

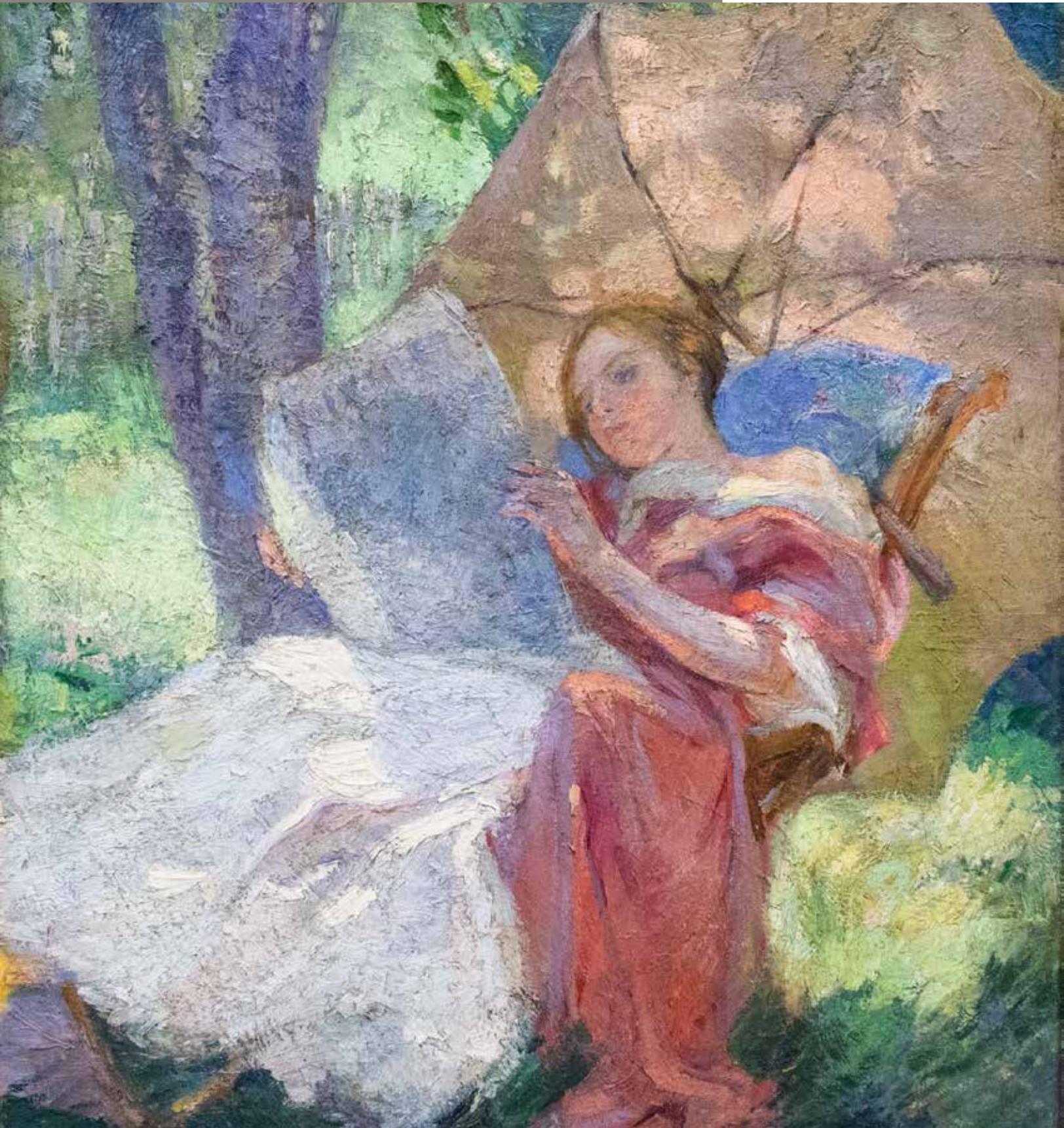
# CANVAS

KNOXVILLE  
MUSEUM OF ART



WINTER / SPRING • 2021

[knoxart.org](http://knoxart.org)



Knoxville Museum of Art  
1050 World's Fair Park Drive  
Knoxville, Tennessee 37916  
865.525.6101 • info@knoxart.org

#### FREE Admission

#### Temporary Hours

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#### Closed

Mondays, Tuesdays, New Year's Day,  
Independence Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas  
Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Eve

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#### Canvas

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#### Questions?

Contact Angela Thomas, Director of Marketing,  
865.934.2034, athomas@knoxart.org

#### FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Welcome to the inaugural edition of *Canvas* online! In early March, we had a paper edition covering late spring/summer all teed up and ready for the printer but, for reasons that require no explanation, the whole thing ended up in the recycle bin, along with plans for a whole lot of exciting exhibitions, programs, events, etc. that never happened. Now, after months of communicating intermittently with our members mostly via quick emails and ham radio (not really, but it felt that way sometimes, and uh-oh I just revealed how ancient I am), we are so happy to present at last a

substantive and informative long-form newsletter, albeit on a digital platform. You'll see that despite, well, everything, the KMA staff has been doing great work (mostly from home) and planning wonderful things, and we're eager to share them with you.

It's been wonderful to have the galleries open to visitors (with lots of safety protocols) since July 1, and do what an art museum does. Happily, we were able to extend the landmark exhibition *Beauford Delaney & James Baldwin: Through the Unusual Door* through the end of October, and you can still access a [free electronic version of the exhibition catalogue online](#). You'll see elsewhere in *Canvas* that the museum's collecting, exhibitions, and programming continue full throttle (programs are still mostly virtual for now, and you'll see that we've made some spectacular acquisitions), but for the time being we'll continue with limited public hours, Wednesday-Sunday 1-5pm. Go to the [KMA website](#) and make a reservation to visit (and we're almost always able to accommodate walk-ins if you just show up) and enjoy the museum's beautifully renewed and refreshed permanent exhibitions and the special exhibitions covered in this edition of *Canvas*.

