

THE ART OF PERFORMANCE

Works on paper from the Texas Christian University
Permanent Art Collection

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Moncrief Cancer Institute

in partnership with

Texas Christian University School of Art

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Works on paper from the Texas Christian University
Permanent Art Collection

The Art of Performance highlights exemplary works from Texas Christian University's Permanent Art Collection. Representing artists from all over the world, this exhibition considers the relationships between performer and audience, artwork and viewer.

The works in *The Art of Performance* not only depict performances but also people gathering to view these spectacles. These images of festivity are uplifting and may remind viewers of times when their own communities have come together, whether to support them during treatment or to simply celebrate life.

This exhibition offers a new vision of musical and theatrical spectacles. In each of these examples, the artists capture the essence of performance in different ways. For example, portraits of composers evoke the same sensory experience in the viewer as music does in the listener. This experience might be calming or joyful for a viewer and remind them of their favorite song or a fun past experience at a musical event. Each example provides a new experience for the viewer as they are invited to remember past experiences with music and theatre. This work also encourages visitors to explore other forms of art and performance, such as opera or dance.

Some of the works in this exhibition portray women in active performance roles. Whether she is the artist or an actor in costume, female performers have agency in these images. Until modern times women rarely participated in public theatrical performance. *Commedia dell'arte*, a type of Italian improvisational theater, was one of the first opportunities in Europe for women to perform publicly. Women acting in *commedia dell'arte* were allowed to improvise characters and actively create roles on stage. Similarly, the portrayal of women as artists in nineteenth-century Japan shows an uncommon scene of women in an active role as creators. Although this depiction may be fictitious, it highlights the opportunity women may have had to be artists in Japanese culture.

The goal of *The Art of Performance* is to broaden conceptions of performance and audience. In doing so, we present viewing as a meditative and healing experience. Visitors are encouraged to learn about the history of these works by following along with this gallery guide, while also making their own visual observations about the art and remembering celebratory moments.



Carmen

1980

Joseph A. Pecsenske
(Hungarian, 1942-1989)

color lithograph on paper
14 x 18 inches



Bartok (90/100)

1981

Joseph A. Pecsenske
(Hungarian, 1942-1989)

color lithograph and etching
paper
27 x 39 inches

The performance depicted in the top image is a scene from *Carmen*, a well-known opera. Many aspects of performance are pictured here: the two lead actors, the chorus, and the orchestra.

Musical performance sometimes inspires artists to capture the effects of sound through the formal elements of art. This results in colorful and visually expressive abstract forms. These forms perform visually what musical notes do musically, offering a vibrant impression of both the musician and their music without making a sound.

Imagine yourself as part of this theater production. Are you part of the orchestra, the chorus, or are you one of the lead actors?



***La Signora,
Commedia Dell'Arte
Etchings III-B (62/150)***

1981

Joseph A. Pecsenske

(Hungarian, 1942-1989)

etching on paper

12 x 15½ inches

La Signora is a stock character from the Italian *Commedia dell'arte*, a type of improvisational theatre. The characters in this type of performance had specific relationships and personalities, but actors were able to devise different scenarios for each performance. *Commedia dell'arte* was also one of the first types of public performance that allowed women on the stage.

Take a moment to look closely and notice the subtle details of La Signora's costume. The folds in her clothing, the delicate feathers in her hair, and the props in her hand complete her elaborate costume.

***Imagine or sketch a costume that captures your fantasy character
or personality. What details are you including?***

What props do you absolutely need?



Fair of San Biagio

1941

Nunzio Gulino

(Italian, 1920-2011)

etching on paper

7¼ x 16¼ inches

The fair of San Biagio is set in the Sicilian town of Comiso. This celebration was important for the people of Comiso because the town is the location of the Church of San Biagio. This print depicts a procession of people going to the church for the feast day, and people gather outside to celebrate alongside neighbors and family.

***Take a moment to look closely at the print.
What unexpected details do you see?***

***If you had your own fair, what would you celebrate?
Who do you imagine there with you?***



***Portrait of
Odilon Redon (83/100)***

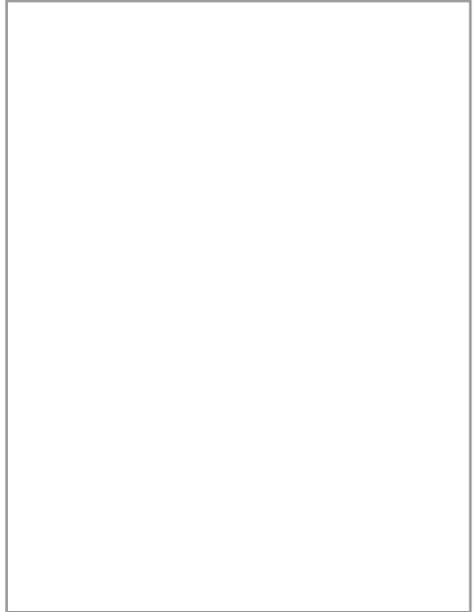
1958

George Lockwood

(American, 1929-1969)

color woodblock print on paper

4¼ x 11½ inches



If the artist is a performer, then their art is performance. Portraiture is a type of performance that is less obvious than those in some of the other works in this exhibition. This print depicts the French artist Odilon Redon. In this case, the performance is George Lockwood's homage to Redon, which he enacts by making the image.

