

CAPTURING  
COMMUNITY  
*INSIDE AN AMERICAN SALON*

# Capturing Community: Inside an American Salon

Charles Demuth  
Arthur G. Dove  
Marsden Hartley  
John Marin  
Georgia O'Keeffe  
Herbert J. Seligmann  
Alfred Stieglitz  
Paul Strand  
Helen Torr  
Carl Van Vechten  
Edith Clifford Williams

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**July 8 - September 24, 2023**

Demuth Museum  
120 E. King Street  
Lancaster, PA 17602

[www.demuth.org](http://www.demuth.org)

This is one in a series of American art exhibitions created through a multi-year, multi-institutional partnership formed by the Philadelphia Museum of Art as part of the Art Bridges Cohort Program.



# INTRODUCTION

American Art's roots run deep, from colonial portraiture to Native American craft predating European settlement. At the turn of the 20th century something new, something unique to this nation started to emerge, thanks in large part to one man— Alfred Stieglitz.

Art *by* Americans and *for* Americans existed since our country's origins, but art of America, a distinctly American style and expression, was forging a way in the early 1900s. The Armory Show of 1913 was the major catalyst of Modern Art in America, introducing U.S. audiences to Fauvism, Cubism, Futurism, and Expressionism from Europe. In response, American artists began experimenting and developing new styles like Precisionism, which was pioneered by Charles Demuth, and Regionalism, led by artists like Grant Wood and Andrew Wyeth.

However, before the momentous Armory Show, Alfred Stieglitz and fellow photographer Edward Steichen were showcasing the works of Auguste Rodin, Paul Cezanne, Henri Matisse, and Pablo Picasso at Gallery 291, the first U.S. gallery or museum to premiere these works. As a photographer, Stieglitz advanced the medium as a fine art form, and as an gallerist, he promoted the works of the European Avant-Garde and American modernists. The U.S. artists he featured in his gallery became known as the Stieglitz Circle, and they worked to define an American identity in art. As a gallery, 291 was pursuing “a path full of thorns indeed but of thorns that wouldn't cover you with blood, but with glory” and the Circle was “not working for today, nor for tomorrow, nor for ourselves, but for all times and for everybody.”<sup>1</sup> Stieglitz was able to create an environment where experimentation was nurtured, artists' ideas flourished, and colleagues grew to appreciate each other's work. For him, the artist and their pursuits were central to his business practices.

*Although Stieglitz's humorless fulminations against America's soulless materialism could seem endless, they were precisely what was needed at this first stage of the avant-garde. Stieglitz created the inspirational oral gospel of early modernism, and he delivered it tirelessly. His commitment was unsullied by commerce: he didn't advertise exhibitions, never locked the gallery doors, kept no records, accepted no commission from his artists, and sold work only to those he judged capable of appreciating it.*<sup>2</sup>

For over 40 years, Stieglitz's New York galleries provided space for American Modernists to exhibit their works and pave the way for a new artistic expression. With his encouragement and support, a generation of artists succeeded and a new era of American Art was born.

*Capturing Community* features the artists Stieglitz predominantly promoted in the 1920s and 1930s, including those in his 1925 Seven Americans exhibition: Charles Demuth, Arthur G. Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, Georgia O'Keeffe, Paul Strand, and himself, Alfred Stieglitz. We've also chosen to include other female artists that worked with Stieglitz to elevate works and voices that may not be as familiar, like Edith Clifford Willams and Helen Torr. By pairing these artists' works with pieces by Charles Demuth, you will see commonalities between artists in subject matter and techniques, but also how they created their own interpretations and styles. Collectively, their body of work defines Modern Art in America.



# The Emergence of Modern Photography

*"The decision as to when to photograph, the actual click of the shutter, is partly controlled from the outside, by the flow of life, but it also comes from the mind and the heart of the artist."* - Paul Strand



From the camera obscura to the daguerreotype, photography has served as a medium for documenting, understanding, and interpreting the world since its conception. In the early part of its history, photography was often thought of as a lesser art form because of its dependence on technology. Because no other standards of picture making existed besides painting, drawing, and printmaking, it was often unfavorably compared to these mediums.

By the mid nineteenth century with the formation of photographic societies around the world, the idea of photography as an aesthetic medium was on the rise. This ultimately led to the emergence of the Pictorial movement. Pictorialism is an approach to photography that emphasizes the beauty of subject matter, tonality, and composition rather than the documentary integrity of an image. Within this movement was the shared objective for photography to become an accepted form of fine art.

