

**Samuel Halpert (1884–1930)**

***Portrait of Edith Gregor Halpert, 1928***

**Oil on canvas**

Palmer Museum of Art, Pennsylvania State University,  
University Park, gift of Joseph M. Erdelac

Edith was a sixteen-year-old aspiring artist when she met Samuel Halpert, an established modernist painter twice her age and, like her, a Russian Jewish immigrant. They wed shortly after her eighteenth birthday. As she later recalled, “I married with the feeling I had married American art.”

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Edith Halpert remembers Samuel Halpert and recalls her early success as a businesswoman.

**Marguerite Zorach (1887–1968)**

***Memories of a Summer in the  
White Mountains, 1917***

**Tapestry**

**Collection of Lucy Loewenheim Cohen**

**Elie Nadelman (1882–1946)**  
***Seated Woman*, c. 1919–1925**  
**Cherrywood and iron**

Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover,  
Massachusetts, museum purchase

Halpert intended the Downtown Gallery to show the most innovative living American artists. Her first exhibition, in November 1926, paired this sculpture by Elie Nadelman with Marguerite Zorach's tapestry, seen nearby. Both artists drew inspiration from American folk art.

**Stuart Davis (1892–1964)**

***Egg Beater No. 1*, 1927**

**Oil on linen**

**Whitney Museum of American Art, New York,  
gift of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney**

When Stuart Davis's early experimental works made their debut at the Downtown Gallery in 1927, they caused an uproar. Although Davis never considered his work abstract, he aggressively deconstructed the traditional genre of still life, using Cubist fragmentation of forms and radical planes of color to reinvent it. Halpert recalled with satisfaction, "People wanted to break the windows. They would come in from the street and scream, 'This is indecent, having these crazy pictures!'"

Davis shared her commitment to bringing modern art to everyday audiences. He commented, "People who are up to date in their clothes, automobiles, apartments, and love affairs must buy this type of picture in order to be consistent." Unfortunately, the public did not yet agree, and Halpert did not sell a single work from Davis's first show.

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The exhibition curator speaks about the relationship between Halpert and Stuart Davis.

**William Zorach (1889–1966)**

***Spirit of the Dance*, 1932**

**Bronze with brown patina**

Collection of Kevin Rowe and Irene Vlitos Rowe,  
Santa Fe, New Mexico

When Rockefeller Center was built in the 1930s, the complex was filled with art. Radio City Music Hall, the flashiest of the Art Deco buildings, was lavishly embellished with paintings and sculptures. Halpert, who counted the Rockefellers among her clients, was able to secure commissions for a number of her artists. For the lower lounge, William Zorach was invited to create an enormous sculpture in cast aluminum, *Spirit of the Dance*, seen here in a smaller version. The work embodies the Art Deco style, with its stylized lines and polished machinelike surfaces. The original still graces the Ground Lounge of the concert hall today.

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*Spirit of the Dance* caused a scandal when it was first installed in Radio City Music Hall. The exhibition curator tells the story.

**601 AD)))**

Verbal Description

**Charles Sheeler (1883–1965)**

***Americana*, 1931**

**Oil on canvas**

**Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
Edith and Milton Lowenthal Collection,  
bequest of Edith Abrahamson Lowenthal**

Charles Sheeler was one of Halpert's most enduring artists. He joined the Downtown Gallery in 1931 and had regular shows there until his death. Best known as a painter, he was also an experimental photographer and often used his own photographs as sources for his canvases. *Americana* was worked from shots Sheeler took of his home in South Salem, New York, which he had filled with Shaker furniture and early American rugs.

Like Halpert, he was attracted to the simplicity and fine craftsmanship of folk art. "I don't like these things because they are old but in spite of it," he said. "I'd like them even better if they were made yesterday." He drew a connection between the flat patterns, subdued palette, and strict geometry of chair backs, fabrics, and backgammon board, on the one hand, and the semiabstract aesthetics and distorted perspective of Cubism on the other. In Sheeler's own art and life, Halpert commented, "everything was done with precision; everything he had in his home is a portrait of him."

**Stuart Davis (1892–1964)**  
***New York—Paris No. 1*, 1931**

**Oil on canvas**

**University of Iowa Museum of Art, Iowa City,  
university acquisition**

**Charles Sheeler (1883–1965)**

***Kitchen, Williamsburg, 1937***

**Oil on hardboard**

de Young | Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museums of  
San Francisco, gift of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd

During the Depression, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller supported struggling artists when she could, often encouraged by Halpert. In 1935 Halpert got Sheeler a commission in Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, then being restored as a tourist attraction with Rockefeller funding. He was hired to paint views of the town's stately Governor's Palace and the Rockefellers' private residence there. What truly captured his imagination, however, were the kitchen implements installed in the basement of the Governor's Palace—this illusionistic composition of the recreated colonial kitchen plays with concepts of truth and artifice.



**Charles Sheeler (1883–1965)**

***Kitchen, Williamsburg, 1937***

**Oil on hardboard**

**de Young | Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museums of  
San Francisco, gift of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd**

**Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986)**

***White Flower*, 1932**

**Oil on wood**

**Muscarella Museum of Art, College of William and Mary,  
Williamsburg, Virginia, gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr.**

Halpert was an early champion of Georgia O'Keeffe, an American modernist who invented her own idiom, fitting into no easy category. Halpert sold *White Flower* to Abby Aldrich Rockefeller in 1934 and later urged her to donate it to the College of William and Mary. "With your interest in Williamsburg, in the college, in art and in women, I hope the idea will appeal to you," she wrote. "It would be a fitting tribute to the artist, not only as an aesthetic gesture but also as an inspiration to the young women who are students."

**Robert Laurent (1890–1970)**

***The Bather*, c. 1925**

**Alabaster**

**Brooklyn Museum, New York, Carll H. de Silver Fund**

**Marsden Hartley (1877–1943)**

***Beaver Lake, Lost River Region, 1930***

**Oil on canvas**

**Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, gift of Bertha H. Walker**

In 1932 Halpert took the seasoned painter Marsden Hartley under her wing, mounting an exhibition of his recent New England landscapes. Dour and harsh, they were a difficult sell during the Depression; not even his gentler, Cézannesque mountainscapes, such as this one, could find a buyer. Nevertheless, Halpert wrote to him with characteristic insouciance: "There has been great interest shown among the artists and among a discriminating public, but unfortunately, I have no good news for you. Everyone is so down and out, that all pictures over \$300 seem to throw them in a faint. We are seriously considering opening a soup kitchen for poor millionaires." It was two years before Halpert was able to sell Hartley's work. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller purchased three paintings; one, a sensual study of a seashell, is on view nearby.

