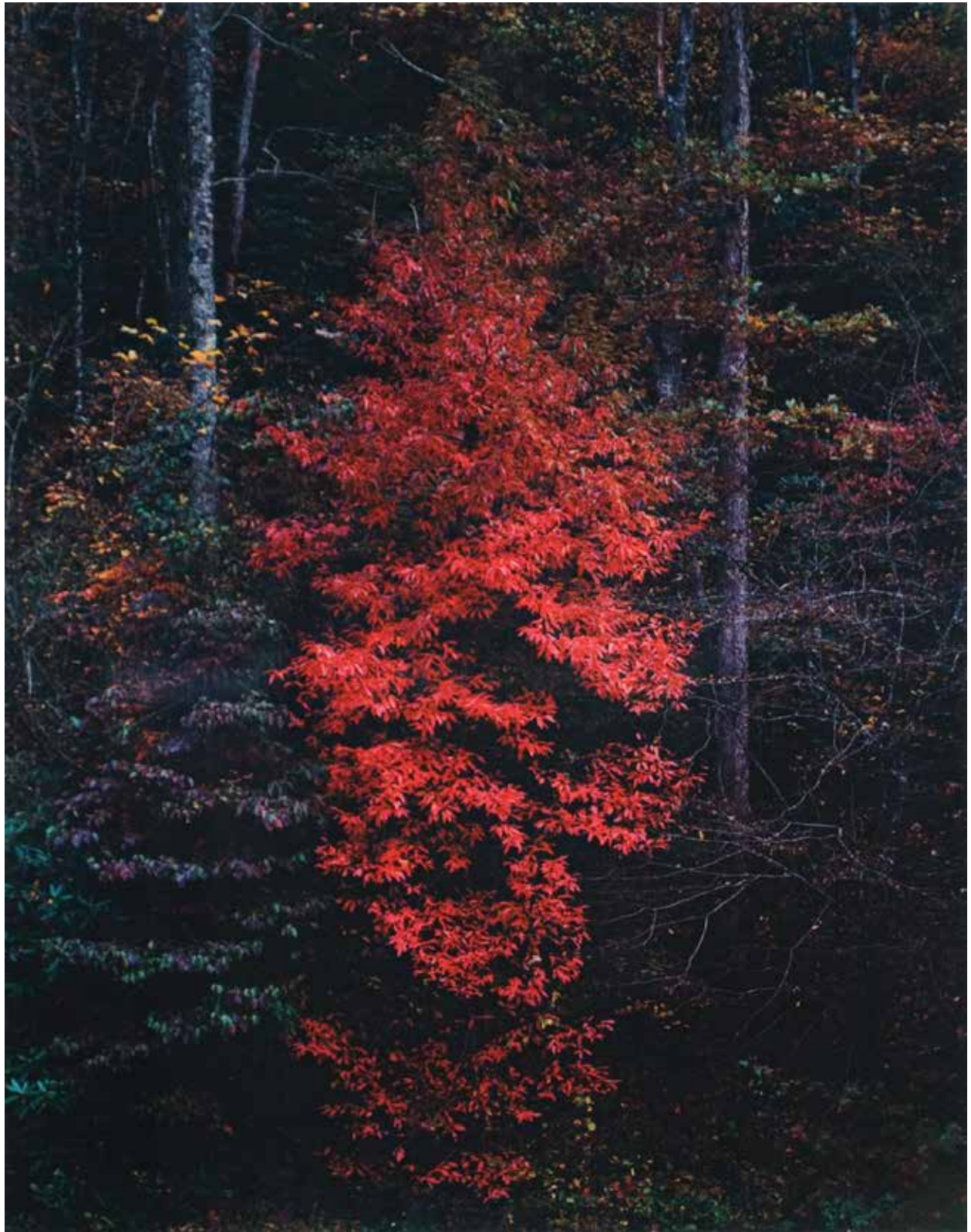


**Ansel Adams** (San Francisco 1902-1984 Carmel, California)

***Dawn, Autumn Forest, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee***, 1948

Gelatin silver print, printed ca. 1970-1976, 19 1/4 x 14 1/4 inches  
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2009 gift of Mary Ellen & Steve Brewington and Patricia & Alan Rutenberg

Ansel Adams, widely considered to be America's greatest landscape photographer, traveled to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1948—his first and only recorded visit to Tennessee—in order to take photographs as part of a Guggenheim Fellowship on America's national parks and monuments. Adams considered the Smokies a difficult subject: in a letter of October 9, 1948, the artist confides that, "The Smokys [sic] are OK in their way, but they are going to be devilish hard to photograph."



**Eliot Porter** (Winnetka, Illinois 1901-1990 Santa Fe, New Mexico)

***Red Tree near Cades Cove, Great Smoky Mountains National Park,  
October 7, 1967***, 1967

Vintage dye-transfer print, 10 1/2 x 8 1/8 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2012 KMA Collectors Circle purchase

American landscape photographer Eliot Porter used dye-transfer printing to reproduce the colors of nature with great accuracy, depth, and luminosity. As a result, Porter was instrumental to color photography's growing acceptance as a fine art form. He visited the Smoky Mountains several times between 1967 and 1969 and took dozens of vibrant photographs in preparation for his highly-acclaimed monograph *Appalachian Wilderness* (1971).



**Rudolph Ingerle** (Vienna 1879-1950 Chicago)

***Smoky Mountains***, circa 1920

Oil on canvas board, 19 13/16 x 24 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2013 gift of the Haslam family in honor of Steve Bailey's 60th birthday

Rudolph Ingerle specialized in colorful, atmospheric landscape paintings in which human activity is shown amid majestic wilderness settings. His early interest in landscape painting was inspired by the mountains of his native Austria. After settling in Chicago, Ingerle traveled the country extensively in search of picturesque outdoor locations such as the Ozark Mountains of Missouri and the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina. By the 1930s, he was spending summers in the Smokies and was involved in its designation as a national park in 1934.





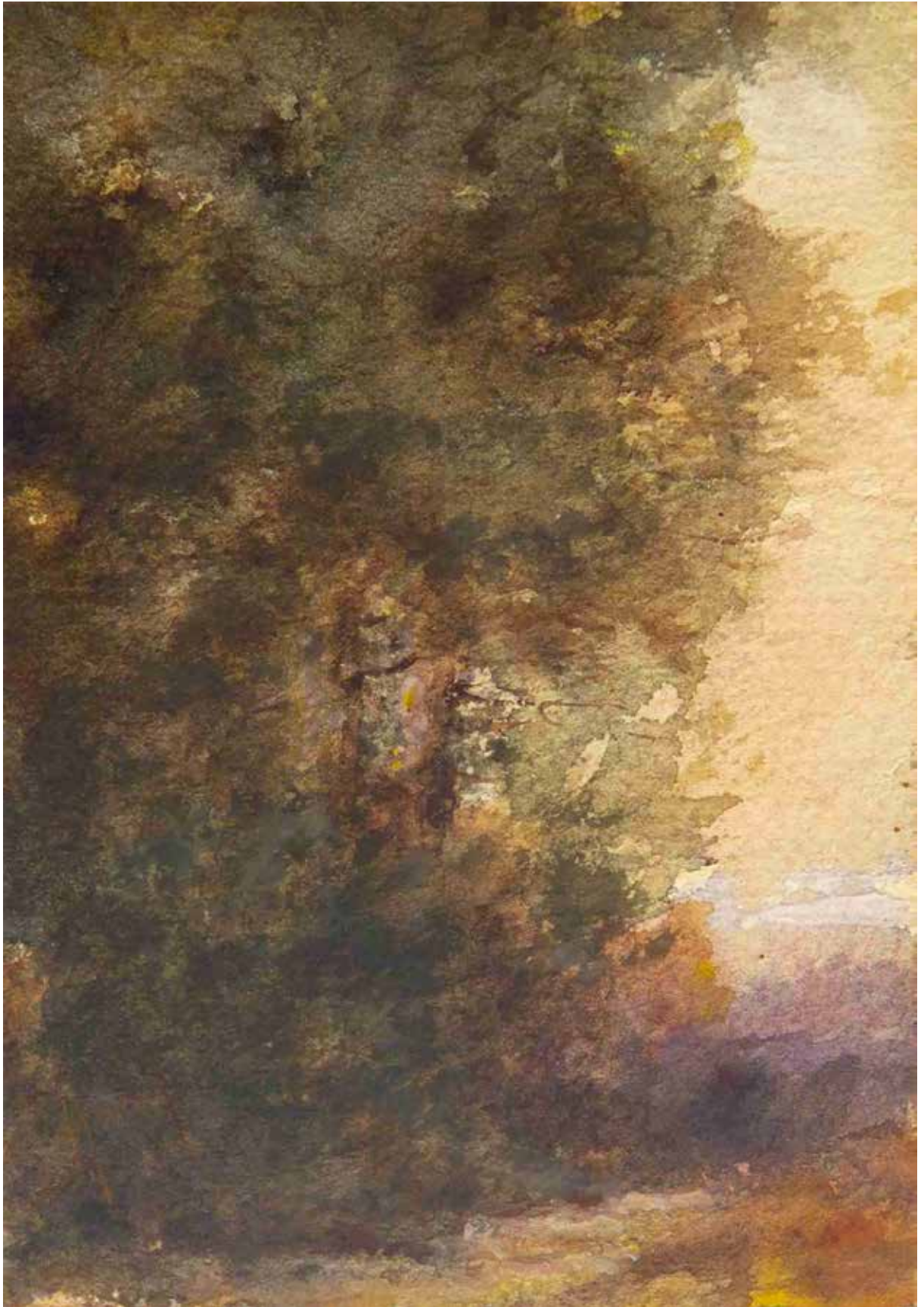
**Charles C. Krutch** (South Carolina 1849-1934 Knoxville)