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Above: Daguerreotype of Louis  
Daguerre by Jean-Baptiste  
Sabatier-Blot, 1844

Left: Advertisement for the  
Kodak camera, 1889



At the turn of the 20th century one of the most influential Pictorialist groups, the Photo-Secession, was founded in New York City by photographer Alfred Stieglitz. Over the Photo-Secession's fifteen year existence, the outlook of Stieglitz and individual members continued to evolve. Increasingly, photographers wanted their work to actually look like photographs, not any other medium, and valued the qualities that were unique to photography.



Exhibition view at the Little Galleries of the Photo Secession, published in *Camera Work*, 1906

With the ability to more accurately represent subjects, painting no longer needed to portray reality and many artists began experimenting with abstraction in their work. Painters focused on light, color, and movement in ways that were not possible with photography, leading the way to a new era in art.

Notes:

1. Marius de Zayas to Stieglitz, January 25, 1911, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, YCAL
2. Steven Watson, *Strange Bedfellows: The First American Avant-Garde* (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1991), 81.



Paul Strand, *Alfred Stieglitz at Lake George*, 1929, gelatin silver print, Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Paul Strand Collection, from the Collection of Dorothy Norman, 1997, 1997-146-53 © Aperture Foundation, Inc., Paul Strand Archive

# Alfred Stieglitz

1864 - 1946

Alfred Stieglitz was a pioneer photographer, editor, and art dealer in New York City during the early teens through the mid -1940's. His first gallery, Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession at 291 Fifth Avenue, commonly referred to as 291, was opened to the public in 1905 with his then business partner and fellow photographer, Edward Steichen. It was here that he displayed the most advanced styles in art five years before the Armory show in 1913. 291 became the first venue in America to show Auguste Rodin, Henri Matisse, Paul Cézanne, and Pablo Picasso. Although 291 featured the art of the European avant-garde, Stieglitz notably championed American artists. In 1925 he opened the Intimate Gallery and later operated the American Place from 1929 until 1946. Throughout his career as a gallerist, he promoted the artists who would come to be known as the famous Stieglitz Circle. These artists included Arthur Dove, John Marin, Marsden Hartley, Charles Demuth, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Paul Strand to name a few. From 1903-17 Stieglitz also edited the photographic journal *Camera Work*, which featured high quality photographs and accompanying essays. Over his 50-year career, Stieglitz was instrumental in not only making pictorialist photography an accepted form of art, but bringing American Modernism to the forefront of the art world.

# Paul Strand

1890 - 1976

Gifted a camera by his father at age twelve, Strand was introduced to the world of photography at a young age. While in high school, Strand visited 291 on a field trip in 1907. This was a defining moment for the young man because upon visiting the gallery, Strand decided to pursue a career as a photographer. Stieglitz would eventually become his mentor and contemporary. Stieglitz promoted Strand's work by exhibiting it in his galleries and publishing it in *Camera Work*. Some of his most well known works include urban photographs of New York City that experimented with abstraction and powerful portraits. In 1936, Strand helped to found the Photo League, a group of photographers who came together around a range of social and creative causes. With a career spanning six decades, Strand and Stieglitz helped to set the standards of early American modernism while also establishing photography as a fine art.





Alfred Stieglitz, *Arthur G. Dove*, 1923, gelatin silver print, Philadelphia Museum of Art: From the Collection of Dorothy Norman, 1967, 1967-285-49

# Arthur Garfield Dove

1880 - 1946

Born in 1880, Arthur Garfield Dove appreciated nature and painting from a young age. He would go on to attend Hobart College and Cornell University and later make his name known in New York City as a commercial artist for The Saturday Evening Post and Harper's Magazine. Following time spent in Europe where he was introduced to the painting styles of Alfred Henry Maurer and Henri Matisse, Dove returned to America with a newfound sense of his own artistry.

With the support of Alfred Stieglitz, he created some of the first abstract paintings to be made in America. Dove first visited 291 at the end of 1909. In March of the following year, Dove's work was exhibited in a group show, marking the beginning of his public career. In his artwork, Dove often explores the contrast of the natural world and the industrial world of materiality. Often considered the first American abstract painter, Dove's influence was far and wide, inspiring Georgia O'Keeffe, Julian Hatton, and Charles Demuth. The latter went on to create a poster portrait in honor of the artist that also features his wife and fellow artist, Helen Torr.