We're particularly proud of the retooled schedule of special exhibitions on offer this year, which draws on the KMA's growing collection and showcases an exceptional regional collaboration. The Black Mountain College exhibition represents an institutional exchange we've wanted to do for a long time: the Asheville Art Museum (with whom we enjoyed a joint Zoom event for our respective collectors' groups in the fall) is sharing works that document an important and formative moment in the history of the American avant-garde, and in return we're sending a selection of our extensive collection of works by Beauford Delaney to Asheville. A win-win, for sure.

We are profoundly grateful that the success of the Resilience Fund, along with the generous and sustained support of our membership, will sustain the KMA until things settle down. Additionally, we would like to thank Amica Insurance for sponsoring free admission in January and February. As I write this, just before Christmas, things are looking a little shaky in the world but, by the time you read this, I'm confident that the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel will be glowing brightly. We are eager to get back to welcoming big groups of people for Alive After Five, in-person education programs, fundraising and social events, and the other activities that seem a dim memory right now. I miss seeing my many KMA friends. We're really jazzed about the possibility of offering classes in the new Rosalind Martin Studios carved out of the former auditorium. Until then, our beautifully-outfitted education spaces have served as perfect video production studios, and you can download dozens of [Summer Art Academy lessons on YouTube](#). Take advantage of those online resources until we can see each other in person again.

#### COVER IMAGE:

**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 Edwin Packard Wiley family.

The Knoxville Museum of Art celebrates the art and artists of East Tennessee, presents new art and new ideas, serves and educates a diverse community, enhances Knoxville's quality of life and economic development, and operates ethically, responsibly, and transparently as a public trust.

## RECENT ACQUISITIONS



**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



**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

## Wiley Family Makes Major Gift of Paintings by Catherine Wiley

Three Impressionist paintings by Catherine Wiley were gifted in late 2020 by the family of Milwaukee-based attorney Edwin P. Wiley (1929-2019). Wiley was the grandnephew of Anna Catherine Wiley (1879-1958), one of East Tennessee's most active, accomplished, and influential artists during the early 20th century. She specialized in quiet Impressionist domestic scenes of women amid their daily lives rendered in jewel-like hues and lively impasto brushwork.

After training in New York and New England, Catherine Wiley returned to Knoxville and soon began to energize the artistic community in a variety of capacities. She taught art at the University of Tennessee, helped organize large-scale national art exhibitions and was a driving force in the Nicholson Art League, an important local art association. She won the gold medal for regional painting at the 1910 Appalachian Exposition and her work is represented in museum collections around the country, including the Metropolitan Museum. She left behind a remarkable and diverse body of work that includes early Art Nouveau-influenced ink drawings and illustrations, sun-drenched Impressionist canvases, and a small number of late works whose darker tones and coarse surfaces approach Expressionism. Wiley's career was cut short in 1926 when mental illness forced her to be placed in an assisted living facility, where she remained for the rest of her life.

Executed at the height of Wiley's career, these three canvases embody the artist's characteristically American adaptation of Monet's Impressionism, one in which she adjusts the gauge of her brush and the application of color to describe atmospheric effects, but without sacrificing narrative details. Beyond her interest in painting light, Wiley sought to capture the inner life of her sitters, a goal she discussed in an essay she composed for the *The Woman's Athenaeum* in 1912: "Only when paintings make us realize more acutely the poetry that lies within us all, the romance that we ourselves feel, the power of our own spirit, the 'externalisation' of our own soul, as it were—only then it has a meaning."

Thanks to the Wiley family's generous gift, the KMA now owns one of the finest collections of Wiley's work in the world.



**Catherine Wiley (Coal Creek [now Rocky Top], Tennessee 1879-1958 Norristown, Pennsylvania)**  
**Woman Holding Infant in a Doorway, 1918**

Oil on canvas, 40 1/4 x 28 inches  
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2020 gift of the Edwin Packard Wiley family

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Acquisitions rotate on and off view throughout the year.  
Check back frequently for new and exciting changes in *Higher Ground* and *Currents*.



**Carl Gombert (Brimfield, Ohio 1959; lives and works in Maryville, Tennessee)**

**Anita, circa 1998**

Ballpoint pen on gessoed panel, 48 x 36 inches  
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2020 gift of Barbara W. and Bernard E. Bernstein

This large drawing captures the essence of Maryville-based artist Carl Gombert's labor-intensive, methodical technique. Here, he takes the familiar image of his wife's face and through extreme enlargement and conspicuous cross-hatching transforms it at close range into an abstracted meditation on mark making and perception.



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

**Untitled, circa 1945**

Ink on paper, 10 3/4 x 8 1/8 inches  
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2020 gift of Paul Law

Knoxville-born Joseph Delaney, younger brother of modernist painter Beauford Delaney (1901-1979), rose from humble beginnings to establish himself as a tireless and prolific figurative artist specializing in depicting Manhattan's urban scene. Over the span of his 60-year career, Delaney displayed a remarkable ability to express the city's vitality using the loose brushwork of gestural abstraction, which at the time represented the cutting edge of studio practice, without sacrificing the narrative content many of his contemporaries had abandoned. Delaney regarded the human figure, especially the female figure, as "the greatest masterpiece" that offered endless variations in proportion, gesture, movement, and emotional content from which nearly any composition could develop. Throughout his career he remained committed to academic figure drawing and produced countless sketches noteworthy for their directness and emphasis on movement. Delaney's figure drawing virtuosity served him well as a portrait artist, as is evident in this rare early drawing in which Delaney captures a vivid likeness while conveying a record of his vigorous creative process.

