A View of the City: Knoxville presents images of Knoxville and vicinity by artists from East Tennessee and beyond during and after the 1940s. The diverse selection of paintings and works on paper offers a complex and compelling portrait of the area over the course of a vital period in its development.

Paintings by Marcia Goldenstein, Joanna Higgs Ross, Tom McGrath, and Karla Wozniak depict local roadside imagery from a variety of artistic perspectives and compositional strategies. Color photographs by David Hilliard and David Underwood feature multiple views of local subjects in order to express notions of movement and elapsed time. Black and white silver prints by Henri Cartier-Bresson and Danny Lyon represent key moments in Knoxville’s everyday life as captured by artists making their first visit to the city. Knoxville 7 painters Robert Birdwell and C. Kermit Ewing use prominent urban locations as points of departure into bold, angular abstractions. Figurative canvases from the 1940s by former Knoxville residents Joseph Delaney and Charles Farr portray the city as it appeared decades earlier, while architectural scenes by George Galloway and Joe Parrott describe local historic structures, many of which face an uncertain future. Together, these works present a diverse portrait of Knoxville and its environs, and underscore the area’s importance during the last century as a source of creative inspiration.

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

Knoxville, Tennessee, 1947

Gelatin silver print


Henri Cartier-Bresson is internationally known as a pioneer of candid or “street” photography, an important 20th-century movement made possible by the development of small portable cameras and high-speed film that enabled artists to capture fleeting moments in everyday life as they unfolded. He is often noted for presenting human subjects in ways that provoke questions about behavior and social patterns. Taken along Market Square in downtown Knoxville, Knoxville, Tennessee, 1947, it depicts a fashionable woman apparently recovering from an eye procedure. Glamorously attired, she appears conspicuously out of place in the driver’s seat of an old weather-beaten pickup truck.
Danny Lyon (Brooklyn 1942; lives and works in New Mexico)

*Driver Larry Thomas off to Maryville Speedway, Sunday, Knoxville, 1967*

Gelatin silver print

Knoxville Museum of Art, purchase with funds provided by Lynne and Scott Fugate

Danny Lyon is an influential documentary photographer, filmmaker, and writer. He planned a brief stop in Knoxville in August 1967 to visit the home of writer James Agee, whose work he deeply admired, especially his collaboration with photographer Walker Evans in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Lyon soon found that the writer’s residence had been demolished and replaced by the James Agee Apartments. Instead of getting back in his car and driving on to Galveston, Lyon documented Agee’s hometown in a wealth of bold and varied images that shed light on a brief but eventful period in Knoxville’s history.
Danny Lyon (Brooklyn 1942; lives and works in New Mexico)

Untitled, Knoxville, 1967
Gelatin silver print
Knoxville Museum of Art, purchase with funds provided by Cathy and Mark Hill

Danny Lyon’s eventful stop in Knoxville in 1967 led to a wealth of compelling photographic images. One particular image—a boy holding a puppy—stood out for Lyon as especially compelling. As he explained, “I spotted these two boys at the end of the street and I knew I had found my subject... One of the boys was a mechanic, and they wanted to go for a drive around town but the car wouldn’t start. It was a beautiful machine, all heavy steel and chrome from an era when American cars were just astounding. The car didn’t have a license, so they had taken the plates from another vehicle. But they had run out of gas. I gave them a dollar to get it going and they ended up riding round the neighborhood waving at people in total triumph for the rest of the day. It’s an enormously emotional picture. The dog looks hurt, the kid looks hurt, he is physically dirty, and the car won’t start... It’s just painful. The kid looks wounded and the viewer feels it.”
Joe Parrott is an East Tennessee painter who specializes in urban and landscape scenes of Knoxville and vicinity. Although entirely self-taught, he is a student of art history and has worked in the local graphic arts industry for more than forty years. Parrott’s paintings provide an important historical architectural record since many of the local structures depicted in his paintings no longer exist. The artist’s compositions are known for their rich paint textures, deep spatial recession, and dramatic lighting. It was the play of light and shadow moving across the façade of Parkridge House that inspired Parrott to produce this painting. The house still stands near Magnolia Avenue in East Knoxville.
Joseph Delaney (Knoxville 1904-1991 Knoxville)

