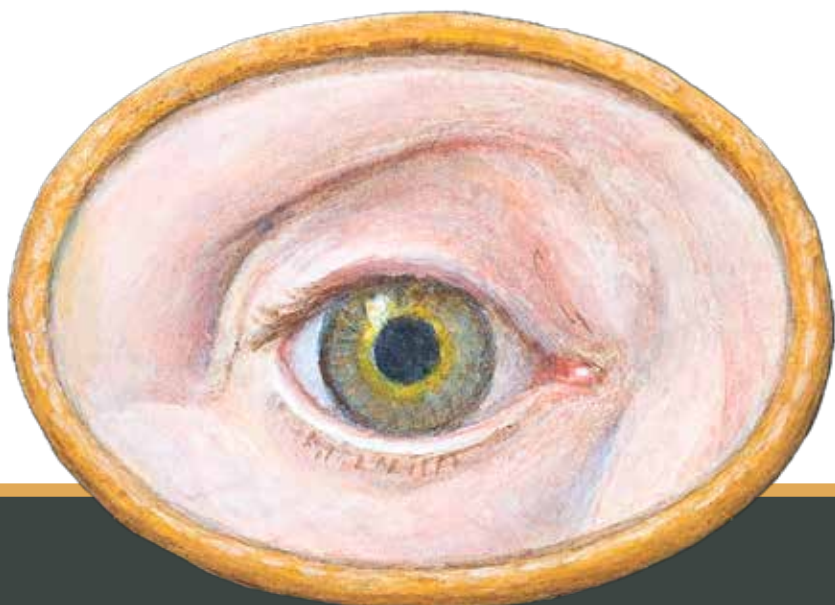


Looking Forward
Looking
Back

The Rowan
University
Art Gallery
Collection



**Exhibition on view
April 17 - May 27, 2023**

Looking Forward, Looking Back, curated by Dr. Andrew Hottle, is an opportunity to celebrate the Rowan University Art Gallery's permanent collection. The exhibition is organized around five themes - Abstraction and Experimentation, Art as Social Commentary, Art History as Inspiration, Figure Studies and Portraiture, and Sylvia Sleigh as Artist-Collector - that shed light on the Gallery's unique history and collecting practice.

The Gallery's permanent collection was established in 2011 through a major gift from Sylvia Sleigh. Since then the collection has grown to number approximately 300 works, with particular emphasis on the works of American women artists who were active in the pivotal period of the 1970s and 1980s.

ART HISTORY AS INSPIRATION

For centuries, artists have looked to the works of their predecessors as sources of inspiration or as examples to emulate. More recently, artists began to engage in conceptual dialogues with works from the past, often as a form of cultural critique.

Dotty Attie's work appropriates and recontextualizes so-called "Old Master" paintings, often from a feminist perspective. *The Scoutmaster's Return* consists of four lithographs, each based on *Madame Rivière* (1805), a celebrated portrait by the French artist J.-A.-D. Ingres (1780-1867). While Ingres's portrait is pristinely rendered, Attie's images are intentionally filled with printing errors. Her title refers to the "squeaky clean" reputation of the scouts, which was sometimes a mere pretense.

Shirley D. Campbell likewise used printmaking but turned her attention to the Dutch-born French artist Kees van Dongen (1877-1968). Her figures are based on his works, including *Nude with a Hat* (1908), which was the source for the woman on the right. Campbell's composition is rendered in mostly linear forms and contains actual depth, in striking contrast to Van Dongen's inherently flat paintings that are dominated by color.

Susan Sills creates life-size cutouts that she describes as "a whimsical restructuring of art history" in which she removes "familiar images from the confinement of the frame" by locating them in "real space." Consistent with her other works, *Manet's Mazurka* is meant to be amusing. The subject and style emulate those of *Mazurka (The Fifer)* (1866) by the French artist Édouard Manet (1832-1883), who took inspiration from the paintings of his Spanish predecessor Diego Velázquez (1599-1660).