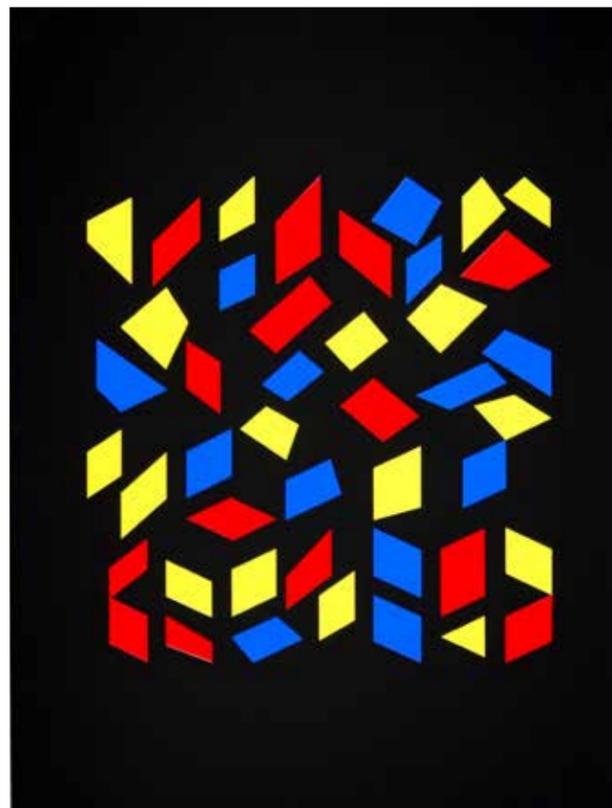


**Hugh Tyler (Kalamazoo, Michigan 1885-1976 South Kent, Connecticut)**

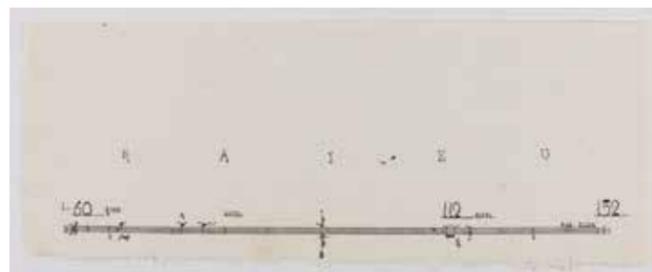
**Untitled (Mediterranean Cove), 1914**

Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 inches  
Knoxville Museum of Art, 2020 purchase with funds provided by Sasha and Charlie Sealy

Hugh Tyler came to Knoxville when his family relocated to be near the source of marble used for the columns manufactured in part by his father's machine company. Although best known as the uncle of famed writer James Agee, Tyler was a talented and versatile painter and an active member of the local arts community. He produced Impressionist-inspired canvases such as *Mediterranean Cove* and was commissioned to paint elaborate decorative passages for Hoskins Library and other buildings on the University of Tennessee campus. Tyler won a top award for "best collection in the Appalachian region" at the 1913 National Conservation Exposition held at Knoxville's Chilhowee Park. He lived most of his adult life in Greenwich Village with several family members including Agee. Tyler and Agee remained very close and the writer based the character Andrew in *A Death in the Family* on his uncle. Tyler is also noteworthy as having given Knoxville-born modernist master Beauford Delaney (1901-1979) his first lesson in drawing and painting.



**Anni Albers, *Orchestra III* from the *Connections* portfolio, 1983**, screenprint on paper, edition 25/150, image: 26 3/4 x 18 7/8 inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, 1997.01.03.65H. © The Joseph and Anni Albers Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, image courtesy Asheville Art Museum.



**John Cage, *Haiku*, 1952**, zinc line cut on Kochi paper, publisher: Black Mountain College Music Press, Black Mountain, NC, edition of 300, 4 3/4 x 12 7/8 inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, Museum purchase with funds provided by 2006 Collectors' Circle members Rob Pulleyn and Cherry & Paul Lentz Saenger, 2006.32.60a. © John Cage Trust, image courtesy Asheville Art Museum.

## A Lasting Imprint

### Rendering Rhythm and Motion in the Art of Black Mountain College

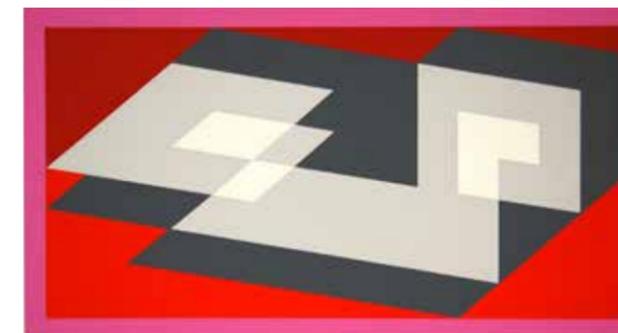
January 29-May 2, 2021

Movement and music—both time-based activities—can be difficult to express in static media such as painting, drawing, and photography, yet many artists feel called to explore them. Movement serves as inspiration—either to capture it or to create it in entirely different media. Similarly, music is driven by rhythm, patterns, and variations that are enticing departures for visual artists. In few places did movement, music, visual arts, and myriad other disciplines intermingle to such impact as they did at Black Mountain College, an experiment in higher education in the mountains of Western North Carolina that existed from 1933 to 1957. For many artists, their introduction to interdisciplinarity at the college resulted in a continued curiosity around those ideas throughout their careers. The works in this exhibition highlight approaches to rendering a lasting imprint of the ephemeral.