**Marsden Hartley (1877–1943)**

***The Seashell*, 1929**

**Oil on board**

**Private collection, New York**

**John Marin (1870–1953)**

***Spring, Tyrol*, 1910**

**Watercolor on paper**

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Humphrey,  
Greensboro, North Carolina

This tranquil landscape, with its light, swift brushwork and evocative color, makes clear why John Marin is celebrated as a master of modernist watercolor.

It is also one of the first artworks purchased from Halpert by Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, the great art patron. The two became fast friends and Halpert guided Rockefeller's taste as she began collecting American art. Ultimately, the bulk of Rockefeller's modern-art collection—a staggering two thousand works—was given to the Museum of Modern Art, of which she was a cofounder. More than five hundred of these had been purchased from Halpert.

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Edith Halpert's first meeting with Abby Aldrich Rockefeller did not go smoothly.

**Ben Shahn (1898–1969)**

***In the Courtroom Cage*, 1931–32**

**Watercolor, gouache, and black ink on  
buff wove paper**

Princeton University Art Museum, New Jersey,  
gift of Dr. Walter E. Rothman

***Vanzetti and Sacco and Their Guards*,  
1931–32**

**Gouache on paper**

Lawrence and Elyse Benenson Collection

In 1932 the Jewish immigrant painter Ben Shahn debuted a series of twenty-three gouaches on the trial of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti at the Downtown Gallery. Sacco and Vanzetti were Italian immigrants and avowed anarchists who were accused of murder in a 1920 payroll robbery; their trial and execution, in 1927, were widely considered a travesty of justice, tainted by prevailing prejudices against foreigners and radicals.

Shahn's art was activist and politically engaged. "I always regretted not having lived in some great historic time; the time of Lincoln or Washington, or even during the Crucifixion," he commented. "Then suddenly it came to me—this was a crucifixion itself—right in front of my eyes." Shahn had been virtually unknown, and the success of the show established him as one of the great Social Realist painters of his generation.

## **Downtown Gallery logo, c. 1927**

**Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, DC, Downtown Gallery records**

**Facsimile**

Halpert commissioned a weathervane from the sculptor Hunt Diederich to call attention to her Thirteenth Street storefront. The name, Our Gallery, and the address wrap around a banner above a dog and cat wrestling. Although she changed the name of her business to the Downtown Gallery in 1927, Halpert kept this image as her logo until 1931. The use of a bold Art Deco design in a traditional folk-art object is emblematic of Halpert's ideas about American art from the very beginning of her career.



# **The Downtown Gallery at 113 West Thirteenth Street, Greenwich Village, Manhattan, c. 1939**

New York City Municipal Archives

Exhibition print

Halpert bought this modest brownstone in 1926 and installed her modern art galleries on street level. Five years later she opened the American Folk Art Gallery on the floor above. She lived in an apartment on the third floor and rented out the top floor to tenants.

# The inaugural exhibition at Our Gallery, November 1926

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, DC, Downtown Gallery records

Exhibition print

Halpert's first effort as a gallerist was a group show: she placed small-scale sculptures on the mantel and bookshelves and hung figurative works on the walls. She deliberately presented her gallery as a domestic space, preserving the brownstone's original rooms and fireplace, so that clients could see the art in a home setting. The Downtown Gallery, she wrote, "emphasizes the belief in the democracy of art, and in the fact that it is possible to buy small works at prices within the reach of the most modest income." Two works in this exhibition, Marguerite Zorach's *Memories of a Summer in the White Mountains* and Elie Nadelman's *Seated Woman*, are on view in this gallery.

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Hear more about what set the Downtown Gallery apart from its competitors.

# The Daylight Gallery, 1930

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, DC, Forbes Watson papers

Exhibition print

In 1930 Halpert expanded her gallery space, building a freestanding, skylit building in the garden behind her brownstone, designed in an up-to-the-minute modernist aesthetic. The aim of the Daylight Gallery was to “show painting and sculpture to the best advantage, and also to show how works of art may be used as elements in modern building.” Halpert’s artists designed some of the decor. Here William Zorach poses with his door grilles, on view on the opposite side of this case.

# **An exhibition of Nathaniel Kaz sculptures in the Daylight Gallery, 1939**

**Photograph by Soichi Sunami**

**Exhibition print**

The Daylight Gallery had gray walls and diffuse lighting, providing a sleek, neutral background for contemporary art. The overall effect was the opposite of that offered by the residential rooms in the main building. Although this Bauhaus-inspired gallery may appear rather commonplace today, Halpert's idea to present modern art in a modern setting was groundbreaking at the time.

**William Zorach (1881–1961)**

**Two door grilles, commissioned for  
the Daylight Gallery, c. 1929**

**Painted steel**

**Bernard Goldberg Fine Arts, New York**

**Marguerite Zorach (1887–1968)**

***A Happy New Year*, c. 1929**

**Linoleum cut on Japanese paper**

**Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, New York,  
gift of Cooper Union Museum Picture Library**

## Excerpts from “Putting Modern Art in Its Place”

*Creative Art*, January 1933

Facsimile

The extravagantly decorated Art Deco Radio City Music Hall generated an enormous amount of publicity when it opened in December 1932. Halpert had used her Rockefeller connections to steer much-needed commissions to her artists during the height of the Depression. Several are still in place, including Yasuo Kuniyoshi’s mural for the ladies’ lounge, a dream garden based on a concept by Georgia O’Keeffe; and Stuart Davis’s seventeen-foot-long jaunty painting for the men’s lounge, filled with emblems of modern masculinity.

Robert Laurent’s *Goose Girl* and William Zorach’s *Spirit of the Dance* also remain on-site. The two sculptures had been temporarily removed before the opening because of objections to their nudity—a bit ironic, as this article suggests, considering that Radio City’s debut featured the bare-legged dance troupe later known as the Rockettes.

# Plan for All-American Exhibition, December 5, 1933

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, DC, Downtown Gallery records

Facsimile

Soon after his election, Halpert wrote to the new mayor of New York City, Fiorello La Guardia, explaining the urgent need for a municipally sponsored all-American exhibition during the Depression: "The small, select class of 'big buyers'—the few rich art collectors on whose support art and artists depended—no longer functions. The artist needs a large buying public. And the state must bring the artist to the public officially. It is fitting that the great city of New York lead the way, and that the chief executive of this city set a precedent for all the other American cities, by fostering culture in a big way."

