University of Nebraska - Lincoln
DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Sheldon Museum of Art Catalogues and Publications

Sheldon Museum of Art

1-1-1992

Fish, Fowl and Fauna

Daphne A. Deeds
Curator at Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska- Lincoln

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/sheldonpubs

Part of the Art and Design Commons

Deeds, Daphne A., "Fish, Fowl and Fauna" (1992). *Sheldon Museum of Art Catalogues and Publications.* Paper 30.
http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/sheldonpubs/30

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Sheldon Museum of Art at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sheldon Museum of Art Catalogues and Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

FISH, FOWL AND FAUNA

Paul Johnsgard, SWAN DECOY, 1971, painted wood, 12 1/2 × 8 1/6 × 6 in.

SHELDON MEMORIAL ART GALLERY

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

FIFTH ANNUAL STATEWIDE TOURING EXHIBITION PROGRAM

John Woodhouse
Audubon
1812-1862
CALIFORNIAN HARE
n.d., lithograph
6 1/16 × 7 7/16 in.
UNL-F.M. Hall
Collection
1972.H-1693

This artist and scientist is primarily known for his detailed studies of birds which means this work depicting a rabbit is unique to Audubon. *Californian Hare* is one of the oldest pieces in the exhibition and shows that one of the earliest functions of art, particularly in the pre-camera American period, was exact representation. The hare is tense, revealing muscles and alert eyes and ears. It is a study of "hares-in-general," by a biologist/artist whose main purpose was to examine objectively rather than offer cuteness or the invitation to become personally attached.

Jose De Creeft
1884-1982
JUANITO
1945, serpentine 11 1/2
× 8 1/2 × 6 in.
UNL-F.M. Hall
Collection
1946.H-266

The sculptor was popular in America in the 1950s. The piece is directly carved from stone and, like the wood carved *Swan* of Paul Johnsgard, is a contrast to the lost wax process of bronze sculpture by Alexander Calder and the unidentified craftsmen of the *Rooster* gate weight. Staring into the eyes of this cat, one may find glimmers of intensity that suggest wisdom. Or perhaps the creature's intelligence is limited to that sphinx-like expression.

Alexander Calder
1898-1976
SNAKE ON ARCH
1943-44, bronze
44 × 28 × 18 in.
UNL-F.M. Hall
Collection
1945.H-258

This piece is a "stabile" or free-standing kinetic sculpture. For many years, *Snake on Arch* was exhibited at Morrill Hall on the University of Nebraska campus where, in the days before tight security systems, viewers could push the snake to watch it swing. The work precedes Calder's invention of the mobile but reflects his fascination with balance and simple, dignified, graceful movement. Unlike Calder's famous airy mobiles, *Snake on Arch* is heavy, cast bronze, whose actual weight is an ironic contrast to its appearance of weightlessness.

John Henry Dolph
1835-1903
BEAGLE PUPPIES
n.d., oil on canvas
16 × 24 in.
UNL-Gift of Mrs.
Florence Dolph Warner
1916.U-1549

These soft, loveable, playful puppies seem to be from an uncomplicated world of innocence and gentle domesticity. The artist reflects a painting genre that has generally been suppressed during the latter half of the twentieth-century by abstract art styles and generally harsh, challenging themes. However, realism is again stirring among artists, and succeeding generations of viewers have fresh perspectives. But regardless of one's likes or dislikes, this painting of "beagle puppies" is worthy of preserving because it reflects a Victorian tradition of fascination for quaint domestic subjects.

Edward Arcenio Chavez
1917-
THE WATERING TANK
c. 1937-38, tempera on
gessoed masonite
18 3/4 × 29 1/2 in.
UNL-U.S. Government
Allocation
1943.WPA-104

The artist made this work during the 1930s, the period in art history of social realism and American Scene painting. The figures, people of working class rural America, are depicted prominently on the canvas. And yet—there is mystery. Who are these men with blurred faces? Why didn't the artist give them distinct features? What are they saying? Are those spirited looking horses as gentle as they seem in the frozen moment? Is the artist conveying something more than simply a picturesque bucolic moment?

Raul Dufy
1877-1953
SERPENT
n.d., woodcut
11 1/2 × 9 in.
UNL-F.M. Hall
Collection
1962.H-795

One of the few works in the exhibition by a European artist, this woodcut is representative of the early twentieth-century style, Art Nouveau, which is characterized by curvilinear, organic patterning. The *Serpent* also refers to primitive, tribal themes and exotic imagery which fascinated Dufy and other French modernists of that early modern period. The woodcut is a form for printmaking whose method can be used for comparison with those of the other prints in the exhibition. Thematically, Dufy's print might resemble a two-dimensional interpretation of Calder's subject of *Snake on Arch*.