Arthur Garfield Dove, *Frozen Pool at Sunset*, 1933, oil on canvas, 16 x 20 in., Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of C. K. Williams, II, 2019, 2019-30-4

Arthur Dove and Charles Demuth did not form a close friendship, but Demuth deeply admired Dove's work as one of the foremost American abstract painters of his time. Demuth even dedicated one of his famous poster portraits to Dove in 1924, something reserved for those with profound impact and influence on the artist's life. Dove and Demuth both depicted nature in their work, though Dove used greater levels of abstraction. *Frozen Pool at Sunset* shows heavy trunks leaning over a blue pond in a dark winter forest setting. Dove's lines and forms are weighty and bold, while Demuth's lighter treatment of subject in *Tree Forms* depicts tall, straight trunks with spreading a dense canopy of green foliage.





Charles Demuth, *Tree Forms*, 1916, watercolor on paper, 10 7/8 x 8 3/8 in., Demuth Museum, Lancaster, PA: Gift of Peggy Nell in memory of Charles and Nancy Tanger



Alfred Stieglitz, *Marsden Hartley*, 1916, gelatin silver print, Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949, 1949-18-62

# Marsden Hartley

1877 - 1943

Growing up in New England and working in a shoe factory with his father, Hartley moved to New York City at the age of twenty two to study at the New York School of Art under William Merritt Chase and later attend the National Academy of Design. After completing what he would consider his first mature works, Hartley caught the attention of Alfred Stieglitz, who was so impressed with the work that he agreed to give Hartley his first solo exhibition at 291 in 1909. Stieglitz also introduced him to the work of Cézanne, Picasso, Kandinsky, and Matisse that would prove greatly influential on Hartley's modernist style. Hartley traveled to Europe for the first time in 1912 and became acquainted with Gertrude Stein's circle of avant-garde writers and artists, including Charles Demuth, in Paris. The following year, Hartley relocated to Berlin. It is here that his artwork shifted into greater abstraction with the influence of German Expressionism. Throughout the rest of his career Hartley would continue to travel extensively, creating ever changing work in New York, Provincetown, New England, Bermuda, and abroad. In 1937, after years of financial hardship and perceived slights, Hartley broke with Stieglitz after another solo exhibition, this time at An American Place, failed to produce sales.





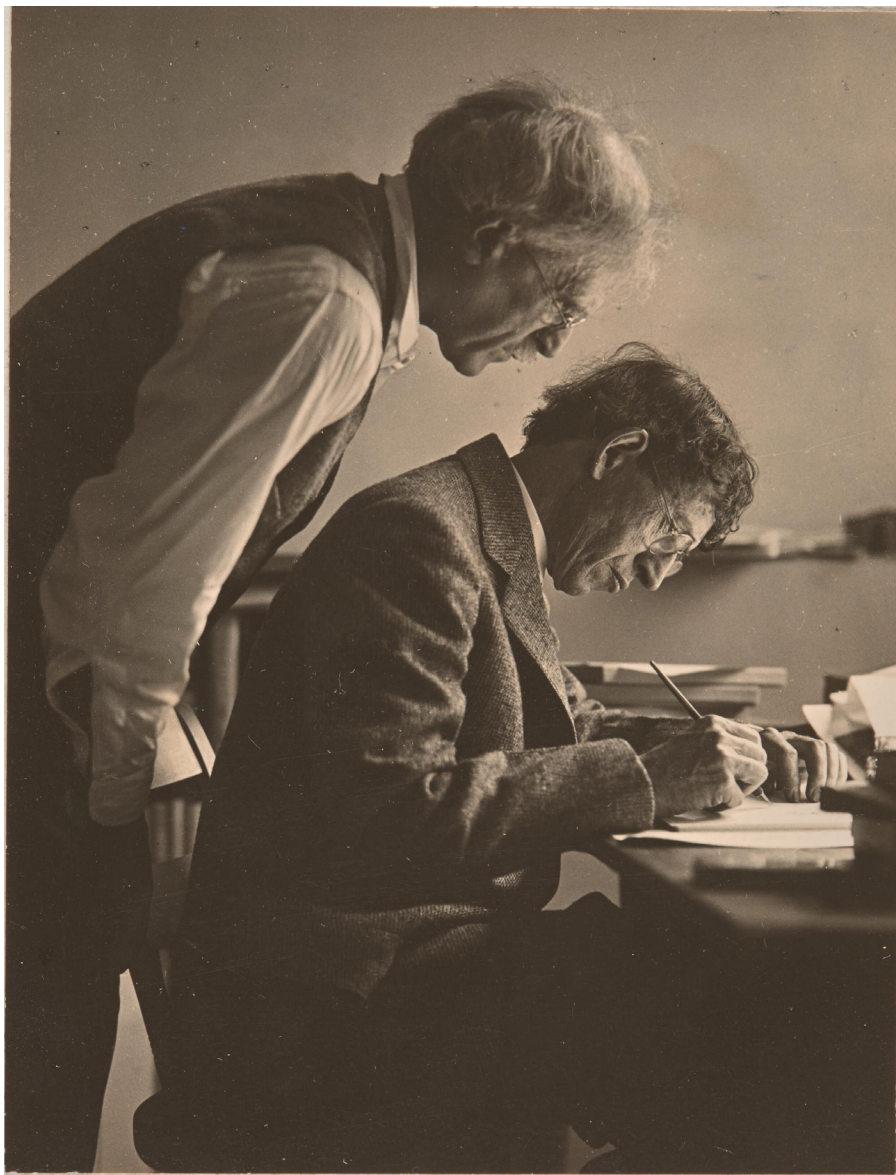
Marsden Hartley, *Movement No. 1 (Provincetown)*, 1916, oil on Beaverboard (TM), 21 x 17 1/8 x 1 7/8 in., Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949, 1949-18-9



