

JOE SMITH  
NANCY FRIESE  
KANE STEWART  
MATT PHILLIPS  
MARION MILLER  
RIE HACHIYAN  
WANCY CAMPBELL  
WATHAN GIBBETT  
TATIANA BERT  
GINSBERRY  
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Artists and the Noble Profession

The 135 Initiative

Reading the Past

# CALENDAR

## Spring Exhibitions

*Artists and the Noble Profession: The 2012 Mount Holyoke College Studio Art Faculty Exhibition*  
3 February–27 May 2012

*Reconstructing Antiquity*  
Through 3 June 2012

## Spring Events

In conjunction with the special exhibition *Artists and the Noble Profession*  
With the generous support of the Lucy P. Eisenhart Fund



### **Friday, 3 February, 4:30 p.m.**

Exhibition opening

“Creative Work and the Work of Creativity: How Colleges and Universities Can Prepare Graduates to Reinvent Our World”

Lecture by Steven J. Tepper, Associate Professor of Sociology and Associate Director, Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy, Vanderbilt University

Gamble Auditorium, Art Building

Reception to follow

With the generous support of the Louise R. Weiser Fund

Cosponsored by the Mount Holyoke College Nexus Program and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

### **Thursdays in February, 4:30 p.m.**

Gallery Talk Series: “Art, Artists, and Creativity on Campus”

Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

**9 February** · Joe Smith, Marion Miller, and Nathan Margalit

**16 February** · Rie Hachiyonagi and Tatiana Ginsberg

(starting at the Museum and walking to view installations at Talcott Greenhouse and the Williston Memorial Library Court)

**23 February** · Nancy Campbell, Kane Stewart, Nancy Friese, and Matt Phillips

[In conjunction with the special exhibition](#)

[Reconstructing Antiquity](#)

This exhibition was made possible with support from the Yale University Art Gallery and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

### **Thursday, 1 March, 5:30 p.m.**

“Dig In: Archaeological Field Work for Students”

Panel discussion with Anthony Tuck, Associate Professor & Eric Poehler, Assistant Professor, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Classics Department and Students of the Five Colleges  
Gamble Auditorium, Art Building

Informal conversation and dinner reception to follow

Free and open to the public

### **Thursday, 29 March, 4:30 p.m.**

“Collection-building in the 21st Century”

Lecture by William E. Metcalf, Adjunct Professor of Classics, Yale University and Ben Lee Damsky, Curator of Coins and Medals, Yale University Art Gallery  
Gamble Auditorium, Art Building

Reception to follow

## The 135 Initiative

*On 15 November 2011 the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum turned 135 years old!  
In honor of this grand occasion, the Museum is raising 135 gifts of art for the collection.*

One hundred and thirty-five years is a truly significant milestone. We are among the oldest academic art museums in the country. The Museum has not just survived all this time, it has thrived; our galleries today are bustling centers of activity, visited by college students and faculty from a wide variety of departments as well as local primary and secondary school students and the general public. We generate thought-provoking exhibitions that add substantially to the scholarship in our field. Our lectures fill the auditorium with members of the greater Five College community, and our alumnae regularly ask for tours as they gather for their reunions, having heard about the exciting programs going on at the Museum.

What then would be the most appropriate manner to celebrate this auspicious occasion? As we considered this, it became clear that we should focus on our cherished collection. Each museum has a personality that is largely derived from the particular mix of objects it houses. No two are the same, and while the feeling of institutional character that emerges from a visit to a museum is certainly refined by the space, wall color, arrangement, and interpretative strategies, it is the collection itself that drives a sense of identity. As a constituent part of Mount Holyoke College, then, we must decide how the Museum reflects the current and future reality of the College. Clearly we will continue to focus on excellence, but is that enough for the museum and college of the 21st century?

