

2001

## The Stieglitz Circle

Nicole Crawford

*Assistant Curator at Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska- Lincoln*

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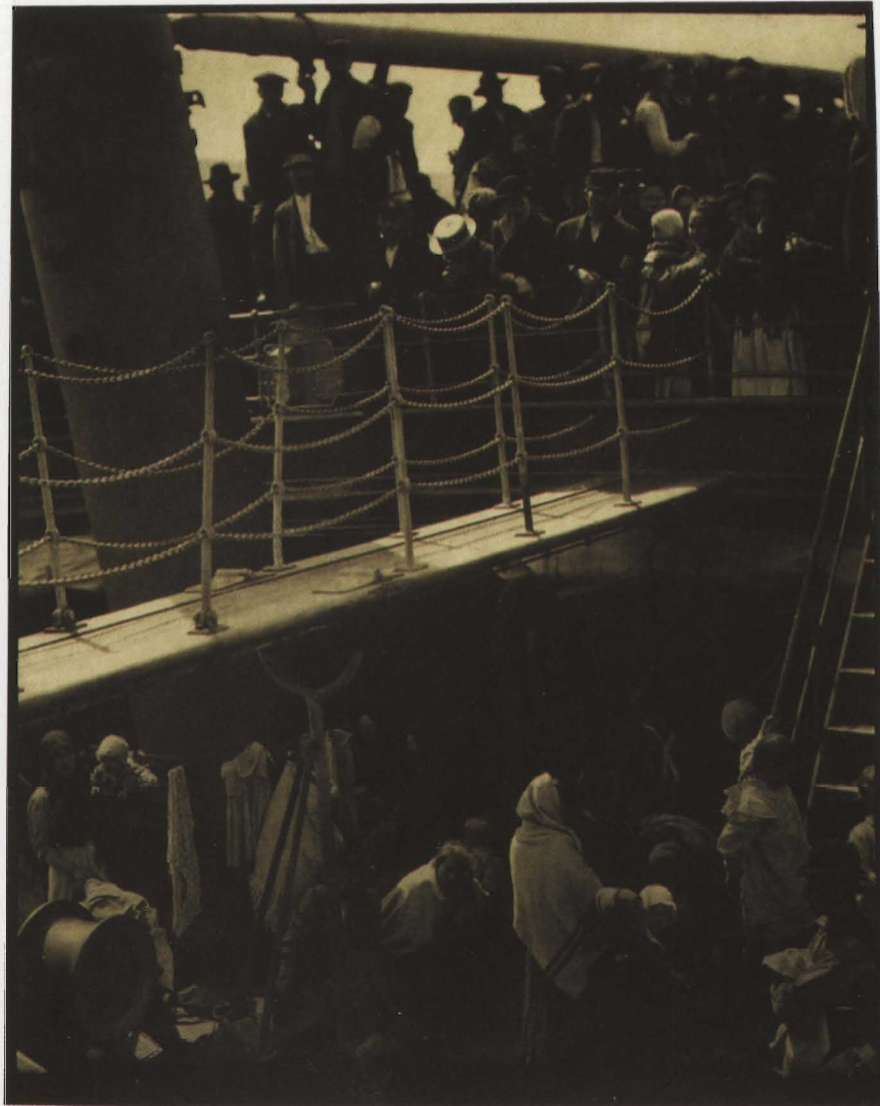
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# The Stieglitz Circle



Alfred Stieglitz, STEERAGE, 1907

Selections from the  
Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery  
and Sculpture Garden  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

The Fourteenth Annual Statewide Exhibition  
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Oscar F. Bluemner  
(1867–1938)  
CAMPO S. TROVASO  
1912, graphite  
4 5/8 x 8 3/8 in.  
UNL-Gift of John Davis  
Hatch, Jr.



This pencil sketch shows the courtyard or “campo,” adjacent to the San Trovaso church, the location of one of three remaining gondola yards in Venice. The artist, German-born Oscar Bluemner, studied to be an architect before coming to the United States, where he became an early advocate of modern painting. Primarily interested in color, Bluemner’s later landscape paintings were a vehicle to present the results of his color theories.

Arthur Beecher Carles  
(1882–1952)  
ABSTRACT-CHARCOAL #4  
n.d., charcoal  
25 x 18 7/8 in.  
UNL-Gift of Joan Washburn,  
Graham Gallery



Fluid lines and abstract forms in this charcoal sketch are examples of the artist’s endless experimentation with new methods of expression. Space becomes more ambiguous as forms are simplified and increasingly abstracted. Though he was passionately interested in color, Carles often made sketches or studies in charcoal as he considered a composition from all four sides.

