

A detail from an abstract painting by Peter Busa, featuring a complex composition of overlapping geometric shapes in various colors including orange, grey, black, red, and green. The forms are layered and partially obscured, creating a sense of depth and movement.

Detail from *Provincetown* by Peter Busa

# CIRCA 1945

**ABSTRACT ART IN THE RENEE & CHAIM GROSS  
FOUNDATION COLLECTION**

July 19–September 15, 2019

Curated by the Renee & Chaim Gross Foundation



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# CIRCA 1945



Detail from Renee Gross, Yehudah Gross, Chaim Gross, and Mimi Gross at home in New York by Marion Palfi

*Circa 1945: Abstract Art in the Renee & Chaim Gross Foundation Collection* considers the mid-century work and collection of American sculptor Chaim Gross (1902–1991) and his wife Renee (1909–2005). Chaim Gross was not only an artist, but a collector, educator, and philanthropist whose dedication to art led the couple to establish an artist-endowed foundation with the mission to educate through their preserved Greenwich Village home, studio, and art collections. In 1943, the Grosses began summering in Provincetown, establishing their annual stay amongst a coterie of other artists. This long history with Provincetown, and the continued links of outdoor public sculptures like *The Tourists*, help to shape the reasoning behind traveling this exhibition to the Provincetown Art Association and Museum.

As a private collection made open to the public, we are witness to the personal choices made by the Grosses as a result of friendships, personal associations, and taste. These pieces were often collected directly from the artists themselves and trace relationships that span decades and locations. Gross was a supporter

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Detail from Chaim Gross posed with *The Tourists* in Provincetown

of his friends and the artists he admired, many of whom were linked with Provincetown. The freedom of thought in Provincetown enabled artists to shift their orientation, not only from the urban context of New York City, but also away from the critical language, terminologies, and trends in the field.

*Circa 1945* includes over 40 works from the Renee & Chaim Foundation Collection that probe the various methods and models of abstraction generated during the mid-century. The year 1945 has long served as a boundary in Western art history, attempting to segment modern from contemporary in addition to marking the end of World War II. The effects of war dispersed artists and often led to new artistic movements as new connections and collaborations were formed. The paintings, sculptures, prints, and drawings in this exhibition evoke questions as to whether the binary categories of figuration/abstraction, color/line, and form/content are as definitive as has often been argued by the art historical canon.

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Detail from untitled (Rome) by Willem de Kooning



# ABSTRACT ART IN THE RENEE & CHAIM GROSS FOUNDATION COLLECTION



Detail from untitled (Dutra Taxi, Provincetown) by Sylvia Carewe

All works from the collection of the  
Renee & Chaim Gross Foundation

**Alexander Archipenko** (1887–1964)

*Seated Figure*, 1947

Bronze, 24.5" x 9" x 6"

**Milton Avery** (1885–1965)

*Sally Pregnant*, 1932

Oil on canvas, 23" x 15"

*Portrait of Chaim*, 1944

Oil on canvas, 21" x 18"

**Henry Botkin** (1896–1983)

*Ceremonial Figure*, 1951

Oil on canvas board, 15" x 9"

**Byron Browne** (1907–1961)

*Woman with Mask*, 1951

Oil on canvas, 38" x 30"

*Head of a Woman*, 1938

Oil on canvas, 28" x 24"

**Rudy Burkhardt** (1914–1999)

*Seven Mystic Birds* installed at the  
family's home in Provincetown, n.d.

Photograph, 7.25" x 9.25"

**Peter Busa** (1914–1985)

*Provincetown*, c. 1948

Oil on canvas, 45" x 31"

*Venus*, c. 1950

Pen and ink on paper, 21" x 14.75"

untitled, c. 1940

Gouache and graphite on paper,  
5.875" x 6.5"

untitled, 1943

Watercolor, ink, and graphite on  
paper, 5" x 7"

**Sylvia Carewe** (1914–1981)

untitled (Dutra Taxi,

Provincetown), c. 1940s

Oil on canvas, 20" x 24"

The conservation of this work was  
made possible by the NYSCA/  
GHHN Conservation Treatment Grant  
Program administered by Greater  
Hudson Heritage Network with  
public funds from the New York State  
Council on the Arts.