Like the other institutions founded during those early years of museum building in the United States, the MHCAM had the distinct advantage of actively collecting in areas that today are challenging for smaller organizations. We were able to acquire significant representations from ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome; Mesoamerican ceramics; late medieval and old master paintings; and 19th-century American art. Indeed, the first work of art acquired for the Museum was *Hetch Hetchy Canyon* (1875), a contemporary painting by Albert Bierstadt, who in 1876 was arguably the most prominent American artist alive. More recently we have added significantly to our holdings of prints, drawings, and photographs. The collection has strengths in many areas, and our goal during this 135th year is to build on these strengths to add depth to our holdings, fill in gaps where possible to broaden what we have, and through it all, to focus on art of the very highest quality.

While people may differ on how quality is defined in art, we can certainly agree that the matrix for judgment should include former director of the National Gallery John Walker's famous criteria of "the rare and the beautiful" along with a teaching museum's desire for objects that are "relevant and significant." In almost every area of art history we have some stand-out objects, and these are almost always on view (unless they are light sensitive). Not surprisingly, the "best" works are also in constant demand for teaching. The



John Stomberg  
Florence Finch Abbott Director  
Mount Holyoke College  
Art Museum

## LETTER

goal for the *135 Initiative* is to live up to the “*Hetch Hetchy Canyon challenge*,” that is to increase the number of stand-out objects in the collection, works that echo Bierstadt’s great painting as exemplars of the best their era and the nation had to offer. In this way, the Museum will continue to enhance its role as one of the largest and best classrooms on campus.

Keep your eyes on our galleries over the next year as we begin to introduce new members of the Museum collection. We already have received amazing gifts including 19th-century French landscape paintings, early modern photography, and contemporary art. Over the next year we will integrate these and other recent gifts into our exhibitions, culminating in a new installation and a publication on the history and current state of the art collections at Mount Holyoke. All in all it promises to be an exciting time for the Museum, perhaps a watershed moment, and we look forward to sharing it with you.

JOHN STOMBERG

Florence Finch Abbott Director



Yingxi (Lucy) Gong ('13)

The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum’s 135th Anniversary Celebration provided Victoria Schmidt-Scheuber ('12) and Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Intern Yingxi (Lucy) Gong ('13) an opportunity to explore the Museum’s history and prepare a presentation about its development. Here is what Lucy writes about the experience.

“I have been working with the Art Museum since I was a first-year student involved in the Society of Art Goddesses. Although I constantly learn new things about the Museum, I had never had the occasion to look back at its long history until the celebration of the 135th anniversary in November 2011. During several visits to the Archives, Victoria and I examined as many primary sources as possible—documents, letters, newspapers, and photographs—trying to compose the “story” of the Art Museum. Photographs proved to be of great importance in helping us visualize today’s familiar setting in a way that connected us with the past. We became acquainted with the exhibition galleries in Dwight Hall that displayed works of art in the style of 19th-century French *salons*, the Museum’s early collection of plaster casts, and Mount Holyoke women dressed “appropriately” and posed for the camera—evidence of the emphasis on women’s perfection in the past.

Based on the materials we found, we focused our presentation in three areas in addition to general history: some of the most successful exhibitions, student involvement, and community cooperation. We also tried to “match up” the past and the present, showing the changes in the Art Museum through the years.

The whole process of composing a presentation gave us a new perspective on the Art Museum as a thriving source of change and development as opposed to a static presence. The Art Museum becomes a mirror of the past and a creator of the future.”

*Artists and the Noble Profession:  
The 2012 Mount Holyoke College Studio Art Faculty Exhibition*

This spring the Museum is honored to feature an exhibition of recent work by the studio art faculty of Mount Holyoke College. In all, nine artists are participating—individuals whose work spans a wide spectrum of media and approaches, including photography, painting, collage, assemblage, drawing, and installation. Their teaching experience runs the gamut as well, from a visiting artist not so long out of graduate school to two senior professors who will soon be transitioning to Emerita status. We take this opportunity to salute their work as artists and as teachers.

THE ARTISTS . . .