Elizabeth Bisbing's tiny collage is an interpretation of *A Young Princess (Dorothea of Denmark?)* (c. 1530-32) by the Netherlandish artist Jan Gossaert (1478-1532). While his painting is pristinely rendered, Bisbing's small paper composition reveals its materials and handmade qualities. As a further allusion to Renaissance paintings, Bisbing mounted her collage in an ornate frame.



Dotty Attie (b. 1938)
The Scoutmaster's Return, 1975
 Color lithographs on paper
 Each 12 x 10 in.
 Sylvia Sleigh Collection
 (2011.2.A-D)



Susan Sills (b. 1941)
Manet's Mazuka, 1994
 Oil on birch
 50.5 x 25 x 0.44 in.
 Sylvia Sleigh Collection
 (2011.36)



Shirley D. Campbell
 (1919-2009)
Ah, Ha! Mr. Van Dongen, undated
 Etching on paper with etching
 on Plexiglas, mounted in
 painted wooden box
 10.5 x 8 x 1.375 in.
 Gift of Shirley Shalit (2018.6)



Elizabeth Bisbing
 (b. 1958)
Princess Dorothea (After Gossaert), 2009
 Painted paper collage in
 painted and textured frame
 16.5 x 14.56 x 2 in.
 Sylvia Sleigh Collection
 (2011.91)

ART AS SOCIAL COMMENTARY

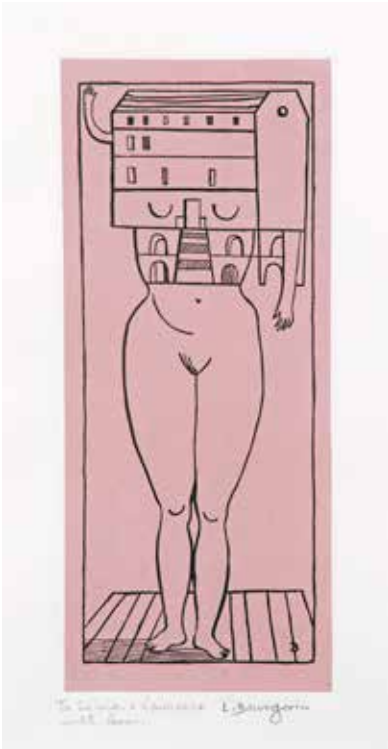
Although many artists have avoided overt social and political statements, a number of others have used visual art to address important issues.

Louise Bourgeois first drew her *Femme Maison* in 1947 but returned to the theme many times. The title means both “woman-house” and “house-wife.” For the artist, home was closely connected to female identity. By combining residential architecture and a curvaceous female body, the woman is obscured by the domestic realm that she simultaneously supports.

Audrey Flack’s small representation of a protest march was created during the turbulent period of the 1960s in the United States. Although their cause is not specified, the protestors are directly related to the artist’s contemporaneous works on the theme of antiwar demonstrations. Flack’s work implies the power of ordinary people to effect change by speaking out.

Rosalind Shaffer created her maquette (small model) as a study for a life-size paper figure that was exhibited in *Protest: An Environmental Project* at SOHO 20 Gallery in 1982. She focused on the struggle of homeless people in the wake of deinstitutionalization, a civil rights effort to end long-term psychiatric confinement in state-run hospitals. Shaffer’s work shows a woman who is living in a pile of trash, which serves as an indictment of a system that liberated psychiatric patients but failed to provide support after their release.

Susan Grabel’s clay sculpture addresses an opposite concern, namely the inundation of consumer goods in contemporary life. Her series, *Caught in the American Dream*, is a critique of the overwhelming effects of commercialization and the corresponding dissatisfaction with the cycle of endless purchases.