FISH, FOWL AND FAUNA

As the art musem of the University of Nebraska, the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery staff is committed to making the exceptional permanent collection available to all Nebraskans. The Sheldon Gallery's Statewide Touring Exhibition Program realizes that goal by circulating art of the highest quality to communities throughout the state. Each Statewide exhibition addresses an art historical genre or theme, and together the five exhibitions constitute a mini-art history course and a unique focus on the Sheldon Gallery's renowned collection. As the exhibition series continues, the relationships between diverse artworks are increasingly apparent.

FISH, FOWL AND FAUNA, offers a selection of animal images drawn from the permanent collection that document a variety of stylistic, art historical and technical resolutions to the familiar subjects. Like the previous statewide exhibitions, FISH, FOWL AND FAUNA spans approximately one-hundred fifty years and includes examples of painting, sculpture, and works on paper, made by both academically trained and folk artists. From internationally renowned sculptor Alexander Calder's abstract bronze, *Snake on Arch,* to the charming iron frog decoy made by an unknown artist, and from John Woodhouse Audubon's 19th century zoological study of the *Californian Hare* to the expressionist painting, *Longhorn #7,* by Theodore J. Waddell, a wide variety of artistic responses to the animal kingdom is evident.

While many staff members contribute to the year long preparation of each exhibition, we are especially appreciative of the efforts of the Community Programs Coordinator, Lonnie Pierson Dunbier. Ms. Dunbier has authored the notes which support the photographs herein, and she has trained innumerable volunteer docents to conduct local tours in each hosting community. We also thank Curatorial Assistant, Karen Williams, for her thoughtful design of this brochure.

The Statewide Touring Exhibition Program succeeds in large part due to the continuing support of the Nebraska Art Association, a non-profit corporation dedicated to the advancement of the visual arts in Nebraska through educational and cultural enrichment opportunities. The decision to make the Statewide Touring Exhibition Program a priority project has been an essential element of this collaborative effort. Of particular importance is the Nebraska Art Association's support of the Community Programs Coordinator position through funding from the Cooper Foundation and the Baldwin Foundation.

Also invaluable are the many local sponsors who support the exhibition in their community. Their appreciation of both the immediate and long range goals of the Statewide Touring Exhibition Program is especially meaningful. Their generosity has enabled tens of thousands of fellow citizens of the state to encounter works of art of the highest quality.

Perhaps the most important component of this joint venture is the selfless effort of the many volunteer docents in each hosting community. Their willingness to receive often complex information and disseminate it to the school children and adults of Nebraska is the vital link which binds the Sheldon staff, the supporters, and viewers of each statewide exhibition together.

Daphne Anderson Deeds
Curator/Assistant Director
Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery

Debbie Smith
1952-
SPOTTED FISH
1991, painted wood
10 1/2 × 27 × 3 3/4 in.
UNL-University Acquisition Trust
1991.U-4286

Karl Zerbe
1903-1972
THE MAGNIFICENT FISH
1944, encaustic on canvas
25 1/2 × 42 7/8 in.
UNL-F.M. Hall Collection
1945.H-253

Although it was acquired in Hawaii, this sculpture originated in Knoxville, Tennessee where the artist creates, in her words, "funny fanciful creatures" from remnants found in dwindling wood piles. She says, "I love animals—the shapes they come in—their expressions. They are a limitless inspiration. In my work, I like expressing that energy of life with the energy of a primitive style of woodworking." Indeed, with its bold polka dots, pronounced mouth, fierce teeth and bright coloring, the unidentified species of fish seems most formidable, and one suspects, none too friendly.

This non-traditional still life is an example of American surrealism. The huge fish and fish vertebrae, the model boat, netting, sea-shells, and the cherub which may be a ship ornament seem dreamlike although the basic context is realistic. The work, although a still life, is not typical of that genre because the light source is unidentified, emanating from some mysterious place. The colors are strong and, with their binder of encaustic or beeswax, reveal Zerbe's fascination with chemistry as well as nature. He was, until he discovered his allergic reaction to these materials, a foremost exponent of this method.

Bror Julius Olsson
Nordfeldt
1878-1955
SEA, ROCK AND FISH
1950, oil on canvas
37 × 48 in.
UNL-F.M. Hall Collection
1981.H-278

This Swedish born artist became an American and settled in New England where he painted many coastal scenes such as *Sea, Rock and Fish*. He was fascinated by the ruggedness of the land and sea scapes which he monumentalized by reducing forms to elemental shapes. Because of this direct style as well as bold coloration, many viewers find similarities between Nordfeldt and his contemporaries, Marsden Hartley and Milton avery. Disavowing total abstraction, Nordfeldt expressed with some realism highly personal emotions about natural landmarks.