Charles Demuth, *Bathers, Provincetown*, 1916, watercolor and graphite on paper, 17 3/4 x 9 3/8 in, Demuth Museum, Lancaster, PA

Marsden Hartley and Charles Demuth were close friends and artistic colleagues. The pair frequently traveled together, including a trip to Bermuda and summers in Provincetown, Massachusetts in the late 1910s. Though the two artists chose different mediums – Hartley using oil and Demuth using watercolor – they both were inspired by the ships they witnessed in these beach communities showcasing large triangular sails at the top of their works. Hartley's abstract composition depicts a large sail blowing in the breeze atop a coiled hull with jagged waves crashing against the ship. Hartley was known for using bold lines and rich colors to speak symbolically about a subject. Demuth's watercolor features four figures enjoying the beach with a sail boat passing by in the background. Both artists use a limited color palette in these works with Demuth choosing mostly blues, grays, and creams, and Hartley utilizing grays, yellows, and oranges.





Herbert J. Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz and John Marin at An American Place*, 1931, gelatin silver study print, Philadelphia Museum of Art: From the Collection of Dorothy Norman, 1997, 1997-146-81 © Herbert J. Seligmann



# John Marin

1870 - 1953

Born in Rutherford, New Jersey in 1870, Marin was among the first American artists to create abstract paintings and is credited for influencing the Abstract Expressionist art movement. Marin studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts from 1899-1901 under Thomas Anshutz and William Merritt Chase, after which he traveled throughout Europe for several years. There, Marin achieved new levels of abstraction in watercolor, experimenting with varying levels of transparencies, dramatic opacities, and the treatment of line. His watercolors are done with a sense of freedom that became his trademark, especially in his seascapes and cityscapes. Marin was an early member of the Stieglitz circle and is considered one of the finest watercolorists of the 20th century. Marin's association with Alfred Stieglitz would last nearly forty years. From 1909 until his death in 1946, Stieglitz showed Marin's work almost every year in one of his galleries.

# Herbert J. Seligmann

1891 - 1984

Critic, poet, essayist, and photographer Herbert J. Seligmann was a close friend and associate of Stieglitz beginning in the 1910s. Throughout their friendship, he transcribed numerous conversations and remarks by Stieglitz and published them in *Alfred Stieglitz Talking* (1966). He also wrote about and photographed fellow modern artists including Georgia O'Keeffe, John Marin, and Marsden Hartley. However, Seligmann is more well known as a writer and civil rights activist. Throughout his career he wrote articles and books advocating for the civil rights of African-Americans and criticizing the rise of Nazism in Europe. Seligmann was the first publicity director for the NAACP from 1919 to 1932 and after World War I, held the position of publicity director of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. He would go on to become a writer for the Jewish Telegraph Agency, publishing an expose on the Nazi Party and their views on race in 1939.