Louise Bourgeois
 (1911-2010)
Femme-Maison, 1984
 Photogravure with chine collé,
 unique state
 10 x 4.3 in.
 Sylvia Sleigh collection (2011.10)



Audrey Flack (b. 1931)
Demonstrators, c. 1967-68
 Graphite and gouache on paper
 7 x 9 in.
 Sylvia Sleigh Collection (2011.15)



Rosalind Shaffer (b. 1949)
Urban Woman (maquette), 1982
 Conté crayon on paper, mounted on wood under glass
 11.56 x 17.875 x 2.75 in.
 Sylvia Sleigh Collection (2011.35)



Susan Grabel (b. 1942)
Caught in the American Dream #2, 1980
 Fired and partly glazed clay
 14 x 29 x 25 in.
 Gift of the artist (2012.5)

FIGURE STUDIES AND PORTRAITS

Humans are central to the history of art. Nude and clothed bodies have been widely used as subjects, often with little attention to the identity of those represented. Likenesses of specific people are also prevalent but typically place more emphasis on individuality.

Elsa M. Goldsmith's painting of Ann Brown functions as both a portrait and a figure study. Brown was a housekeeper who developed a special bond of friendship with the artist. In the painting, she is barefooted, seated, and turned slightly toward an empty chair that accentuates her solitude. Painted, drawn, lifelike, and abstract forms interact to yield a complete artistic statement that lacks the “finished” quality of a conventional painting.

Alice Landes emerged as a painter when abstract expressionism dominated the visual arts in the United States. In her figure study, two views of a model named Charlotte are rendered in bold lines and assertive shapes that hold the colorful forms in visual tension with the dark masses of the interior environment. Charlotte's identity is largely irrelevant because her role is compositional.

Diana Kurz similarly used her models as figure studies but emphasized more of their humanity than Landes. *Couple on Patchwork Quilt* features a pair of nude figures who face each other. While their poses, proximity, and unclothed bodies imply intimacy, the painting offers no narrative and cannot be interpreted as anything more than the title indicates—two people sitting on a quilt.

Sylvia Sleigh is widely recognized for her paintings of nude men in passive poses that were historically associated with women. In contrast to the tradition of male artists portraying anonymous, idealized, and often eroticized female nudes, Sleigh embraced the individuality of her subjects and treated them with dignity. Her portrait of the American actor Sean Pratt is unsparing in its nudity as he casually poses on a striped sofa. The artist, who is known for painting men with body hair, was particularly proud of her successful representation of Pratt's freckled skin.



Elsa M. Goldsmith (1920- 2005)
Ann Brown, c. 1965-66
Oil on canvas
Gift of Cris and Jo Ann Goldsmith (2021.13)



Alice Landes (1927-1995)
Charlotte, 1965-66
Acrylic on canvas
73.25 x 71.75 x 2 in.
Gift of the Siegel Family, Great Neck, New York (2022.2)



Diana Kurz (b. 1936)
Couple on Patchwork Quilt, 1978
Oil on canvas
55.875 x 48 x 2.25 in.
Sylvia Sleight Collection (2011.20)



Sylvia Sleight (1916- 2010)
Portrait of an Actor: Sean Pratt, 1994
Oil on linen
42.5 x 55.75 in.
Sylvia Sleight Collection (2011.87)

ABSTRACTION AND EXPERIMENTATION

Experimentation has long been a significant aspect of artmaking. A number of early twentieth-century artists in Europe and North America heralded abstraction as a new visual language for the modern era. The result was a wide range of non-representational works that emphasize form, composition, materiality, impermanence, and concept—to name only a few—instead of traditional narratives and other fixed meanings.

Irene Krugman's mixed-media relief sculpture consists mainly of circles, cylinders, and hemispheres in a complex interplay of space and volume, which she achieved through the juxtaposition of solid and open forms.

Marion Ranyak created shapes and forms in damp sand by modeling, incising, and scooping. She also pressed a variety of objects into the surface. The artist subsequently poured cement into the design to produce a relief sculpture, which turned hollows into solids and projections into recessions.

Paula Tavins stitched small stuffed rectangular pods into a grid-like arrangement but situated them among numerous unruly threads. Her work draws attention to similarities and differences, presence and absence, order and disorder.

Barbara Coleman mixed acrylic paint with gravel and gel medium, after which she applied it with a squeegee. Her stated goal was to create something “sculptural on canvas,” an idea that she reinforced by leaning her heavily textured work against the wall instead of hanging it.