For over three decades, **Nancy Campbell** and **Marion Miller** have been a force within the Mount Holyoke community. A printmaker, Campbell's work capitalizes on the medium's layering technique to present images of subtle planes of color and texture suggestive simultaneously of three-dimensional space and flat patterns. She has also run the legendary Mount Holyoke College Printmaking Workshop, under the banner of which she has brought dozens of renowned women artists to campus to create and edition new works of art, including Jennifer Bartlett, Vija Celmins, and Kiki Smith.

Marion Miller paints in a manner inherited from the old masters, filtered through modernism, and evolved into a personal approach that allows her to create an eerie intimacy in her work regardless of the subject. That is, we seem to be looking into an exclusive engagement between observer and observed. Both the subjects' and the artist's physical positions appear temporary, suggesting an unseen past and future that reinforces



Nancy Campbell  
*Teikai*  
Screen print, 2011  
Photograph courtesy of  
the artist

Marion Miller  
*Arena Series: Pink Shirt*  
 Oil on canvas, 2011  
 Photograph Laura Shea



the sense of privacy. We only see the present, as the before and after belong to the artist and sitter. While this might describe any still image, Miller generates a distinctive narrative tension in her paintings from this fragmentation.

The sculptural works of **Joseph Smith** impose their own mass on the spectator—that is, they boldly join our bodies in taking up space. They insist on a kind of equal footing as physical presences in the room. In a very real way, the work defines the rules of engagement as we move around and/or through them. His media range from found objects such as furniture parts to a variety of non-traditional materials. Perplexing and complex, Smith's sculptures seem animated by a law of physics that we have yet to discover.

**Rie Hachiyonagi** transforms interior spaces with her large-scale installations. Using materials such as handmade paper and light, her work has an evanescent quality. There is a gentle push and pull between the tangible and intangible materials—both have a strong presence in her work. For this exhibition, Hachiyonagi has selected the entrance atrium at the Williston Memorial Library, one of the busier locales on the Mount Holyoke campus. The circulation of people through the space and the impressive height of the room are both added factors in the delicate balance of her installation.

We asked **Matthew Phillips** to share his drawings with us (he is primarily a painter) because even though each one is a finished work of art, most bear the signs of the development that led him to that finished state. The term “drawing” is broadly invoked here. These works on paper have pencil, colored pencil, hand-mixed paints, and collage. Some have layer upon layer visible. Each one is a testimony to creativity as an iterative process of idea, followed by execution and critique, changes, struggle, and eventual triumph as the artist wrestles the variables of line, texture, color, density, and composition into a successful final form.

Books, both the idea of them and their physical pages, play an important part in **Nathan Margalit's** paintings. Conceptually, books contain information and ideas penned



by an author at a great remove from the reader. They bridge time and space and allow for communication—if one-sided—between individuals that would otherwise remain separated. Margalit’s abstract paintings evoke this consideration by using actual pages, some significantly altered, as collage elements embedded in his encaustic (wax-based) medium. The pages simultaneously suggest layers of oblique meaning and operate as strong compositional elements. The paintings oscillate between being arrangements of forms on (or in) a surface and bearers of allusive stories waiting for viewer activation.

For this exhibition, **Tatiana Ginsberg** enters the specialized space of the College’s Talcott Greenhouse. This is a fitting location when we consider both her materials and methodology. Ginsberg tends to make her own paper, leaving it more raw than refined; she uses bits of cloth, torn and not cut; when she cuts paper, she does so unevenly. She engages materials rather than dominates them. In this we find echoes of the greenhouse where rows of plants are neatly potted, but allowed to grow on their own. She tends toward repeated forms, each one slightly different, like blades of grass in a field. Together, her sensibility toward what she makes, and how she makes it, suggest the greenhouse as a natural environment for her creative work.

