

Visual Language: The Art of Abstraction



Large Print Labels

Introduction

Visual Language: The Art of Abstraction

Visual Language: The Art of Abstraction presents a selection of abstract, non-representational artworks from Boise Art Museum's Permanent Collection. A cross-section of abstract artwork, created by the most significant American abstract artists working from the 1980s through the early 2000s, fills these galleries with Color Field paintings, lyrical abstraction, and minimalism. Charles Arnoldi and Ed Moses are examples of West Coast artists who have pushed the boundaries of process and materials within abstraction. Richard Serra, representing the East Coast, demonstrates the power and beauty of a simple line, while Ann Thornycroft and Sam Francis exude explosive texture and

movement in their artworks. This exhibition surveys the range of abstract art in which artists use the visual language of art—line, color, pattern, value, shape, and texture—to express meaning and emotion.

Organized by the Boise Art Museum

Galleria

Anne Appleby

(1954, Harrisburg, PA)

Luna, 2002

oil and wax on wood panel

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Driek and Michael Zirinsky in Honor of Hennie and Bill Cantwell



Larry Bell

(b. 1939, Chicago, IL)

S 173 (Mirage Series), 1991

mylar, paper, laminant film,

aluminum, and silicon monoxide on canvas

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Henry T. Hopkins



Patrick Heron

(1920 – 1999, Leeds, United Kingdom)

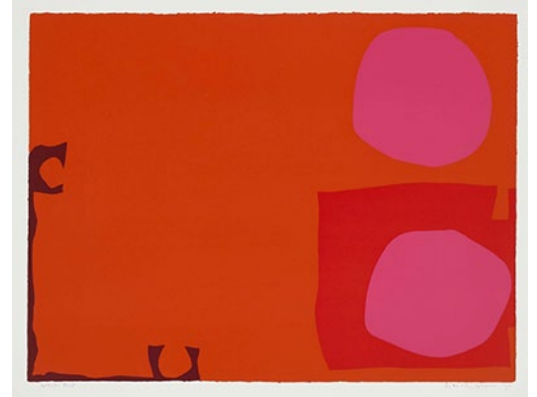
Two Magenta Discs in Red, 1970

screenprint

Boise Art Museum

Permanent Collection

Gift of Mr. Eddie Green



Squeak Carnwath

(b. 1947, Abington Township, PA)

Untitled, 1991

monoprint on paper

*Boise Art Museum Permanent
Collection*

*Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher for
BAM's 75th Anniversary*



Sam Francis

(1923 – 1994, San Mateo, CA)

Untitled, 1989

acrylic on paper

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

*Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher for BAM's 75th
Anniversary*



Kim MacConnel

(b. 1946, Oklahoma City, OK)

Woman with Mirror, Gouache #5,
2007

gouache on paper

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

*Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher for BAM's 75th
Anniversary*



Sam Francis

(1923 – 1994, San Mateo, CA)

Handmade for Garner, 1970s
monotype with hand painting
on paper



Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection
Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher for BAM's 75th
Anniversary

Sol LeWitt

(1928 – 2007,
Hartford, CT)



Bands (Not Straight) in Four Directions –
Red, 1999

oil-base woodcut print on Zangetsu paper,
edition 27/75

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection
Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher for BAM's 75th
Anniversary

Gallery 13

Charles Arnoldi

(b. 1946, Dayton, OH)

Untitled, 1990

mixed-media monotype on
handmade paper

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher



Charles Arnoldi

(b. 1946, Dayton, OH)

***Boulder Holder*, 1985**

wood, plywood, and acrylic
paint

Boise Art Museum

Permanent Collection

Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher



Charles Arnoldi has been an influential member of the California art scene for five decades. Arnoldi's paintings and sculptures are known for their grand scale and the incorporation of natural materials, bold colors, and minimal elements. Visually and physically aggressive, *Boulder Holder*, was made by painting, then carving, large slabs of plywood with a chainsaw. This impressive sculptural painting encapsulates wild energy in static form while utilizing natural materials to express the relationship between humans and nature.