Charles Demuth  
(1883–1935)  
BACKDROP OF EAST  
LYNNE  
1919, tempera on board  
19 7/8 x 15 7/8 in.  
UNL-F. M. Hall Collection



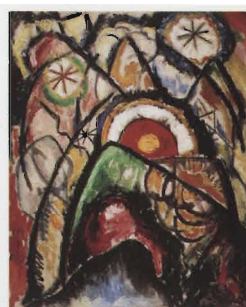
Charles Demuth is described as a master watercolorist, whose sense of order in shapes, planes, and lines gives this composition a geometric precision. The method employed by the artist in portraying *Backdrop of East Lynne* is considered Precisionist, a movement that has its roots in Cézanne’s analytical approach to painting combined with the Cubists’ precise definition of planes.



Arthur Garfield Dove  
(1880–1946)  
OUT OF THE WINDOW  
(Out the window)  
1940, watercolor on  
paper  
5 x 7 in.  
UNL-Howard S. Wilson  
Memorial

Considered one of the innovators of nonobjective art, Arthur Dove abstracted forms from the external world as he produced challenging avant-garde paintings. One of several artists for whom Alfred Stieglitz played a sheltering, patriarchal role, Dove said he could not have existed as a painter without that “super-encouragement” provided by Stieglitz.

Marsden Hartley  
(1877–1943)  
PAINTING NUMBER ONE,  
1913  
1913, oil on canvas  
39 3/4 x 31 7/8 in.  
UNL-F. M. Hall Collection



In 1913, Marsden Hartley went to Germany where he met a group of artists called Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider) whose art was based on an emotional response to subjects or ideas rather than a representation of the way things actually look. Showing the influence of these artists, *Painting Number One, 1913*, with its explosive form and spontaneous color, is considered one of the first purely abstract paintings by an American artist.



Marsden Hartley  
(1877–1943)  
MOUNT KATAHDIN,  
AUTUMN, NO. 1 (Mt.  
Ktaadn, Maine)  
1939–40, oil on canvas  
30 1/8 x 40 in.  
UNL-F. M. Hall Collection

Painted in the last decade of Hartley’s life after his return to Maine, *Mount Katahdin, Autumn No. 1* is an abstracted landscape depicting the highest mountain in his native state. Describing this work, the artist said, “. . . I am the first serious artist to get to the foot of Mt. Katahdin and to paint it.”



## The Stieglitz Circle

The Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden is pleased to present *The Stieglitz Circle*, the fourteenth annual Sheldon Statewide exhibition. Sheldon Statewide is a unique collaboration between the Sheldon Gallery, the Nebraska Art Association (a non-profit volunteer membership organization dedicated to the advancement of the visual arts in Nebraska) and the efforts and cooperation of the many Nebraska communities that serve as exhibition venues. The mission of the Sheldon Gallery is the acquisition, exhibition, and interpretation of 19th- and 20th-century American art. Each year twenty works from the collection are circulated throughout the state of Nebraska.

The 2000-2001 Sheldon Statewide exhibition focuses on the works of some of the earliest Americans to embrace Modernism, many of whom were promoted by photographer and gallery owner Alfred Stieglitz. Shaping the New York art world and contributing to the rise of avant-garde culture in the era before the Depression, Stieglitz is without a doubt one of the most important single figures in the development of Modernism in America.

The "Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession" opened its doors on November 25, 1905. Better known as "291" because of its Fifth Avenue address in New York, it became a central gathering place for some of the most significant names of the American avant-garde who looked upon 291 as a safe harbor amidst a sea of anti-modernist hostility in the visual arts. Because art galleries had generally rejected photography, Stieglitz envisioned a space in which photography could be measured in juxtaposition to other media. From this combination of his passionate spirit with specific knowledge of the aesthetic revolutions of his time, he gained the power to change the course of American art and taste.

With the help of Edward Steichen, Stieglitz created a stronghold of modern art at 291 by presenting the first American exhibitions of the leading European artists, such as Auguste Rodin, Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse, and Pablo Picasso, artists who were virtually ignored by every other gallery or art organization in the United States. These exhibitions, furthermore, helped shape the styles of the major painters working around Stieglitz, providing examples for those unable to view these works in Europe. Marin's Cubist-inspired views of New York City and the boldly colored Matisse-like forms of Maurer's still lifes are examples of such influence. Even more significant, these exhibitions anticipated the Armory Show in 1913, which first exposed large numbers of Americans, including artists, to the artistic actions taking place in Europe.