Colors in the hands of **Nancy Friese** create harmonies and disharmonies, establish visual rhythms, and reinforce the amazing spatial complexities of her compositions, but they seldom replicate anything we would call “natural color.” She takes the visible spectrum of nature and rearranges hues and tones as explorations of color’s expressive possibilities, literally recreating landscapes in an alternative chromatic world of her own creation. It is a world where we are encouraged to linger and slowly discover the creative choices that tally to a bold and idiosyncratic vision.

**Kane Stewart** embraces photography broadly, moving freely between the latest digital techniques and revivals of 19th-century approaches such as cyanotype and platinum palladium printing. His work tends toward social explorations of the region, taking on projects that seek to reveal shared cultural traits. Stewart’s recent series have included examinations of recreational activities and agriculture in the Pioneer Valley. For this exhibition, he has created three-dimensional photographic collages that unite into one coherent installation.

## ... AS TEACHERS

### *The Curriculum and the “Meta” Curriculum*

Colleges across the country—and around the world—acknowledge that to give students an edge as they prepare to become productive citizens of the 21st century we must find ways to teach them creativity. It is this skill that leads to innovation in engineering and technology, that promises breakthroughs in science and medicine, that separates leaders from followers, and that lies at the heart of artistic practice. If we just take as an example this year’s group of MacArthur Foundation fellows, we find that the one trait linking all these extraordinary people is the ability to conceive creative solutions to seemingly insurmountable problems.

Teaching creativity directly reflects the College’s most basic value: the liberal arts. By definition, this approach to education refers to the free pursuit of knowledge (*artes*

## ON VIEW

*liberales*) and has been set in opposition to following a more narrowly focused path to a pre-defined body of knowledge (*artes illiberales*). This is often reflected today in the perceived contrast between trade and professional degrees on the one hand and what an institution such as Mount Holyoke College has to offer on the other. In practice we see this difference as analogous to the distinction between teaching the operation of certain tools and the ability to conceive results—between hammering nails and imagining new buildings. In fact, there is growing evidence that individuals trained in creative practices will have a much greater role in the 21st century than those trained to follow established protocols. That is, the skills needed to encourage creativity are exactly those that are increasingly needed in our globalized present and future.

So, how does all this involve these nine teachers at Mount Holyoke College? Every one of them is focused on training young women skills that have applicability in the art studio and—perhaps even more importantly—in almost any other arena in life. Pursuing studio art practice could be one of the most important educational moments for students from any major. We know full well that a minority of our majors will become full-time, professional artists. These will join the wonderful cohort of alumnae who have made significant lives in the arts. Mount Holyoke College prepares these students well for a life in the arts with training, encouragement, and contacts that put them well on the path to success as visual artists.

A majority of the students who study art practice, however, will go on to other endeavors and will do so more successfully after having studied art. In a recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Steven J. Tepper, the keynote speaker at the opening for the faculty exhibition, outlines a careful argument to support this point of view. Tepper notes that there are several overarching skills that visual arts training provides that have wide applicability. These include things such as non-routine thinking, the ability to take (and apply) critical feedback, careful observation, an eagerness to consider “what if” scenarios, the capacity to communicate a vision to a group, and a willingness to risk failure. These important proficiencies are deeply embedded within every studio class.

It is with great joy and pride that we acknowledge these nine individuals as fine artists and educators. We applaud all that they do for the students of Mount Holyoke College.

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Alumnae listen as gallerist Michael Rosenfeld discusses the highlight of his booth at Art Basel Miami Beach in December. Almost 60 alumnae joined Florence Finch Abbott Director John Stomberg and Curator Wendy Watson for a tour of the famous art fair followed by a private reception.





## Reading the Past

"History is not what happened, but what is encoded and transmitted."

Richard Shechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology*

As an institution that by definition specializes in the transfer of "encoded" knowledge, Mount Holyoke College is fortunate to have original clay and stone artifacts with cuneiform writing in its Art Museum. These objects are among the world's oldest written records, documenting the transactions and power structures of societies that produced them beginning more than 5,000 years ago.

