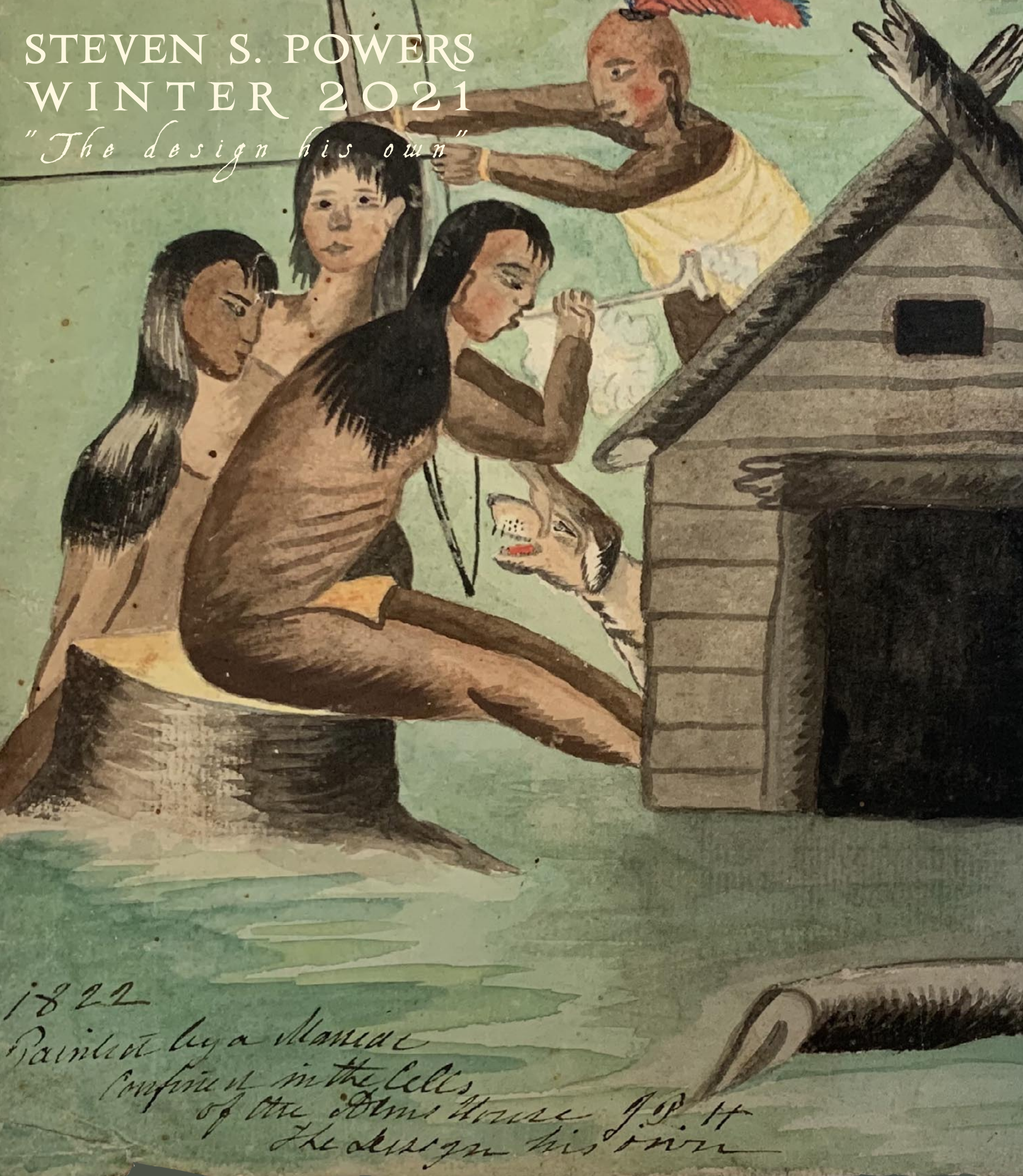


STEVEN S. POWERS
WINTER 2021

"The design his own"



1822

Painted by a Manda
Confined in the cells
of the Idms House J.P. H
The design his own

STEVEN S. POWERS

“THE DESIGN HIS OWN”

It is a curiously worded phrase and not one I had read before, “the design his own.” Dr. John Pennington Hopkinson wrote these words on a watercolor that he collected in 1822. But the words are wise and impart, to me at least, something more than a casual comment of credit. Hopkinson felt compelled to make a special note and credit the artist, that it was something he created from his imagination—not something borrowed or copied. More so, Hopkinson wrote, “Painted by a maniac confined in the cells of the Alms House—the design his own.”