***Untitled (Chimney Tops)***, late 1920s

Watercolor on paper, 13 3/4 x 10 3/4 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2008 bequest of the estate of Frank B. Galyon

Charles Christopher Krutch was one of East Tennessee's first painters to specialize in scenes of the Smoky Mountains. His soft, atmospheric watercolor and oil paintings capture the shifting character of the mountain range that served as his sole focus. The self-taught artist achieved his trademark style by working layers of oil paint with his fingers as well as brushes. Krutch's goal was to capture the changing "moods" of the mountains, which he regarded as "just like people."





**Charles Krutch** (South Carolina 1849-1934 Knoxville)

***Untitled***, early 1920s

Watercolor on paper, 10 x 8 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2009 gift of Dr. and Mrs. William J. McCoy III





**Thomas Hart Benton** (Neosho, Missouri 1889-1975 Kansas City, Missouri)

***Cradling Wheat***, 1939

Lithograph on white wove paper, edition of 250, 9 3/4 x 12 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2020 purchase with funds provided by KMA Collectors Circle

Featuring lean field hands harvesting grain on a sunny hillside, the scene stands as a classic example of Regionalist master Thomas Hart Benton's interest in championing grassroots America, which he felt was rapidly disappearing due to industrialization. *Cradling Wheat* includes such nostalgic touches as the cradle scythe used by the farmer on the right to cut the grain, an implement that would have been old-fashioned by the time Benton's 1928 visit to East Tennessee.



**Charles E. Krutch** (Knoxville 1887-1981 Knoxville)

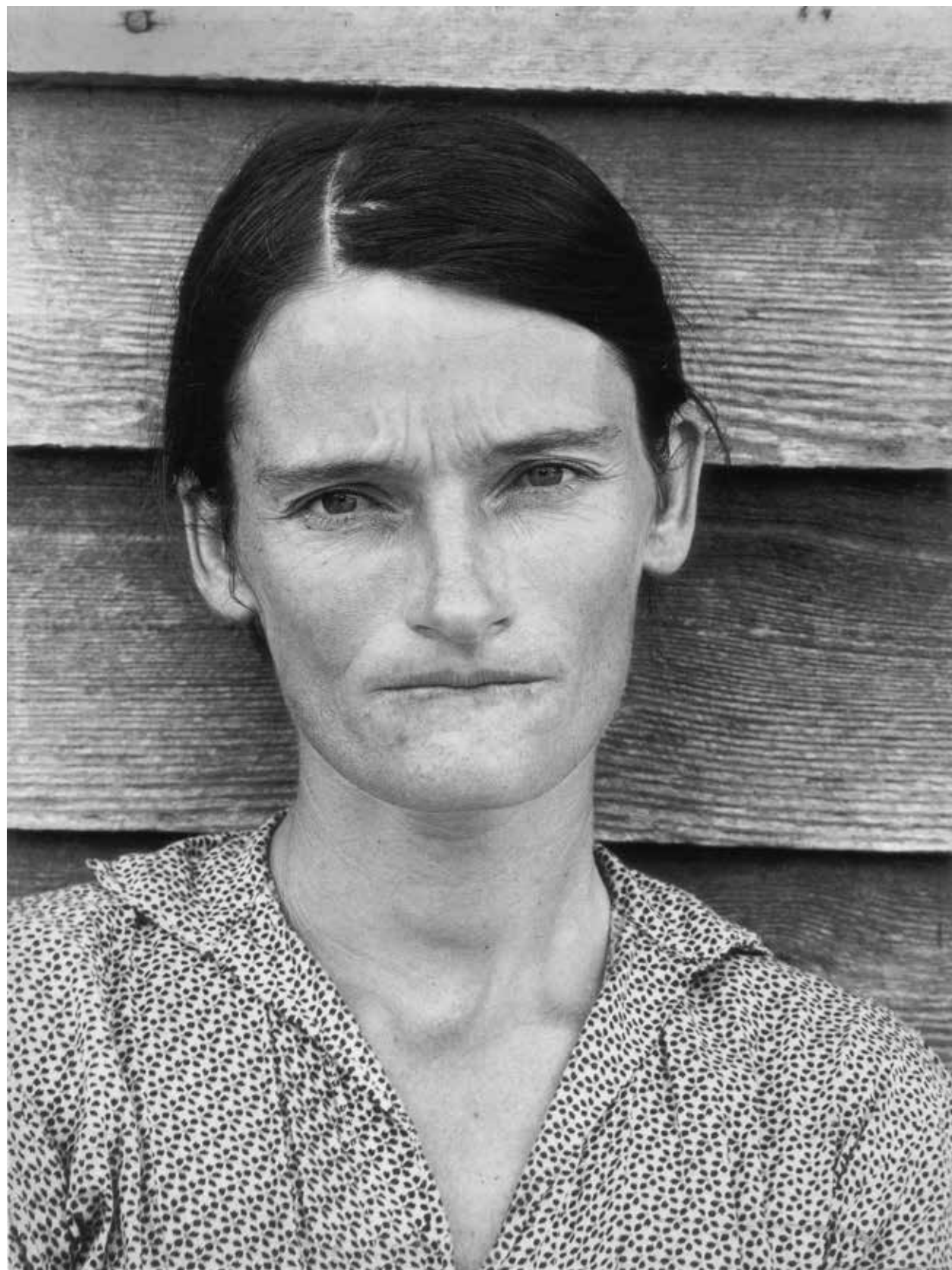
***Men Playing Checkers, Red Bank, Tennessee, for the Tennessee Valley Authority***, 1935

Gelatin silver print, 12 x 15 3/4 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2021 purchase with funds provided by Sasha & Charlie Sealy, Patricia & Alan Rutenberg, and Nick Wyman

Charles E. Krutch (nephew of Smokies painter Charles C. Krutch) became a staff photographer for the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1934, succeeding Lewis Wickes Hine. The TVA was created not only to improve the navigability of the Tennessee River, control flooding, and provide electricity, but also to spark economic development and improve the quality of life in the region. Krutch's depictions of the area soon came to represent the public image of the TVA.





**Walker Evans** (St. Louis, Missouri 1903-1975 New Haven, Connecticut)

***Tenant Farmer's Wife, Alabama***, 1936

Gelatin silver print, 10 x 8 inches

Edition of 100 from Ives-Sillman portfolio printed under artist's supervision in 1971

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2022 purchase with additional funds provided by Patricia & Alan Rutenberg

In his epic collaboration with Knoxville-born writer James Agee, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, legendary American photographer Walker Evans documented the plight of sharecroppers in the South. This iconic image depicts 27-year-old Allie Mae Burroughs, a sharecropper's wife and mother of four, whom Evans photographed at close range against wooden walls whose weathered lines echo those in Burroughs's impoverished yet determined face.



