



Exhibitions at
PAAM

Sincerely Yours

Inscriptions from the Permanent Collection

CURATED BY MADELEINE LARSON AND KATHERINE SMAILS
ON VIEW DECEMBER 6, 2024 - FEBRUARY 9, 2025
IN THE MOFFETT GALLERY

The visual perspective of a Collections Manager can often be a technical one, frequently focused on the minor details of an artwork—the tiny area of surface flaking, the miniscule scratch on the glass, the paper’s texture in raking light.

A museum Collections Manager is trained to notice everything about the work of art so it can be stored and displayed safely and for as long as possible.

In early 2024, PAAM began undertaking the process of digitizing its Permanent Collection and conducting a full-scale inventory of its artwork holdings. A full collection inventory can be a daunting task for any museum, especially for one that is 110 years old, but it provides the invaluable opportunity to dig into artwork rarely seen, accessed, or discussed. As the Collections Manager, the process of collection digitization and inventory has given me incredible new insights into artworks, as the project requires close looking and analysis of every piece to find new details and capture new data.

One of these new data points not previously (consistently) captured was signature and inscription information: if and where the artwork is signed, dated, editioned, marked, stamped, labeled, or otherwise inscribed. While many of these inscriptions communicate objective artwork information, like a print’s edition, others could be considered more extraneous to understanding the piece. Throughout the inventory and digitization process, combing through our collection, I was always delighted to find artworks with scratches of more personal text in the corners—the “with love”s and the “Happy Birthday”s.

In Collections Management practice, signatures and inscriptions are vital to an object’s record, as they can illuminate authorship, date and location created, ownership, and provenance. As shown through the pieces in this exhibition, inscriptions can also give viewers insight into another dimension of an artist, such as the intent behind and background of a piece—not only the what, but the why. The works in this exhibition reflect a variety of different types of inscription: many are

personal dedications, either to the sitter of a portrait or to denote the artwork as a gift to a loved one; some are tributes to fellow artists—peers, students, or teachers. These inscriptions draw attention to the humanness of each individual artist and ask viewers to imagine the art-making process on a much more intimate scale.

This exhibition invites close looking, and I encourage you to not only connect with the content of each artwork, but to imagine the author's hand as they inscribed their work of art to a friend, a lover, a fellow artist, or perhaps to nobody specific at all. Look in the margins, and consider what the signature and inscription might tell you about an object that its title, its date, or its subject matter may not. These pieces urge us to see artwork as not only a practice of making, but one of sharing and gifting as well.

I give endless thanks to Katherine Smails and Seth Abrahamson for their incredible work in getting PAAM's inventory and digitization project off the ground.

—*Madeleine Larson, Registrar and Collections Manager*

All interpretive text on in the checklist and on artwork labels was written by Katherine Smails, summer 2024 Collections Associate at PAAM.

ARTWORK LIST

William Harry Warren (WHW) Bicknell (1860-1947)

Untitled (Wharf Scene, from a sketch by Stacy Tolman), n.d.

Etching

Gift of Mrs. W.H.W. Bicknell, 1964

W.H.W. Bicknell was a versatile artist who etched portraits, book pages, landscapes, and architectural views. Bicknell and Stacy Tolman were friends and fellow art students who shared an art studio in Boston. Tolman's most well-known artwork, *The Etcher*, on view at The Met Museum in New York City, depicts Bicknell intensely focused at work in their shared studio. Details of their relationship are not widely documented, and that tendency towards privacy is demonstrated here in a simple acknowledgement of Tolman's model sketch. Bicknell's inscription obfuscates the meaningful and productive friendship the two enjoyed and instead simply gives credit where credit is due.

Edwin Walter Dickinson (1891-1978)

Untitled (Provincetown Buildings), 1916

Etching

Gift of Eliza Ayrault Magee, 2021

Edwin Walter Dickinson (1891-1978)

Untitled (Provincetown Street), 1916

Etching

Gift of Eliza Ayrault Magee, 2021

Nancy Jo Ferguson (b. 1935)

For Harriet, n.d.

Ink on paper

PAAM Permanent Collection

Red Grooms (b. 1937)

Tappy Toes, 1969

Ink on paper

Gift from the Richmond Bequest, 1978

Charles Hawthorne (1872-1930)

Untitled (To My Friend, Kennedy), 1899

Oil on canvas

Gift of Lea Shepard Handler in memory of Florence Cranford Smith Shepard, restoration funded by Doug Cliggott and Annemette Cliggott-Perlt, 2017

Seaside scenes around Provincetown served as the subjects of some of Charles Hawthorne's most admired works. He is known for lush portraits and landscapes influenced by Impressionism, which utilize strong light and color alongside psychological insight and technical skill. Hawthorne gifted this low-tide dock scene to a friend, Kennedy, in 1899, the same year he founded the Cape Cod School of Art. It was the first outdoor school dedicated to figure painting in America. Among Hawthorne's students was Houghton Cranford Smith, a landscape painter and one of the founders of PAAM. It was Smith's granddaughter who donated the artwork to PAAM in honor of her mother in 2017, though the identity of "Kennedy" remains unclear.