All the works herein are “designs of their own,” as it were. At the time of their creation, something new that the world had never seen before. As time goes on, spouses, siblings, relatives, neighbors, communities, whole populations sift through what stays and what goes. What gets destroyed or what is saved. When you throw something away, someone else may keep it, and it is sifted through another keeper. “One man’s trash...” It lives another day.

One of the most common remarks said about antiques is, “I can’t believe it survived!” I can. Look at it! It is beautiful, complex, and sublime. It was then, and it is now. Quality of vision is always appreciated—not by all, but some—maybe even just one that sifts it and saves it for another day.

I would be remiss not to comment on the devastating toll and struggles of the year 2020. Every corner of the Earth has been affected by the tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic and its related economic wreckage. We look back at the 1918 pandemic as though it was an eon ago, but it was only one hundred years ago—not learning from past mistakes, but repeating them. Cultural institutions are sifting through the art and ephemera that defines this time—collecting now, as they did in 1918, our response to a global health catastrophe. When we see historical exhibits, we often marvel at how past generations got some fundamentals of “common sense” absurdly wrong—and yet we don’t realize many of us are the “absurds”—in a different time and in a better pair of shoes. I’m looking at you anti-maskers!

WORKS OF ART
& AMERICANA



Masonic Sun Face (detail)
France
Circa: 1780
Size: 9 3/4" (h) x 9 3/4" (w)

Carlo Zinelli (1916-1974)

Untitled [with Cycloptic Elephant]

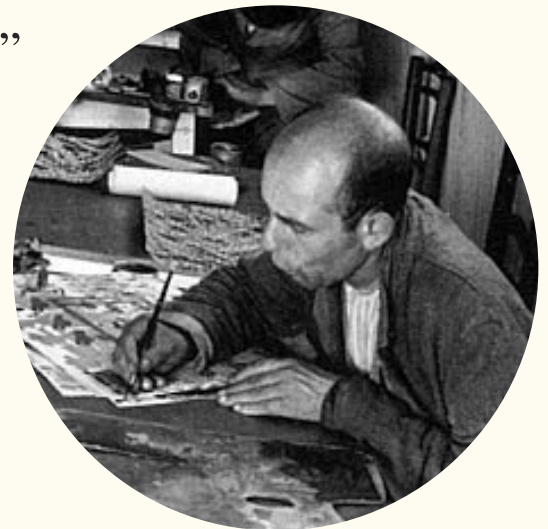
Gouache on paper

Circa: 1958

Size: 19 1/2" (h) x 13 1/2 (w) sight

Provenance: Gift to psychiatrist who worked at the San Giacomo alla Tomba Hospital, Verona, Italy in the early 1960s; thence by family descent.

An extraordinary example of an early Zinelli composition. Densely composed in a “horror vacui” fashion, the vertical work is rich with figures and fantastic animals, including a striking cycloptic elephant. The vibrantly colored figures weave throughout the composition in red, yellow, blue, and green, while birds, boats, bicycles, ladders, and a large guitar are planted throughout the space.



The work continues on the back with a cluster of red and yellow figures and boxy elements. The paper is initialed and dated on the back bottom “Z C 12-4 or 9 [-] 58.” April or September 12, 1958.

Carlo Zinelli is considered one of the core artists of Art Brut as recognized by Jean Dubuffet. A schizophrenic, Carlo was hospitalized from 1947-1974. In 1957, as part of a therapy program, Zinelli started to paint. Zinelli’s works are divided into four periods, with this work falling into the first (1957-1960). In this first phase, Zinelli worked more intuitively than later works



of a salt
pans
spot
Kashmir



Z. P. 12-458

Z. P. 12-458

where compositional figures vary much more in scale, and the compositions are more deliberate. Though Zinelli's work remained graphically intense throughout the years, I believe the earlier works to be more honest and unaltered before receiving recognition from local artists, galleries, and Jean Dubuffet for his Art Brut collection.



Zinelli's work is represented in numerous institutions and has been the subject of many exhibitions worldwide, including; the Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne, Switzerland; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; New National Museum, Monaco; Whitechapel Gallery, London, England; International Folk Art Museum, Santa Fe, NM; American Folk Art Museum, New York, NY; Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, Italy; Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, Switzerland; and The Museum of Everything.