**Lewis Wickes Hine** (Oshkosh, Wisconsin 1874-1940 Dobbs Ferry, New York)

***Home Life, Tennessee Valley Authority, Loyston, Tennessee***, 1933

Gelatin silver print, 6 3/4 x 8 1/2 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2021 purchase with funds provided by Marie & Bob Alcorn in honor of JoAnn & Sam Fowler

Lewis Wickes Hine is internationally known for his hard-hitting images of child labor during the first decades of the twentieth century and later worked as staff photographer for the Tennessee Valley Authority. *Home Life* depicts TVA worker Esco Glandon and his family on October 31, 1933 gathered around the fireplace of their Loyston, Tennessee cabin. The family relocated to Loyston so Glandon could assist with the construction of Norris Dam. The tranquil atmosphere of this composed scene hides the fact that the Glandons and other Loyston residents had to move to higher ground in 1936 as their 150-year-old town was inundated by waters from the Clinch River after the completion of Norris Dam.





**Baldwin Lee** (New York, 1951; lives and works in Knoxville)

***Alan and Friend, Vicksburg, Mississippi, 1983***, 1983

Gelatin silver print, 16 x 20 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2011 purchase

*Photographers who take pictures of people depend on intuition for selecting subjects. They are alerted when they are in the presence of someone who, when depicted in a photograph, becomes its reason for being.*

--Baldwin Lee

Former assistant to renowned American photographer Walker Evans, Baldwin Lee is internationally recognized for his images of rural African American life across the South. As an Asian American from the North, the artist had to overcome multiple cultural barriers and his own apprehension to gain the trust of his sitters. Lee's images serve as compelling documents of individual perseverance and collective resilience within Southern communities.



**Danny Lyon** (Brooklyn 1942; lives and works in Santa Fe, New Mexico)

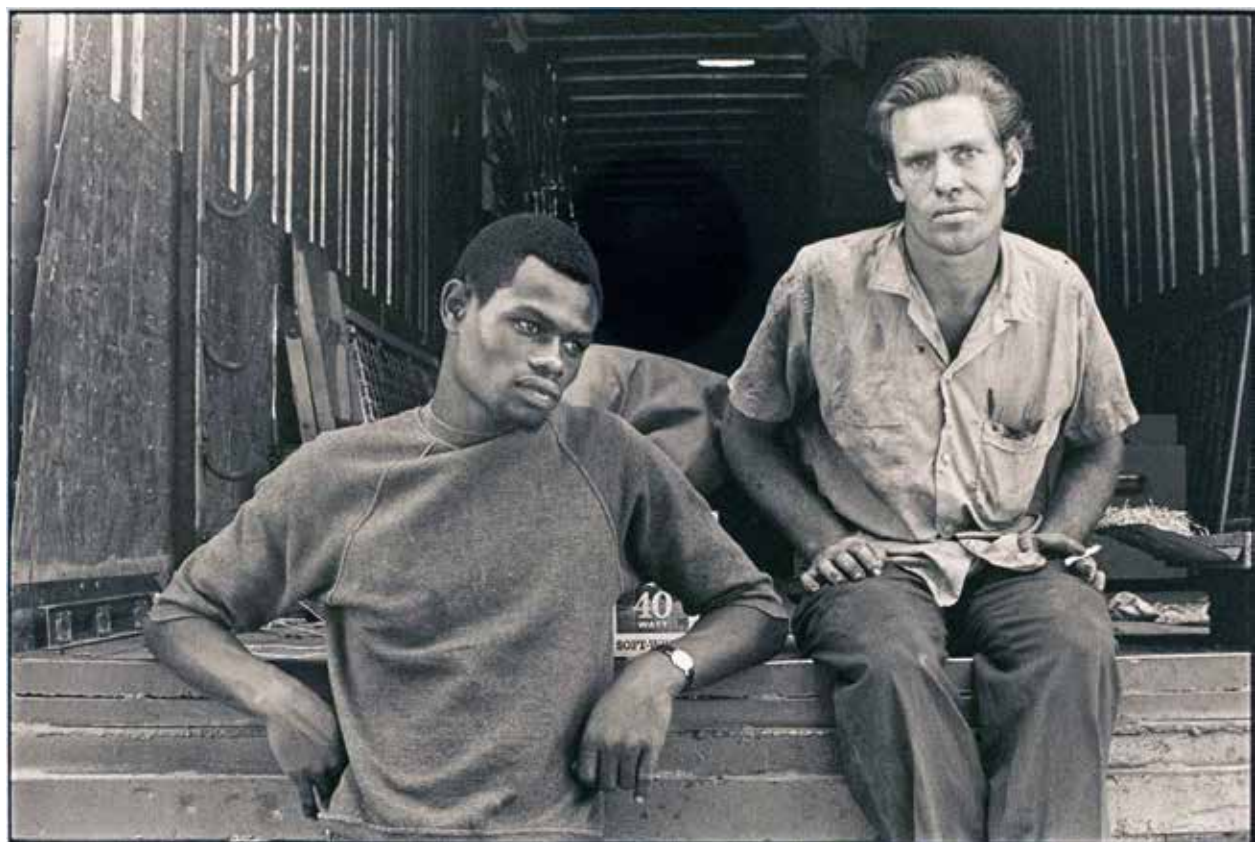
***Untitled, Knoxville, 1967***, 1967

Gelatin silver print from a unique Knoxville 1967 portfolio printed by the artist for the KMA, 2014, 11 x 14 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2014 purchase with funds provided by Cathy & Mark Hill

Danny Lyon is considered one of America's most original and influential documentary photographers, and is known for the extraordinary lengths to which he goes to immerse himself in his subject. These photographs stem from Lyon's brief stopover in Knoxville in late August of 1967 in order to visit the childhood home of writer James Agee. He admired Agee's brutally candid and descriptive work, especially his collaboration with photographer Walker Evans in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. As Lyon explained, "Agee's writing had a more profound effect on me at the time than Evans's photographs... Agee had an unshakeable belief in documentary photography and film as a powerful instrument of truth."





**Danny Lyon** (Brooklyn 1942; lives and works in Santa Fe, New Mexico)

***Tennessee Valley Fair, Knoxville***, 1967

Gelatin silver print from a unique Knoxville 1967 portfolio printed by the artist for the KMA, 2014, 11 x 14 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2014 purchase with funds provided by Maribel Koella and Chuck Jones



