

Sculptural Objects from the KMA Collection

This special display inaugurates the KMA's newly renovated Sarah Jane Hardrath Kramer Education Center, a multi-purpose space named in honor of the KMA's first director of education. We are taking advantage of current COVID-19 restrictions on large gatherings to use this event and classroom space to display a diverse selection of sculptural works, many small in scale, from the KMA collection. Some were acquired years ago and have been displayed many times, while others have rarely been shown or were recently acquired. Figurative works by Tennessee artists Bessie Harvey, Richard Jolley, and Red Grooms examine human life in all its struggles, timeless beauty, and satirical moments. Small objects by Henry Moore and John Himmelfarb reflect contrasting approaches to bronze. John Jordan, Jen McCurdy, and Brad Sells each explore the vessel as a sculptural form from distinct vantage points. Together, this selection reflects a broad cross-section of modern and contemporary art from East Tennessee and beyond as expressed in a variety of materials and techniques.





Red Grooms (Nashville 1937; lives and works in New York)

Hot Dog Vendor No. 3, 1997

Paper construction, watercolor, and graphite

Knoxville Museum of Art, 1997 gift of Lysiane and Red Grooms

Red Grooms is a multi-media artist known for his inventive, playful works on topics ranging from big-city life to art history. *Hot Dog Vendor No. 3* represents one of the artist's many experiments with bringing sculptural effects to typically two dimensional media such as painting and printmaking. This unique three-dimensional watercolor stems from the artist's Hot Dog Vendor series, which includes a limited edition print (1994) and a large scale sculpture (1999).



Jo Hanson (Carbondale, Illinois 1918-2007 San Francisco)

Plier Leg Spirit, 1989

Found materials

Knoxville Museum of Art, 1990 gift of Priscilla Birge and the artist

Jo Hanson's studio practice is driven in large part by her concern with waste management and the future of the environment. Her sculptures are made from discarded objects—old newspapers, letters, parking tickets, tin cans, needles—that she finds on the sidewalks of San Francisco. While calling attention to contemporary society's "throw-away" attitude, she gives new life to items that have become lost in the flow of life. Her sculptural collages emphasize the individual shapes and textures of the objects, recalling earlier art movements such as surrealism and cubism.



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

Cotton Pickers, circa 1988

Painted wood, wood putty, found objects

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2004 gift of Glady and Ross Faires

Born Bessie Ruth White, Harvey was the seventh of 13 children. Of her adverse circumstances, the artist once observed, "The story of my life would make *Roots* and *The Color Purple* look like a fairy tale. There was nothing. In the morning, you'd just get up, go looking for whatever you could find, and if you had one meal that day, then you'd made progress."

Many of the artist's creations celebrate the deeds of biblical heroes, or recount compelling chapters in African American history. Although her works often present themes of adversity and struggle, as in *Cotton Pickers*, many contain underlying messages of human perseverance and divine compassion.



Bessie Harvey (Dallas, Georgia 1929-1994 Alcoa, Tennessee)
Wash Woman, 1982

Painted wood, wood putty, synthetic hair, fabric, found objects
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2003 purchase with funds provided by KMA
Collectors Circle

Bessie Harvey, a native of Alcoa and one of East Tennessee's most heralded self-taught artists, is noted for her magical ability to extract historical and imaginary characters from gnarled roots, branches, paint, and cloth. Although many of her creations celebrate the deeds of biblical heroes, or recount compelling chapters in African American history, this work represents a portrait of her eldest daughter while she was pregnant and struggling with daily chores.

Unlike many sculptors who chisel away wood or stone to create their works, Harvey used a process that was almost exclusively additive. As she pointed out, "I don't carve, they already shaped."



Bessie Harvey (Dallas, Georgia 1929-1994 Alcoa, Tennessee)
***Moses and the Serpent*, 1988**

Wood, paint, fabric, hair, and found objects
Knoxville Museum of Art, 1990 gift of Glady Faires

While drawing strength from her mother's strong Christian faith, visionary artist Bessie Harvey found additional comfort in her own artistic ability to sculpt with ordinary objects gathered from her daily environment. "I was always finding ways of making something out of nothing when I was little...I think it was God's way of making us happier children." In the making of her sculptures, Bessie Harvey often discerned biblical characters in gnarled roots and sticks she transformed using wood, putty, fabric and paint. The artist felt a special connection to Moses, as a person with ties to Africa who had little or no formal education. Over the course of her career, Harvey produced several sculptures of the Hebrew prophet representing key events in his life.