Not merely a reflection of Stieglitz's personal vision, the dynamism of 291 correspondingly stemmed from the diverse individuals who gathered at the space for discussions of art and aesthetic theories. Nearly every American artist who had been or wished to be exposed to modern European art was attracted to 291. It became a forum wherein both young avant-garde artists and critics could find encouragement and opportunities for discussion that was, at the time, unavailable elsewhere. Valuing what 291 offered, these artists became stronger as a community through their association with Stieglitz.

Ironically it was the Armory Show of 1913 that resulted in the demise of the 291 Gallery. The last remaining years of 291 were then viewed against the backdrop of that sensational blockbuster and the media attention it received. In this period several avant-garde galleries emerged with younger, more vigorous supporters of modern art forcing the doors of 291 to close in 1917 after nearly eighty exhibitions. However, the artists associated with the Stieglitz Circle continued to work from this experience influencing generations of artists who would come after them. Therefore, Stieglitz's influence far outlived 291's rather brief existence.

As the focal point for all leading modernists, Stieglitz used the 291 Gallery to promote these artists with great zeal, which resulted in putting his own photography to the wayside. In spite of Stieglitz's great efforts to enlighten collectors, most of the wealthy, cultured patrons who might have been won over to modernism were unprepared to take the leap before 1913. Moreover, being unable to convert large numbers near the end of the 291 Gallery, he abandoned his hope for America's appreciation of art. Nevertheless, no other individual or institution has approached the promotion and cultivation of American modernist artists with more conviction and with such a definite educational purpose as Alfred Stieglitz.

Sheldon Statewide succeeds in large part due to the continuing support of the Nebraska Art Association, Rhonda and James Seacrest, the local sponsors who support the exhibition in the respective communities, and the many volunteer docents at each venue. Their appreciation of both the immediate and long-range goals of Sheldon Statewide is especially meaningful, and their generosity has enabled tens of thousands of fellow citizens to encounter works of art of the highest quality.

Nicole Crawford  
Assistant Curator

Abraham Walkowitz  
(1880-1965)  
UNTITLED (New York)  
n.d., graphite  
15 3/4 x 7 1/4 in.  
NAA-Nelle Cochrane  
Woods Memorial



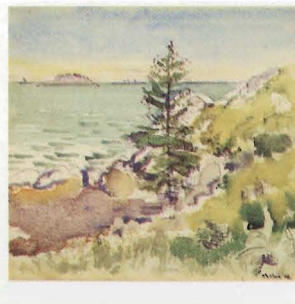
Siberian-born Abraham Walkowitz is one of several artists in the Stieglitz circle who were fascinated with New York City. In this pencil drawing, skyscrapers loom over a narrow, pedestrian-crowded street. Compare this work with John Marin's *Pertaining to Nassau Street, New York*.



Max Weber  
(1881-1961)  
NIGHT  
1915, oil on canvas  
48 x 40 1/4 in.  
NAA-Nelle Cochrane  
Woods Memorial

Demonstrating his mastery of the complicated Cubist vocabulary, Weber represents his impression of "night" with this emotional response to the city after dark. The artist, who had become familiar with French art and theory while studying in Paris, uses lines, planes and subtle color to express the deceptive properties of darkness.

Gaston Lachaise  
(1882-1935)  
PORTRAIT OF JOHN  
MARIN  
1928, bronze  
12 1/4 x 9 x 10 in.  
UNL-F. M. Hall Collection



John Marin  
(1870-1953)  
FROM RAGGED ISLAND  
1914, watercolor on  
paper  
14 1/4 x 16 1/4 in.  
UNL-Howard S. Wilson  
Memorial

The sculptor's skill in modeling is apparent in this sensitively rendered portrait of the painter, John Marin, whose work also is included in the exhibition. The Sheldon Gallery collection includes another important Lachaise sculpture, *Floating Figure*, a monumental bronze female nude permanently installed in the sculpture garden.

*From Ragged Island* was painted at a time when the artist had "discovered" Maine. This tranquil landscape captures the essence of land, sea and sky in the artist's personal style, showing a sense of structure and order conveyed with restraint. Comparing his work to the game of golf, Marin commented, "The fewer the strokes I can take, the better the picture."