Budd Hopkins (1931-2011)

Untitled (For the Mermaid), 1967

Gouache on paper

Gift of Arien Mack, 2017

Edward Hopper (1882-1967)

Untitled (Sketch of foot in sandal), n.d.

Graphite on paper

Gift of Laurence C. and J. Anton Schiffenhaus in memory of Mary Schiffenhaus and two anonymous donors, 2016

Josephine Hopper (1883-1968)

Untitled (Sketch of man in fedora), 1952

Graphite on paper

Gift of Laurence C. and J. Anton Schiffenhaus in memory of Mary Schiffenhaus and two anonymous donors, 2016

Charles Kaeselau (1882-1972)

Untitled, n.d.

Watercolor on paper

Charles Kaeselau studied at the Art Institute of Chicago under renowned portrait painter Charles Hawthorne around the same time as a notable generation of American artists including Norman Rockwell, Henry Hensche, and Grant Wood. Following in his teacher's footsteps, Kaeselau often painted en plein air, outdoors. In this quick but vibrant watercolor, as the viewers we sit just beyond his easel and palette set up on the side of this seaside road. As he shaped the development of American art in the early to mid-20th century, this grateful pupil kept his teacher's lessons in mind.

Robert Motherwell (1915-1991)

Delta (For Renate with Love), 1981

Aquatint, lift-ground etching

Gift of the Estate of Renate Ponsold, 2024

Seong Moy (1921-2013)

Juggling Alchemist, n.d.

Serigraph

Gift of Lisa Fabian Lustigman, 1995

Arnold Newman (1918-2006)

Hudson and Ione Walker, 1964

Black & white photograph

Gift of the artist, 1996

Surrounded by art they have collected and curated, Hudson and Ione Walker appear at ease but alert, training their keen artistic eyes on friend and photographer Arnold Newman. The artist-art historian duo founded the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown and aided in opening the Provincetown Symphony Society. Their local impact and friendship have here earned them the honor of Newman, one of the most important portrait photographers of the 20th century. Newman is known for creating a deeper narrative through contextual, dynamic backgrounds and for photographing the likes of Albert Einstein, John F. Kennedy, and Pablo Picasso.

Mischa Richter (1910-2001)

Driving School, n.d.

Ink on paper

Umberto Romano (1905-1982)

Untitled (to Aaron), 1961

Sepia ink on paper

Gift of A. T. Karlis, 1976

Alvin Ross (1920-1975)

Still Life with Fruit, 1957

Etching

Gift of Aaron Schmidt in memory of Mary M. Schmidt and Philip F. Schmidt, 2023

A self-described realist who went against the grain and studied across Europe in his youth, Alvin Ross spent much of his time in Provincetown. He had previously taught at the New School for Social Research and the Pratt Institute. It was at the latter that he worked alongside Philip F. Schmidt, to whom this etching was dedicated with well wishes for 1958. Ross became a family friend of the Schmidts and remained in contact with Philip's wife, Mary, after Philip's passing. It was Philip's son, Aaron, who went on to donate this piece to PAAM while conveying fond memories of "Mr. Ross." Ross served as the president of PAAM in the early 1970s shortly before passing at just 55, leaving behind an important body of work.

Charles Sovek (1937-2007)

Block Studies in Demonstration, n.d.

Oil on panel

Gift of Fred Gibbons, 2024

Raphael Soyer (1899-1987)

Portrait of Herman Maril, 1946

Oil on canvas

Gift of the Herman Maril Foundation, 2019

Raphael Soyer (1899-1987)

Portrait of Esta Maril, n.d.

Conte crayon on paper

Gift of the Herman Maril Foundation, 2019

The subject of this artwork, Esta Maril, and her husband, artist Herman, began visiting Provincetown in the late 1940s and soon encountered Raphael Soyer and his wife, Rebecca. Soyer, among the most important American scene painters of his generation, was known nationally for his humanist, realist style, and the Soyers were known locally for being actively involved in the community. According to the sitter, his portrait was sketched unbeknownst to Esta and gifted to her by Raphael as a welcoming gesture to the artists' group on the scene. After decades of friendship and Herman's passing, the Soyers kept in touch with Esta and often made efforts to include her in their activities. "With love," indeed.

Sophie Webb (b. 1958)

Penguins in Antarctic, 1998

Watercolor on paper

Gift of Nancy Webb, 2010

John Whorf (1903-1959)

Morning Mist/Trapboat (For Bill and Camilla), n.d.

Watercolor on paper

Collection of Helen and Napi Van Dreck

If you recognize anyone mentioned in these inscriptions, please scan the QR code to give us additional information about the artist or dedicatee to add to the museum's digital object record. Artwork cataloging is an ongoing process, and community-based information sharing is vital to building our town's collective art history.



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