This was vintage Halpert: a grandiose, rhetorically sweeping appeal to a vision for New York as not only the quintessential American city but also, potentially, as America's great art center. La Guardia later came to be known for his large-scale public works; Halpert had gauged his concerns correctly, and he welcomed her idea.



# Opening night of the First Municipal Art Exhibition at Rockefeller Center, February 28, 1934

Rockefeller Center Archives

Exhibition print

In 1934 Halpert organized the largest art show staged in New York City to date. With the cooperation of competing dealers, ample Rockefeller funding, and the support of the newly elected Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, the First Municipal Art Exhibition featured over one thousand works by five hundred living American artists. On opening night, before an audience of five thousand attendees, Halpert was able to announce that the event had already generated \$10,000 worth of sales.

The show did much to solidify New York's reputation as a mecca of contemporary art. It also presaged the immense blockbuster art fairs that are today a fixture of the contemporary art scene.

# **Charles Sheeler (1883–1965)**

## **Salt and pepper shakers, 1934–35**

**Polished aluminum**

Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, New York,  
gift of George R. Kravis II

In addition to painting and photography, Charles Sheeler also tried his hand at applied art. His salt and pepper shakers are a model of machine-age design, with the pour holes forming the initials S and P. Halpert included them in her 1934 show *Practical Manifestations in American Art*, in which she mixed artworks with household objects designed by the same artists—an entirely novel concept at the time. Her aim was to underscore the artistic merits of applied design. But she also wanted to give those who could not justify spending money on nonessentials during the Depression a chance to make art a “living factor in the home” through the purchase of useful items.

# American art as merchandise, 1933

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, DC, Downtown Gallery records

Exhibition print

In 1933 Macy's department store sold ladies' dresses made with fabrics designed by artists, including three represented by Halpert. The store promoted these with a window display of the modes, together with paintings by the artists.

It seems likely that Halpert was involved in this idea. She had worked at Macy's while still a teenager, and the advertisement at left uses her distinctive style of marketing prose: "Knitted fabrics designed by six of the American moderns. Representative modern artists have lent their special talents to the designing of these fabrics. You will recognize the decorative quality of Kuniyoshi's still lifes, and the tonal monotones of Sheeler's white smokestacks, and the sturdiness of Stuart Davis' murals. Macy's has worked these interesting motifs into wearable sports clothes typical of our modern life."

**Charles Sheeler (1883–1965)**

**Edith Halpert, 1935**

**Gelatin silver print**

**Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, DC, Downtown Gallery records**

Halpert, wearing a dress made from a fabric designed by Sheeler, poses between his paintings *View of New York* and *Classic Landscape*.

# **Charles Sheeler (1883–1965)**

## **Textile sample in wool knit, c. 1934**

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, DC, Charles Sheeler papers

Sheeler's fabrics used modern patterns based on traditional motifs, reminiscent of the early American rugs and bedspreads depicted in his paintings, such as *Americana* (on view nearby). Both were included in the Downtown Gallery's 1934 exhibition *Practical Manifestations in American Art*.

**Charles Sheeler (1883–1965)**

**Edith Halpert, 1935**

**Gelatin silver print**

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, DC, Downtown Gallery records

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Washington, DC, Charles Sheeler papers

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**Louis Lozowick (1892–1973)**

***Storm Clouds above Manhattan, 1935***

**Lithograph**

**Philadelphia Museum of Art, purchased with the Lola Downin  
Peck Fund from the Carl and Laura Zigrosser Collection**

**José Clemente Orozco (1883–1949)**

***Mexican Pueblo*, 1929**

**Lithograph**

**Philadelphia Museum of Art, gift of Henry P. McIlhenny**



**Wanda Gág (1893–1946)**

***The Forge*, 1932**

**Lithograph**

**Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, purchase**

**Rockwell Kent (1882–1971)**

***Over the Ultimate*, 1926**

**Wood engraving**

**Philadelphia Museum of Art, purchased with the Lola Downin  
Peck Fund from the Carl and Laura Zigrosser Collection**

**Paul Cadmus (1904–1999)**

***The Fleet's In!*, 1934**

**Etching**

**Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, purchase**

**Edward Hopper (1882–1967)**

***Evening Wind*, 1921**

**Etching**

**New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations,  
Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints  
and Photographs, Art & Architecture Collection, gift of  
Edward Hopper**

**Victoria Hutson Huntley (1900–1971)**

***Moonlight*, 1935**

**Lithograph**

**Collection of Derek D. Cocovinis, DDC Fine Arts,  
Livingston, New Jersey**

**Thomas Hart Benton (1889–1975)**  
***Going West (Express Train), 1934***

**Lithograph**

**New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations,  
Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and  
Photographs, Art & Architecture Collection, Friends of the  
Print Room Fund**

**Arshile Gorky (1904–1948)**  
***Painter and Model (The Creation Chamber), 1931***

**Lithograph**

**Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC,  
gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Douglas Weiss**

**Stuart Davis (1892–1964)**

***Sixth Avenue El*, 1931**

**Lithograph**

**Collection of Sandra Cristofori**



**Mabel Dwight (1876–1955)**

***Life Class*, 1931**

**Lithograph**

**Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, purchase**

**Attributed to John Brewster, Jr.**  
(1766–1854)

***Boy with a Finch*, c. 1800**

**New England or New York**

**Oil on canvas**

**Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Virginia,  
gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller**

*Boy with a Finch* is one of Halpert's most remarkable folk-art discoveries. The artist was identified years later as John Brewster, Jr., an itinerant nineteenth-century portraitist. In 1939 Abby Aldrich Rockefeller purchased it for her planned American folk art museum, the first of its kind. It remains a cornerstone of the collection she donated to Colonial Williamsburg. Rockefeller wrote to Halpert: "You have made a real contribution to the understanding and knowledge and appreciation of early American painting in this country, a contribution which I personally think no one else was prepared to make."

**Attributed to Edward Hicks (1780–1849)**  
***The Peaceable Kingdom*, c. 1846**

**Oil on canvas**

de Young | Legion of Honor, Fine Arts Museums of  
San Francisco, gift of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd

Edward Hicks, one of the great American folk artists, was almost entirely unknown until Halpert showed one of his *Peaceable Kingdom* paintings in her *American Ancestors* exhibition in 1931. Hicks, a Quaker preacher and sign painter, made more than sixty versions of the scene. His inspiration is Isaiah 11:6: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.” Hicks pairs this religious legend with a historical one: in the background William Penn signs a peace treaty with the indigenous Lenape people.