**Henri Cartier-Bresson** (Chanteloup-en-Brie, France 1908-2004 Céreste, France)

***Knoxville, Tennessee, 1947***, 1947

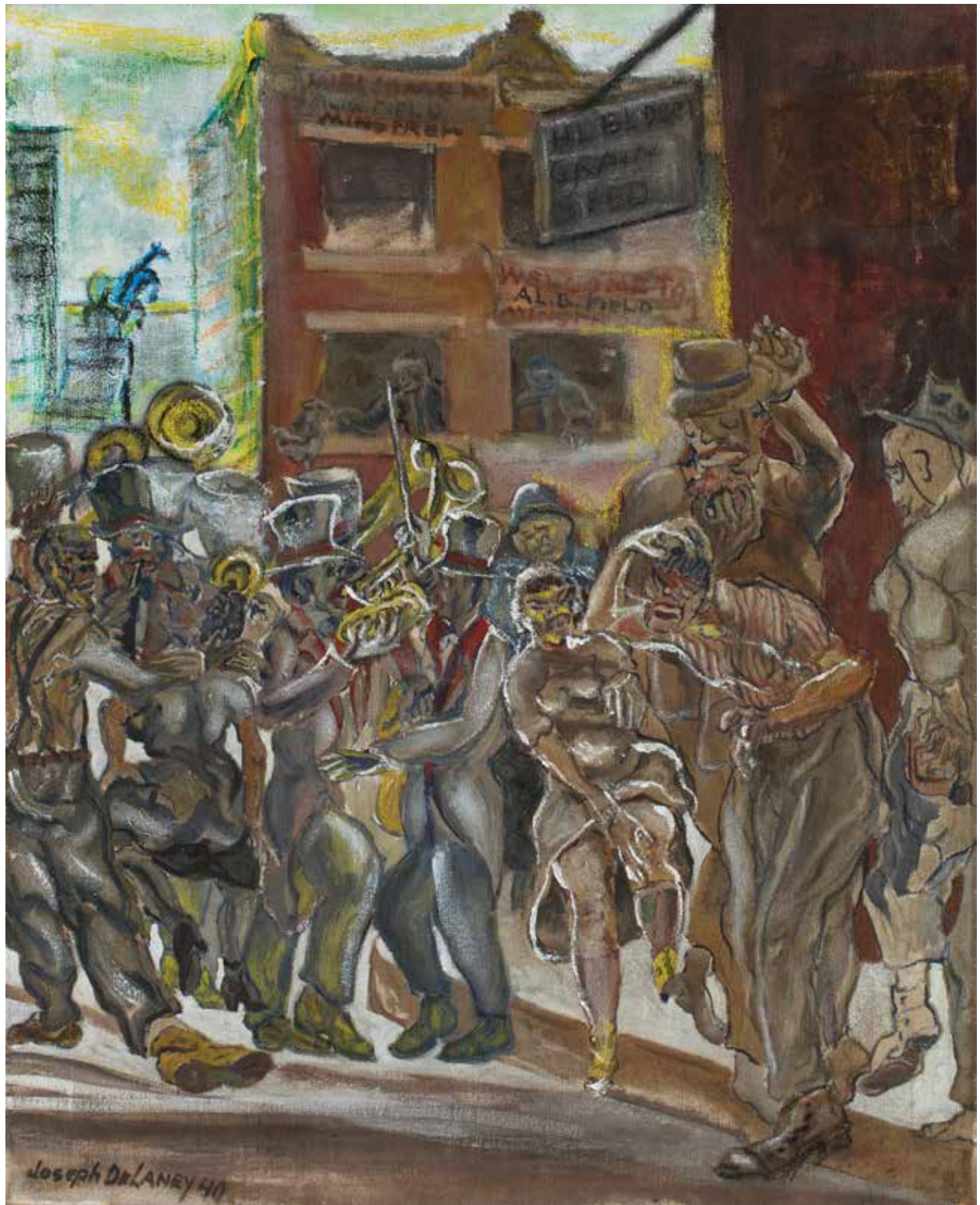
Gelatin silver print, 12 x 16 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2019 purchase with funds provided by June & Rob Heller, Jim Martin, James L. Clayton, Hei Park, John Cotham, Jayne & Myron Ely, Dorothy & Caesar Stair, Ebbie Sandberg, John Trotter, the Guild of the Knoxville Museum of Art, Mardel Fehrenbach, Kitsy & Louis Hartley, Sylvia & Jan Peters, Mary Rayson, Alexandra Rosen, John Z. C. Thomas, and Lisa Carroll

© Henri Cartier-Bresson / Magnum Photos

Henri Cartier-Bresson is internationally known as a pioneer of candid or “street” photography, an important twentieth-century movement made possible by the development of small portable cameras and high-speed film that enabled artists to capture fleeting moments as they unfolded. Taken along Market Square, in the heart of downtown, *Knoxville, Tennessee, 1947* depicts a fashionable woman apparently recovering from an eye procedure. She appears conspicuously out of place in the driver’s seat of an old weather-beaten pickup truck.





**Joseph Delaney** (Knoxville 1904-1991 Knoxville)

***Vine and Central, Knoxville, Tennessee***, 1940

Oil, pastel, and charcoal on canvas, 30 x24 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2018 purchase with funds provided by the KMA Collectors Circle, Rachael Patterson Young Art Acquisition Reserve, Nancy & Charlie Wagner, and Richard Jansen

The son of a circuit preacher, Knoxville-born Joseph Delaney and his family eventually settled in Knoxville only a few blocks from the intersection of Vine Avenue and Central Street, an ethnically diverse, densely populated, and lively neighborhood where races and classes in segregated Knoxville rubbed shoulders.

Restless by nature, Delaney left Knoxville and lived a vagabond's life during much of the 1920s. He eventually established a studio practice in New York, where he became known as a prolific painter of the local urban scene. Painted in Manhattan, *Vine and Central, Knoxville, Tennessee* represents Delaney's fond recollection of the bustling downtown Knoxville intersection near his family's home. In this festive scene, a raucous integrated crowd gathers as minstrels from the troupe of Al G. Field parade in front of H. Bloom & Co., a grocery store at 144 S. Central Street that was in operation from the late 19th century until around 1935.



**Charles Griffin Farr** (Birmingham, Alabama 1908-1997 San Francisco)

***Street in Knoxville***, 1947

Oil on canvas, 24 x 29 3/4 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2021 purchase with funds provided by Nancy & Charlie Wagner

Charles Farr was a devoted realist painter who spent much of his youth in Knoxville before settling in San Francisco. *Street in Knoxville* depicts an undetermined location in the artist's childhood hometown. The presence of a storefront sign for Bell Laundry, a small chain active in Knoxville until 1928, indicates that Farr reconstructed the scene from memory roughly twenty years after moving from Knoxville.





## Beauford and Joseph Delaney: Expatriate Masters

Although they spent most of their lives and careers outside East Tennessee, Knoxville-born **Delaney brothers Beauford** (1901–1979) and **Joseph** (1904–1991) represent two of the region's most noteworthy and accomplished painters. They followed divergent paths personally and artistically and overcame poverty, racism and other hurdles, going on to enjoy long and productive careers and, in Beauford's case, achieve international renown.

Prominent Knoxville artist Lloyd Branson, who mentored young Beauford, encouraged the brothers to head north for professional training. By 1923, Beauford packed up and left for Boston. Joseph later boarded a northbound train to Chicago in 1925. Both Delaney brothers soon settled in New York. There, they took diverging paths as guided by their disparate natures. The pragmatic Joseph did not stray far from his academic roots and remained committed to painting the American scene, while the more cosmopolitan Beauford was naturally adventurous and inclined to experiment more with abstraction.

Having established a studio practice in Greenwich Village by 1931, Beauford Delaney began mingling with a distinguished circle of cultural luminaries such as W. E. B DuBois, W. C. Handy, Al Hirschfeld, and Willem de Kooning, but enjoyed little commercial success. Lifelong friend James Baldwin (1924–1987) chronicled the painter's complex character and artistic evolution with uncommon insight. Baldwin found in Beauford a father-figure, muse, and model of perseverance as a gay man of color.

Beauford found in Baldwin a powerful intellectual and spiritual anchor who inspired some of his finest works. In addition to being Beauford's protégé, Baldwin served as a key witness to Delaney's winding artistic journey and complex persona. continued their long and mutually beneficial relationship until the painter's death in 1979. In October of 1955, Beauford moved from the city to a garden apartment in the tree-lined suburb of Clamart, where he began an extensive series of abstract oils and watercolors marked by soft lyrical passages that expressed the artist's emotional response to his new environment. These qualities stirred Baldwin, who characterized Beauford's Clamart years as his "striking metamorphosis into freedom."

By 1953, Beauford left New York for Paris where he and Baldwin The last decades of Beauford's production reflect a remarkable degree of variety, inventiveness, and experimentation. He made his first forays into printmaking, and increasingly strayed from his signature swirling impasto in order to produce canvases comprised largely of flat areas of paint laid down with a palette knife. Beauford created some of his final works in the early 1970s, which are remarkable in their uncharacteristic descriptive detail and absence of abstract elements, almost as if he were circling back to his earliest days as an artist in East Tennessee.

Joseph Delaney established himself as a tireless and prolific painter of Manhattan's urban scene, displaying a remarkable ability to express the city's vitality, making gestural applications of paint without sacrificing the narrative content many of his contemporaries had abandoned. He earned much-needed income and gained exposure as a self-professed

street “sketch artist,” rendering his subjects using vigorous, lively contours. He was a fixture, along with Beauford, in Washington Square’s annual outdoor art exhibition. After gaining full-time employment in 1934 as an artist for the government-sponsored Works Progress Administration (WPA), he assisted with major mural projects and produced a series of watercolors depicting daily life in Lower Manhattan. Even though Joseph’s paid assignment soon ended, his passion for chronicling the city’s varied and ever-changing character fueled his studio practice for decades, even after he returned to Knoxville in 1986 as artist-in-residence at the University of Tennessee.

Joseph produced a substantial body of work that honors his strong academic foundation while incorporating modernist techniques responsible for reshaping the artistic landscape of his day. The artist’s inventive compositions vividly capture the turbulent character of modern life in a manner that also conveys in bold terms his passion for the physical act of painting. Balancing elements of descriptive realism and gestural abstraction, Joseph effectively conveys a vibrant modern world in transition while representing an unvarnished record of his energetic painterly process.