John Marin, *Weehawken Sequence No. 41*, c. 1916, oil on canvas board, 15 x 17 1/8 x 1 1/8 in., Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of C. K. Williams, II, 2019, 2019-30-9 © Estate of John Marin / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Charles Demuth, *The Canal - New Hope, PA*, 1908-11, watercolor on paper, 6 3/4 x 9 3/4 in., Demuth Museum, Lancaster, PA: Gift of William F. and Doris W. Herr

John Marin and Charles Demuth shared a love for the watercolor medium, and Demuth created a poster portrait in homage to his peer. Like Demuth, Marin drew inspiration from urban architecture and his Weehawken Sequence of nearly 100 works created in the 1910s depicts the river, warehouses, and landscape of the then industrial area across the Hudson from Manhattan. In this boldly abstracted oil, buildings occupy the center of the composition while the long foreground depicts the natural landscape. In *The Canal - New Hope, PA*, Demuth highlights another town on a river. The building forms are much less abstract and more densely packed, while natural elements are highlighted in green and blue tones. Like Marin, Demuth created this work after returning from Europe. He spent the summer of 1908 in New Hope when the town was the center of the Pennsylvanian Impressionist movement and he was experimenting with techniques he was learning while studying at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.



Carl Van Vechten, *Charles Demuth and Georgia O'Keeffe*, May 3, 1932, gelatin silver print, Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of John Mark Lutz, 1965, 1965-86-3434



# Georgia O'Keeffe

1887 - 1986

Born on a farm near Sun Prairie, Wisconsin in 1887, Georgia O'Keeffe was determined to make her way as an artist at a young age. She studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Art Students League in New York, where she learned the techniques of traditional painting before experimenting with abstraction. It was these early abstract drawings that caught the attention of Alfred Stieglitz, who would later become her husband, and became the first to exhibit her work in 1916. By the mid-1920s, O'Keeffe was recognized as one of the most important and successful American artists. She depicted essentially American subjects often tied to a specific place, ranging from urban skyscrapers, still lifes, and abstracted natural objects. In New York she came to know the many early American modernists who were part of Stieglitz's circle and her work was often exhibited by Stieglitz in his galleries. By the end of the 1920s, O'Keeffe made the first of many trips to northern New Mexico, inspiring a new direction for her artwork and eventually becoming her permanent home. Even though her works show elements of different modernist techniques like Surrealism and Precisionism, O'Keeffe's style is uniquely her own.

# Carl Van Vechten

1880 - 1964

Carl Van Vechten was known as a writer, photographer, and patron of some of the most influential figures of the New York avant-garde movement. After moving to New York in 1906, Van Vechten soon became the first American critic of modern dance. He would go on to publish a multitude of essays and novels before turning his attention to photography in the early 1930s. He photographed many of the preeminent creative talents and was a frequent guest of many artist salons of the period. His subjects range from figures of the Harlem Renaissance to modern writers, artists, and performers including Langston Hughes, Billie Holiday, Marcel Duchamp, Henri Matisse, F. Scott Fitzgerald and countless others. Such an assortment of famous subjects gives a sense of both Van Vechten's interests and his considerable role in defining the cultural landscape of the twentieth century. Van Vechten remained active, writing and photographing, until his death in 1964.