## Horse weathervane, c. 1850–75

Made by Rochester Iron Works, New Hampshire  
Iron

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Bayou Bend Collection,  
gift of Miss Ima Hogg

In November 1932 the Museum of Modern Art organized *American Folk Art: The Art of the Common Man in America, 1750–1900*.

As the title suggests, this groundbreaking exhibition presented folk art as an expression of democratic and egalitarian values, lending an aura to the genre that it still enjoys today.

All but two of its more than 175 objects came from the private collection of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller (lent anonymously), all of which had been acquired from Halpert. Rockefeller's version of this iconic weathervane was included. Halpert subsequently sold additional examples to her other top folk-art clients; this one was purchased by the Houston philanthropist Ima Hogg, founder of the Bayou Bend Collection.

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The exhibition curator explores Edith Halpert's enthusiasm for folk art. Halpert reminisces about the hunt for weathervanes.

**Anonymous**  
**Cow weathervane, 1850**  
**Copper**

**Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri,  
purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust**

# **Rooster weathervane, c. 1875–90**

**Possibly made by Rochester Iron Works,  
New Hampshire**

**Cast iron and zinc**

**Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Virginia, from the  
Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Collection, gift of the  
Museum of Modern Art**

**Attributed to Erastus Salisbury Field**  
**(1805–1900)**

**Possibly *Mrs. Pearce and Mr. Pearce*,**  
**c. 1835**

**Massachusetts**

**Oil on canvas**

**Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Virginia, gift of**  
**Abby Aldrich Rockefeller**

**The Gansevoort Limner (possibly  
Pieter Vanderlyn, c. 1687–1778)  
*Miss Van Alen*, c. 1735**

**Oil on canvas**

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, gift of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch

Halpert first exhibited *Miss Van Alen* at her gallery in 1933. The canvas is a fine example of what makes folk portraits so appealing: in the simplest of terms, with little painterly flourish and no use of perspective, the artist creates an intimate connection between the viewer and this spirited young woman.

*Miss Van Alen* was widely admired among folk-art enthusiasts at the time. In the late 1940s Halpert sold the painting and other portraits on view in this room to Edgar and Bernice Garbisch. Prominent collectors, they eventually gave more than three hundred works of folk art to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. Other major gifts were parceled out to museums across the country.

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“Folk art was art of the masses and not the classes: Every time I use that expression Garbisch gets absolutely violent! He always calls me a Communist.” The exhibition curator compares Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and Edgar Garbisch, two of Halpert’s biggest folk-art clients.



## William Michael Harnett (1848–1892)

### *The Faithful Colt*, 1890

Oil on canvas

Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford,  
Connecticut, the Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin  
Sumner Collection Fund

In April 1935 a scout in Philadelphia brought Halpert a canvas that stopped her in her tracks. Every detail of this odd still life, from the cracks in the gun's ivory handle to the creases in the newspaper clipping pasted below it, is recorded with virtuosic precision. Almost nothing was known about the artist, whose name was painted in the corner as though it had been carved into the wooden panel.

Halpert promptly offered the painting to the director of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut. She knew Harnett's uncanny work would appeal to him; Arthur Everett "Chick" Austin, Jr. had staged the first Surrealist exhibition in the United States at the Atheneum in 1931, and Halpert saw in the hyperreal work, with its intent focus on a single, implicitly violent object, a certain affinity with Europe's latest radical art movement. Furthermore, Elizabeth Jarvis Colt, widow of the firearms manufacturer Samuel Colt, had been a benefactor of the museum. The sale was swiftly negotiated.

Halpert began to exhibit Harnett's work regularly, and a mania for his paintings ensued, with buyers across the country clamoring for his work. He was the "biggest sugar daddy I ever had," she quipped.

**Anonymous**  
**Horse weathervane, nineteenth century**

**Made in Pennsylvania**

**Pine**

**Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy,  
Andover, Massachusetts, museum purchase**

**Raphaelle Peale (1774–1825)**

***Venus Rising from the Sea—A Deception,***  
c. 1822

**Oil on canvas**

**Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri,  
purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust**

This painting stood apart from the other artworks presented in Halpert's 1931 *American Ancestors* exhibition for its unusually sophisticated and seductive use of trompe l'oeil, a form of realism that creates an illusion of three-dimensionality. Here the crisp white cloth tricks the viewer into thinking it can be removed to uncover the bathing woman behind it.

When Halpert bought it from a Connecticut dealer for \$75, the grimy, nearly illegible canvas had been passed over by all the major art dealers in New York. Only after she had sent it to be restored was the signature of the now-celebrated American painter Raphaelle Peale revealed, and his hidden Venus along with it.

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"It's a helluva Peale!" Edith Halpert recounts how she discovered this lost gem and sold it to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

**602 AD)))**

**Verbal Description**

**Joseph Whiting Stock (1815–1855)**

***Baby in a Wicker Basket*, c. 1840**

**Oil on canvas**

**National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, gift of  
Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch**

In 1943 Halpert sold this sweet portrait of an infant to the comedian Harpo Marx, who bought it as a Christmas gift for his wife following the adoption of one of their four children. Marx later sold it back to Halpert in exchange for a work by Georgia O'Keeffe. He returned that painting as well, explaining, "We are over the saturation point. If we put another painting in our house one of the kids will have to move out." Later he attempted to repurchase *Baby in a Wicker Basket*, but Halpert had already sold it to the Garbisches.

**Asahel Powers (1813–1843)**  
**Possibly *Mr. and Mrs. William Sheldon*,**  
**c. 1831**

**Oil on wood**

**National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, gift of  
Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch**

**Milton William Hopkins (1789–1844)**

***Agnes Frazee and Her Child*, 1834**

**Oil on canvas**

**Philadelphia Museum of Art, collection of  
Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch**

**Anonymous**  
**Indian archer ornament for a locomotive,**  
**nineteenth or early twentieth century**  
**Metal**

**Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Virginia, gift of**  
**Abby Aldrich Rockefeller**

**Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000)**

***When It Is Warm the Parks Are Filled with  
People*, 1943, from *The Harlem Series***

**Gouache and pencil on paper**

**Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian  
Institution, Washington, DC, gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn**



**Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000)**

***Subway—Home from Work*, 1943,  
from *The Harlem Series***

**Gouache on paper**

**Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, gift of the Alexander  
Shilling Fund**

**Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000)**  
***The Music Lesson*, 1943, from**  
***The Harlem Series***

**Gouache on paper**

**New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, gift of the Association  
for the Arts of the New Jersey State Museum**

**Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000)**

***This Is Harlem*, 1943, from  
*The Harlem Series***

**Gouache and pencil on paper**

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn

Jacob Lawrence's paintings of Harlem are nuanced, vivid depictions of America's most iconic African American community. His distinctive style draws on the simplified forms of folk art, the patterns and shapes of geometric abstraction, and the deep traditions of narrative history painting.