Mario Sironi
1885-1961
TWO HORSEMEN
n.d., oil on canvas
12 × 14 13/16 in.
NAA-Gift of Mrs. Thomas C. Woods
1964.N-67

On this canvas, the Italian born artist used techniques of Abstract Expressionism that were popular in the 1950s and 60s. With a palette knife, Sironi thickly and broadly applied paint of neutral, muted colors. The forms, characteristic of the highly personal expression of the artist, are simple and abstract and suggest that Sironi may be more interested in manipulating paint than detailing or elaborating a subject. Perhaps for the artist and for some viewers, *Two Horsemen* may be of more interest for its contrasting of light and dark colors than for the confrontation between men and animals.

Ptd. L. Prang & Co.
SILK WORM AND MOTHS
n.d., chromolithograph
7 13/16 × 5 1/8 in.
UNL-University Collection
1991.U-4277

In the mid to late 19th century, Louis Prang of Boston was one of the most talented, financially successful, and famous of American chromolithographers. He experimented with his first print of this kind soon after the Civil War and began reproducing famous paintings as well as making the first Christmas cards. Because of their subtle, opaque quality, Prang's chromolithographs resembled original watercolors and were highly popular. The Sheldon Gallery has a large collection of chromolithographs including *Silk Worm and Moths*, part of a series of biology textbook illustrations.

Beth Van Hoesen
1926-
SALLY
1979, etching
11 1/2 × 13 1/2 in.
UNL-James E.M. and Helen Thomson Collection
1985.U-3764

This etching was inspired by the artist's personal affection for her lop-eared pet rabbit, Sally. Van Hoesen said, "My work contains what I respond to. I set up a relationship with the subject. That's what I want people to feel and respond to." The first of many mass-produced prints by Van Hoesen, *Sally* is now widely distributed because of its popularity with many people who feel immediately responsive to the soft-looking, loveable creature. Although *Sally* may seem a relatively simple subject, the etching with its subject matter, detailing, and muted colors can be related to the fifteenth-century German engraver, Albrecht Dürer.

Unknown American
19th Century
ROOSTER GATE WEIGHT
n.d., cast iron
15 5/8 × 17 1/2 in.
UNL-Gift of David and Rosemary Seyler
1984.U-3632

This bronze gate weight is an excellent example of folk art that combines utilitarian purpose with imaginative qualities. Looking at the rooster's graceful, dignified stance and the balance between its comb and fringe, a viewer might be deceivingly persuaded that the piece is nearly weightless. Skillfully the unidentified artisan both reduced the familiar, feathered rooster to its most elemental aspects and injected a strong sense of vitality and dignity into a creature whose only purpose is to "weight the gate."

Theodore J. Waddell
1941-
LONGHORN #7
1983, oil on canvas
36 × 48 in.
NAA-Gift in memory of Mrs. Ruth Brownell Bullock
1985.N-668

On this canvas, the artist combines his talents as an oil painter with his interests as a Montana rancher. Also a sculptor, Waddell is known for his highly individualized interpretation of western subjects such as cattle, horses and ranch country landscape. Stylistically, *Longhorn #7* is an example of the Abstract Expressionist tradition with its heavy application of color, bold gestural strokes and the conveying of some realism with a direct encounter with a calf. The painting with its strong suggestion of "cowness" depicts an isolated, perhaps vulnerable and innocent animal standing in an empty space.

Unkown
FROG DECOY
n.d., painted wood and metal
7 1/8 × 2 3/4 × 1 1/2 in.
Collection Michael Bellamy

This object, of unknown origin and craftsman, is a cast iron fish decoy recently purchased by an Omaha antique dealer in a shop in Galena, Illinois. Shaped from molten iron and painted when cooled, the frog is a wonderful example of original design and coloration. Notice the symmetrical way the legs are formed at the joints. The work is also valuable because it is an object from a dying tradition of artists who worked in cast iron.

James Gillray
1757-1815
FAT CATTLE
1802, hand colored etching
11 1/4 × 10 1/8 in.
UNL-F.M. Hall Collection
1972.H-1637

Dating back to the early 1800s, this lithograph is from the English satirical and caricature tradition of Hogarth and is both thematically and technically provocative. The canvas is shared by two figures—the large animal and the almost equally large and bovine appearing man whose haughty expression may seem ironic to those of us standing back with the full comparative view. To create this work, the artist etched stone from which the prints were then made. He then applied color individually to the lithographs.