John Marin  
(1870-1953)  
PERTAINING TO NASSAU  
STREET, NEW YORK  
1936, watercolor on  
paper  
25 3/8 x 20 1/4 in.  
UNL-Bequest of Frances  
Sheldon



Alfred Henry Maurer  
(1868-1932)  
STILL LIFE WITH BOWL  
c. 1908, oil on canvas  
mounted on masonite  
18 x 21 5/8 in.  
UNL-Bequest of Bertha  
Schaefer

The influence of Cubism is apparent in John Marin's abstract watercolor impression of this bustling urban scene. Trained as an architect, Marin was inspired by the structural forces seemingly pent up within the skyscrapers of the city. With diagonal lines, sketchily defined figures and a unique use of color, he conveys to the viewer a sense of frenetic motion in a confined space.

Inspired by new, boldly colored modernist paintings of Cézanne and Matisse, Alfred Maurer modeled form with color in this still-life composition. Painted while the artist was working in France, this work indicates a shift from Maurer's earlier preference for the subdued tones of Romantic Realism.

Alfred Henry Maurer  
(1868-1932)  
WOMAN WITH BLUE  
BACKGROUND (Portrait of  
a Woman)  
c. 1907, oil on panel  
21 3/4 x 18 in.  
UNL-Bequest of Bertha  
Schaefer

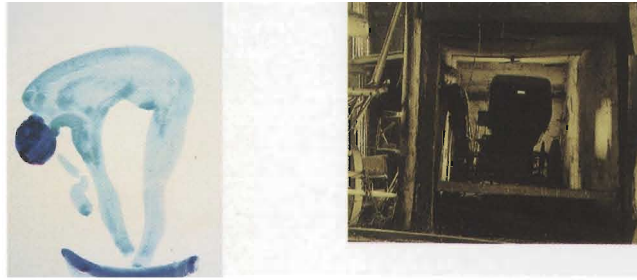


Elie Nadelman  
(1882-1946)  
FEMALE HEAD  
c. 1906-09, drypoint  
6 15/16 x 5 in.  
NAA-Nelle Cochrane  
Woods Memorial Fund

Intensity and expressive range of color make *Woman with Blue Background* one of Maurer's most outstanding paintings. Taken out of school at age sixteen to work in his father's lithographic business, Maurer was largely a self-taught artist. His own art was transformed by a four-year stay in Paris in the early 1900s when he saw the work of avant-garde artists. The result was a newly found freedom of color and design.

This Polish-born artist is known primarily as a sculptor. His bronze *Man in the Open Air* is one of the most significant sculptures in the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery collection. *Female Head* is an example of Nadelman's skill in making classical yet stylishly contemporary drawings. He said, "I employ no other line than the curve, which possesses freshness and force."

Georgia O'Keeffe  
 (1887-1986)  
 BLUE NUDE (LEAH)  
 c. 1917, watercolor on  
 paper  
 15 1/16 x 11 1/8 in.  
 UNL-Anonymous donor



Charles Sheeler  
 (1883-1965)  
 INTERIOR, BUCKS  
 COUNTY BARN  
 c. 1917, silver print  
 7 3/4 x 9 11/16 in.  
 UNL-F. M. Hall Collection

This c. 1917 watercolor, though an obvious reference to the human figure, is similar to other abstract works made by O'Keeffe while she was teaching school in Texas. A year later, O'Keeffe met Alfred Stieglitz (who was to become her husband) when he exhibited her work at his "291" gallery. Thus, O'Keeffe became a member of the circle of struggling abstractionists whose work was exhibited and promoted by Stieglitz in the early years of the twentieth century.

Charles Sheeler trained himself in photography after realizing that he could not support himself by painting. *Interior, Bucks County Barn* is a result of Sheeler's interest in eighteenth and nineteenth-century barns in the country around his house near Doylestown, Pennsylvania. In this photograph, the dominating silhouette of the old buggy is framed in light and shadow.

Edward Jean Steichen  
 (1879-1973)  
 SHROUDED FIGURE IN  
 MOONLIGHT  
 1905, oil on canvas  
 24 x 25 1/8 in.  
 UNL-F. M. Hall Collectio

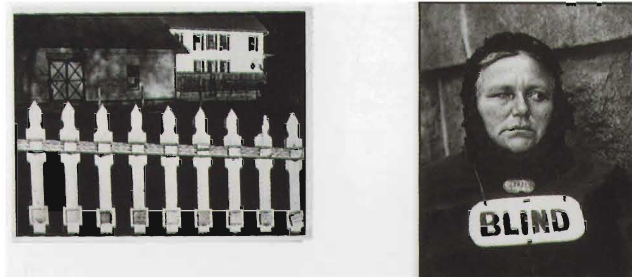


Alfred Stieglitz  
 (1864-1946)  
 STEERAGE  
 1907, gravure  
 13 1/8 x 10 3/8 in.  
 UNL-Gift of Lawrence  
 Reger

Painted in the Symbolist manner, *Shrouded Figure in Moonlight*, indicates Steichen's interest in the spiritual and mystical nature of art. This enigmatic image causes the viewer to consider many questions left unanswered by the artist. Self-taught as a photographer, Edward Steichen established "291" gallery in New York with his partner and friend, Alfred Stieglitz, in 1905.