The inscriptions on these small tablets and cones were made not with pen and ink, but by pressing a wedge-shaped reed stylus into soft clay, giving rise to the name "cuneiform" (from the Latin *cuneus*, meaning wedge). This writing system, generally believed to have begun as a series of pictographs (or pictorial representations), eventually became a system of abstract characters linked to the spoken word. Originally associated with the Sumerian language, cuneiform script came to represent at least twelve different languages over a 3,000-year period.

The invention of cuneiform writing was initially inspired not by literary desires but by administrative needs. With the growth of centralized economies, officials of palaces and temples needed to keep track of commodities like livestock, textiles, foodstuffs, and land. Mount Holyoke's cuneiform documents, acquired in the 1890s, record such inventories, as well as property transfers, the payment of debts, lists of workmen and slaves, and praise for Sin-kashid, the King of Uruk (ca. 1850 BCE). Eventually, the cuneiform script was used to produce some of the greatest literary works in recorded history.

### *Teaching with Objects of Early Writing*

Recently, three dynamic faculty members from the departments of Religion, History, and Theatre Arts have begun using these remarkable objects in teaching.

For his course last spring, "Introduction to the Hebrew Bible," Associate Professor of Religion **Michael Penn** organized an extraordinary experience for his students by assembling objects from the Museum and the Library's special collections to offer a workshop on the history of the written word. Held at the Art Museum, this session offered students the



Sumerian,  
Ur III Dynasty  
*Tablet with cuneiform  
inscription*  
Clay, ca. 2094-2047 BCE  
Gift of Mrs Allen E. Baker  
(Alison Ostrander, Class of 1936)  
Photograph Laura Shea  
1976.5.2

## CONNECTIONS

special opportunity to simultaneously examine original works of art and historical texts including the cuneiform tablets, Assyrian reliefs, inscribed papyri, cylinder seal impressions, codices, and illuminated manuscript leaves. Underscoring the role of cuneiform tablets in documenting the history, economics, religion, and culture of the Ancient Near East, Professor Penn highlighted the fact that these objects include humankind's earliest extant literary works such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the Babylonian *Creation Story* that directly influenced biblical authors and are the source of important scholarship today.

During his first year of teaching at Mount Holyoke, Assistant Professor of History **Richard Payne** offered a new course entitled "The Inheritance of Iran: The Iranian World from Antiquity to the Middle Ages," which explored patterns of religious, cultural, and social change from the rise of ancient Iranian empires through the time of the Islamization of Iranian society. Integrating sources that included classics of Persian and Arabic literature such as the *Shahnameh (The Book of Kings)*, Professor Payne brought his class to the Art Museum to study objects that provide a window into the rich artistic traditions of this region of the world. These ranged from early Iranian ceramic vessels and bronzes to illuminated Persian manuscript leaves and Islamic coins. Perhaps one of the most captivating objects viewed during the class visit, was a cuneiform tablet from the reign of Darius I (521–486 BCE), the third King of Kings of the Achaemenid Empire and one of the most influential figures of Iranian history.

For the past two years, Associate Professor of Theatre Arts **Erika Rundle** has incorporated objects of early writing into her popular course "Histories of Performance I" that she describes as "a survey of world performance history." The course focuses on the evolution of human language and consciousness, and how early writing systems influenced oral traditions and performance. As Professor Rundle notes, text was used by those with economic power and prestige to "mark history," challenging the primacy and authority of orality. Objects selected for close examination during two Museum class visits included 4,000-year-old clay tablets, 2,600-year-old Assyrian limestone reliefs with cuneiform inscriptions, and 3,000-year-old Egyptian objects featuring hieroglyphic text, bringing to life the transformative power of the first written texts of early civilizations. "By encountering these fascinating objects," explains Rundle, "students experience firsthand the ways in which writing performs across time and space, offering up new meanings to new interpretive communities."