Friedel Dzubas

(1915 – 1994, Berlin,
Germany)



Untitled, 1984

oil on paper

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Sydney and Clark Fidler

Charles Arnoldi

(b. 1946,
Dayton, OH)



Volatile, 2005

acrylic on canvas

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

*Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher for BAM's 75th
Anniversary*

Nancy Graves

(1939 – 1995,
Pittsfield, MA)



Seik, 1983

acrylic and watercolor on paper

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher

From 1972 to 1976, innovative American painter, sculptor, filmmaker, and printmaker, Nancy Graves worked increasingly as an abstract painter, developing a fluid style that was both energetic and whimsical. By the mid-1980s, she produced a series of paintings with illusionistic effects. Graves was interested in ideas about fleeting phenomena, particularly shadows. *Seik* is a characteristic work from this period, employing pastel coloration, vibrant flowing brush strokes, and a light, watery application of paint.

Matt Repsher

(b. 1977, Penland, NC)

***Burke*, 2012**

stoneware and mixed media

*Boise Art Museum Permanent
Collection*

*Gift of Anita Kay Hardy and Gregory Kaslo for
BAM's 75th Anniversary*



Chris Hawthorne and James Nowak

(b. 1953, Detroit, MI, and b. 1956)

***Tidal Pool*, 1990**

blown glass

Boise Art Museum

Permanent Collection

Gift of Gretchen A. Smith





Ellsworth Kelly

(1923 – 2015, Newburgh, NY)

18 Colors (Cincinnati), 1982

18-color lithograph on Arches Cover paper,
edition 21/57

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

*Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher for BAM's 75th
Anniversary*

Ellsworth Kelly worked across many artistic media – painting, sculpting, and printmaking – often combining two or more techniques in an experimental fashion. He is well known for his hard-edged minimalist and color-field artworks, such as *18 Colors (Cincinnati)*. Though he took inspiration from the world around him, he was adamant that his art was never a direct

reference to objects, but rather was a perception of life. During the heyday of Abstract Expressionism in the United States, Kelly spent six years in France. While there, he met Joan Miro, Alberto Giacometti, Alexander Calder, among others, all of whom significantly impacted the evolution of his artistic practice.

Gallery 13, Case #1

Case #1, right side

top shelf:

Helen Frankenthaler

(1928 – 2011, New York, NY)

***Thanksgiving Day*, 1973**

hand painted glazed stoneware tile

Boise Art Museum

Permanent Collection

Gift of Lenore and Allan Sindler



bottom shelf:

José Sierra

(b. 1975, Merida, Venezuela)



Untitled, 2014

stoneware

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Museum Purchase with funds donated by the

A. Kay Hardy and Gregory A. Kaslo

Philanthropic Gift Fund in the Idaho

Community Foundation

José Sierra's ceramic sculptures are informed by pre-Hispanic art and architecture, contemporary design, and the mountains and landscape of his native home of Venezuela. His process involves altering wheel-thrown porcelain and stoneware by adding, cutting into, and re-shaping the clay after it comes off the pottery wheel. Sierra is a self-taught artist who now runs a thriving ceramics studio practice in New Mexico.

Case #1, center

top:

Ed Moses

(1926 – 2018, Long
Beach, CA)



Untitled, 1973

acrylic on laminated tissue paper

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

*Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher for BAM's 75th
Anniversary*

bottom shelf:

Wouter Dam

(b. 1957, Utrecht, the Netherlands)



Red Sculpture, 2009

stoneware, thrown and assembled, with
diffuser-applied matte glaze

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

*Gift of Anita Kay Hardy and Gregory Kaslo in
Honor of Terry Melton for BAM's 75th
Anniversary*

Case #1, left side

top shelf:

Sonja Blomdahl

(b. 1952, Waltham, MA)



***Citrus Amber*, 2002**

blown glass

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Collectors Forum Purchase, 2004

Artist Sonja Blomdahl has been making glass vessels for more than four decades. Her artwork is an exploration of form, color, proportion, and process. She sees her vessels as symbols of wholeness and balance. Each artwork's outer form holds a continuous curve, built of multiple melded pieces and colors of glass that lead the viewer's eye around the form.

bottom shelf, left:

Artist Unknown

Eskimo Lidded Storage Basket, Late 20th century

grasses with purple, blue, and orange dyes

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Drew and Katie Gibson for BAM's 75th Anniversary



bottom shelf, center:

Jane Suare

(b. 1937, St. Louis, MO)

Standing oval form with colored string attachments,
1984-85

waxed linen thread and acrylic paint

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Drew and Katie Gibson for BAM's 75th Anniversary



bottom shelf, right:

Artist Unknown

Eskimo Lidded Storage Basket, Late 20th century
plant fibers and dyes

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection
Gift of Drew and Katie Gibson for BAM's 75th Anniversary