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**Beauford Delaney** (Knoxville 1901-1979 Paris)

***Self-Portrait***, 1963

Charcoal and pastel on newsprint, 14 1/4 x 18 3/4 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2014 purchase with funds provided by the Rachael Patterson Young Art Acquisition Reserve

Pastel accents enliven this introspective charcoal portrait sketch, which depicts Beauford Delaney in his early 60s during a period in which he was living in the Montparnasse area of Paris. The intensity of the artist's gaze was noted memorably by James Baldwin in recounting his first encounter with Delaney at the artist's Greenwich Village studio in 1940: "I was terrified, once I had climbed those stairs and knocked on that door. A short, round brown man came to the door and looked at me. He had the most extraordinary eyes I'd ever seen. When he had completed his instant X-ray of my brain, lungs, liver, heart, bowels, and spinal column (while I had said, usefully, 'Emile sent me') he smiled and said, 'Come in,' and opened the door. He opened the door all right."



**Beauford Delaney** (Knoxville 1901-1979 Paris)

***Untitled (New York City)***, circa 1945

Watercolor on paper, 15 1/2 x 22 1/2 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2014 purchase with funds provided by KMA Collectors

Circle

This is one of several urban scenes by Beauford Delaney from the 1940s. Delaney uses bold brushwork and jewel-like hues to define the geometric contours of lampposts, directional signs, manhole covers, fire escapes, and other features whose distinctive shapes appealed to his eye.







**Beauford Delaney** (Knoxville 1901-1979 Paris)



***Portrait of James Baldwin*, 1944**

Pastel on paper, 24 x 18 3/4 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2017 purchase with funds provided by the Rachael Patterson Young Art Acquisition Reserve

This pastel is one of Beauford Delaney's earliest portraits of James Baldwin (1924-1987), Delaney's protégé and lifelong friend. Baldwin's prominent eyes appear as enlarged reflective portals capable of revealing the essential inner light Delaney sought in his sitters, the "light contained in every thing, in every surface, in every face," as Baldwin once described. Its vibrant color scheme may have been inspired by an incident recalled by Baldwin early in their friendship when, while the two were walking the rainy streets of Greenwich Village, Delaney called his attention to "oil moving like mercury in the black water of the gutter" whose swirling iridescent colors formed a visual experience the writer later credited as a revelation.

In the lower right corner is a note of dedication to the men's mutual friend John Arvonio (1913-1994), a photographer and experimental filmmaker. Arvonio is perhaps best known for his short film *Abstract in Concrete* (1952), filmed at night over a five-year period. The ten-minute piece captures the dazzling effect of storefront lights as reflected in Manhattan's rain-soaked streets. Although no evidence has been found that Delaney or Baldwin related the story of the gutter reflections to Arvonio, the film's imagery and vantage point are strikingly similar to Baldwin's description of the experience.



**Beauford Delaney** (Knoxville 1901-1979 Paris)

***Yaddo***, 1950

Pastel on paper, 18 x 24 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2017 purchase with funds provided by the Rachael Patterson Young Art Acquisition Reserve

This pastel stems from Beauford Delaney's residency at Yaddo, a progressive retreat center for artists in Saratoga Springs, New York. Lifelong friend James Baldwin would be a resident in 1954. The experience proved pivotal in inspiring Delaney to delve further into expressive abstraction, and in encouraging him to leave New York in 1953 and join Baldwin in Paris. Depicting the interior of Yaddo's greenhouse, this pastel reflects the painter's growing tendency to represent his environment as a series of angular, interlocking color shapes, and his ability to derive compositional ideas from windows and other transparent and reflective surfaces.





**Beauford Delaney** (Knoxville 1901-1979 Paris)

*Untitled (Abstract Circles)*, circa 1956

Pastel and mixed media on paper, 25 1/4 x 19 1/2 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2018 Delaney Purchase (complete credit line at the end of this section)

Beauford Delaney began exploring abstraction during the 1940s and intensified his experiments after arriving in Paris in the 1950s. Not long after moving to a suburban studio in the Paris suburb of Clamart in 1955, Delaney wrote that, along with his enduring interest in light, “the desire and necessity for movement is the prime incentive,” and of his mark-making that “every line of calligraphy put down is loaded with potency.” *Untitled (Abstract Circles)* expresses the artist’s new objective by way of exuberant, densely-layered loops of pastel color that pirouette across the surface and appear to spin outward beyond its borders. The image’s iridescent hues may have been inspired by the stained glass windows Delaney observed at Chartres Cathedral, which in 1954 he lauded as the “the most wonderful thing I have ever seen created by man.”





**Beauford Delaney** (Knoxville 1901-1979 Paris)

***Blue-Light Abstraction***, circa 1962

Oil on canvas, 25 3/4 x 21 1/2 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2018 Delaney Purchase (complete credit line at the end of this section)

Distinctly aquatic works such as *Blue-Light Abstraction* may represent Beauford Delaney's recollections of a traumatic experience when he jumped off a boat into the ocean off Patras, Greece on July 25, 1961 while on vacation. If so, these compositions seemingly align with Delaney biographer David Leeming's assertion that the painter at this time was moving steadily toward depictions of "his inner turmoil itself." The undulating contours in *Blue-Light Abstraction* and other non-objective works of the period bear a striking resemblance to "caustic networks" of patterned light refracted within or reflected across moving bodies of water.





**Beauford Delaney** (Knoxville 1901-1979 Paris)

***Abstraction #12***, 1963

Oil on canvas, 51 1/2 x 38 1/2 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2018 Delaney Purchase (complete credit line at the end of this section)

Along with yellow, red was among Beauford Delaney's favorite colors. The artist once recalled that his mother, Delia, knowing his love of the color, made up his bed with a bright red spread whose brilliant hue he confessed "excited him so much that he couldn't sleep all night." In this unusually large Delaney abstraction, the artist creates a composition of great optical presence and depth by applying layers of alternating colors in lyrical interlocking patterns. Of Delaney's early 1960s abstractions close friend and fellow painter Paul Jenkins wrote, "The structure was there in each painting but one sensed more of a veil than a grid. It was as if he had cut hundreds of flowers and crushed them. Stems and all."





**Beauford Delaney** (Knoxville 1901-1979 Paris)

***Moving Sunlight***, 1965

Oil on canvas , 25 3/4 x 21 1/2 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2018 Delaney Purchase (complete credit line at the end of this section)

Although initially appearing to be rendered in a narrow range of hues, *Moving Sunlight* in fact is comprised of dozens of overlapping layers of yellow intermingled with red, burnt orange, olive, lime green, and white.



**Beauford Delaney** (Knoxville 1901-1979 Paris)

***Scattered Light***, 1964

Oil on canvas, 36 5/8 x 28 3/4 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2015 purchase with funds provided by the Rachael Patterson Young Art Acquisition Reserve

This painting's descriptive title embodies a prevailing theme in Beauford Delaney's mature abstract work: the union of light and movement. In this composition, minute dabs of contrasting colors form a vibrant visual field reminiscent of flickering pixels on a digital screen. Although produced two years after the artist left Clamart, this painting reflects Delaney's continued use of the atmospheric abstract vocabulary he developed there.







**Joseph Delaney** (Knoxville 1904-1991 Knoxville)

***Untitled (Saguenay, Quebec)***, circa 1945

Oil on canvas board, 16 x 20 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2017 gift of Tom Pair in memory of Joseph Delaney

This painting likely depicts the port town of Saguenay, Quebec, Canada. An inveterate traveler, Joseph Delaney took a break from life in Manhattan in 1945 in order to paint life along Quebec's picturesque banks. In the foreground, neatly arranged vehicles surround a small market. A Canada Steamship Lines luxury vessel is moored in the distance. Even in this early work, Delaney displays a strong interest in capturing dense public gatherings his trademark blend of carefully described and boldly gestural passages.



**Joseph Delaney** (Knoxville 1904-1991 Knoxville)

***Macy's Parade***, 1974-84

Acrylic and pastel on canvas, 81 1/2 x 121 1/8 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 1990 gift of the artist

This work illustrates Joseph Delaney's ability to infuse even his largest and most complex compositions with the immediacy of a drawing sketched on location. The artist began by drawing directly onto bare canvas, in this case using colorful pastel outlines that he left visible. Vibrant acrylic color, more prominent in his later paintings, is applied in brushwork that fluctuates between carefully described passages and abstract dashes. The resulting effect lends visual energy to the festive depiction of this annual parade as it makes its way along Broadway just south of Herald Square.