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**Willem de Kooning** (1904–1997)

untitled (Rome), 1959  
Ink on paper, 40" x 30"

**John Flannagan** (1895–1942)

*Head of a Young Girl*, 1938  
Granite, 9" x 6.5" x 8.5"

**Arshile Gorky** (1904–1948)

*Still Life*, 1928  
Oil on board, 16" x 30"  
untitled (abstract still life), c. 1935  
Oil on canvas, 16.5" x 21.5"

untitled, c. 1937–38  
Silkscreen, 11.5" x 15"

**Chaim Gross** (1904–1991)

*Acrobatic Performers*, 1956  
Bronze, 37.5" x 12" x 5"

*Acrobat and Offspring*, 1953  
Ebony, 27.75" x 10" x 7.5"

untitled (fantasy drawing), 1950  
Ink on paper, 12.5" x 9.5"

untitled (fantasy drawing), 1951  
Ink on paper, 12" x 9"

*Fishermen with Fishing Nets*, 1950

Watercolor, ink, and graphite on paper, 23" x 28.5"

Illustration for *The Book of Isaiah*, c. 1972

Ink on paper, 13.25" x 10.375"

*The Lindbergh Family and Hauptmann Trial*, 1932–34

Golden streak ipilwood, 64" x 6.75" x 5.625" each

*Roosevelt and Hoover in a Fistfight*, 1932

Mahogany, 75" x 21" x 1.5"

*Seven Birds in Seven Rings*, 1959

Bronze, 16" x 9.75" x 6.25"

*Zahave*, 1954

Serpentine stone, 20" x 8.5" x 8.25"

**Bernard Gotfryd** (1924–2016)

Chaim Gross modeling a portrait of artist Karl Knaths in Provincetown, 1965  
Photograph, 4.25" x 6.25"

**Marsden Hartley** (1877–1943)

*Rest Period*, 1942–43  
Oil on board, 30" x 9"

**Karl Knaths** (1891–1971)

*House Plants*, n.d.  
Oil on canvas, 30" x 24"

**Jacob Lawrence** (1917–2000)

*Valley Forge*, 1954  
Tempera on board, 12" x 16"

**Fernand Léger** (1881–1955)

*Music*, c. 1942  
Gouache on paper, 20" x 26"  
The conservation of this work was made possible by generous donations from Foundation supporters for the event "Conversations with Conservators: A Benefit to Support Conservation at the Renee & Chaim Gross Foundation."

*Still Life*, 1942

Gouache on paper, 11.5" x 16"

**Martin P. Lazarus** (1918–1982)

Chaim Gross at the family's home in Provincetown, c. 1965  
Photograph, 9.5" x 7.25"

**André Masson** (1896–1987)

*Brother and Sister*, 1941  
Bronze, 6" x 3.25" x 4.5"

**Roberto Matta** (1911–2002)

untitled, c. 1953  
Oil with graphite etching on board, 16" x 23"

**Louise Nevelson** (1899–1988)

*An Ancient Garden*, 1953–55  
Etching and aquatint, 14.5" x 17.75"

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Detail from *Fishermen with Fishing Nets* by Chaim Gross

**Marion Palfi** (1907–1978)  
Renee Gross, Yehudah Gross,  
Chaim Gross, and Mimi Gross at  
home in New York, 1944  
Photograph, 7" x 8.75"

**I. Rice Pereira** (1902–1971)  
untitled, 1941  
Mixed media on paper, 14" x 11"

**Photographer unknown**  
Chaim Gross posed with *The Tourists*  
in Provincetown, c. 1985  
Photograph, 9.25" x 7.25"

Chaim Gross working in  
Provincetown, c. 1960  
Four photographs, 3.5" x 3.25" each

Federico Castellón, Chaim Gross,  
Sylvia Carewe, and Hudson D. Walker  
at the home of Renee and Chaim  
Gross in New York, c. 1940  
Photograph, 7.5" x 7.5"

North wall of the living room at 526  
LaGuardia Place, New York, c. 1970  
Photograph, 10" x 13.5"

**Theodoros Stamos** (1922–1997)  
*In the Cascades*, 1949  
Oil on canvas, 24" x 20"

**Ruth Vodicka** (1921–1999)  
untitled (abstract head), 1955  
Bronze, 4.625" x 2.75" x 2.75"

**Abraham Walkowitz** (1878–1965)  
*Maine Fishermen*, 1932  
Watercolor and black crayon on  
paper, 21" x 29"

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