*Rare Carved & Painted Folk Art Ball
& Ring Toss Game*

Circa: 1930s

Size: 33" (h) x 17 1/2" (w) x 27" (d)

A rare, large-sized American Folk Art carnival ball and ring toss figure with cage. The figure with extended left arm and a bread-board like chest painted as a white shirt with a big red tie—his head surmounted atop a blue painted cage.

The game is all original and maintains a great, complex, worn painted surface. The color and wear to the painted tie is just fantastic!

Though fairly large the entire object can be hung on a wall (it is wired for hanging) or put on the floor or a pedestal and viewed in the round.

Provenance: Ricco-Maresca; Private Collection.





Self Portrait detail from Hudson River Bridge

Joseph Roth (1851?–1921)

Textile embroidery on linen

Circa: 1906

Size: 12 1/2" (h) x 24" (w)

Joseph Roth (1851?-1921)

At least fifteen works by Roth have been identified, ranging in date from 1905 to 1921. The earlier ones while he was at Ward's Island Asylum in Central Islip, NY, and later when he was a patient at the Binghamton State Hospital, Binghamton, NY. Roth's rich and complex embroideries are a foundation of early American Outsider Art and the importance of his masterworks cannot be overstated.

I have not been able to identify Roth; however, a "John Roth" appears in the 1920 Broome County census, including the Binghamton State Hospital. It lists his age at 69 in 1920 and lists his birthplace as Germany. He is the only "Roth" listed in the hospital during that time, and dated examples of Roth's work are known until 1921.

Several of Roth's works, including one herein, use the phrase "World Erlöser," which translates from German as "world savior or redeemer." Having transcribed six textiles, it is clear Roth had a "messiah complex" and likely suffered from schizophrenia.

In both works, Roth's drawing ability is established with a good sense of perspective in rendering the architecture of the building and the bridge. As well, each portrait within the roundels has its own identity.

Atypically in both of these masterworks, Roth embroiders nearly the entire surface—every square inch. Whereas in other works, Roth used the linen ground or substrate as a blank piece of "paper"—"drawing" as it were with thread—here both are "painted."

The first textile herein is an early work dating from 1905. Roth meticulously rendered the asylum where he was a patient using blue, brown, black, and tan threads. Floating above the building, Roth created eight portraits within roundels. Though they are not identified as they sometimes were, Roth typically rendered himself, his mother, wife, and hospital doctors. Above and to the figure's side, Roth stitched in broken English (usually he wrote in German or a hybrid of both). From what I have been able to transcribe, Roth remarked on the "Emperor of The



Ward's Island Asylum

Joseph Roth (1851?–1921)

Textile embroidery on linen

Circa: 1905

Size: 9" (h) x 22 1/8" (w)



(next page) *Hudson River Bridge*
Joseph Roth (1851?–1921)
Textile embroidery on linen
Circa: 1906
Size: 12 1/2" (h) x 24" (w)

United States," and mentioned something about building the Ward's Island Asylum and the year 1905 (the asylum was not built this year, but other facilities merged).

The second textile dates from 1906 and illustrates Roth's plans or designs for a Hudson River Bridge. The New York and New Jersey Interstate Bridge Commission, a consortium of three groups, was created in 1906 to put forth a plan for a Hudson River crossing from New York to New Jersey—this in time became the Holland Tunnel. The project was reported in the *New York Times* and other papers, and Roth likely was inspired by the concept.

Above three portrait roundels, Roth stitched, "The Hutson Rever [sic] Bridge from Canal Street to Jersey City / Modeled from Joseph Roth World Erlöser [redeemer]." Roth envisioned a train bridge over the river with sailboats and side-wheel paddle steamers passing through the bridge's pylons. Roth renders the water with tightly woven blue and white threads in a herringbone pattern giving the illusion of waves.





- SANCTUM - SANCTORUM. -



Explanatory Marks: The Mystical Drawings of George M. Silsbee

on exhibit with Ricco/Maresca Gallery

January 28 - March 13, 2021

Essay by Allison C. Meier

At different points during his life, George M. Silsbee was an artist, miner, engineer, and organ builder. But like many men in the second half of the 19th century, he also had a mystical alternate identity where ceremony, rites, and a mastery of secret symbolism connected him to something greater than himself. In his Masonic practice, he was a seer of rituals and conjurer of archaic wisdom, translating divine guidance into labyrinthine charts. Over a century since they were created, his works on paper—now exhibited to the public for the first time—offer a tantalizing vision to be untangled. Their dense networks of ink and watercolor calligraphy, encoded text, illustrations, and numbers—where no space for symbolism is wasted—suggest that with the right understanding one could journey through their protocols to ancient esoteric knowledge.