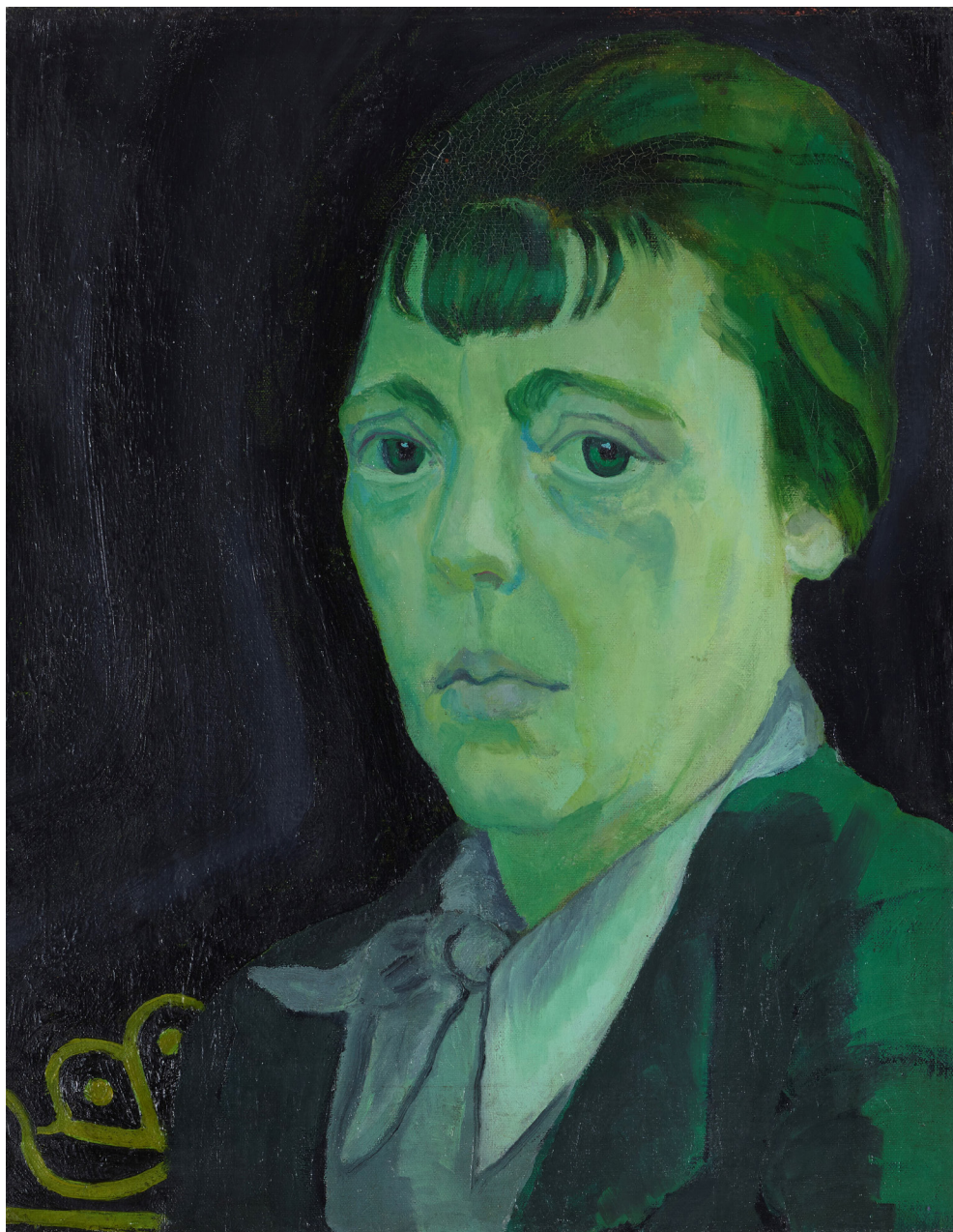
Georgia O'Keeffe, *Peach and Glass*, 1927, oil on canvas, 16 1/8 × 13 1/8 × 2 1/4 in., Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of Dr. Herman Lorber, 1944, 1944-95-4 © The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Charles Demuth, *Apples*, n.d., watercolor and graphite on paper, 9 1/2 x 11 1/4 in., Demuth Museum, Lancaster, PA: Partial gift of Jean and Eberhard Gromoll

Georgia O'Keeffe and Charles Demuth share a lot of similar subject matter, using flowers, urban structures, and produce in many of their works. As close friends, they often would discuss each other's latest artwork in correspondence and even paint together during one of Georgia's visits to Lancaster. Both O'Keeffe's *Peach and Glass* and Demuth's *Apples* depict fruit in a simplistic setting, highlighting the produce's color and form. O'Keeffe's painting includes other elements like a plate and cup while Demuth's watercolor has the fruit floating on a blank page. Demuth's work may even be considered unfinished as one of the three apples is merely a pencil outline and no pigment has been applied. Demuth employs Cubist principles with geometric reflections of light bouncing off of the apples' surfaces, while O'Keeffe's peach shows more of a gradient of orange, pink, and yellow tones. O'Keeffe's work demonstrates more depth of field with shadows cast behind the cup and peach.





Helen Torr, *Self Portrait*, n.d., oil on canvas, 14 x 11 in., Art Bridges



# Helen Torr

1886 - 1967

Nicknamed “Reds” for the vibrant color of her hair, Helen Torr won a scholarship to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts where she studied under William Merritt Chase. She also studied at the Drexel Institute alongside modernist artists Charles Demuth and Charles Sheeler. Torr worked alongside her husband and artist Arthur Dove as well as Georgia O’Keeffe to develop a characteristically American approach to Modernism in her own distinct style. Torr is representative of the many long overlooked female artists who are finally garnering recognition for their contributions to American Modernism. Despite consistent support from Dove, Torr never enjoyed the same success or support from Stieglitz and the community surrounding him.