Gallery 13, Case #2

Case #2, right side

top shelf:

José Sierra

(b. 1975, Merida, Venezuela)

Untitled, 2014

stoneware

*Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection
Museum Purchase with funds donated by the
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middle shelf:

Caryl Kaiser Boeder

(b. 1952, Elmhurst, IL)

Grotto, 1996

handmade felt

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection



bottom shelf:

Dale Chihuly

(b. Tacoma, WA)

***Lapis Lazuli Soft Cylinder with
Silver Drawing, 1987***

blown glass

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection



Case #2, center

Val Cushing

(1931 – 2013, Rochester, NY)

Platter, 1990s

ceramic stoneware

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Karla Wynn



Case #2, left side

top shelf:

Sonja Blomdahl

(b. 1952, Waltham, MA)

Blomma Vase, 2004

hand blown glass

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher for BAM's 75th Anniversary



middle shelf, left:

I (Isabelle) Plaster

(b. unknown)

Maka open basket with yellow and green band design, 2008

cedar bark and bear grass, dyes

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Drew and Katie Gibson for BAM's 75th Anniversary



middle shelf, right:

I (Isabelle) Plaster

(b. unknown)



Maka open basket with yellow X and green band design, 2008

cedar bark and bear grass, dyes

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Drew and Katie Gibson for BAM's 75th Anniversary

bottom shelf:

José Sierra

(b. 1975, Merida, Venezuela)



Untitled, 2014

stoneware

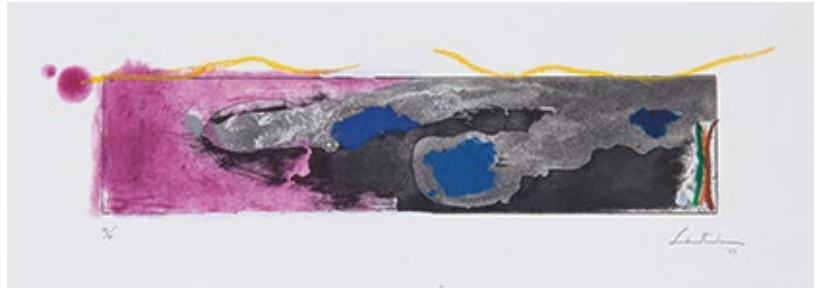
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Helen Frankenthaler

(1928 – 2011, New York, NY)

***A Page from a Book III*, 1997**

14-color etching, aquatint, mezzotint, and pochoir on paper, edition 18/60

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher for BAM's 75th Anniversary

Helen Frankenthaler's career stretched over six decades. She is notable for her influence on the transition from Abstract Expressionism to Color Field painting in the United States. Her artistic style is characterized by fluid shapes, simplified abstract compositions, and an emphasis on immediacy. In the artist's words, "A really good picture looks as if it's

happened at once." Utilizing thinned down paints, her canvases often intentionally contain small areas left bare in the space between two colors. Raw canvas frequently glows through thin washed areas of color or sections the artist has scrubbed to achieve translucent, cloud-like marks.

Ellsworth Kelly

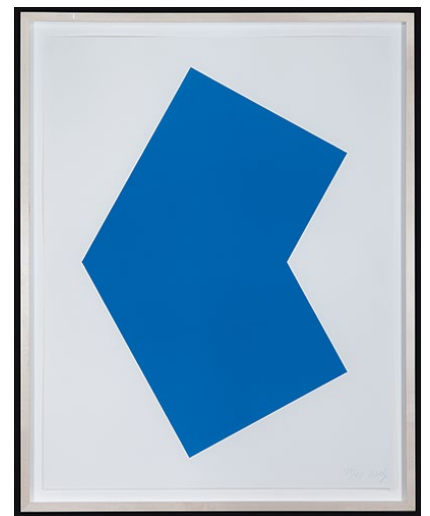
(1923 – 2015, Newburgh, NY)

Blue, 2001

one-color lithograph on Rives BFK paper, edition 29/45

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher for BAM's 75th Anniversary



Gallery 12

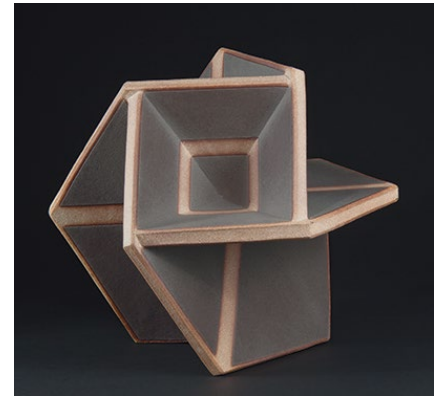
John Mason

(1927 – 2019, Madrid, NE)