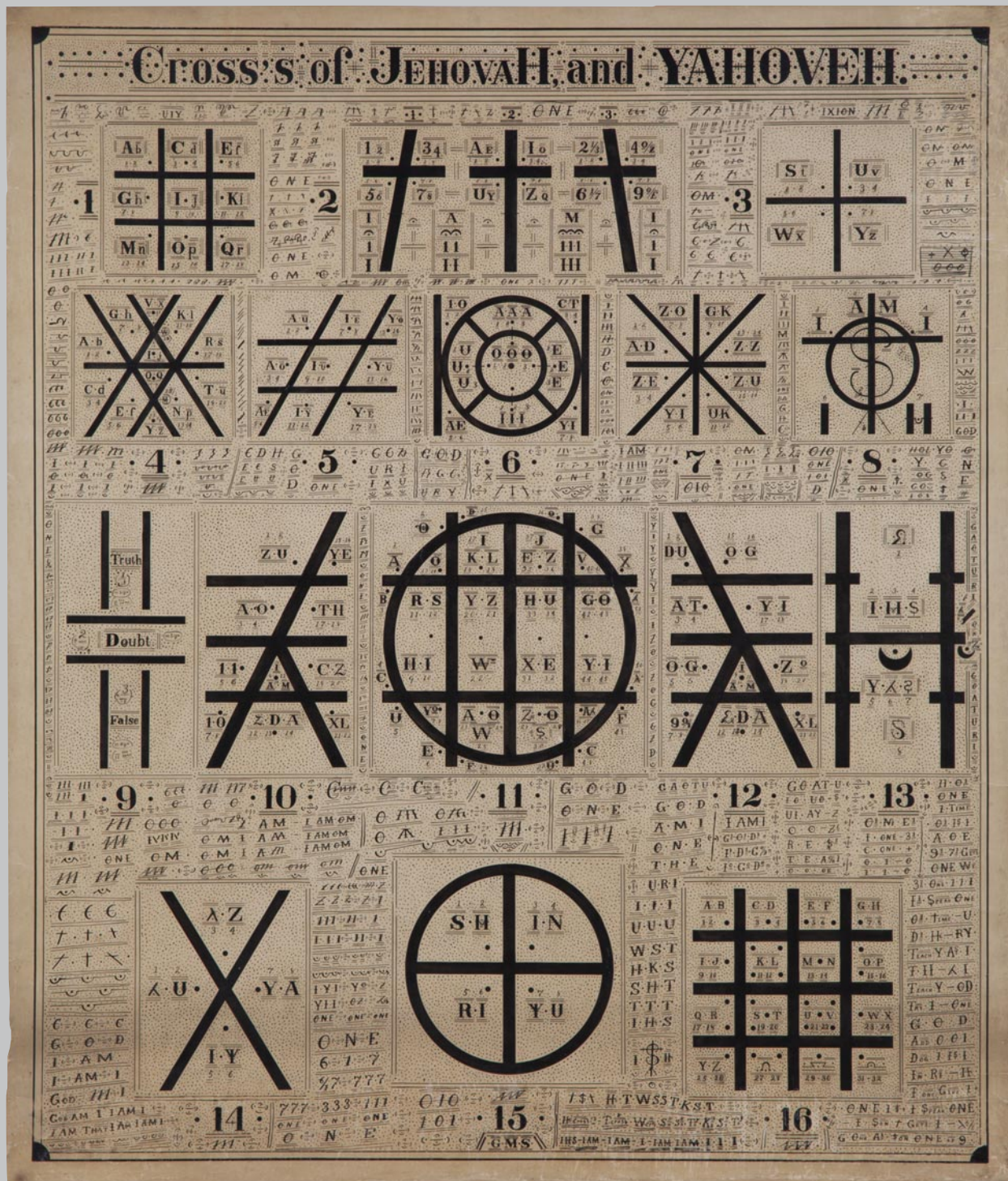
Lodge Records (detail)

George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)