When Lawrence joined the Downtown Gallery in 1942, Halpert became the first mainstream dealer in Manhattan to represent a black artist. The association, and her savvy marketing, made the young painter a national sensation. "I always owe Edith Halpert," Lawrence said. "I think she is one of the great American dealers." Halpert played a crucial early role in bringing African American art into the canon.

**209** (▶)

The exhibition curator describes Halpert's efforts to integrate the New York art market.

**603 AD)))**

Verbal Description

## Horace Pippin (1888–1946)

### *Sunday Morning Breakfast*, 1943

Oil on fabric

Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri, museum funds; Friends Fund; bequest of Marie Setz Hertslet, museum purchase, Eliza McMillan Trust, and gift of Mrs. Carll Tucker, by exchange

Halpert's 1944 Horace Pippin exhibition featured this painting. Pippin merged elements of folk art and high modernism—deliberately flattened space, attention to geometric forms, decorative surface patterns—with social critique. This scene, drawn from the artist's childhood memories, has a rustic warmth that lends dignity to the depiction of poverty. "I paint things exactly the way they are," Pippin explained. "I don't do what these white guys do. I don't go around here making up a whole lot of stuff. I paint it exactly the way it is and exactly the way I see it."

Halpert sought to develop a coherent identity for American art and saw diversity as one of its core values. When Pippin and Yasuo Kuniyoshi won prizes at the prestigious Carnegie International exhibition in 1944, Halpert wrote gleefully to one of her clients: "If the announcement does not impress the world at large with the way a true democracy functions, we had better join [the right-wing, anti-Communist agitator Elizabeth] Dilling."

**Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1889–1953)**

***The Swimmer*, c. 1924**

**Oil on canvas**

**Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, gift of Ferdinand Howald**

Like Halpert, Yasuo Kuniyoshi was an immigrant who embraced both his American identity and a modernist aesthetic. He painted figures in New England landscapes using a blend of angular, fragmented Cubist space and a simplified style reminiscent of folk art.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the Japanese-born painter, whom Halpert had been supporting for over a decade, suddenly became an “enemy alien.” He was placed under house arrest, his assets frozen. Halpert responded immediately, mounting a defiant retrospective of his work. In the press release she described his life as “a characteristic American story of opportunity and success. It is the story of his assimilation and emergence in the American pattern. It is the story of the development of a great talent enriched by the opportunities in American life and in turn enriching that life. It is the story of art and life in a democracy.”

Following World War II, Kuniyoshi became the first living artist to have a retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art and later represented the United States at the 1952 Venice Biennale.

**Charles Sheeler (1883–1965)**

***Ore into Iron*, 1953**

**Oil on canvas**

**Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, gift of William H. and Sandra B. Lane and Henry H. and Zoe Oliver Sherman Fund**

Sheeler is known for his paintings of industrial scenes, executed in a prismatic style that celebrates the gritty beauty and power of machinery. Here the blast furnaces of a Pittsburgh steel plant are abstracted to an intricate pattern of curves and planes.

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The collector William Lane, who loved the work of Charles Sheeler, purchased paintings by the truckload from the Downtown Gallery.

**Peter Blume (1906–1992)**

***South of Scranton*, 1931**

**Oil on canvas**

**Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, George A. Hearn Fund**

*South of Scranton* is a dreamscape, painted in Blume's signature Magic Realist style. The canvas blends the artist's recollections of the coal fields of Pennsylvania and a harbor in Charleston, South Carolina, where he encountered German sailors exercising on the deck of a ship. The ambitious painting won the Carnegie Prize in 1934, but it did not sell, perhaps because the enigmatic scene, with its homoerotic undertones, was unpalatable to many collectors at the time.

So in 1941 Halpert included it in one of her most ingenious marketing stratagems, an exhibition entitled *What Is Wrong with This Picture?* It was a group show of paintings that had failed to find a buyer—a circumstance, she commented, that “should make the critics and museums and collectors blush.” She even handed out questionnaires to visitors, inviting them to answer the question posed by the exhibition's title. This may have been a sales ploy, but her larger point was that taste is subjective and personal; people should trust their own judgment and buy what they like.

**Arthur Dove (1880–1946)**

***Tree Forms*, 1932**

**Oil on canvas**

**Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina at  
Chapel Hill, Ackland Fund**

The Downtown Gallery mounted a retrospective of Arthur Dove's work in 1947, shortly after the artist's death. The exhibition featured fifty paintings spanning a forty-year career. They revealed the hitherto obscure artist as, in Halpert's words, a "pioneer abstractionist" whose art anticipated Abstract Expressionism. Later, reviewing Dove's early nonrepresentational experiments, she found that some predated even those of Vasily Kandinsky in 1910, generally considered the first pure abstractions. Once again she was able to argue that American artists were just as innovative as Europeans. Over the next two decades she presented six shows of his work and placed more than sixty paintings in museums nationwide.



**Arthur Dove (1880–1946)**

***Dawn III*, 1932**

**Oil on canvas**

**McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas, Mary and  
Sylvan Lang Collection**

**Arthur Dove (1880–1946)**

***High Noon*, 1944**

**Oil and wax on canvas**

**Wichita Art Museum, Kansas, Roland P. Murdock Collection**

**Anonymous**  
**Pisces weathervane, late nineteenth**  
**century**

**Painted iron and other metal**

**Shelburne Museum, Vermont, museum purchase,  
acquired from Edith Halpert, the Downtown Gallery**

**Henry Leach (1809–1885)**

**Liberty weathervane pattern, 1879**

**Made for Cushing and White Co.**

**Painted wood**

**Shelburne Museum, Vermont, museum purchase,  
acquired from Edith Halpert, the Downtown Gallery**

In the triumphant postwar years, collecting folk art became a popular way to express national pride. The allegorical motif of Lady Liberty, much in vogue in the nineteenth century, reemerged as a symbol of a victorious democracy. This impressively large figure was originally designed to hold an American flag in her right hand as she led the way into the future.