Paul Johnsgard
1931-
SWAN DECOY
1971, painted wood
12 1/2 × 8 1/2 × 6 in.
Nebraska Art Association
1990.N-701

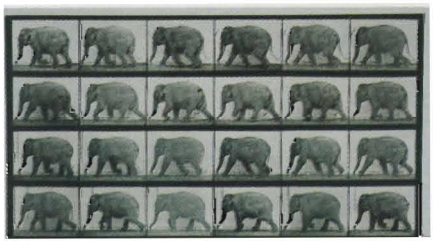
The carver of this highly realistic life size swan is an avowed bird lover and bird watcher whose aesthetic appreciation of these animals is evident in the workmanship of the sculpture. Dr. Johnsgard, Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, is nationally renowned, both for his scientific research and writing about waterfowl and for his artistic expression through writing, drawing, painting, and woodcarving. Deeply concerned about the preservation of bird sanctuaries and migratory patterns, Johnsgard is also a strong advocate of water resource conservation so that creatures such as this swan continue to live in Nebraska.

Dwight Kirsch
1899-1981
MANDRILL IN TECHNICOLOR
1946, color serigraph
13 1/4 × 18 1/4 in.
UNL-
Gift of George Tuck
1991.U-4278

A native Nebraskan, Kirsch has a reputation as a prolific painter as well as an accomplished art teacher and administrator. From 1931-47, he chaired the Art Department of the University of Nebraska, and from 1936-50, was the Director at Morrill Hall of the University of Nebraska Art Collection, now housed at Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery. As an artist, he is known for stylistic and thematic diversity with pieces ranging from realism to cubism. This serigraph was purchased in Texas many years ago by George Tuck, then a child and now UNL Professor of Journalism. Tuck recently donated *Mandrill in Technicolor* to the Sheldon Gallery.

S.C. Lixars
GRYSTES SALMOIDES
HARLEQUIN DUCK
FELIS DIARDII-FEMALE
n.d., hand colored lithograph
3 5/8 × 5 5/8 in.
UNL-University Collection
1991.U-4274,5,6

These prints seem highly appropriate for the exhibition, FISH, FOWL AND FAUNA because they, like the Audubon prints, reveal interest in the details of the natural world. Although very little is known about the artist or the origin of these works, it is assumed they are after paintings and that the color was added by hand following the lithographic process. Undated, the pictures appear to reflect Victorian or late 19th century fascination with realistic aspects of flora and fauna of the natural world.



Eadward Muybridge
1830-1904
ELEPHANT WALKING
1887, collotype
8 1/8 × 14 7/8 in.
UNL-F.M. Hall Collection
1975.H-2046

This print is from a series of photographs dating from the late 1800s. Muybridge, a self-taught photographer, was a major pioneer of these developments. He began exploring methods of instantaneous photography when Leland Stanford of California asked Muybridge to find proof that race horses had short periods of time when all four feet were off the ground. For this purpose, Muybridge invented a zoopraxiscope, a primitive forerunner of the motion picture. The collotype plates of which this work is an example, were published in 1887, and proved that the human eye had been deceived about the processes of animal motion.

FISH, FOWL AND FAUNA

Statewide Touring Exhibition Program Schedule

Norfolk • **September, 1991: The Norfolk Arts Center**
Local Sponsor: The Norfolk Arts Center

McCook • **October, 1991: The High Plains Museum**
Local Sponsors: AmFirst Bank of McCook, Cattlemen's Consulting Service, 1st National Bank of McCook, McCook National Bank

Aurora • **November, 1991: The Plainsman Museum**
Local Sponsor: Hamilton Community Foundation

York • **December, 1991: The First National Bank**
Local Sponsor: The First National Bank of York

Holdrege • **January, 1992: Holdrege Public Library**
Local Sponsors: Dr. Stuart Embury, Great Plains Art Guild, Holdrege Public Schools Foundation, Phelps County Tourism Committee

Grand Island • **February, 1992: Grand Island Public Library**
Local Sponsor: Arts in Education Committee of CARP

Beatrice • **March, 1992: Gage County Historical Society**
Local Sponsor: Beatrice National Bank

Columbus • **April, 1992: Columbus Art Gallery**
Local Sponsor: Columbus Art Gallery

North Platte • **May, 1992: The Mall**
Local Sponsors: First National Bank of North Platte, North Platte National Bank, North Platte Telegraph, United Nebraska Bank

Cozad • **June, 1992: Robert Henri Museum**
Local Sponsors: Cozad Arts Council, Robert Henri Museum

SHELDON MEMORIAL ART GALLERY
THE NEBRASKA ART ASSOCIATION