Helène Aylon spread linseed oil onto a Masonite panel in order to begin a process of gradual change. Over time, the oil soaked further into the panel and the color shifted as it dried. The change, however, is slow and therefore imperceptible to the naked eye.

Blythe Bohnen emphasized gesture and worked monochromatically to eliminate content-based interpretations of her art. Using the edge of a graphite bar, she drew in a continuous motion, after which she repeated the gesture directly below it. Although they visualize the same motion, subtle variations underscore their hand-made qualities.



Irene Krugman (1925-1982)

Untitled (25th Anniversary Gift for Nathan and Shirley Shalit), 1967

Construction of painted wood, metal, plastic balls, wooden balls, and rubber balls mounted on painted wood with wood glue, screws, and nails

9 x 9 x 4.25 in.

Gift of Shirley Shalit (2015.1)



Marion Ranyak

(1925-2018)

Untitled, 1976

Cement sand casting

16 x 18.5 x 2 in.

Gift of Mark Ranyak (2022.4)



Paula Tavins (1939-2019)
Untitled, 1973
Canvas, acrylic, and thread
7 x 7 x 0.75 in.
Sylvia Sleigh Collection (2011.69)

Barbara Coleman (1937-2021)
Studies in Concrete White #9, 1974
Pencil and acrylic mixed with gravel on canvas
72 x 12 x 2 in.
Sylvia Sleigh Collection (2011.50)



Helène Aylon (1931-2020)

Painting That Changes in Time, 1974

Linseed oil on Masonite under Plexiglas, nailed to a wood support
11.25 x 12.75 x 1 in.

Sylvia Sleigh Collection (2011.4)



Blythe Bohnen (1940-2023)

Motion touching 5 points, overlapped by motion touching 5 points, 1975

Graphite on paper

28.5 x 22.5 in.

Sylvia Sleigh Collection (2011.8)

SYLVIA SLEIGH AS ARTIST-COLLECTOR

The gallery depends on generous gifts from artists and collectors to expand and enrich the permanent collection. Every work in this exhibition was donated. The core of the collection was a gift from Sylvia Sleigh, a pioneering feminist artist who became well-known in the 1970s for painting nude men. An example, *Portrait of an Actor: Sean Pratt*, is on view in the main gallery. The works in this section were made by professional artists but carried personal meaning for Sleigh.

Sylvia Sleigh painted *Trees at Pett* in April 1948, after which she gave it to her romantic partner and future husband, Lawrence Alloway. The painting depicts a simple view of the property where Sleigh lived at the time. With limited financial means, Alloway enlisted a friend to adapt an existing frame, which remains with the work. Sleigh painted *The Threshold, Blackheath* four years later. It represents a glimpse of Alloway's residence at Blackheath Park but focuses on the adjacent lush garden.

Nancy Grossman's *A Garden for Sylvia* is a pencil drawing of a pleasant flowering landscape with a bird and dragonfly. Sleigh, who was born in Wales and raised in England, had a lifelong affinity for pleasingly irregular English gardens. For years, she cultivated her own backyard garden in Manhattan.

Marjorie Wadsworth's *Victorian Fantasy, Kensington Gardens*, like Grossman's drawing, undoubtedly resonated with Sleigh for its picturesque qualities and British subject matter.

Marion Lerner Levine, who was born in London, shared Sleigh's British origins. Her small *Memory of the Coronation, 1937* refers to the ceremonial crowning of King George VI in Westminster Abbey. As Sleigh later explained, "I was brought up a royalist. I was always interested in the Royal Family."

Rhea Sanders's intimate painting, called *I*, is a self-portrait whose title puns on the words *I* and *eye*. Sleigh hung this work over the sofa where she spent a great deal of time in her later years. The painting was a personal gesture in which Sanders symbolically watched over her friend.

Harriet Winter, known professionally as Mrs. H. Winter, was a fashion designer who lived across the street from Sylvia Sleigh. In her later years, Winter made needlepoint portraits of women whom she admired. Winter's inclination toward design is easily observed in the horizontal and vertical lines that traverse Sleigh's head.