The sculpture was purchased by Electra Havemeyer Webb, a folk-art collector with an eye for historically significant work and a preference for patriotic subjects. Halpert pointed her toward a more sophisticated kind of collecting that noticed aesthetic qualities. She encouraged Webb to buy works like this one, with its bold silhouette and elegant, abstract form. Webb bought nearly one hundred folk-art objects from her and in 1947 established the Shelburne Museum in Vermont, calling Halpert “the Fairy Godmother to the museum.”

# **Centaur weathervane, late nineteenth century**

**Attributed to A. L. Jewell and Co.**

**Cut and stamped copper sheet with other metal**

**Shelburne Museum, Vermont, museum purchase,  
acquired from Edith Halpert, the Downtown Gallery**

# **Dolphin weathervane, 1875–1959**

**Copper**

**Shelburne Museum, Vermont, museum purchase, acquired  
from Edith Halpert, the Downtown Gallery**

**John Marin (1870–1953)**

***From the Bridge, N.Y.C., 1933***

**Watercolor with charcoal and collage on paper**

**Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford,  
Connecticut, the Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin  
Sumner Collection Fund**

At mid-century John Marin was considered by many to be America's greatest living artist. His paintings struck a balance between avant-garde gestural abstraction and more traditional representation. Halpert tried repeatedly to entice him to join the Downtown Gallery with unabashed flattery. First she mounted a solo exhibition of his pictures of Manhattan (including this watercolor) to illustrate "the parallel growth of a great city and a great artist." Afterward she wrote to him, "I can say without hesitation that you are my favorite artist, American or otherwise, possibly more so because not otherwise. I can also say, with all due modesty, that I—or the Downtown Gallery—is the logical and only place for Marin." She eventually succeeded in 1950, once she agreed to construct a John Marin Room within the gallery, dedicated exclusively to showing his work.

**William Steig (1907–2003)**

***Proud Woman*, 1941**

**Pearwood and rope**

**Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence,  
Museum Works of Art Fund**

William Steig, already a famous cartoonist for the *New Yorker* (and later a beloved children's book author and illustrator) had three solo exhibitions with Halpert. He premiered his little-known satirical sculptures in carved wood at the Downtown Gallery.



# Stuart Davis (1892–1964)

## Study for *Ready to Wear*, 1955

Gouache and graphite on paper

Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, Dr. and Mrs. Milton Lurie Kramer, Class of 1936, Collection, bequest of Helen Kroll Kramer

Among Halpert's most dependable clients at mid-century were Milton and Helen Kroll Kramer, a Manhattan professional couple who often purchased small pictures on installment from her. With thrift and intelligence, they amassed a collection of more than 150 artworks, including Davis's study for *Ready to Wear*. Although individual works may not have been the biggest or best by an artist, together the ensemble created quite an impression in their home. (Like so many of the great private collections Halpert helped to assemble, the Kramers' artworks were later donated to a public museum.) In 1950 *Look* magazine published an article about the Kramers' "Big Little Art Collection," on view in the case nearby.

# **The Downtown Gallery at 32 East Fifty-First Street, Manhattan, c. 1955**

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, DC, Downtown Gallery records

Exhibition print

In 1940 Halpert moved the Downtown Gallery to Midtown Manhattan, and in 1945 she purchased this rowhouse, where she remained until 1965. In the new space she reversed the order of her galleries: the ground floor was dedicated to folk art, so that customers were obliged to consider the work of “American ancestors” before viewing the modern artists on the second floor. As she had done in Greenwich Village, she lived upstairs.

# An exhibition of Jacob Lawrence's paintings at the Downtown Gallery, November 1941

US National Archives and Records Administration,  
College Park, Maryland

Exhibition print

The Midtown showrooms were sumptuous, with modern flourishes. The walls were covered in Metalush, a fine metal netting that Halpert invented and patented, which was both decorative (it shimmered) and practical (it concealed nail holes). Jacob Lawrence's *Migration Series*, which made its public debut at the Downtown Gallery, can be seen hanging on these lustrous walls.

# **John Marin in the John Marin Room at the Downtown Gallery, November 16, 1950**

**Photograph by Morris Huberland**

**Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, DC, Downtown Gallery records**

**Exhibition print**

John Marin was still putting the finishing touches on a painting the day before the public opening of the John Marin Room at the Downtown Gallery. In this intimate and informal space a rotating selection of his paintings, watercolors, prints, and drawings were propped up on a wraparound aluminum ledge.

## ***A Museum Collection: American Folk Sculpture at the Downtown Gallery, 1950***

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, DC, Downtown Gallery records

Exhibition print

Halpert presented folk art in a consciously modernist way to emphasize that these works should be seen as fine art. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s she sold Electra Havemeyer Webb a large number of weathervanes, figureheads, trade signs, and carved figures, destined to join the core collection of the new Shelburne Museum in Vermont. She showed some of these folk sculptures at the Downtown Gallery in a minimalist space, placed on white pedestals or perched atop thin, stylized poles. This was Halpert's boldest effort yet to convince the public of the affinity between American folk and modern art, and to assert the rightful place of the former in art institutions.

**Edith Halpert at home with Georgia  
O'Keeffe's *In the Patio IX*, 1955**

**Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, DC, Downtown Gallery records**

**Exhibition print**

# Downtown Gallery exhibition brochures

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution,  
Washington, DC, Downtown Gallery records

Facsimiles

In the 1940s and 1950s Halpert used clever frameworks to encourage middle-class Americans to buy art.

**Christmas exhibition, 1950:** Halpert's annual holiday sales promoted the novel idea of buying artworks as presents for friends and family. This jaunty ad offers contemporary art as one among many consumer goods—and more affordable than some.

***Art for the 8,060,000*, 1948:** ever the shrewd marketer, Halpert wanted clients with modest incomes to see the purchase of small and inexpensive works as worthwhile and within their reach. "Do you realize," this brochure asked, "that you are among the 8,060,000 who could purchase original works of art by leading progressive American artists?"

***Art for the 67%*, 1952:** perhaps Halpert's wittiest sales scheme was aimed at the 67% of American adults who were married. She displayed two artworks by each of twenty-six artists, "one for Mister and one for Missus." Both could be lent on approval so the pair could duke it out at home over which one to keep.