Sketch a portrait of yourself or a friend in the box. Take liberty in adding fun colors, interesting shadows, and surrounding objects. Here, Lockwood has included flowers and he focused on Redon's face. Which part of the body will you focus on?



***Night View of Saruwaka -
machi yoru no kei, No. 90***

from the series *One Hundred
Famous Views of Edo*

1968

Isamu Hayakawa

(Japanese, active 1950s-1960s)

color woodblock print on paper

14 x 9½ inches



***Hangishi Dosabiki (Block-carver,
Applying Sizing)***

from the series *Cultivation of Brocade
Prints, a Famous Product of Edo*

ca. 1798-1808

Kitagawa Utamaro

(Japanese, 1753-1806)

color woodblock print on paper

10 x 14½ inches

The print on the left depicts a nighttime view of Saruwaka-machi, the theater district of Tokyo. People can be seen walking in the streets, leaving the theater performance that took place on the right side of the street.

***What pastimes are important to you, your friends, and family?
Are you more like the extrovert in the street, or the introvert
in the second-story window?***

In the print on the right, Utamaro depicts an *ukiyo-e* print workshop. *Ukiyo-e* is Japanese for “picture” of the “floating world,” a popular artistic style in seventeenth-century Japan. This is another case where artists are performing by creating art. This assembly line performance will result in a print much like the one in which they are portrayed.

***If you were pictured in this print, who would you be? The woman in
the front prepping the materials, the woman in the middle designing
the print, or the woman in the back carving the block to be printed?***



High Rank Geisha

late eighteenth century

Kunisada Gototei

(Japanese, 1786-1865)

color woodblock print on paper

4½ x 7 inches



Courtesan Looking in a Mirror

late eighteenth century

Kitagawa Utamaro

(Japanese, 1753-1806)

color woodblock print on paper

10¼ x 15¾ inches

In the print on the left, Gototei offers a glimpse into the lives of the *Oiran*, or high-ranking geishas, whose livelihoods centered on their roles as performers. *Oiran* were trained as artists, musicians, and poets and were required to uphold expectations of beauty, grace, and fashion.

***What types of performances do you do in everyday life?
If your everyday life was a play or a movie, what props would
you need in order to perform?***

The image on the right depicts female performance as it relates to the public and the private. Putting her private beauty ritual on display, the artist reinforces the importance of keeping up appearances for a public audience.

***In what ways do you think our society puts pressure on people
to look a certain way?***



***Act 2, Scenes 1 and 2
Untitled V from the
portfolio Romeo and Juliet
(edition 19/100)***

1980

Ádám Würtz

(Hungarian, 1927-1994)

color intaglio print on paper

19 x 27¼ inches



***Act 3, Scene 5
Untitled IX from the
portfolio Romeo and Juliet
(edition 19/100)***

1980

Ádám Würtz

(Hungarian, 1927-1994)

color intaglio print on paper

19 x 27¼ inches

These prints are from a series that depicts Shakespeare's play
Romeo and Juliet.

“And joy comes well in such a needy time!” – Juliet

***Think of a time when you experienced unexpected joy.
What did that feel like? Who was with you?***

What colors do you associate with joy?

***Notice how Ádám Würtz uses sketches to tell a story. Next time you
find yourself reading a book, interpret the text through doodling.***

GALLERY GUIDE

“A work of art is above all an adventure of the mind.”

– Eugene Ionesco

Gallery Activities

1) Letter writing: Choose a work of art and write a letter to a character. Why did you gravitate towards this character? What would you like them to know about you? What thoughts or feelings do you think the character might have?

- La Signora
- Bartok
- Geisha
- Courtesan
- Romeo
- Juliet
- Odilon Redon

2) Meditation: Imagine yourself participating or watching either *Carmen*, *Fair of San Biagio*, or *Night View of Saruwaka-machi yoru no kei*. What sensory details from the work of art can you imagine? Can you imagine sounds or smells? What is the weather like? What is the energy like?

3) “I spy:” Take time with the artworks to find the following items.

- Sunflowers
- A cup of tea
- A fan
- The moon
- A stringed instrument
- A dog
- The sun
- A mirror

4) Poetry: Select a work of art and write a haiku. A haiku is three lines long, totaling seventeen syllables. The first line is five syllables, the second line is seven syllables, and the third line is five syllables like the first. In your poem, consider what is going on in the work. How is the work speaking to you?

Example: Removing makeup
The façade she hides behind
Still the screen remains

5) What songs or melodies come to mind while viewing these artworks? How do you feel when looking at these artworks?

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Cover: *Night View of Saruwaka -
machi yoru no kei, No. 90*
from the series *One Hundred
Famous Views of Edo*
1968
Isamu Hayakawa