

## **Horace Pippin**

born West Chester, PA 1888; died West Chester, PA 1946

### ***Shell Holes and Observation Balloon, Champagne Sector***

c. 1931–1937

Oil on muslin

Horace Pippin's chilling landscape of the bombed-out French town of Champagne recalls his service during World War I (1914–1918) with the 369th Infantry Regiment. Known as the Harlem Hellfighters, the heroic all-Black unit suffered the most casualties of any American regiment during the war. Pippin himself lost the use of his right hand at Champagne in 1918.

His memories of ruptured earth and collapsing farmhouses remained vivid more than a decade later, when he taught himself painting to rehabilitate his injured arm and contend with the trauma. He wrote, "I can never forget suffering, and I will never forget sunset, that is when you could see it, so I came home with all of it in my mind and I Paint from it to Day."

**Gift of Mrs. John Merryman, Jr., BMA 1967.48**

## **Arshile Gorky**

born Khorkom, Ottoman Empire (present-day Dilkaya, Turkey)  
c. 1904; died Sherman, CT 1948

### ***The Unattainable***

1945

Oil on canvas

Delicate forms made of thinned paint seem to appear and fade away. Arshile Gorky embraced Surrealism, an approach to art that sought to give visual form to subconscious thoughts, and infused it with his memories of Armenia. With *The Unattainable*, Gorky used oil paint as a medium for fine, calligraphic drawing, as if to channel the unfiltered impulses of his mind more fluidly.

Gorky and his sister immigrated to America in 1920 as refugees from the Armenian Genocide. Their forced departure and their mother's death during the journey had a lasting impact on his art. By the 1940s, Gorky was established in New York and in the circles of Surrealist artists who had relocated from Europe due to the turmoil of World War II (1939–1945).

Purchase with exchange funds from Blanche Adler Bequest, Frederic W. Cone, William A. Dickey, Jr., Nelson and Juanita Greif Gutman Collection, Wilmer Hoffman, Mr. and Mrs. Albert Lion, Saidie A. May Bequest, Philip B. Perlman Bequest, Leo M. Rogers, Mrs. James N. Rosenberg, and Paul Vallotton, BMA 1964.15

# Isamu Noguchi

born Los Angeles, CA 1904; died New York, NY 1988

## *Floating Lunar*

1943–1952

Gypsum plaster, paint, wood, replacement cotton thread

Here, sculptural elements are precariously suspended in space by a thread, seemingly orbiting around a lunar surface. This other-worldly composition may have been influenced by Isamu Noguchi's experience at an internment camp. Following the 1942 bombing of Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt declared all Americans of Japanese ancestry "enemy aliens," forcing 113,000 Japanese Americans on the West Coast into camps and surveilling those on the East Coast. Although Noguchi lived in New York, he voluntarily entered an Arizona internment camp with the goal of creating hope through art. However, he quickly became disillusioned. Upon his return to New York, Noguchi created this work as part of his *Lunar* series, a group of illuminated light sculptures influenced by the sun of the Arizona desert and his fascination with the "reflection of light on form."

Gift of Edward M. Benesch, BMA 1961.46

## **Joaquín Torres-García**

born Montevideo, Uruguay 1874; died Montevideo, Uruguay 1949

### ***Grafismo Constructivo Sobre Cinco Tonos (Graphic Construction Over Five Tones)***

1943

Oil on canvas mounted on Masonite

In this painting, Joaquín Torres-García flattened space and used a complex system of vertical and horizontal lines to present an abstracted view of the railway station in Montevideo, Uruguay (Ferrocarril Central or F.C.C.). The artist lived in Europe and the United States for over 40 years and returned to Montevideo after being starstruck by an exhibition of pre-Columbian art in Paris, France.

Here, Torres-García applied the five tones of red, yellow, blue, white, and black, a palette inspired by the work of Dutch artist Piet Mondrian (1872–1944). He depicted the city through a style influenced by Tiwanaku, Nazca, and Incan art. Torres-García believed that his hybrid international style could express universally humanist concepts—a style he called “constructive universalism.”