Most of her work was not shown during her lifetime, having been exhibited only twice. The first in a show organized by O’Keeffe in 1927, and the other at Stieglitz’s gallery, An American Place, in 1933. The latter was a joint show with Dove. Although she requested that her work be destroyed upon her death, Torr’s sister went on to donate much of her work to the Heckscher Museum in New York, where a major retrospective was mounted in 1972.



While Helen Torr and Charles Demuth may have met during their studies at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Drexel Institute in the early 1900s, their professional relationship was mainly developed through Torr's husband Arthur Dove and her occasional showings with Stieglitz. Both Torr and Demuth feature floral compositions in their work. Torr's *Calla Lily* painting centers a white lily with buds and foliage surrounding it in shimmering tones. Demuth's *Iris* places a blooming flower at the center of the work with other stems filling out the composition. Demuth's treatment of the flowers is more delicate with blotting and salting watercolor techniques, while Torr's flowers are more dominant forms composed from bold brush strokes and sweeping lines.



Left: Helen Torr, *Calla Lily*, c. 1950, gouache on board, 26 x 22 1/2 in., collection of Den Clabaugh

Above: Charles Demuth, *Irises*, c. 1925, watercolor on paper, 13 3/8 x 9 3/4 in., private collection on loan to the Demuth Museum



# Edith Clifford Williams

1885 - 1971

An early pioneer in the American abstract art movement, Edith Clifford Williams - known as Clifford - was born into a prominent family in Ithaca, New York. After studying at Yale's School of the Fine Arts, she traveled to Europe and was briefly enrolled at the Académie Julian in Paris in 1906. Little is known of Clifford until her emergence in New York in 1914 as one of the few female artists in Alfred Stieglitz's orbit. She regarded both Stieglitz and 291 greatly, corresponding with the gallerist throughout her life. Clifford had a long-running romantic relationship with fellow avant-garde artist of the Stieglitz circle, Charles Duncan, who is famously depicted in Charles Demuth's poster portrait of 1924. Some scholars believe that, like in Dove's poster portrait, Clifford is also alluded to in the painting. In 1917, Clifford showed two works, including *Two Rhythms*, at the inaugural exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in New York. The following year, Williams' father passed, causing her to return to Ithaca, stop painting, and destroy much of her work.







While it is unknown how frequently Edith Clifford Williams and Charles Demuth may have interacted, Demuth likely knew Williams through her association with Charles Duncan. Like Duncan, very little of Clifford's work remains, and *Two Rhythms* is one of a handful of canvases surviving. The highly abstracted work features arching gold lines to create triangular shapes and undulating green lines in the center of the composition. The lines intersect to convey a lyric sensibility of two distinct rhythms. Similarly, Demuth's *Flowers, White and Brown*, displays long curvy lines of stems of flowers. While Demuth's forms are representational and identifiable, both works have a flattened field and soft hues.

Left: Edith Clifford Williams, *Two Rhythms*, 1916, oil on canvas, 31 1/4 x 31 3/16 x 2 3/4 in., Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950, 1950-134-524

Above: Charles Demuth, *Flowers, White and Brown*, c. 1915, watercolor on paper, 10 7/8 x 8 1/4 in., Demuth Museum, Lancaster, PA: Gift of the Junior League of Lancaster



Charles Demuth, *Self Portrait*, 1907, oil on canvas, 26 1/16 x 18 in., Demuth Museum, Lancaster, PA: Gift of Margaret Lestz

# Charles Demuth

1883 - 1935

Born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1883, Charles Demuth began art lessons as a child after being diagnosed with a disease that left him bedridden. He would go on to study at Franklin and Marshall Academy, Drexel University, and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Demuth traveled to Paris in the subsequent years, engaging with fellow artists and absorbing modern avant-garde ideas and styles including the emergence of Cubism and Fauvism. While traveling abroad, living in Greenwich Village, and summering in Provincetown broadened his stylistic perspective, Demuth always returned to his hometown of Lancaster, Pennsylvania to work. It is here in the small second floor studio that he completed some of his most famous works. Demuth helped pave the way for American Modernism in his development of the Poster Portrait (an anticipatory genre to Pop Art in America), his contributions to the Precisionist art movement, and his mastery in watercolor. During his lifetime, he gained the respect and enjoyed the friendships of many artists including Alfred Stieglitz, Georgia O'Keeffe, Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, Carl Van Vechten, and many more.



# Contribute

Use the gallery camera in our lobby to take a photograph of yourself or someone visiting with you today. Post the image on our Capturing Community board to help us build a representation of our community.