Artists such as Barbara Morgan and Clemens Kalischer are concerned with the motion of the human form, evoking a sense of elongated or contracted muscles, or of limbs moving through space. Others, like Lorna Blaine Halper or Sewell Sillman, approach the challenge through abstraction, foregoing representation yet communicating an atmosphere of dynamic change. Marianne Preger-Simon's drawings of her fellow dancers at Black Mountain College from summer 1953 are not only portraits but also a dance of pencil on paper, created in the spirit of BMC professor Josef Albers's line studies as she simultaneously worked with choreographer Merce Cunningham. Each of these artists ultimately reflects on the temporal nature of movement and music. Also represented among the selection of more than 50 prints, textiles, drawings, paintings and sculptures featured in the exhibition are influential artists such as Anni Albers, Ruth Asawa, Ilya Bolotowsky, John Cage, Buckminster Fuller, Ray Johnson, Kenneth Noland, Robert Rauschenberg, Kenneth Snelson, and Jack Tworkov. Accompanying works of art is a selection of related photographs and archival objects that offer intimate perspectives on the school's unique collaborative atmosphere. Even now, decades after the school's closing in 1957, its powerful influence continues to reverberate.

*A Lasting Imprint* is organized by the Asheville Art Museum, Asheville, North Carolina and features key works from the museum's Black Mountain College Collection.

Presenting Sponsor : **The Guild of the KMA**



**Josef Albers, *Formulation: Articulation Folio I, Folder 14*, 1972**, screenprint on paper, edition 369/1000, sheet: 15 x 40 inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, 1997.01.04.65N. © The Joseph and Anni Albers Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, image courtesy Asheville Art Museum.

## A Lasting Imprint

Rendering Rhythm and Motion in the Art of Black Mountain College

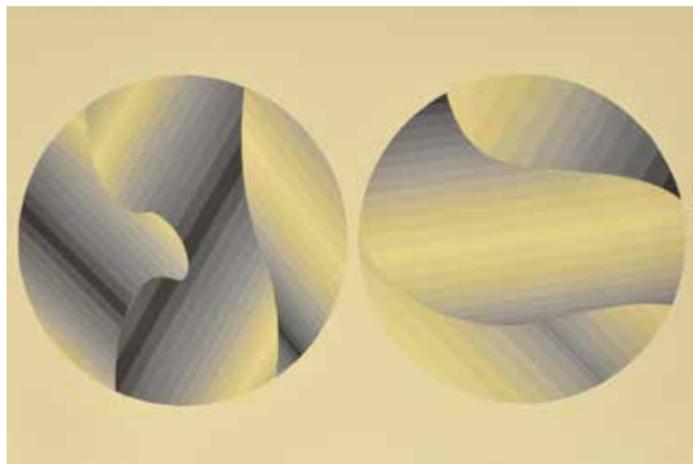
January 29-May 2, 2021



**Elaine de Kooning, *Torchlight Cave Drawings No. 1, 1985***, aquatint on paper, publisher: Crown Point Press, San Francisco, edition 13/25, sheet: 20 x 25 1/2 inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of Michael J. Teaford & Robert K. Benites, 2015.11. © Estate of Elaine de Kooning / Levis Fine Art, image courtesy Asheville Art Museum.



**Robert Rauschenberg, *John from the Ruminations series, 1999***, intaglio in two colors with photogravure on Lana Gravure paper, publisher: ULAE, edition 40/46, sheet: 29 1/2 x 39 7/8 inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, 2015 Collectors' Circle purchase, 2015.32. © Robert Rauschenberg Foundation and ULAE / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York, image John Schweikert, courtesy Asheville Art Museum.



**Sewell Sillman, *Two Orbs (AKIN) 2, 1969***, acrylic on paper, 24 1/2 x 36 1/4 inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, Gift of the Sewell Sillman Foundation, 2019.26.07. © Sewell Sillman Foundation, image courtesy Asheville Art Museum.

## A View of the City: Knoxville

May 21-August 1, 2021

*A View of the City* features more than 20 paintings and works on paper of Knoxville and vicinity by artists from East Tennessee and beyond representing the city and outlying areas during and after the 1940s. Drawn entirely from the KMA's collection, this diverse selection offers a complex and compelling portrait of our area over the course of a vital period in its development.

Presenting Sponsor :

**The Frank and Virginia Rogers Foundation**



**Joe Parrott (Knoxville 1944; lives and works in Knoxville)**  
*Parkridge House, 2019*

Oil on plywood, 24 x 24 inches, Knoxville Museum of Art, 2019 gift of the artist



**C. Kermit "Buck" Ewing (Bentleyville, Pennsylvania 1910-1976 Bali, Indonesia)**  
*George's Riches from Broadway, 1955*

Oil on canvas, Approx 30 x 40 inches, Knoxville Museum of Art, 1986 gift of the Knoxville Arts Center



**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 and Rob Heller, Jim Martin, James L. Clayton, Hei Park, John Cotham, Jayne and Myron Ely, Dorothy and Caesar Stair, Ebbie Sandberg, John Trotter, KMA Guild, Mardel Fehrenbach, Kitsy and Louis Hartley, Sylvia and Jan Peters, Mary Rayson, Alexandra Rosen, John Z.C. Thomas, and Lisa Carroll © Henri Cartier-Bresson / Magnum Photos



**Danny Lyon (Brooklyn 1942; lives and works in New York)**  
*Untitled, Knoxville, 1967*

Gelatin silver print, 11 x 14 inches, Knoxville Museum of Art, 2014 purchase with funds provided by Cathy and Mark Hill

## Undercurrents: Recent Acquisitions of Contemporary Art

May 21-August 1, 2021



**David S. Allee (New York 1969; lives and works in New York)**  
**East Hampton Main Beach, 2010**  
 Chromogenic print, 30 x 40 inches  
 Knoxville Museum of Art, 2019 gift of Elin and Michael Nierenberg



**Charles E. Williams (Georgetown, South Carolina 1984; lives and works in Greensboro, North Carolina)**  
**Nightstick - Harlem, July 1964, 2016**  
 Oil on gesso watercolor paper  
 30 x 22 inches  
 Knoxville Museum of Art, 2018 gift of the artist

The KMA's contemporary art remains the fastest growing segment of the KMA collection. *Undercurrents* celebrates this growth and will include more than 30 paintings, sculptures, and works on paper acquired recently through museum purchases and donations from artists and collectors far and wide. Among the featured artists are David Allee, Katherine Bernhardt, Michelle Grabner, Josh Smith, Jered Sprecher, and Charles E. Williams.