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Alfredo Halegua, Washington, D.C., BMA 1979.168

## **Berenice Abbott**

born Springfield, OH 1898; died Monson, ME 1991

### ***Court of the First Model Tenements in New York City***

1936

Gelatin silver print

Friends of Photography Fund, BMA 1986.9

## **Consuelo Kanaga**

born Astoria, OR 1894; died Yorktown Heights, NY 1978

### ***New York El***

1924

Gelatin silver print

Chessie System Railroads Fund, BMA 1987.19

## **Alma R. Lavenson**

born Rochester, NY 1897; died New York, NY 1989

### ***Carquinez Bridge***

1933

Gelatin silver print

Purchase with exchange funds from the Edward Joseph Gallagher III Memorial Collection; and partial gift of George H. Dalsheimer, Baltimore, BMA 1988.413

In the early 20th century, women photographers boldly captured the radical new structures of modern American life as well as its economic disparities.

Berenice Abbott artfully documented derelict buildings and homes of working-class immigrants in New York City. With rails glistening in the sunlight and snaking around skyscrapers, Consuelo Kanaga's image captures New York City's elevated train system (nicknamed the "El"), a icon of modernity. Kanaga later used her lens to raise awareness of the issues faced by marginalized communities. Alma Lavenson depicted the Carquinez Bridge from below as if in awe of the capabilities of modern technology. The bridge, constructed in 1927, was part of the direct route from Sacramento to San Francisco, connecting inland California to the coast. This bridge was later demolished in favor of a new, earthquake-resistant suspension bridge.



# Ben Shahn

born Kaunas, Lithuania, 1898; died New York, NY 1969

## *Six*

1952

Tempera on linen stretched over plywood

With tightly clasped hands, six figures sit in a row on folding chairs. They seem to be anxiously waiting. Ben Shahn made this painting in the same year that he published a similar composition in *Harper's Magazine* alongside an article by journalist Mary Heaton Vorse (1874–1966) that uncovered the inhumane working conditions and exploitation of New York City's longshoremen. Every day, longshoremen waited for the “shape”—the formation of a work crew. Only those who had an inside track with the union bosses were hired.

Edward Joseph Gallagher III Memorial Collection, BMA 1953.7



Ben Shahn, illustration for *Harper's Magazine*, April 1952

# Robert Henri

born Cincinnati, OH 1865; died New York, NY 1929

## *The Red Shawl*

1909

Oil on canvas

Between 1909 and 1916, Robert Henri painted many portraits of Spanish American modern dancer Betalo Rubino (1893–1936), who rose to popularity in New York during the late 1910s. Henri used the loosely painted red shawl seen here to suggest stereotypical Spanish costumes in his portraits of singers and dancers. In their work, Henri and Rubino drew upon the American fascination with Spain and its historical ties to Islamic cultures. Henri's exoticized portrayals of Spanish subjects appealed to American audiences. He was a leader of the Ashcan School, a group of artists inspired by the urban life and working classes of New York City.

Gift of Alvin R.L. Dohme in Memory of his Parents, Dr. and Mrs. Alfred R.L. Dohme, BMA 1958.18



# Richmond Barthé

born Bay St. Louis, MS 1901; died Pasadena, CA 1989

## *Féral Benga*

Original model 1935; this cast c. 1960

Bronze

The curve of the dancer's muscular body, balanced by the large sword arcing over his head, enhances the drama of this sculpture. *Féral Benga* was the stage name of Senegalese cabaret dancer François Benga (1906–1957), a muse to Harlem Renaissance artists including sculptor Richmond Barthé. Benga, an acclaimed dancer in Paris, developed a *danse du sabre*, which drew upon exoticized stereotypes of Black bodies and was popular with white audiences. Benga opened a Senegalese restaurant in the mid-1930s, using photographs of himself in his marketing.

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Advertisement and menu for *Féral Benga* (cabaret-restaurant), c. 1934. From “*Féral Benga: African Muse of Modernism*,” by James Smalls. In *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, Number 41, November 2017. Courtesy Bibliothèque nationale de France