# Reflect

How do you think photography influenced modern art?

What similarities and differences do you see between these artists' works?

Who are your mentors that influence you and your work?

How can you encourage others to find their “voice” and pursue their talents?

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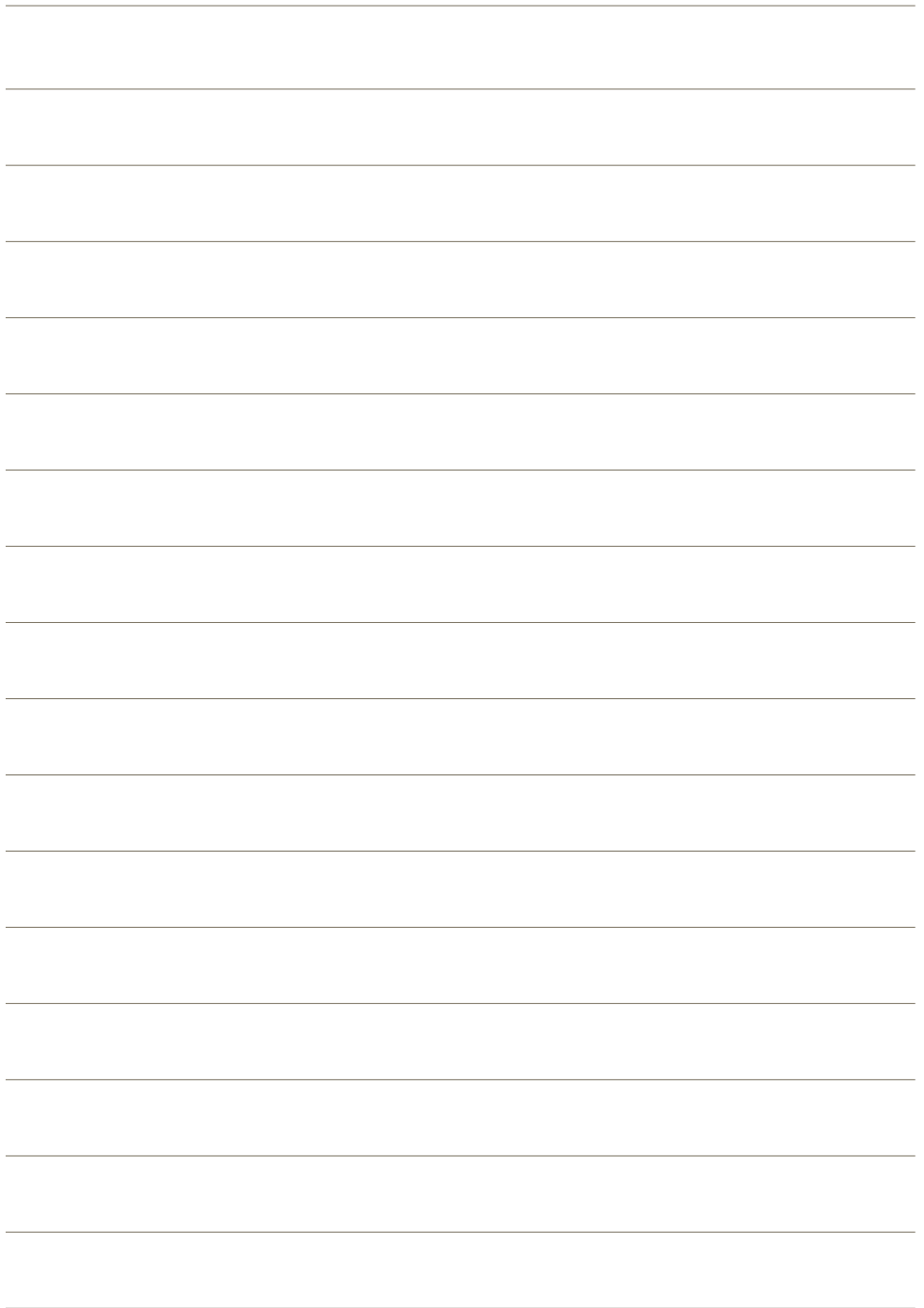
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# Create

Draw your own work inspired by any of the pieces in this exhibit. Then consider how Charles Demuth might approach the same subject and create a sketch that's influenced by what you've learned about Demuth's work.





# Generous Support for this viewing guide provided by **Art Bridges**

**We are grateful for the leadership and generosity from Art Bridges  
and the Philadelphia Museum of Art for this exhibition and its  
programming.**

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