Erika Rundle and "Histories of Performance" students



This renewed interest in the Mount Holyoke cuneiform tablets was the impetus for an in-depth project to preserve and document the collection. The Museum's tablets and cones, together with a larger group of similar materials from the Department of Religion had never been thoroughly photographed, translated, or conserved. Thanks to Aegean Bronze Age scholar Karen Polinger Foster ('71), a lecturer in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Yale University, and her husband Benjamin R. Foster, Professor of Assyriology and Curator of Yale's stellar

Babylonian Collection, arrangements were made to send the Mount Holyoke objects to New Haven. There, they were treated by conservator Elizabeth Payne and studied by scholars who will shortly publish them in an international journal.

Now back home, the tablets and cones continue to provide direct experience with daily life in the Ancient Near East. Through the innovative integration of these original objects in their teaching, Professors Penn, Payne, and Rundle are giving Mount Holyoke students an opportunity to interact directly with artifacts that have survived the millennia, carrying with them the ideas and histories of their ancient makers.

### Teaching the Teachers

For years Mount Holyoke College Art Museum has offered programs to local school children as a way of introducing them to visual literacy, the power of objects, and the museum experience. Through interactive and exploratory involvement with original works of art and artifacts, students have the opportunity to build critical thinking skills while learning both about the uniqueness of specific objects and the wider implications that can be drawn from them in support of curricular objectives.

Now the Museum has added to its education menu by offering professional development opportunities for regional K-12 teachers to expand their pedagogical skills. On 7 January 2012, the Museum hosted 12 teachers for a day of exploring the practice of teaching



with objects. The thematic emphasis was designed to take advantage of the strengths of Mount Holyoke's antiquities collection and the special exhibition, *Reconstructing Antiquity*, a collaboration between MHCAM and the Yale University Art Gallery sponsored by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. In addition

to exercising close-looking skills and getting a hands-on experience in working with the collection, the program offered a chance to share approaches and issues in teaching about the ancient world, brainstorm lesson plans that include the use of objects, and discuss the bridges that can be built between the informal learning environment of the Museum and the classroom.

Co-led by Jane Gronau, Education and Public Relations Coordinator at the Museum, and Mark Roblee, a graduate student intern from the master's program in Public History at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, the workshop not only introduced or reintroduced teachers to the Museum, but provided the basis for the future development of curriculum materials for teachers on the MHCAM website.



Baking cuneiform tablets in a kiln at high temperatures is part of the conservation process

Educators participating in the workshop *Teaching with Objects*



## Abelardo Morell

The image is both familiar and disorienting. The Baroque facade of Santa Maria della Salute appears like an apparition, suspended in a miraculous optical illusion over a bedroom interior. The grandeur of the basilica's features melt into the sumptuous floral wall paper of the Venetian room, its curvaceous doorways and recesses echoing the ornate gilded frames and wood-inlaid vanity.

This interplay of texture, pattern, light, and shadow are painstakingly composed by a photographer with an eye for the unusual. In describing his own work, Cuban-born artist Abelardo Morell confesses that he is drawn to the black magic of photography. With his puzzling dual images, often pairing tourist sites with a nearby interior, Morell attempts to make the familiar new: "In my camera obscura pictures well-known sites have a certain

strangeness that I like; it's almost like seeing a thing that has become a cliché come to life again." The result of these images is not just an imagined landscape, but a reiteration of a natural relationship between two settings that are married through the creative eye of the artist.

The magic of Morell's photographs comes from a centuries-old optical device, the *camera obscura*, (the Latin term for "dark chamber"), known to ancient scientists as early as the fifth century BCE. Aristotle outlined its basic principles in his *Problemata* of 350 BCE, describing the anomaly caused by a beam of light shining through a pinhole into a darkened space. The *camera obscura* projects an inverted image upon a nearby surface, using the pinhole as a lens to focus the bright light. In Aristotle's time, the tool was useful for observing solar activities, but for artists of the 17th and 18th centuries, such as Vermeer and Canaletto, it was used as a drawing aid.