-Dr. Andrew Hottle
Professor of Art History and
Communication Studies,
Rowan University

Sylvia Sleigh (1916- 2010)

Trees at Pett, 1948

Watercolor on paper

12 x 9.25 in.

Gift of the Estate of Sylvia Sleigh (2016.16)



Sylvia Sleigh (1916-2010)

The Threshold, Blackheath, 1952

Watercolor on paper

10 x 14 in.

Gift of the Estate of Sylvia Sleigh (2016.7)





Nancy Grossman (b. 1940)

A Garden for Sylvia, 1966

Graphite on paper

13.875 x 21.875 in.

Sylvia Sleigh Collection (2011.94)



Marjorie Wadsworth (1911-2001)

Victorian Fantasy, Kensington Gardens, 1995

Gouache on composition board

23.3 x 16.5 in.

Sylvia Sleigh Collection (2011.74)

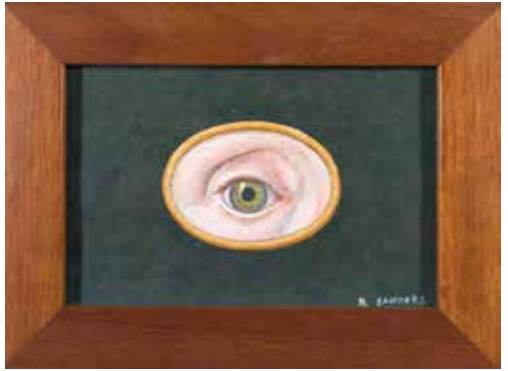
Marion Lerner Levine (b. 1931)
Memory of the Coronation,
1937, 1978

Watercolor and graphite on paper
4 x 6 in.
Sylvia Sleigh Collection (2011.56)



Rhea Sanders (1923-2020)
I, undated

Acrylic and oil glaze on paper
4 x 6 in.
Sylvia Sleigh Collection (2011.85)



Harriet Winter (1927- 2010)
Untitled (Sylvia Sleigh),
c. 1997-2010

Needlepoint on fabric canvas,
mounted on Plexiglas and wood
19.375 x 14.75 x 1.25 in.
Sylvia Sleigh Collection (2011.101)



BRIEF ARTIST BIOS

Dotty Attie (b. 1938) is a painter and printmaker who was among the founding members of the all-women's cooperative, A.I.R. Gallery, in New York City. She studied at the Philadelphia College of Art (now University of the Arts; BFA), the Brooklyn Museum of Art School, and the Art Students League.

Helène Aylon (1931–2020) was a visual, conceptual, installation artist, and eco-feminist who lived and worked in New York City. She studied at Brooklyn College (BA), the New School for Social Research, Art Students League, San Francisco State University (MFA equivalency), and Antioch College West (MA equivalency).

Elizabeth Bisbing (b. 1958) is a collage artist who lives and works in New York City. She earned a BFA in painting at Moore College of Art in Philadelphia.

Blythe Bohnen (1940–2023) was an abstract painter and photographer. She studied at Smith College (BA, art), Boston University (BFA, applied art), and Hunter College (MFA, painting). She was a founding member of the all-women's cooperative, A.I.R. Gallery.

Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010) was born in France and moved to New York City in 1938. Before coming to the United States, she studied at Atelier Bissière, the École des Beaux-Arts, the École du Louvre, the Sorbonne, and the Académie Fénélon. In her later years, her psychologically complex sculptures and installations brought her international renown.

Shirley D. Campbell (1919–2009) was a printmaker who lived and worked in Morris Plains, New Jersey. She studied at The Newark School of Fine and Industrial Arts, the New York Graphic Workshop, and Pratt Center for Printmaking.

Barbara Coleman (1937–2021) was an abstract painter who lived and worked in New York City. She studied at Marymount College (BFA) and Hunter College. She was a founding member of SOHO 20 Gallery, an all-women's cooperative in New York.