Presenting Sponsor :  
**The Frank and Virginia Rogers Foundation**

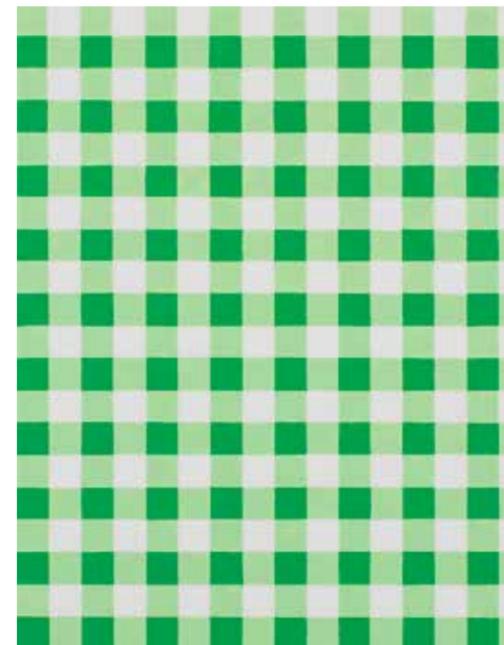


**Josh Smith (Okinawa, Japan 1976; lives and works in New York)**  
**Untitled, 2010**  
 Oil on canvas, 30 x 24 inches  
 Knoxville Museum of Art, 2019 gift of Elin and Michael Nierenberg

## Undercurrents: Recent Acquisitions of Contemporary Art



**Jered Sprecher (Lincoln, Nebraska 1976; lives and works in Knoxville)**  
**Technology of Dirt, 2018**  
 Oil on linen, 47 x 40 inches  
 Knoxville Museum of Art, 2020 bequest of Daniel F. McGehee



**Michelle Grabner (Oshkosh, Wisconsin 1962; lives and works in Oak Park, Illinois)**  
**Untitled, 2013**  
 Flashe on panel, 20 x 16 inches  
 Knoxville Museum of Art, 2019 gift of Elin and Michael Nierenberg



**Katherine Bernhardt (Clayton, Missouri 1975; lives and works in Brooklyn)**  
**Nicki Minaj, 2010**  
 Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 inches  
 Knoxville Museum of Art, 2019 gift of Elin and Michael Nierenberg



# Shell House

The Knoxville Museum of Art is the grateful beneficiary of an extraordinary bequest from architect and teacher William Shell, who died in 2017. Now that the estate has been fully settled and policies established for the stewardship of the Shell gift, we wanted to share the attached appreciation of Professor Shell and his remarkable legacy. The estate included the Shell House, a luminous glass box perched atop a cliff high above the Tennessee River in Lakemoor Hills, which he designed and built.

After long and careful consideration of ways the property might be used or developed, the KMA Board of Trustees directed that the house and adjoining lot be sold with the protection of easements that will ensure the property's ongoing preservation. The easements were developed with the help and support of Knox Heritage, a local organization dedicated to the preservation of significant buildings in the region. The KMA is dedicated to the care and preservation of significant works of art from the region, and the museum is equally committed to the care and preservation of the unique property entrusted to it. We feel that the decision to sell the property with protective easements was the best one for the house and for the KMA and honors Professor Shell's intentions. We are grateful to be the beneficiary of his vision and generosity.

Most of the proceeds from the sale of the house and the liquidation of other estate assets have been placed in a restricted endowment. Only the interest on this endowment can be spent for specified purposes, and no more than 4% of the endowment's value can be distributed annually. Specifically, income from the William Starke Shell Endowment Fund can be used only to support two main museum objectives: the acquisition of art and the presentation of diverse, high-quality educational programming. A smaller portion of the estate proceeds was added to the KMA's building reserve, to be applied to future architectural projects.

The KMA is grateful to Dottie Habel, an architectural historian, former Director of the UT School of Art, and former KMA trustee, for writing the attached appreciation of William Shell's lifetime masterwork; estate executor Kathy Proctor for her patient assistance with so many aspects of the bequest and for making available the attached photographic documentation of the Shell House by Robert Batey Photography; former KMA board chair Richard Jansen for chairing the task force that guided critical decisions about the disposition of the estate; KMA trustee Taylor Wortham for his leadership in establishing criteria for the responsible investment and distribution of the Shell bequest; and Todd Morgan at Knox Heritage for his help with the preservation easements that will protect Professor Shell's legacy.

<sup>1</sup> Although Mies van der Rohe is often credited with two statements key to the modern aesthetic—"Less is more." and "God is in the details."—Franz Schulze has determined that Mies did not invent either. He is, however, responsible for the adage "almost nothing" to describe modernism in architecture. Franz Schulze, *The Farnsworth House* (Chicago, 1997), 9 and Franz Schulze and Edward Windhorst, *Mies van der Rohe, A Critical Biography, New and Revised Edition* (Chicago, 2012), 205-206.