In its most recent iteration, Morell transforms a room into a mega-scale *camera obscura*, photographing the resulting image

with a large format camera over a six to ten hour exposure. He covers the window with a thick, black plastic, trims a tiny hole, and watches in amazement as the rays of light converge on the opposite wall. After years of perfecting the pinhole's dimensions, Morell has learned to control the crispness of the image by inserting a glass lens; similarly, he can use a prism to re-invert the projection. By trapping sunlight, the *camera obscura* becomes a filter for the natural world. As Morell explains, "You cannot afford to see life directly without any means, without any mediums. Life is too big, too radiant, too chaotic. We all need some way to observe life." Blossoming from a eureka moment during a demonstration for his students at the Massachusetts College of Art, Morell's *camera obscura* images have become his signature vehicle for seeing the world.



Abelardo Morell (American, b. Cuba, 1948)  
*Camera Obscura: Santa Maria della Salute*  
 Gelatin silver print, 2006  
 Purchase with the Madeleine Pinsof Plonsker (Class of 1962) Fund  
 Photograph courtesy of Abelardo Morell and Bonni Benrubi Gallery, New York

## Curatorial Project Report

Emily Wood ('09), Art Museum Advisory Board Fellow

The Museum's collection of posters produced during World War II has proved to be an incredibly important resource to the Mount Holyoke College community, serving as the focus of numerous student research papers, acting as vital object-based teaching tools for professors, and appearing in Museum exhibitions. The majority of the 142 different posters are American, produced by various wartime agencies of the US Government, including the Office of War Information. They were originally made for such diverse purposes as recruiting young women to join the Nursing Corps; encouraging frugality and discouraging gossip on the home front; promoting the purchase of war bonds and stamps; providing information about government services and regulations; demonizing the enemy; and glorifying the heroism of the American armed forces.

Spanning such a wide range of topics related to the American war effort, these posters give students, faculty, and visitors a keen insight into the nation's priorities during the War as defined by the government. They also point to issues of gender, nationalism, militarism, and the role which the United States envisioned for itself on the world stage. Notably the posters also allow for valuable research into the state of the graphic arts during the period around WWII as many of them were created by leading illustrators and artists of the time, including Ben Shahn, Martha Sawyers, Melbourne Brindle, Albert Dorne, and Norman Rockwell.

In addition to the US posters, the MHCAM collection also contains a number made by foreign governments for American audiences, including the United Kingdom, the Philippines, France, Greece, India, Mexico, and New Zealand. These designs were created both to inform the public and to foster support for the new American allies. Though many of these countries had been fighting for over two years before the US entered the war, some may still have seemed quite exotic to the general public. Furthermore, the collection also contains two posters from Canada and seven from China that were produced for their respective national audiences. These posters, which often tie into themes and sentiments similar to those seen in the American posters, provide an international counterpoint to the visual tactics and propagandistic goals of materials produced in the United States.

Individually, any single war poster in the MHCAM collection is a valuable document that can enhance investigations into the history of the Second World War. But taken as a group, the diversity, quality, and quantity of Mount Holyoke's collection makes such studies immeasurably richer.



American, Artist Unknown  
*Use It Up—Wear It Out—  
 Make It Do!*  
 Color lithograph, 1943  
 Photograph Laura Shea  
 2000.577.113.INV

*Home to Ithaca*

From a James Joyce novel to a TV miniseries, the *Odyssey* has attracted myriad re-imaginings. In 1977, Romare Bearden (1911–1988) created twenty collages based on Homer's ancient Greek poem, capturing in *Odysseus'* heroic search for home an expression of the



Romare Bearden  
(American, 1911–1988)  
*Home to Ithaca*  
Cut paper collage, 1977  
Gift of the estate of Eileen  
Paradis Barber (Class of 1929)  
Photograph Laura Shea  
1997.14.39

African American experience. *Home to Ithaca*, a gift to the Museum from the estate of Eileen Paradis Barber (Class of 1929), is 16th in the series created from cut paper shapes.