**Joseph Delaney** (Knoxville 1904-1991 Knoxville)

***Sunday School Lesson***, circa 1942

Sepia tone with gouache, pen, and ink on paper, 14 x 15 1/4 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2020 purchase with funds provided by KMA Collectors Circle

Born to a minister-father, the Delaney brothers learned to draw on Sunday school cards at church and were given art lesson by distinguished local artist Lloyd Branson. *Sunday School Lesson* is one of only a handful of narrative works on paper in which Joseph Delaney appears to depict moments from his childhood, circa 1910. These works were produced in the early 1940s, years after he had settled in New York City. In this scene, a group of boys, two of whom perhaps represent Delaney and his older brother Beauford, are scolded by a stern church matron.



**Joseph Delaney** (Knoxville 1904-1991 Knoxville)

***Marble Collegiate Church***, 1974-75

Oil on canvas with hand-painted frame, 72 x 47 3/4 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 1990 gift of the artist

Among Joseph Delaney's most majestic street scenes, this composition emphasizes the grandeur of Manhattan's architecture rather than the density of its crowds. Much of the scene's drama stems from beams of sunlight illuminating the church's soaring spire, which dwarfs the Palm Sunday procession below. The painting's unusual frame was designed and built by the artist.







**Ruth Cobb Brice** (Knoxville 1899-1971 Knoxville)

***Untitled***, 1960

Watercolor and pastel on paper

Beck Cultural Exchange Center, Inc., Knoxville

East Tennessee native Ruth Cobb Brice was a groundbreaking Black artist, educator, and writer. As a painter, she specialized in pastoral landscapes, nature studies, surrealist scenes, as well as colorful abstractions as seen in these two related works. A leader in the local Black creative community, Brice is the first woman of color from Knoxville to become a published author, and the first Black artist to join the invitation-only Knoxville Watercolor Society.



**Ruth Cobb Brice** (Knoxville 1899-1971 Knoxville)

***Untitled***, 1960

Watercolor and pastel on paper

Beck Cultural Exchange Center, Inc., Knoxville





Note: In 2018, the Knoxville Museum of Art purchased 18 works from the Estate of Beauford Delaney including 9 sketchbooks, 4 works on paper, and 5 oil paintings on canvas. The credit line below lists the community which helped to fund this landmark purchase. When space restrictions do not allow the entire credit line, it is listed as “2018 Delaney purchase.”

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2018 purchase with funds provided by the Rachael Patterson Young Art Acquisition Reserve, Ann & Steve Bailey in honor of Rachael Patterson Young, Natalie & Jim Haslam in honor of Lindsay Young, Molly & Bob Joy, the KMA Collectors Circle, The Knoxville (TN) Chapter of the Links, Incorporated, Daniel McGehee, Marty Begalla, Nancy & Charles Wagner III, June & Rob Heller, Sandi Burdick & Tom Boyd, the Guild of the Knoxville Museum of Art, Debbie & Ron Watkins, John Z. C. Thomas, Richard Jansen, John Cotham, Monica Crane & Luke Madigan, Susan & Kent Farris, Lane Hays, Sylvia & Jan Peters, Patricia & Alan Rutenberg, Barbara & Steve Apking, Pam & Jeff Peters, Ebbie & Ronald Sandberg, Barbara & Bernie Bernstein, Karen & Reinhold Mann, Penny Lynch & Kimbro McGuire, David Butler & Ted Smith, Kitsy & Lou Hartley, Diane Humphreys-Barlow & Jack Barlow, Debbie & Jimmy Jones, Merikay Waldvogel & Jerry Ledbetter, Meredith & Mark Overholt, Alexandra Rosen & Donald Cooney, Sandy & Frank Steer, Donna & Terry Wertz, Jackie Wilson, Pat & Geoff Wolpert, Wokie Massaquoi-Wicks & Stephen C. Wicks, Denise DuBose & Francis Lloyd, Falen & Clark Gillespie, DeLena Feliciano, Anna Fraser & Douglas Goode, and Georgia & William Pace

## The Knoxville 7

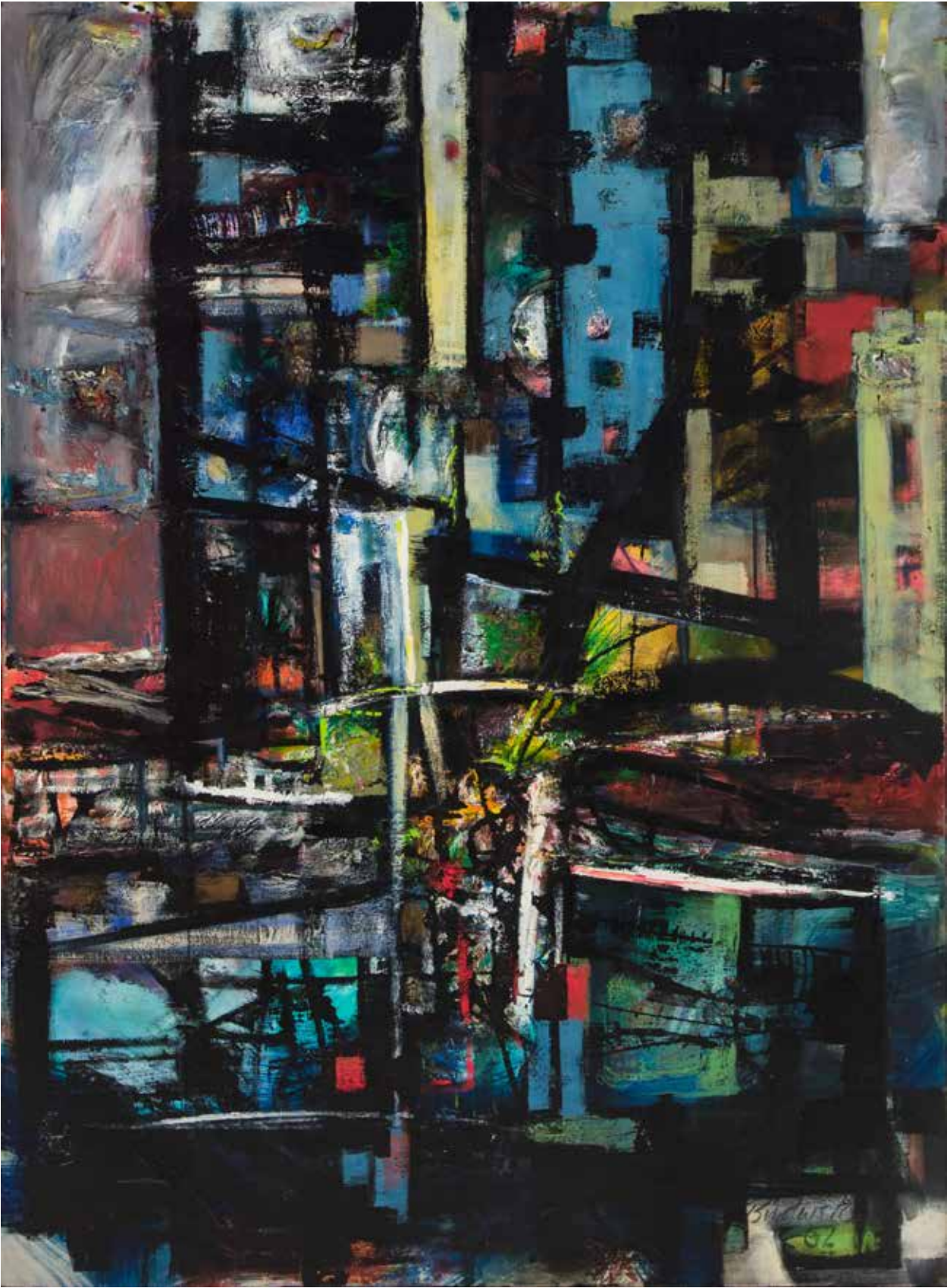
Modernism took hold in East Tennessee in the early 1950s and invigorated an art scene greatly in need of new energy and ideas. Its primary leader was **C. Kermit “Buck” Ewing** (1910–1976), newly arrived from Pittsburgh to head the University of Tennessee’s art department. Ewing recruited a group of progressive younger artists—initially **Carl Sublett** (1919–2008), **Walter Hollis “Holly” Stevens** (1927–1980), and **Robert Birdwell** (1924–2016)—all of whom experimented with contemporary modes, and produced what are likely the first abstract art works in East Tennessee. They eventually became known as “The Knoxville 7” with the recruitment of like-minded artists **Joanna Higgs** [later Ross] (b. 1934), **Richard Clarke** (1923–1997), and sculptor **Philip Nichols** (1931–2019).