## The Curious Case of The Shell House

Dorothy Habel

**When William Starke Shell died in June 2017, the Knoxville Museum of Art learned for the first time that he had bequeathed his entire estate to the institution. Anyone who knew Bill Shell realized that his single, most treasured asset was the home that he built in south Knoxville. This 35-year project was a labor of pure devotion, an homage, to the world-famous, modernist architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), who emigrated from Germany to the United States to teach and practice architecture in Chicago in 1938. Technically, Bill Shell was the designer of his house, but much more to the point, he was the builder and the person for whom it was built. Nearly every principle of the design is transposed from those of Mies van der Rohe, whose personal mantra as an architect was "beinahe nichts," "almost nothing."**

**The Shell House demonstrates Mies's thinking in all of his modern designs, ranging from institutional buildings (Crown Hall, IIT, Chicago), to multi-story apartment buildings (860 Lakeshore Drive, Chicago) and corporate headquarters (Seagram Building, New York). But, the key ancestor of The Shell House is The Farnsworth House in Plano, Illinois that Mies designed in 1946. Of all of Mies's house designs, The Farnsworth is the most famous—for its design, for its client, and for its bitter, litigious, and even political denouement.**

(continued on page 11)



# Shell House



# The Curious Case of The Shell House

(continued from page 9)



## The Farnsworth House

Undoubtedly, Mies was excited to have been commissioned by noted physician Dr. Edith Farnsworth in winter 1945-1946 to design a weekend retreat for her. He rushed to finish the design for inclusion in a retrospective of his work that opened in early 1947 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. On this occasion the design created quite a stir. In fact, his American colleague and exhibition curator (and later collaborator), Philip Johnson (1906-2005) was stunned by the design of an open-plan,

transparent house, and immediately turned his attention to this challenge, creating The Glass House, his own home in New Canaan, Connecticut, that was completed in 1949. Although the design of The Farnsworth House was completed in 1946, its construction did not begin until 1949, and the house was completed in 1951. The house, set on rural property along the bank of the Fox River, is extraordinary: entirely enclosed by glass walls, hung on a steel skeleton frame and placed on a travertine

base, the house was without traditional, interior walls; a core interior structure, placed off-center and fashioned of warm-toned wood, accommodates the kitchen, bathroom, storage, and utilities. The whole is crisp, open, light-filled, and transparent: "almost nothing."

# The Curious Case of The Shell House

(continued)



## The Glass House

How ironic that such an important monument in the history of modern architecture should have provoked such bitter feelings on completion. Architect and client spent two years in court; Mies sued Farnsworth for failure to make payments on completion; Farnsworth countersued claiming that Mies had both overcharged her and misrepresented himself as an architect. In her view, the cost overruns were one matter and the lack of acceptable functionality of the house was quite another. The house was too hot in the summer, too cold in the winter; the roof leaked; the glass walls collected condensation; and neither home nor furniture (also Mies designed) were comfortable. To Farnsworth these shortcomings revealed the architect's lack of professional qualification. All legal matters were settled in Mies's favor in 1953. If these conflicts were not enough to cool Mies's enthusiasm for house design, the notoriety of the architect, his design, and his client also fed a political maelstrom fanned by the communist "Red" scare driven by Senator Joseph McCarthy. The reductivism of The

Farnsworth House and its furnishings was seen by both critics and fellow architects, including Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), as the architectural equivalent of totalitarianism brought to America by architects like Mies van der Rohe. To many, the message was that future clients must resist the temptation to indulge architects designing the modern home.

English art critic and Mies scholar Reynar Banham noted that The Farnsworth House "left other architects little to do except to try to make it even more perfect." This brings us back to the curious case of The Shell House. Born and raised in Arkansas, Bill Shell completed undergraduate studies at the University of Arkansas before completing his M.Arch. at Columbia University in New York in 1963. He joined the faculty of the College of Architecture and Design at the University of Tennessee in 1969, after practicing in a number of high-profile firms in New York and Chicago, including Mies van der Rohe's. What Shell brought to UT was Mies' model of architectural education, strong on hard work over long

hours, on discipline, and on rational thinking that often informed the signature element of reduction, yielding a distillation of as many elements of architectural space as conceivably and functionally possible. Mies was noted for having attracted a cult-like following, and Professor Shell was a follower. A quiet and reserved person, Bill set about his personal project to design a home with an open, flexible plan for a single person with his sights clearly set on the Farnsworth House as his model. He purchased land in South Knoxville on a cliff overlooking the Tennessee River in 1978; he received his first building permit in 1998; the footings were set in 2002; and the house was completed in 2013. The Shell House resembles the more famous Farnsworth House in terms of its siting in nature, its forms and materials, and its aesthetic. The accompanying photographs of The Shell House allow us to appreciate the similarities between the two homes.

# The Curious Case of The Shell House

(continued)



## The Shell House

Mies's experience designing The Farnsworth House soured him on individual clients seeking house designs. Edith Farnsworth seems to have made sure that her architect could not think about her house without regret. Mies would have been pleased with every design decision at The Shell House, but his greatest satisfaction would have been with the client, his devotee Bill Shell. In stark contrast to Edith Farnsworth, Bill Shell embraced his role as

the client; he surrounded himself with Mies's modern aesthetic, its precision, its elegance. Bill was an extraordinary client, and by assuming this role he made The Shell House, in Reynar Banham's words, "even more perfect" than The Farnsworth House.