Next year, it will join nearly 50 of Bearden's works on paper as part of a two-year traveling exhibition entitled *Romare Bearden: A Black Odyssey*. Starting at the Reynolda House Museum of Art in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, it will travel to the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art; the Amon Carter Museum; the Chazen Museum, University of Wisconsin; the Michael Carlos

Museum, Emory University; the Currier Museum; and to Columbia University.

In *Home to Ithaca*, Bearden brings together a classical legend and a conflation of history, culture, and geography with bold color and cutouts that recall Matisse. In this evocation of *Odysseus'* return to Ithaca, the artist has created a triumphant spirit of a homecoming and return from exile with great forward movement created by the clouds, the projecting spears of the ship, and its diagonal sail. Making visual references to African and Afro-Caribbean culture, such as the motifs on the ship's sides and the distinctly non-Ionian landscape, he has also transformed the story's meaning with the depiction of a black *Odysseus*.

Recognized as one of the most creative and original visual artists of the 20th century and an acknowledged master of collage, Romare Bearden had a prolific and distinguished career. As a young child, he moved with his family to Harlem from the South as part of the Great Migration of African Americans, and their life and culture would become the primary subject of the last 25 years of Bearden's art. He was honored both during his lifetime and posthumously with numerous prestigious awards, publications, and exhibitions. Along with representation in important public and private collections, he was awarded the National Medal of Arts and in 2004, was the first African American painter to receive a retrospective at the National Gallery in Washington.



## ANOTHER BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION!

On 1 January 1932, the doors of the Joseph Allen Skinner Museum first opened to the public. After years of thought and effort, Joseph Skinner, a member of the prosperous Skinner silk manufacturing family and a local philanthropist, had placed his personal collection of Connecticut Valley folk art, Native American artifacts, and natural history objects on view to the public two days a week. Eighty years later, Mount Holyoke College, which became the Museum's steward upon Skinner's death in 1946, proudly continues this tradition from May to October each year, with availability for appointments and class visits year-round.

As we reflect on the past eight decades, we are reminded anew of the special nature of the Skinner Museum and its history. It was born in an age of widespread museum openings dedicated to preserving America's past—a contemporary of Colonial Williamsburg, the Edison Institute, the Winterthur Museum and Country Estate, and more locally, Old Sturbridge Village. It stands today both as a time capsule and as a testament to the transition in American history away from the Old World and into the New.

In March 1932 the New York collector and writer, Charles Messer Stowe, wrote that for years Skinner went about "industriously buying and begging objects of the past" with a "reverence for the wisdom and sturdy qualities of forebears." Importantly, Stowe went on to note that we should "undertake to make tangible this reverence by gathering together and preserving as many objects as may be which will show their manner of living." This call is no less urgent today than it was 80 years ago as we seek to preserve the past here at Mount Holyoke College and make this history story tangible to our students, our faculty, and our neighbors here in South Hadley and beyond.

We look forward to celebrating the 80th birthday of the Joseph Allen Skinner Museum this spring.



Joseph Allen Skinner Museum  
Photograph Laura Shea

## Become a Friend of Art.

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Museum Hours: Tuesday–Friday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m. and weekends, 1–5 p.m.

Admission is free. Donations are welcome. Fully accessible.

413-538-2245 [www.mtholyoke.edu/artmuseum](http://www.mtholyoke.edu/artmuseum)

To sign up for *MHCAM News* and receive exhibition and event announcements, go to [www.mtholyoke.edu/artmuseum](http://www.mtholyoke.edu/artmuseum).

Special thanks go to the Leon Levy Foundation for its continuing support of the Museum and its programs.



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Please send form and check, payable to *MHC Friends of Art*, to Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, Lower Lake Road, South Hadley, MA 01075-1499. Questions? Call 413-538-2245 or email [artmuseum@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:artmuseum@mtholyoke.edu).