## **“\$50-a-Month Buys a Big Little Art Collection”**

***Look***, February 28, 1950

**Photographs by Stanley Kubrick**

A 1950 article in *Look* magazine profiled Milton and Helen Kroll Kramer, loyal middle-class clients of the Downtown Gallery. Although the idea of buying art on layaway was common by then, it had been sensational when Halpert introduced it in 1926, and she still found it effective. A small painting by Stuart Davis, which the Kramers purchased from the Downtown Gallery on installment, is on view nearby.



## ***ABC for Collectors of American Contemporary Art, 1954***

**By John I. H. Baur with drawings by Saul Steinberg**

In 1954 Halpert commissioned the curator and scholar John I. H. Baur to write this beginner's guide for art enthusiasts. The accessible, unpretentious pamphlet, complete with humorous illustrations by Saul Steinberg, echoed Halpert's ethos. It encouraged people to buy for pleasure rather than prestige or investment.

The guide ends with a passionate argument for public giving, describing the kind of philanthropic client Halpert had been cultivating for more than thirty years: "Beyond money or the gratification of seeing one's name on a label, the giver is likely to find his deepest pleasure in the knowledge that he has brought an understanding of art to everyone in his community who will seek it. The real collector becomes, almost inevitably, a missionary whose reward lies in awakening, wherever he can, a new awareness of art's power to move the human spirit. Many owners have parted with some of their finest possessions, and a few have bought major works of art specifically for the public, foregoing the pleasures of hanging them, even temporarily, in their own homes. These are marks of the true collector, whose understanding of art's unique value compels him to share it with his fellow man."

**O. Louis Guglielmi (1906–1956)**

***Subway Exit*, 1946**

**Oil on canvas**

**Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art, Auburn University,  
Alabama, Advancing American Art Collection**

**O. Louis Guglielmi (1906–1956)**

***Tenements*, 1939**

**Oil on canvas**

Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, Athens,  
university purchase

*Tenements* links poverty with early death, associating substandard housing with coffins. A critic, reviewing the Advancing American Art collection, sneered, “If you contemplate adding to the suicide rate, we recommend this picture for the guest room.” The hostility to O. Louis Guglielmi’s painting is a mark of how much the political context of American culture was changing in the immediate postwar period. Guglielmi had made two versions of it; the other took its title, *One Third of a Nation*, from President Franklin Roosevelt’s much-admired 1937 inaugural address: “I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished.”

Such socially engaged art was now said to show the United States in a bad light. In 1948, after members of Congress attacked the government’s Advancing American Art collection as too radical, President Harry Truman ordered it dispersed. Most of the artworks went to galleries at Southern universities. The sale thus unintentionally continued Halpert’s lifelong mission to bring progressive art to underserved areas of America.

**Ben Shahn (1898–1969)**

***Hunger*, 1946**

**Tempera on board**

**Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art, Auburn University,  
Alabama, Advancing American Art Collection**

Responding to the overwhelming ravages of World War II, Ben Shahn began to use a dreamlike, allegorical approach, as in this haunting image. “A symbolism which I might once have considered cryptic,” he explained, “now became the only means by which I could formulate the sense of emptiness and waste that the war gave me, and the sense of the littleness of people trying to live on through the enormity of war.”

*Hunger* was purchased by the US State Department in 1946 for the Advancing American Art collection. This infuriated conservative Congress members, who were already suspicious of his art. Painters like him, one warned, “want to tell foreigners that the American people are despondent, broken-down, or of hideous shape, thoroughly dissatisfied with their lot and eager for a change of government.”

**Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1889–1953)**

***Circus Girl Resting*, c. 1925**

**Oil on canvas**

**Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art, Auburn University,  
Alabama, Advancing American Art Collection**

Yasuo Kuniyoshi's *Circus Girl Resting* was published more than any other painting during the Advancing American Art scandal. Its scantily clad woman, plump and bug-eyed, became a stand-in for the collection as a whole and bore the brunt of the harshest criticism. President Truman weighed in clumsily, declaring, "If that's art, then I'm a Hottentot."

**Jack Levine (1915–2010)**

***Welcome Home*, 1946**

**Oil on canvas**

Brooklyn Museum, New York, John B. Woodward  
Memorial Fund

*Welcome Home*, a harsh satire on the military elite, was shown in the *American National Exhibition* in Moscow in 1959, arousing the ire of the United States Congress. Nearly half the artists in the show—so claimed the now-infamous House Un-American Activities Committee—had “records of affiliations with Communist fronts and causes.”

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, former European commander of American armed forces, entered the fray, calling Jack Levine’s painting “lampoon more than art.” Halpert shot back at Eisenhower: “The Levine painting is not anti-American. It’s just anti-pompous general.” Her comments circulated in the international press, and she became a celebrity in the Soviet Union.

A native Russian speaker, she took the opportunity to make the case for America as a champion of free speech, emphasizing that “each artist is free to paint, carve, model, weld, etc. as he pleases and that each form of expression has its exponents among critics, museum personnel, and public.” The director of the United States Information Agency, organizer of the project, eventually acknowledged that *Welcome Home*, which was not removed from the show, had become “by a strange turn of fate, a symbol of freedom in contrast to a closed society.”

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Edith Halpert caused a furor when she participated in the *American National Exhibition* in Moscow at the height of the Cold War.

**604 AD)))**

Verbal Description

# Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986)

## *Bare Tree Trunks with Snow*, 1946

Oil on canvas

Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas Art Association Purchase

While Georgia O'Keeffe is best known for her magnified flowers and mountainscapes, Halpert intentionally highlighted her more abstract work, aligning it with Abstract Expressionism, which by the mid-1950s was dominating the art scene. In a series of solo exhibitions Halpert presented the artist not only in a new light, but also to a new generation of collectors unfamiliar with her work. The effort was a success and O'Keeffe's late career flourished. The painter, notoriously difficult to please, was impressed. "I have heard it remarked," she wrote to her dealer, "that you are the best salesperson in the New York art world."

## 211

The exhibition curator explores Edith Halpert's feminist repositioning of Georgia O'Keeffe's art.

**Stuart Davis (1892–1964)**  
***Little Giant Still Life*, 1950**

**Oil on canvas**

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond,  
the John Barton Payne Fund

Stuart Davis often drew inspiration from the look and language of contemporary American street signs and product packaging. This bold composition was created around the logo for Champion spark plugs.

*Little Giant Still Life* was shown at the 1952 Venice Biennale, when Davis represented the United States, along with his fellow Downtown Gallery artist Yasuo Kuniyoshi, as well as Edward Hopper and Alexander Calder. This was a striking achievement for an artist whose work had been too radical to sell at the start of Halpert's career.