John Himmelfarb (Chicago 1946; lives and works in Chicago)

Delegate, 2019

Patinated bronze, 4/4

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2019 gift of Molly Day and John Himmelfarb

Noted Chicago-based artist John Himmelfarb is internationally known for his idiosyncratic modernist work in several media. Like Red Grooms, whose *Hot Dog Vendor No. 3* appears nearby, Himmelfarb is deeply influenced by Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art, and is known for creating playful works informed by his interest in a diverse range of topics including language, industrialization, and urban sprawl. Also like such artists as Grooms and Picasso, he is a master technician who goes to great lengths to make objects that appear spontaneous and impulsive.



Richard Jolley (Wichita, Kansas 1952, lives and works in Knoxville)

Perception versus Reality, 1999

Blown and acid-etched glass

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2013 gift of June and Rob Heller

Richard Jolley is a Knoxville-based multi-media artist who specializes in sculpting hot glass forms and combining them with steel, bronze, and other materials. He is best known for his expressive human figures presented with acid-etched surfaces and for his unique palette of hand-formulated colors. *Perception versus Reality* stems from the artist's Totem series in which individually hot-worked forms are fused together in complex stacked arrangements. Over the years his work has grown in scale and complexity to include expansive installations of glass elements anchored by steel armatures. His largest work, the permanent installation *Cycle of Life* (2014), can be seen in nearby Bailey Hall.



John Jordan (Nashville 1950; lives and works in Cane Ridge, Tennessee)

Black Textured Vessel, 1998

Carved, dyed maple

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2006 gift of Martha Connell

John Jordan, of Cane Ridge, Tennessee, is known for his refined lathe-turned vessels. The conservation-minded artist prefers to salvage his raw material from dumps or construction sites. He begins by lathe-turning a block of freshly cut or “green” wood, which is less prone to cracking or splitting. After creating the basic vessel form on the lathe, he removes it and spends weeks adding a variety of surface details and textures by hand with a variety of personally-designed tools. In the making of *Black Textured Vessel*, Jordan pitted the surface with thousands of tiny cuts and then masked the wood grain behind a dense coating of black dye.



Henry Moore (Castleford, England 1898-1986 Much Hadham, England)

Animal, 1975

Bronze with brown patina, 2/7

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2014 gift of June and Rob Heller

Henry Moore is one of the 20th century's greatest modern sculptors. He is known in particular for his abstracted reclining figures carved in stone or wood, often on a monumental scale, that feature a dynamic interplay of mass and void. Later in his career, he began making clay maquettes, or small scale models, that he used in the making of larger scale works. Eventually, many of these models were also cast in bronze. Maquettes such as *Animal* and *Maquette for Relief No. 1* enabled him to explore his ideas quickly and with the spontaneity of a sketch. Yet, Moore worked to endow his maquettes with the same timeless monumentality found in his large scale sculptures. He also applied the chemical patina himself, treating the bronze with different acids to achieve a variety of colors and surface effects.



Henry Moore (Castleford, England 1898-1986 Much Hadham, England)

Maquette for Relief No. 1, 1959

Bronze with brown patina, 2/9

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2014 gift of June and Rob Heller



Jen McCurdy (Newport, Rhode Island 1955; lives and works in Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts)

Gilded Wave Vessel, 2012

Porcelain and gilding

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2013 gift of Dr. and Mrs. Arthur F. Furman in honor of the Knoxville Museum of Art's 25th Anniversary

Jen McCurdy is an internationally recognized ceramic sculptor based in Martha's Vineyard known for her ability to push porcelain to its structural limits. After throwing her vessels on the potter's wheel, McCurdy waits until the porcelain is leather hard, and then cuts and carves the material to create complex openwork structures. She seeks to strike a balance between convex and concave, interior and exterior, and light absorbed and reflected. Skilled in the art of gilding, she then adds gold leaf to illuminate the vessel's inner walls and enhance its visual profile.



Brad Sells (Cookeville, Tennessee; lives and works in Cookeville, Tennessee)

Eclipse, 2007

Carved pecan wood

Knoxville Museum of Art, 2007 purchase with funds provided by KMA Collectors Circle

Rather than viewing the vessel form as an exterior-interior duality, Cookeville, Tennessee sculptor Brad Sells looks to blur the any such divisions. His flowing forms echo his interest in natural processes, passage of time, and cycles of constant change. Initially trained as a potter, Sells turned his attention to working with wood that he shapes in order to give it the undulating appearance of a wheel-thrown clay vessel just before it falls apart. Rather than turning or steam bending his material, the artist uses a direct carving method that involves harvesting green wood with a chainsaw before grinding, sanding, and hand rubbing the vessel into its final form. As to the naming of *Eclipse*, Sells explained that in harvesting its material from a local pecan tree he discovered "a limb pith with a partial moon shape, an orbital and the heart pith that line up much like a lunar eclipse."