Each Knoxville 7 artist responded to and interpreted Modernism distinctively. Birdwell and Ewing were bonded by a common interest in painting city views and the human figure. Stevens and Sublett shared a commitment to landscape painting, whether in local marble quarries or coastal Maine where they both summered with their families. Clarke also had an affinity for landscape subjects, and often joined the two on painting sessions in Knoxville and Maine. Higgs and Nichols worked largely on their own, and submitted work to Ewing when it came time to participate in group exhibitions. Higgs used bold cross-hatched strokes to transform local landscapes into energetic studies of sky and foliage or shadowy introspective self-portraits. Nichols, the group’s sole sculptor, brought industrial-welding skills to the production of intricate steel forms

whose angular volumes served as fitting sculptural counterparts to the largely abstract canvases produced by other members of The Knoxville 7.

For the April 1963 Dogwood Arts Festival, Ewing and his colleagues organized *7 Knoxville Artists of America*, their largest ever exhibition. Its title subversively referenced the city's designation by *Look* magazine as an "All America City" in "recognition and involvement of diverse segments and perspectives," an ironic honor for a city that still enforced racial segregation. Carl Sublett's *Composition, Pop Goes My Easel* takes a solid swing at the pretensions and hypocrisy of his hometown, and connects directly.

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**Robert Birdwell** (Knoxville 1924-2016 Knoxville)

***A View of the City (Gay Street)***, 1962

Oil on canvas, 54 x 40 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2011 gift of Ann & Robert Birdwell

Here, Robert Birdwell employs a complex blend of interlocking shapes, varying textures, and contrasting colors to convey the visual energy along Gay Street in the heart of downtown Knoxville.



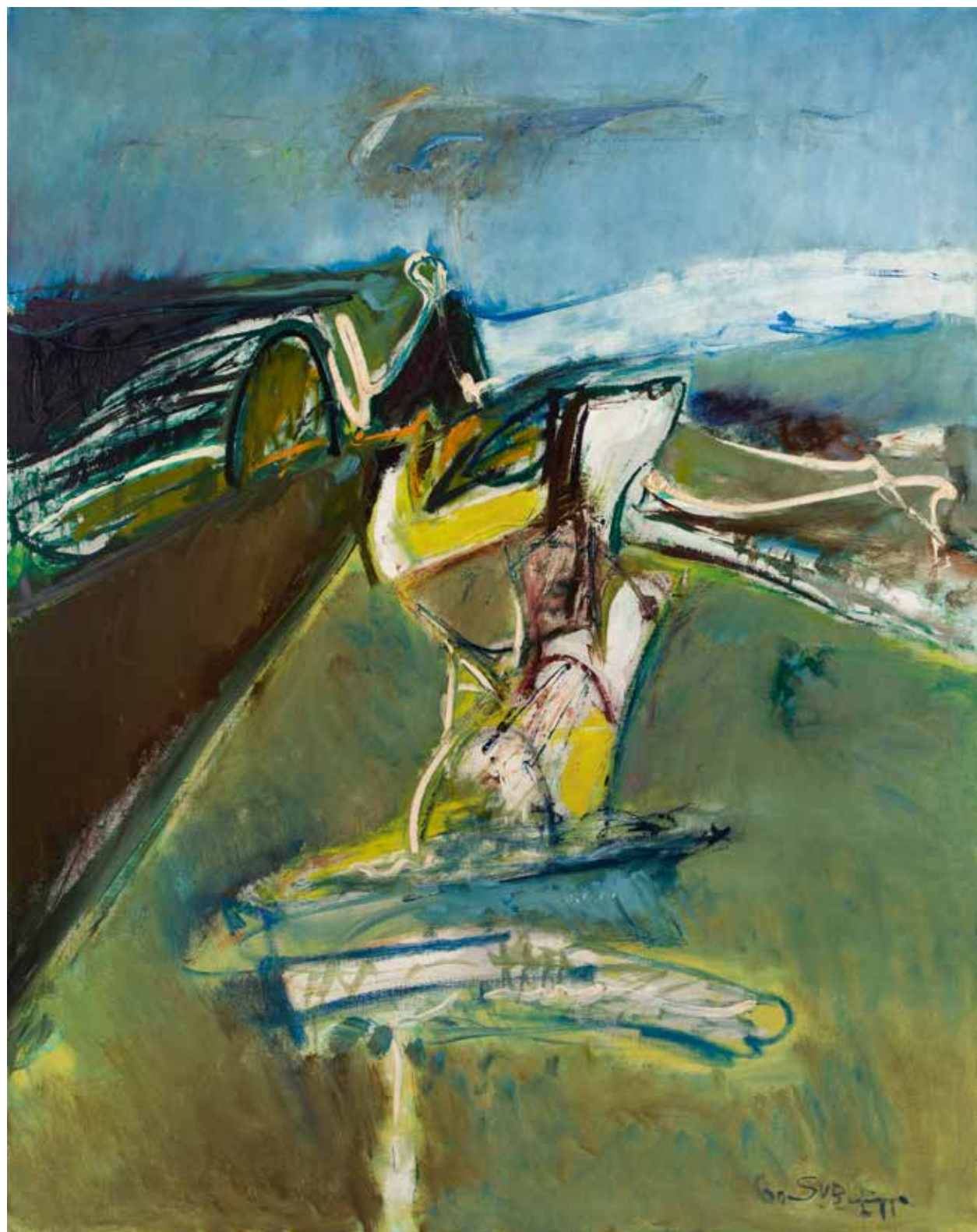
**C. Kermit “Buck” Ewing** (Bentleyville, Pennsylvania 1910-1976 Bali, Indonesia)

***George’s—Rich’s from Broadway***, 1955

Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 1986 gift of the Knoxville Arts Center

Here Buck Ewing depicts a local Knoxville landmark—Rich’s department store (now the University of Tennessee’s Conference Center) on Henley Street in downtown Knoxville—and presents it as an intricate, fragmented study of intersecting rectangles in a manner reminiscent of Picasso’s analytic cubism. Rich’s sponsored some of The Knoxville 7’s events, provided space for displays of the group’s work, and employed Mary Ewing, the artist’s wife, as a buyer.





**Carl Sublett** (Johnson County, Kentucky 1919-2008 Union, Maine)

***Down East***, 1960

Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2007 gift of the Ewing family in memory of Mary and C. Kermit "Buck" Ewing

Carl Sublett was one of East Tennessee's most prolific and versatile artists. The Kentucky native came to Knoxville in 1954 and soon became an influential painting instructor at the University of Tennessee. He found endless inspiration in the Maine coastline, East Tennessee countryside and many other outdoor painting locations. Sublett shifted effortlessly from abstraction to precise realism throughout his long career and by the 1970s turned to watercolor as his primary medium.



**Joanna Higgs Ross** (Nashville 1934; lives and works in Nashville)

***Trees and Sky***, 1959

Oil paint on canvas, triptych, 50 x 88 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2012 gift of Dr. Larry Ray in honor of Joanna Higgs Ross

For Joanna Higgs Ross, the Smoky Mountains served as an endless source of artistic inspiration. *Trees and Sky* was inspired by her first car ride through Cades Cove in the fall of 1959, three years after she moved to Knoxville to attend the University of Tennessee. The painting's brilliant colors suggest fall foliage against vivid blue skies, and the fragmented imagery conveys shifting glimpses of the landscape from the vantage point of a moving vehicle. Higgs Ross currently resides in Nashville and maintains an active studio practice.