Square Hex, Charcoal with Tracers, 2004

ceramic

*Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection
Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher for BAM's 75th
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Brice Marden

(1938 – 2023, Bronxville, NY)

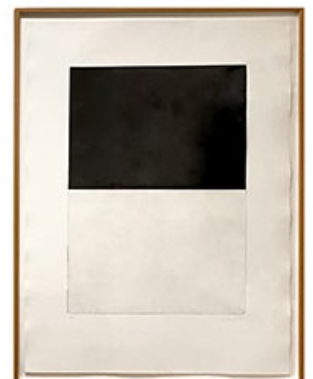
left-right:

Untitled, 1973

Untitled, 1973

lithographs

*Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection
Gifts of Dana Hunt*



Robert Motherwell

(1915 – 1991, Aberdeen, WA)

Lament for Lorca, 1981-82

color lithograph

edition: 15/52, published
by Tyler Graphics

Boise Art Museum

Permanent Collection

Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher

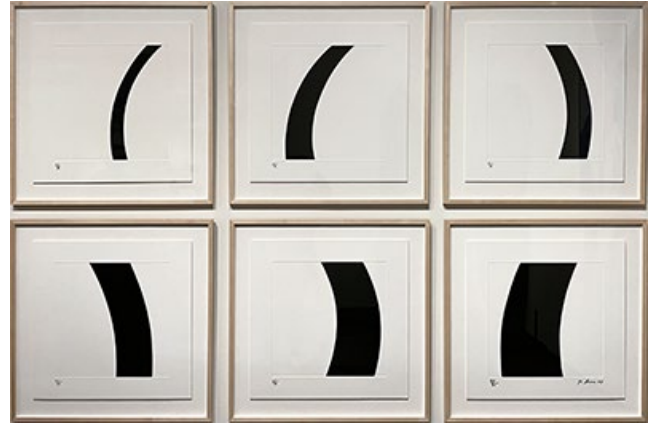


In *Lament for Lorca*, Robert Motherwell pays homage to the Spanish poet, Federico Garcia Lorca, who was assassinated by Nationalist forces at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. Motherwell championed Lorca's writing and was so impacted by the tragic proportions of the Spanish Civil War that he produced a series of more than 200 paintings entitled, *Elegies to the Spanish Republic*, devoted to the conflict. About *Elegies*, Motherwell said,

“After a period of painting them, I discovered black as one of my subjects – and with black, the contrasting white, a sense of life and death which to me is quite Spanish. They are essentially the Spanish black of death contrasted with the dazzle of a Matisse-like sunlight.”

Richard Serra

(b. 1938, San Francisco, CA, d. 2024, Orient, NY)



The Line of the Curve, 2004,

6-panel, one-color etching on Somerset satin white paper, edition 21/35

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher for BAM's 75th Anniversary

Richard Serra is most notable for his large-scale, site-specific, steel sculptures, and bold, black-and-white artworks on paper. As with his sculptures, Serra's lithographs and drawings emphasize spare, minimal forms that convey a sense of mass, volume, or weight.

Investigating space, form, and structure is at the heart of his artistic practice. *The Line of the Curve* is powerful in its simplicity, a characteristic that extends throughout Richard Serra's artistic oeuvre.

Ann Thornycroft

(b. 1944, London, England)

Angel, 1984

oil on canvas

*Boise Art Museum Permanent
Collection*

Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher



Angel is part of a 1984 series by Ann Thornycroft and one the most figurative artworks of her career. It comprises a central image symbolizing a somewhat floating figure. Like other artworks in the series, when oriented horizontally, it appears more like a landscape. Of her paintings, Thornycroft has said, “I am interested in the interplay between the accidental mark and the deliberate mark and geometric shape. I find this dichotomy mirrors the ebb and flow of life.”