Stieglitz said, ". . . I was born in Hoboken. I am an American. Photography is my passion. The search for Truth my obsession." While traveling by ship to Europe, Stieglitz observed the scene preserved in this photograph. What he saw caused the photographer to race to his cabin for his last unexposed plate. That plate resulted in the now famous image, *Steerage*. Throughout his life, Stieglitz championed avant-garde American artists and led the battle to recognize photography as a fine art form.

Paul Strand  
 (1890-1976)  
 THE WHITE FENCE (From  
 "Paul Strand-Portfolio  
 Three")  
 1916, silver print  
 9 7/8 x 13 in.  
 UNL-Gift of Michael E.  
 Hoffman



Paul Strand  
 (1890-1976)  
 BLIND WOMAN (From  
 "Paul Strand-Portfolio  
 Three")  
 1916, silver print  
 13 x 10 in.  
 UNL-Gift of Michael E.  
 Hoffman

Photographer Paul Strand had his first one-man exhibition at Stieglitz's "291" gallery in 1916, the year *The White Fence* was photographed. Strand explored the problems and possibilities of the medium, creating seminal photographic images in the period before World War I. His friendship with artists in the Stieglitz circle influenced the development of his contemporary aesthetic.

This poignant photograph is an example of the close-up images taken by Strand on the streets of New York. Stieglitz wrote of Strand's work in 1917, "His work is rooted in the best traditions of photography. . . . It is brutally direct. It does not rely on tricks of process. . . . These photographs are the direct expression of today."

# The Stieglitz Circle 2000-2001 Sheldon Statewide Program Schedule

Chadron	August 29 - September 27, 2000, Silver Eagle Gallery Local Sponsor: Chadron State College
North Platte	October 1 - October 27, 2000, The Mall Local Sponsors: NebraskaLand National Bank; North Platte Telegraph; Ross Perry Motors and Crossroads Dodge, Cadillac, Oldsmobile, Dodge, Jeep & Eagle; United Nebraska Bank; Western Nebraska National Bank; First Federal Lincoln Bank
Grand Island	October 30 - December 1, 2000, Grand Island Public Library Local Sponsors: Home Federal; Grand Island Public Schools; CARP
McCook	December 3, 2000 - January 5, 2001, Museum of the High Plains Local Sponsor: McCook Arts Council
Holdrege	January 7 - February 2, 2001, Holdrege Public Library Local Sponsors: Dr. and Mrs. Stuart Embury; Dr. and Mrs. Wayne Quincy; Dr. and Mrs. Doak Doolittle; First National Bank of Holdrege; Holdrege School Foundation; National Art Honor Society, Holdrege Chapter
Aurora	February 4 - March 2, 2001, Plainsman Museum Local Sponsor: Hamilton Community Foundation, Inc.
Beatrice	March 4 - March 30, 2001, Gage County Museum Local Sponsor: Beatrice National Bank & Trust Co.
Columbus	April 1 - April 27, 2001, Columbus Art Gallery Local Sponsor: Kirkpatrick Pettis
Fremont	April 29 - June 1, 2001, Gallery 92 West Local Sponsor: Fremont Area Art Association
Cozad	June 3 - July 13, 2001, Robert Henri Museum & Historical Walkway Local Sponsors: Cozad Arts Council; Tenneco Automotive; Friends of the Henri
Hastings	July 15 - August 30, 2001, The Hastings Museum Local Sponsor: The Hastings Museum
York	September 4 - September 28, 2001, Cornerstone Bank Local Sponsor: Cornerstone Bank
Norfolk	September 30 - October 26, 2001, Norfolk Arts Center Local Sponsor: Norfolk Arts Center



Sheldon Statewide is supported in part by the Nebraska Art Association and through a donation by James and Rhonda Seacrest. The Nebraska Art Association is a nonprofit membership organization dedicated to the advancement of the visual arts in Nebraska through educational and enrichment opportunities. Nebraska Art Association programs are supported in part by a Basic Support Grant from the Nebraska Arts Council, a State agency. The Institute of Museum and Library Services, a Federal Agency that fosters innovation, leadership and a lifetime of learning, supports the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.