Two decades later, Davis emerged as one of her most successful painters. This was perhaps because more extreme forms of abstraction had begun to appear, casting his work in a friendlier light. Later, his verbal-visual paintings also seemed to presage Pop art, making Davis not just popular, but prophetic.



**Stuart Davis (1892–1964)**

***Trees and El*, 1931**

**Oil on canvas**

**Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle,  
War Assets Collection**

**Charles Sheeler (1883–1965)**  
***Portrait of Newtown House*, 1932**

**Oil on gessoed board**

**Private collection, courtesy of Alexandre Gallery, New York**

In 1932, with the help of Charles Sheeler, Halpert bought a country home in Newtown, Connecticut, near his own house in Ridgefield. Halpert and Sheeler both admired early American design for its well-made, handcrafted simplicity. The painter helped furnish her rustic saltbox home with antiques and Shaker furniture from his collection and, soon after she moved in, painted this small devotional portrait of it for her.

**Bernard Karfiol (1886–1952)**

***Edith Gregor Halpert and Adam, 1935***

**Oil on canvas**

**Jewish Museum, New York, gift of the World Savings and Loan  
Association and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco**

**William Zorach (1881–1961)**

***Portrait Head of Edith Halpert*, 1930**

**Marble**

**Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina  
at Greensboro, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert S. Falk and  
Mr. and Mrs. Carl O. Jeffress**

**Niles Spencer (1893–1952)**

***Studio Table*, 1925**

**Oil on canvas**

**Myron Kunin Collection of American Art, Minneapolis**

**John Frederick Peto (1854–1907)**  
***Lincoln and the Star of David*, 1904**  
**Oil on canvas**

Collection of Walter B. and Marcia F. Goldfarb

A decade after Halpert revived William Harnett's reputation, research revealed that many of the canvases ascribed to him were in fact by his contemporary, John Frederick Peto. Some unknown person had forged Harnett's signatures. In time Peto came to be recognized as an outstanding painter in his own right. His *Lincoln and the Star of David* probably appealed to Halpert for its inclusion of a six-pointed star and a picture postcard of the revered American president, a juxtaposition that neatly summed up her own dual identity as an American Jew.

**Stuart Davis (1892–1964)**

***Composition with Winch*, c. 1932**

**Oil on canvas**

**Courtesy of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art,  
Bentonville, Arkansas**

**Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1889–1953)**

***Little Joe with Cow, 1923***

**Oil on canvas**

**Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art,  
Bentonville, Arkansas**

**213** 

The exhibition curator traces Edith Halpert's influence on our understanding of American art.



**Arthur Dove (1880–1946)**

***Snowstorm*, 1935**

**Oil on canvas**

**Collection of Michael L. Gordon**

**Attributed to Joseph Lochbaum**  
(active c. 1800–1806)

**Birth and baptismal certificate for  
Jacob Bosshaar, c. 1805**

**Watercolor and ink on laid paper**

**Philadelphia Museum of Art, promised gift of  
Joan and Victor Johnson**

**Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986)**

***Poppies*, 1950**

**Oil on canvas**

**Milwaukee Art Museum, Wisconsin, gift of  
Mrs. Harry Lynde Bradley**

**605 AD)))**

**Verbal Description**

**Anonymous**

**Hen pheasant weathervane, c. 1875**

**Probably made in Connecticut**

**Pine with traces of paint**

**Private collection**

**George L. K. Morris (1905–1975)**

***Wall-Painting*, 1936**

**Oil on canvas**

**Brooklyn Museum, New York, A. Augustus Healy Fund**

**Anonymous**

**Key-and-saw trade sign, late nineteenth century**

**Probably made in Connecticut**

**Brass**

**Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, gift of  
Edith Gregor Halpert**

**Charles Demuth (1883–1935)**  
***Love, Love, Love. Homage to Gertrude Stein*, 1928**

**Oil on wood**

**Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid**

In the 1960s Halpert called herself a “‘square’ in a Pop-hole,” acknowledging, with typical wit, that her artists were no longer among the avant-garde. Rather than trying to keep up with the times by adding younger artists to her roster, she simply rebranded works already in her inventory. In March 1963 she presented *Signs & Symbols ★ U.S.A. 1760–1960*—an exhibition that remains visionary today in its understanding of the American roots of Pop art and the influence of folk traditions. In it she showed this enigmatic, billboardlike painting by Charles Demuth alongside a nineteenth-century key-and-saw trade sign (on view nearby), arguing that her artists had been incorporating mass media and popular culture into their work for decades—sometimes centuries—before the arrival of Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg.

**Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986)**

***In the Patio IX*, 1950**

**Oil on canvas, mounted on wood**

**Jan T. and Marica Vilcek Collection, New York,  
promised gift to the Vilcek Foundation**



**Joseph Stella (1877–1946)**

***Study for New York Interpreted:  
The Bridge, 1917–22***

**Watercolor and pencil on paper**

**Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian  
Institution, Washington, DC, gift of the Federal Bureau  
of Investigation**

**O. Louis Guglielmi (1906–1956)**

***A Muted Street*, 1940–42**

**Oil on canvas**

**Myron Kunin Collection of American Art, Minneapolis**

**Elie Nadelman (1882–1946)**

***Circus Performer*, 1920–25**

**Painted cherrywood**

**Colby Museum of Art, Colby College, Waterville, Maine,  
the Lunder Collection**

**John Storrs (1885–1956)**  
***Study in Architectural Forms***  
***(Forms in Space), 1927***

**Bronze**

**Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, Texas, Raymond and  
Patsy Nasher Collection**

**Joseph Stella (1877–1946)**  
***Tree, Cactus, Moon*, c. 1928**

**Gouache on paper**

**Reynolda House Museum of American Art, Winston-Salem,  
North Carolina, gift of Betsy Main Babcock**

**Attributed to Abraham Heebner**  
**(1802–1877)**

***Exotic Bird and Townscape*, c. 1830–35**

**Made in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania**

**Watercolor and ink on paper, with a  
grain-painted period frame**

**Collection of Jane and Gerald Katcher**

**Anonymous**

***Bird and Flowers*, c. 1825**

**Watercolor and ink on wove paper**

**Philadelphia Museum of Art, promised gift of Joan  
and Victor Johnson**

**William King (1925–2015)**

***Edith Halpert*, 1959**

**Painted terracotta**

**Guild Hall Museum, East Hampton, New York,  
gift of Virginia Zabriskie**