*Vine and Central, Knoxville, Tennessee*, 1940

Oil, pastel, and charcoal on canvas

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

The son of a circuit preacher, Knoxville-born Joseph Delaney and his family were on the move across East Tennessee almost constantly during his early childhood. The family eventually settled in Knoxville near the intersection of Vine and Central, an ethnically diverse, densely populated, and lively neighborhood where races and classes in segregated Knoxville rubbed shoulders. Delaney left Knoxville and lived a vagabond’s life during much of the 1920s, eventually establishing a studio practice in Manhattan. Over the span of his 60-year career, Delaney displayed a remarkable ability to express the city’s vitality using bold spontaneous brushwork without sacrificing narrative content. Painted while the artist was living in Manhattan, *Vine and Central, Knoxville, Tennessee* represents Delaney’s fond recollection of the bustling downtown Knoxville intersection near his family’s home during a minstrel parade.
Charles Griffin Farr (Birmingham, Alabama 1908-1997 San Francisco)

*Street in Knoxville*, 1947

Oil on canvas
Collection of Timothy Farr Davis

Born in Birmingham, Alabama, Charles Farr spent much of his youth in Knoxville before settling in San Francisco by the mid-1940s. There, he worked as a devoted realist painter, achieving recognition for his precise landscapes, still lifes, and figure studies during a time when abstract painting was in vogue. Farr’s bright, clear views of a flawless, apparently vacuum-sealed world convey subtle emotional tension and a sense of mystery. Often called a “magic realist,” Farr himself defined his work as trying “to make things more real than they already were.”

*Street in Knoxville* depicts an undetermined location in the artist’s childhood hometown. The presence of Bell Laundry, a small chain active in Knoxville until 1928, indicates Farr painted it from memory roughly twenty years after moving from Knoxville.
C. Kermit “Buck” Ewing (Bentleyville, Pennsylvania 1910-1976 Bali, Indonesia)

George’s Riches from Broadway, 1955
Oil on canvas
Knoxville Museum of Art, 1986 gift of the Knoxville Arts Center

Buck Ewing is noteworthy as founder of the avant-garde art group The Knoxville 7 and the University of Tennessee’s School of Art. He specialized in abstracted figure studies, landscapes, and urban scenes. Here he depicts a local landmark—Rich’s department store (now UT’s Conference Center) on Henley Street in downtown Knoxville—and presents it as a 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.
Robert Birdwell (Knoxville 1924-2016 Knoxville)

*Face of a City*, 1957

Oil paint on canvas
Knoxville Museum of Art, gift of the Knoxville Arts Center

For Robert Birdwell, downtown Knoxville was a favorite painting location. In his canvases and watercolors from the 1950s and 1960s, he tended to reduce the city’s features to a network of colorful, interlocking geometric forms. Visible in the foreground is Knoxville’s L & N Station, located near the KMA at the intersection of Summit Hill Drive and Henley Street.
Robert Birdwell (Knoxville 1924-2016 Knoxville)

A View of the City (Gay Street), 1962

Oil on canvas

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

A founding member of the progressive art group The Knoxville 7, Robert Birdwell and his colleagues applied modern art styles of the day—especially Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art—in their depictions of local subject matter. Here, he employs a complex blend of interlocking shapes, varying textures, and contrasting colors to convey the visual energy of one of his favorite boulevards, Knoxville’s Gay Street.
Marcia Goldenstein (Lincoln, Nebraska 1948; lives and works in Knoxville)

One Mile, An Artificial Cosmos, 2012
Oil paint on sixteen wood panels
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2014 gift of Stuart Worden in memory of Betsy Worden

In her landscape paintings, contemporary mixed-media artist Marcia Goldenstein explores the capacity of familiar imagery to evoke notions of time and place. One Mile is based on photographs the artist took at regular intervals on a walk in her North Knoxville neighborhood. She is interested in replicating in paint the abstracting effects of her camera on the landscape imagery. The stacked rows of paintings suggest a sequence of movements, as if frames in a motion picture. Goldenstein taught painting and drawing at the School of Art, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, from 1976 to 2014.
Thomas Riesing (Milwaukee 1948; lives and works in Knoxville)