Designer, builder, and perfect client, Bill Shell also served as first steward of his home by securing the future of The Shell House through his designation of KMA as acting

steward. In turn, we celebrate the Museum's choice, first, to protect the property with a covenant for its preservation, and then, to find a new owner, the next steward. To be sure, the Shell House is both "almost nothing," and "really something." ■

<sup>1</sup> Although Mies van der Rohe is often credited with two statements key to the modern aesthetic—"Less is more." and "God is in the details."—Franz Schulze has determined that Mies did not invent either. He is, however, responsible for the adage "almost nothing" to describe modernism in architecture. Franz Schulze, *The Farnsworth House* (Chicago, 1997), 9 and Franz Schulze and Edward Windhorst, *Mies van der Rohe, A Critical Biography, New and Revised Edition* (Chicago, 2012), 205-206.

<sup>2</sup> In this context, Wright (and others) simply referred to the "Bauhaus architects" rather than offering specific names. In addition to Mies, who had served as Director of the Bauhaus from 1930-1933, this group also included Walter Gropius (1883-1969) who had preceded Mies in emigrating to the U.S. when he received academic appointment to teach at Harvard University in 1937. In 1938, Mies was appointed Director of Architecture at the Armour Institute, which in 1940 became the College of Architecture, Planning and Design at Illinois Institute of Technology.

<sup>3</sup> A seminal publication with this message was Elizabeth Gordon's editorial, titled "The Threat to the Next America" that appeared in the April 1953 edition of the popular periodical *House Beautiful*. Here, an outraged Gordon writes, "I have talked to a highly intelligent, now disillusioned, woman who spent more than \$70,000 building a 1-room house that is nothing but a glass cage on stilts." Her anonymous references are, of course, to Edith Farnsworth and Mies's design for her house. For an extensive review of the client/architect relationship as a part of the history of The Farnsworth House, see Schultz, *Mies van der Rohe*, chapter 10, and 268 for Gordon's statement.

<sup>4</sup> Banham, cited in Schultz, *Farnsworth House*, 6.

<sup>5</sup> For Mies' philosophy of teaching, honed over his 30-year career at IIT, see Schultz, *Mies van der Rohe*, Chapter 7. In addition to his administrative and instructional work at the Institute, Mies designed 22 buildings for the IIT campus.

# L'Amour du Vin

WINE AUCTION & DINNER

March 5-7, 2020

Thank you to presenting sponsor Lexus of Knoxville, partner Blackberry Farm, and chairs Simonne and Taylor Wortham for a successful 2020 event. Held in March, L'Amour du Vin featured Chef Tory McPhail, Arista Winery, and artist Denise Stewart-Sanabria.

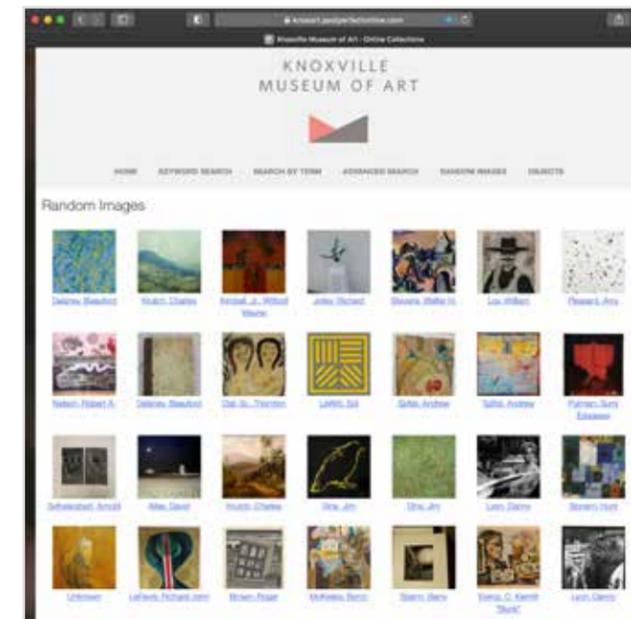
Other high level sponsors include: Natalie and Jim Haslam, All Occasions Party Rentals, Ann and Steve Bailey, Bandit Lites, Brewington Family, Melissa and Randy Burleson, Dominion Group, Amanda and Jason Hall, June and Rob Heller, Merchant & Gould, Petrone Family, Lisa and David Reath, and The Trust Company of Tennessee. Special thanks to all sponsors, volunteers, donors, and special guests.

All funds raised support the operation of the KMA.

Photography by Juicebeats Photography



## KMA WEBSITE NEWS : New Collection Page



The Knoxville Museum of Art's collection has enjoyed robust growth over the past decade. It now includes more than 1500 objects—works on paper, paintings, mixed media works, and sculpture—with particular focus on the art history of East Tennessee from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the present, and on recent developments in international contemporary art. While a large number of objects are on view in the KMA's collection galleries *Higher Ground*, *Currents*, *Facets*, and the *Thorne Miniature Rooms*, the size of the collection necessitates that many objects are in storage at any given time. With the goal of giving viewers greater access to all works in the collection all the time, the museum has unveiled a new KMA Collection page as part of its recently upgraded website.

The KMA Collection page includes 1) links to information and installation images for each of the KMA's collection galleries, 2) a search engine linked to the museum's collection database that offers in-depth object information and a multiple search options (keyword, term,) feature that with each click prompts the display of 28 thumbnail images of collection objects at random, information on the KMA Collectors Circle, a special membership group that provides opportunities for in-depth, exclusive experiences with art and provides the primary source of funds for KMA collection purchases. *Thanks to the curatorial team for their hard work in creating this page.*

<https://knoxart.org/collections>

The Frank and Virginia Rogers Foundation has been a consistent and generous supporter of the KMA since its inception in 1988. Sara Virginia Barnett "Ginny" Rogers established the Foundation after her husband, well-known Knoxville radiologist Dr. Frank Tipton Rogers, passed away. The Foundation provides support to a variety of local organizations supporting the arts, mental health, children, and historic preservation.