Audrey Flack (b. 1931) is a Photorealist painter and sculptor. She studied at Cooper Union, Yale University (BFA), and New York University (history of art). She has taught and lectured nationally and internationally.

Elsa M. Goldsmith (1920–2005) was a figurative and abstract artist who lived and worked in Great Neck, New York. She studied at Parsons School of Design (BA), worked for the pioneering industrial designer Belle Kogan, and later turned to painting and printmaking.

Susan Grabel (b. 1942) is a sculptor, feminist, curator, and social activist who lives and works in New York. She studied at the Brooklyn Museum Art School and earned a BA at Brooklyn College.

Nancy Grossman (b. 1940) is a sculptor, collagist, and assemblage artist who lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. She graduated from the Pratt Institute (BFA).

Irene Krugman (1925-1982) lived in Morristown, New Jersey, and worked in New York City. She was a sculptor of environmental works that concern spatial relationships.

Diana Kurz (b. 1936) is a painter of portraits, figures, landscape, and still life who lives and works in New York City. She graduated from Brandeis University (BA) and Columbia University (MFA).

Alice Landes (1927-1995) was an expressive painter who lived and worked in Great Neck, New York. She attended Brooklyn and Queens College, after which she studied with Gert Greenblatt and Betty Holliday.

Marion Lerner Levine (b. 1931) is a still-life painter who lives and works in New York City. She studied at the Chicago Graphic Workshop, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (BFA), and the University of Chicago.

Marion Ranyak (1925-2018) lived and worked in Rye, New York. She studied at Wheelock College but was most heavily impacted by her brief study with Hans Hofmann. She was a founding member of SOHO 20 Gallery, an all-women's cooperative in New York.

Rhea Sanders (1923-2020) lived and painted in Europe for a decade before settling in New York City. She studied at the Gabriel Guild, Cooper Union, and Pratt Graphics. She was an acrylic, tempera, and watercolor painter of still lifes and city views.

Rosalind Shaffer (b. 1949) is a sculptor who lives and works in Connecticut. She graduated from Syracuse University (BFA). She was a founding member of SOHO 20 Gallery, an all-women's cooperative in New York.

Susan Sills (b. 1941) is an artist who reinterprets Old Masters in life-size wood cutouts. She lives and works in Brooklyn. She studied at Queens College (BA), Boston Museum of Fine Arts, New York University, and Brooklyn Museum School of Art.

Sylvia Sleigh (1916-2010) was born in Wales. She lived and worked in England until 1961, after which she was active in the United States. She studied at the Brighton School of Art. She was a founding member of SOHO 20 Gallery, an all-women's cooperative in New York, and became well-known for painting male nudes in the passive poses that were traditionally reserved for women.

Paula Tavins (1939-2019) was a mixed media artist who lived and worked in New York City. She attended the Art Institute of Chicago (BFA) and California College of Arts and Crafts (MFA).

Marjorie Wadsworth (1911-2001) was an English artist. She studied at the Brighton School of Art. She worked as a design and display executive at British Cellophane Limited. After her retirement, she joined the Free Painters and Sculptors and began to paint again. Her works are gouache compositions based on the parks and gardens of London.

Harriet Winter (1927-2010), known professionally as Mrs. H. Winter, was a painter who became an autodidact fashion designer. She lived and worked in New York City.

A Museum Destination for Contemporary Art

Rowan University Art Gallery serves as a vibrant cultural destination for South Jersey, the Rowan community, and surrounding region. We are committed to cultivating an inclusive, accessible, and just environment that encourages dialogue and collaboration between exhibiting artists, students, faculty, and the general public through the presentation of interdisciplinary art exhibitions, artist talks and other public programming. Our mission is to present diverse forms of contemporary art by professional artists with content that is thought provoking, relevant, and timely. With our exhibitions and programming, we seek to engender curiosity and a passion for contemporary art, enrich the quality of life for area residents, and create a welcoming and inclusive cultural destination at Rowan University.

ROWAN UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY

301 High Street West
Glassboro, NJ 08028

Mon-Fri, 10:00 - 5:00 PM
Sat, 11:00 - 5:00 PM

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