Joan Livingstone

(b. 1948, Portland, OR)

Doppelganger, 1909

industrial felt and epoxy resin

Boise Art Museum

Permanent Collection

Gift of the artist



Gallery 11

Ed Moses

(1926-2018, Long Beach, CA)

The Drifter (Y Branco), 1999

acrylic on canvas

Boise Art Museum

Permanent Collection

Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher



California Abstractionist, Ed Moses, is widely regarded for his complex abstractions filled with luminous color and fluid expression. Unlike most painters who use easels and brushes, Moses paints his paintings on the floor, often using a long-handled mop to apply paint in broad swaths and extend his reach. A practicing Tibetan Buddhist since 1971, Moses devoted himself to pursuing a spontaneous, spiritual approach to painting. *The Drifter (Y Branco)* reflects the gestural movement and

heroic scale Moses preferred. The surface is built with layers of splashing and staining. Even with multiple layers of paint, the painting has a semi-transparent look that makes the canvas appear light and airy.

Gallery 11, Case #3

Case #3, left side

top shelf:

Ruenell Foy Temps

(1940 – 2020,
San Francisco, CA)



Inlaid Platter, 1979

ceramic

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Clifford Temps

bottom shelf:

David Shaner

(1934 – 2002, Pottstown, PA)



Stoneware Slab, 1969

stoneware

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of John Takehara

Case #3, center:

Jim Kraft

(b. 1949, Detroit, MI)

Lichen Keep, 2007

hand-built ceramic

Boise Art Museum

Permanent Collection

Gift of the Earl Hardy Box Canyon Nature

Preserve in Honor of the 75th Anniversary of

Boise Art Museum



Case #3, right side

top shelf, left:

Joanne Russo

(b. 1956, Winsted, CT)

Small lidded basket with four pointed feet, 2002

plant fibers, white glass seed beads, black plastic discs

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Drew and Katie Gibson for BAM's 75th Anniversary



top shelf, right:

Artist Unknown

Rwandan Peace Basket,

20th Century

sisal with black dye

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Drew and Katie Gibson for BAM's 75th Anniversary



bottom shelf, left:

Adam Silverman

(b. 1963, New York, NY)

Untitled, 2012

ceramic

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Anita Kay Hardy and Gregory Kaslo



bottom shelf, right:

Adam Silverman

(b. 1963, New York, NY)

Untitled, 2012

ceramic

Boise Art Museum

Permanent Collection

Gift of Anita Kay Hardy and Gregory Kaslo



Gallery 11, Case #4

Case #4, left side

top:

Julia Mangold

(b. 1966, Germany)

Untitled, 2000

graphite on vellum and paper

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Sally and Wynn Kramarsky, New York



bottom shelf:

Christopher Staley

(b. 1954, Boston, MA)

Snow Falling at Night, n.d.

glazed stoneware

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Anita Kay Hardy and Gregory Kaslo



Case #4, center

top:

Sol LeWitt

(1928 – 2007, Hartford, CT)

Irregular Form, 1997

gouache on paper

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Sally and Wynn Kramarsky, New York



bottom shelf, left:

José Sierra

(b. 1975, Merida, Venezuela)

Untitled, 2014

stoneware

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bottom shelf, right:

Dorothy Torivio

(1946 – 2011,
Acoma Pueblo, NM)

Jar, n.d.

natural hand-harvested clay
and slip

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection
Gift of Joan H. and John B. Carley



Case #4, right side

top:

Max Cole

(b. 1937, Hodgeman County, KS)

Untitled, 1997

acrylic on paper

Boise Art Museum

Permanent Collection

Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher



bottom shelf:

Yoonjee Kwak

(b. 1988, South Korea)

Untitled (from the *Breath* series), 2019

ceramic

Boise Art Museum Permanent Collection

Gift of Anita Kay Hardy and Gregory Kaslo



Korean American ceramicist Yoonjee Kwak's sculptures embrace the Korean tradition of vessels as representations of human beings. In this light, a generous person would be symbolized by a large vessel. *Untitled (from the *Breath* series)*, draws inspiration from minimalism, nature, and geometry. Each small opening acknowledges the individual's interactions with their surrounding environment, a reminder of the interconnection of all things.

Richard Diebenkorn

(1922 – 1993, Portland, OR)

Serge, 1985

four-color lithograph,
edition 6/26

Boise Art Museum

Permanent Collection

Gift of Wilfred Davis Fletcher



Throughout his career, Richard Diebenkorn shifted between figurative artwork and pure abstraction, unrestricted by the popular art movement of the current generation. *Serge* is inspired by aerial views of the landscape. Here, Diebenkorn unifies the image through monochromatic color while pushing the use of representational references far into abstraction.