At the KMA, the Foundation's support has assisted in the purchase of artwork, support of educational initiatives, funding for the Sarah Jane Hardrath Kramer lecture series, provision for capital improvements, and, most recently, sponsorship of *Beauford Delaney and James Baldwin: Through the Unusual Door*.

In May 2021, the Rogers Foundation will be featured as Presenting Sponsor of two exhibitions, *View of the City: Knoxville and Vicinity* and *Undercurrents: Recent Acquisitions of Contemporary Art*. The exhibitions will showcase works from KMA's extensive permanent collection. The Foundation's participation is a fitting tribute to Frank and Ginny Rogers' keen interest in East Tennessee art and artifacts.

Because of its remarkable and sustained support of the museum, the Rogers Foundation was awarded the James L. Clayton Award in 2005. The award was established in 1994 to recognize annually an individual, family, or business whose support of the museum has been both uncommonly generous and sustained.

Thank you to the Frank and Virginia Rogers Foundation Board for your continued support of the KMA. We are truly grateful for your belief in our mission. We would also like to extend special thanks to Phil Scheurer, who led the Foundation for more than 25 years, as he passes the leadership torch to Lynn Rison.

## The Frank and Virginia Rogers Foundation



Virginia Rogers

## KMA DEDICATES NEW ART STUDIOS AND EVENT SPACE



Rosalind "Rozz" Martin, Director of Education

The Knoxville Museum of Art has good news to share. The total redesign and rebuilding of the space formerly occupied by the Regal Auditorium is complete. The KMA now has a state-of-the-art event space, dubbed Regal Commons, and two beautiful art studios thanks to the lead support of Steve and Ann Bailey and June and Rob Heller.

"The KMA lost its studio/classrooms in the Candy Factory a decade and half ago, which required the museum to improvise," said Executive Director David Butler. "Once again having dedicated spaces for teaching and studio activities will greatly enhance the museum's art instruction opportunities for the community."

For now, until the KMA can gather groups of people again, the art studios serve primarily as a video production set to create virtual content for the KMA website and social media platforms.

More than 60 hours of Summer Art Academy and Community Schools classes were filmed in the new studios over the spring and summer months.

"The Education team is looking forward to using the space for in-person classes," said Rozz Martin, Director of Education. "Thank you Steve and Ann Bailey and June and Rob Heller for our beautiful new studios. We are overwhelmed and inspired by your generosity."

While unable to celebrate in person, the KMA Board of Trustees and staff held a virtual dedication honoring the Baileys and the Hellers for helping us realize this important project. At their request, the new studios were named in honor of the 27-year service of Director of Education Rozz Martin, who has done so much to sustain and grow the KMA's educational outreach and amplify our impact throughout the community.

Visit the [KMA YouTube channel](#) for free virtual content including art classes, gallery tours, lectures, and more.



## Summer Art Academy

KMA's Summer Art Academy will start June 7- July 30, 2021. The Summer Art Academy is for students ages 3 and up, which introduces students to a variety of materials and artistic concepts to stir up curiosity and to enhance their natural creativity and critical thinking. Classes for 2021 will be posted on [knoxart.org](http://knoxart.org) in late March.

- June 7-11
- June 14-18
- June 21-25
- June 28- July 2
- July 5-9
- July 12-16
- July 19-23
- July 26-30

Thank you to our 2020 Sponsors :

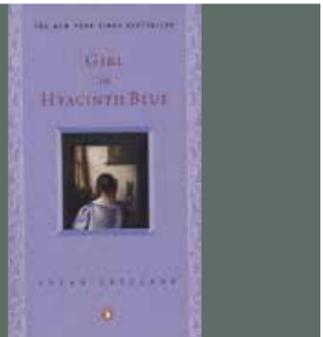
- Publix Supermarket Charities
- UBS Financial Services
- Ann & Steve Bailey
- Emerson Automation Solutions
- The Guild of the KMA

## KMA Book Club

The KMA Book Club meets three times a year to discuss a variety of books related to art, culture, and history.

The next book is *Girl in Hyacinth Blue* by Susan Vreeland. The discussion will be held Tuesday, February 23 at 5:30 pm.

Free and open to the public. Contact Margo Clark at [mclark@knoxart.org](mailto:mclark@knoxart.org) to request the Zoom link.



## Second Sunday Art Activity Video

Be sure to watch for the Second Sunday Art Activity videos from the education department this winter and spring. There will be fun activities you can do with your children at home.

January 10 • February 14 • March 14 • April 11



## Virtual Programming

Enjoy KMA programs from the comfort of home!

Cocktails & Conversation Lectures along with other programming have gone virtual.

Check the [KMA YouTube channel](#) for recent recordings and the [KMA Events page](#) for upcoming virtual events.





Diana Lopez wears her smile mask to check-in guests.

## Volunteer at the KMA!

Are you passionate about art and want to share that enthusiasm with the community? Do you need service hours for school? Would you like to gain experience in a professional non-profit environment? Then, become a volunteer with the KMA! The Knoxville Museum of Art is looking for committed individuals to join our team. If you're interested in learning more about the volunteer program, please contact Volunteer Coordinator, Chelsea Lloyd at [clloyd@knoxart.org](mailto:clloyd@knoxart.org).



Volunteers work on mailing project at the KMA

## SAVE THE DATE! • Artists on Location • April 24, 2021

### KMA Gift Shop

The KMA Gift Shop is the best place to shop in Knoxville **FOR BEAUTIFUL WORK BY LOCAL ARTISTS!** Always fun and unique items to choose from. KMA members always receive a discount!



# SUPPORT THE KNOXVILLE MUSEUM OF ART WITH AN ARTS PLATE



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