*Untitled (Alcoa Highway Bridge)*, 1989
Charcoal and erased charcoal on Arches Cover Paper
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2013 gift of Alan Solomon

Tom Riesing is a versatile artist whose site-specific landscapes reflect recollections of his extensive travels filtered by what he once described as “time and introspection.” This Knoxville vista stems from a series of charcoal works in which the artist erases areas of dark pigment in order to produce striking highlights and various atmospheric effects. Before his tenure as art department chair at Ball State University, Riesing taught painting and drawing at the School of Art, University of Tennessee, Knoxville for more than thirty years.
Joanna Higgs Ross (Nashville 1934; lives and works in Nashville)

Trees and Sky, 1959
Oil paint on canvas, triptych
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2012 gift of Dr. Larry Ray in honor of Joanna Higgs Ross

For Middle Tennessee native 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. Its 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 was the lone female member of The Knoxville 7, a progressive local art group active during the mid-20th century.
George Galloway (Knoxville 1923-2000 Knoxville)

*Past Gone*, 1985

Watercolor on paper
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2008 gift of Janet Bower in memory of Ben Bower

George Galloway and his wife Dot were veterans of the Knoxville art scene, specializing in nostalgic watercolors of local timeworn haunts and scenic vistas. His training as an architect is evident in the detailed rendering of this East Tennessee barn’s structure.
David Underwood (Columbus, Ohio 1959; lives and works in Jefferson City, Tennessee)

*East Tennessee Barn*, 2000
Cyanotype on flecked paper
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2008 gift of the artist

Jefferson City-based artist David Underwood creates images inspired by his extensive travels primarily through the medium of “composite photographs.” Many take the form of various images from a certain site or subject grouped to create a single work. In this image, he depicts an old East Tennessee barn in a series of frames that suggest his shifting vantage point over a period of elapsed time. Underwood often works in the blue-tinged medium of cyanotype, an inexpensive centuries-old photographic process used to produce blueprints.
Tom McGrath (New Milford, Connecticut 1978; lives and works in New York)

**Untitled**, 2009
Oil on canvas over panel
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2010 gift of the artist

Tom McGrath specializes in loosely-rendered landscapes that reflect his interest in representing natural imagery as seen through the windshield of a moving vehicle. Using bits of imagery culled from dozens of photographs he took during car rides through East Tennessee, the artist softens and distills landscape features to the point at which the composition hovers between representation and a series of abstract marks. McGrath is a former Artist in Residence at the University of Tennessee.
Karla Wozniak (Berkeley, California 1978; lives and works in Berkeley, California)

**Synchronous Fireflies**, 2013
Oil on panel
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2015 gift of the artist

Former UTK School of Art faculty member Karla Wozniak produces vibrant oil paintings and watercolors loosely based on roadside landscapes observed in her travels. These locations serve as points of departure into abstracted compositions in which landscape imagery—banded hills, clouded skies, sprawling vegetation—is compressed into jagged surface patterns defined by bold, colorful brushwork. Although her paintings often contain subtle references to commercial development, seasons, weather, and time of day, her larger interest is in the expressive use of intensified color, pattern, and texture. **Synchronous Fireflies** is based on a summer landscape setting near Knoxville.
David Hilliard (Lowell, Massachusetts 1964; lives and works in New Haven, Connecticut)

*Knoxville Summer*, 2001

C-print mounted on aluminum, edition of 12

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2003 purchase with funds provided by Heidi and William Kouns, Tommie Rush and Richard Jolley, Mr. and Mrs. Clancey, Colleen Lee, Margaret and Clifford Rogers, Sandy and Monroe Trout, Hillary and Greg Hall, Penny Lynch and Kimbro Maguire, Sylvia and Jan Peters, Jim McDonough, Dorothy and Caesar Stair

David Hilliard’s color photographs present largely autobiographical imagery of everyday human interaction in ordinary places. He uses a panoramic multi-panel format in order to suggest a sequence of action in an unfolding narrative. Hilliard stages each image, and often manipulates physical distance between figures to suggest emotional distance. This scene was photographed along Chapman Highway in South Knoxville.