**Walter H. Stevens** (Mineola, New York 1927-1980 Deer Isle, Maine)

***Tour Trap***, 1957

Oil on canvas, 48 x 64 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2007 gift of the Ewing family in memory of Mary and C. Kermit "Buck" Ewing

Along with Carl Sublett and C. Kermit "Buck" Ewing, Walter "Holly" Stevens was one of the first faculty members of the University of Tennessee's art department and a core member of the Knoxville 7. Stevens and fellow artist Carl Sublett often set up their easels in local marble quarries, and spent most summers painting along the Maine coastline, either near Sublett's summer home at Port Clyde, or Stevens' summer home in Deer Isle. Both artists used these natural landscapes as inspiration for bold experiments with color and form devoid of human presence or site-specific details. This painting typifies Stevens' ability to reduce the natural environment into dynamic arrangements of interlocking color shapes designed to express the interaction of sea, land, and sky.



**Philip Nichols** (Freeborn County, Minnesota 1931-2019 Knoxville)

***Form in Steel***, 1963

Welded steel, 30 x 19 x 14 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2010 gift of the Carl Sublett Family

Philip Nichols was known for his welded steel sculptures resembling architectural structures or mechanical forms. He came to Knoxville in 1961 from Michigan as the first sculptor appointed to the University of Tennessee art faculty, and the seventh and final member of The Knoxville 7. Nichols' intricate steel forms served as a fitting sculptural counterpart to the largely abstract canvases produced by other Knoxville 7 members.

*Form in Steel* represents a very early example of Nichols' Knoxville 7-era sculpture, and was produced in his makeshift campus studio on 16th Street only a year or two after he moved to Knoxville. Using skills honed through years of working as an industrial welder, he fused dozens of small steel panels into a cubist-inspired structure resembling a pair of conjoined, faceted figures.





**Carl Sublett** (Johnson County, Kentucky 1919-2008 Union, Maine)

***Composition, Pop Goes My Easel***, 1963

Oil and graphite on canvas, 53 x 53 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2014 purchase with funds provided by the KMA Guild

*Composition, Pop Goes My Easel* represents Carl Sublett's experimentation with Pop Art during the early 1960s. This painting subtly expresses the hypocrisy of *Look* magazine's designation of Knoxville as an "All-America City" in 1962 despite rampant discrimination that included the arrest of African Americans for patronizing local establishments.



**Richard Clarke** (Noblesville, Indiana 1923-1997 Knoxville)

***Untitled***, 1963

Watercolor on paper, 18 x 24 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2011 gift of Janice Clarke

Although Richard Clarke joined the University of Tennessee's art faculty as early as 1956, he did not begin exhibiting with The Knoxville 7 until 1960. Active as a printmaker and a painter, he produced both oil and watercolor paintings before shifting exclusively to watercolors by the early 1960s. He specialized in local landscape scenes rendered in varying degrees of abstraction using a broad range of marks laid down in broad transparent washes. Clarke often painted out of doors, and the Maine coast and a marble quarry in Friendsville, Tennessee were among his favorite locations.





**C. Kermit “Buck” Ewing** (Bentleyville, Pennsylvania 1910–1976 Bali, Indonesia)

***Fahrenheit***, 1959

Oil on canvas, 41 3/4 x 51 5/8 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2015 purchase

C. Kermit “Buck” Ewing was a charismatic and influential voice for progressive art in East Tennessee during the mid-twentieth century. The Pittsburgh native came to Knoxville in the late 1940s and soon founded the University of Tennessee’s art department. Although Ewing is perhaps best known for his carefully described urban scenes and figure studies, his style eventually shifted toward broad landscapes in which he experimented with loose, expressive brushwork.

## **Bessie Harvey**

A new creative voice in the region emerged in Alcoa, Tennessee, in the late twentieth century. Entirely self-taught, Bessie Harvey (1929–1994) used little more than roots, sticks, shells, and paint to assemble a diverse cast of spirited figures—biblical characters, African ancestors, mythological creatures—infused with uplifting messages of human perseverance and divine compassion.

Harvey's artistic process occurred through an intensive collaboration with natural and supernatural forces. Often spending hours at a time outdoors, she began to discern faces in trees, clouds, weathered panels, and gnarled branches. To her, the faces represented spirits planted by God and shaped by nature. She discovered that the only way to dispel them was to give them physical form. Harvey's work soon became well-known to family, neighbors, and other community members.

Having established a fully functional studio by 1978, Harvey secured a suitable creative space and her work soon began to attract the attention of artist friends, collectors, dealers, and museums. By the early 1980s the artist's creations evolved in size and intricacy. Various pieces of wood were soon combined to construct larger and more elaborate sculptures. Some were formed out of tree stumps from which individual branches emanated, each fashioned into an independent figure formed of various materials. These larger works provided Harvey with an expanded structural format capable of supporting more complex narratives. At the same time, Harvey began a series of small sculptural tableaux, Africa

in America, that embodied her extensive experience as a Southern woman of color who grew up in the pre-Civil Rights era.



Reflecting the scope and force of her intellect, Harvey's cast of biblical and ancestral characters is empowered by her own personal experience and infused with moral concepts of universal significance.

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**Bessie Harvey** (Dallas, Georgia 1929-1994 Alcoa, Tennessee)

***Moses and the Serpent***, 1988

Wood, fabric, hair, and found objects, 88x 22 x 16 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 1990 gift of Gladys Faires

Bessie Harvey used a process that was almost exclusively additive. With the exception of drilling an occasional set of eyeholes, the artist would only paint and embellish with glue, beads, yarn, cloth, and a variety of other materials. Harvey identified strongly with Moses, and created several works dedicated to the biblical figure.



Christina  
8/9  
Cocoro

**Bessie Harvey** (Dallas, Georgia 1929-1994 Alcoa, Tennessee)

***Untitled (Cocono)***, 1989

Watercolor and pen on paper, 15 x 11 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2012 gift of Gladys and Ross Faires

Although best known for her assembled wooden sculptures, Harvey also produced numerous drawings, most using watercolor pens. Most include flattened, simplified human and animal figures in combinations that reflect the artist's spiritual visions.





**Bessie Harvey** (Dallas, Georgia 1929-1994 Alcoa, Tennessee)

***African Totem***, circa 1988

Painted wood, wood putty, feathers, shells, metal, plastic, and found objects

73 x 29 x 20 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2012 gift of Gladys and Ross Faires

Bessie Harvey is considered by many as an important American visionary and outsider artist—someone who develops a body of work outside the mainstream of art schools, art galleries, and museums. The Alcoa, Tennessee-based artist used her work as a powerful means of exploring spirituality, religion, segregation, slavery, and various narrative dramas in which her root characters often act out stories drawn from history.

*African Totem* reflects Harvey's interest in Africa as an ancestral home and a source of endless spiritual and artistic energy. It also illustrates her ability to compose large, complex sculptures in the round using a wide variety of media and found objects.



**Bessie Harvey** (Dallas, Georgia 1929-1994 Alcoa, Tennessee)

***Cotton Pickers***, circa 1988

Painted wood, wood putty, found objects, 16 x 26 1/2 x 33 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2004 gift of Gladys & Ross Faires

*Cotton Pickers* stems from Bessie Harvey's *Africa in America* series, a group of roughly 20 or so works the artist produced off and on after 1983.

Taking the form of small dioramas, the scenes depict important moments in African American history and race relations during and after the era of slavery.





**Bessie Harvey** (Dallas, Georgia 1929-1994 Alcoa, Tennessee)

***Seven Sisters of the World***, late 1980s

Mixed media on wood, 12 x 6 1/2 x 4 inches each

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2004 gift of Gladys & Ross Faires

Bessie Harvey used her work as a powerful outlet for exploring spirituality, religion, segregation, slavery, and other narratives in which her root characters act out roles drawn from history. Although her works often present themes of adversity and struggle, each contains an underlying message of human perseverance and divine compassion. In this work Harvey celebrates feminine power and beauty in cultures worldwide.



**Bessie Harvey** (Dallas, Georgia 1929-1994 Alcoa, Tennessee)

***Mother with Child***, circa 1991

Painted wood, wood putty, fabric, found objects, 45 x 8 x 15 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2003 gift of Faye Dean





**Bessie Harvey** (Dallas, Georgia 1929-1994 Alcoa, Tennessee)

***Wash Woman***, 1982

Painted wood, wood putty, synthetic hair, fabric, found objects, 35 1/2 x 15 1/2 x 10 1/2 inches

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2003 purchase with funds provided by KMA Collectors Circle

In the making of *Wash Woman*, Bessie Harvey transformed a piece of gnarled and swollen wood into a portrait of her eldest daughter while pregnant and struggling with daily chores.



*Higher Ground: A Century of the Visual Arts in East Tennessee*

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