Colored inks on paper mounted on linen

Circa: 1891

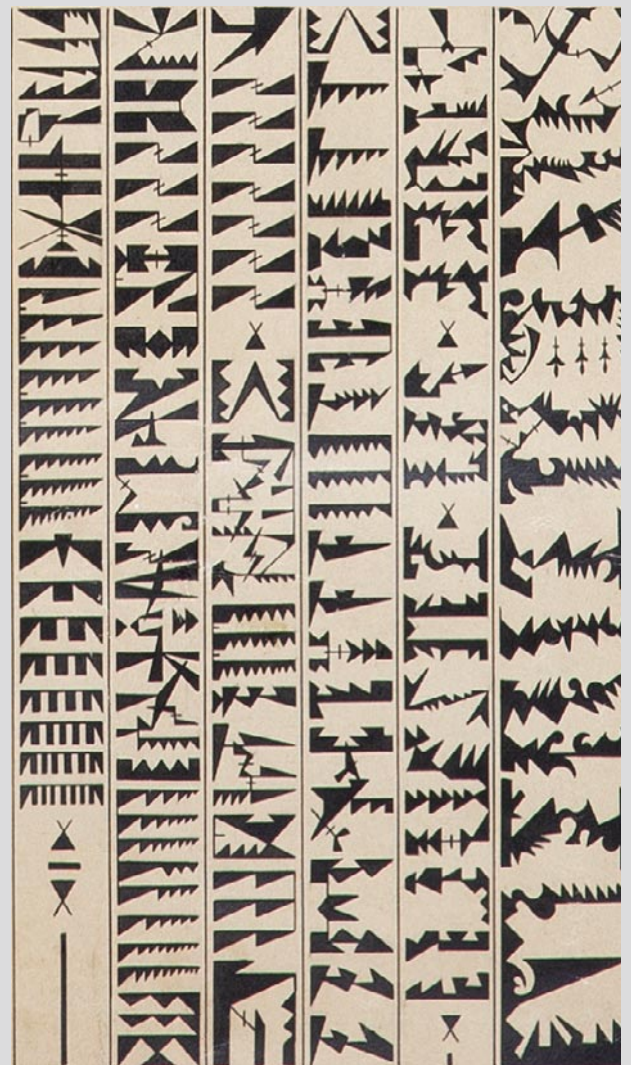
Size: 40 5/8" (w) x 35 1/8" (h)



Cross's of Jehovah and Yahoveh
 George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)
 Ink on paper mounted on linen
 Circa: 1891
 Size: 21 1/2" (w) x 25 1/8" (h)

The known details of Silsbee's biography, gleaned from census records, city directories, fraternal society publications, and newspaper archives provide just a spare sketch of the artist. Born on January 9, 1840, in Oneida County, New York, he died on his birthday in 1900 at the age of 60 near Waukau, Wisconsin. His obituary called him an "artist of ability"—although the medium of art is unspecified— and noted that he'd arrived in Wisconsin with his parents as a child in 1845 and later moved to Summit in Waukesha County. During the Civil War, he served three years in the First Wisconsin Cavalry and then in the 1870s relocated to Denver, Colorado. There he worked with organ builder Charles Anderson on an instrument with over 500 pipes, making it one of Colorado's largest pipe organs. Then he moved on again, this time to the newly bustling Leadville, a major mining center of the Colorado Silver Boom, and spent two decades working as a miner and engineer.

In 1875, Silsbee was listed as a member of the Kenosha Masonic Lodge, No. 47 in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and it was



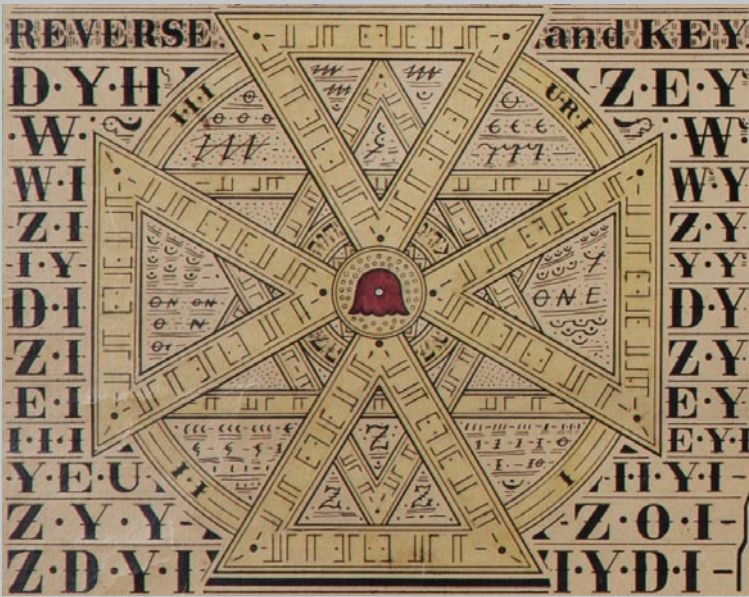
Jehovah's Holy Bible / The Fables of Priesthood (detail)

George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)

Colored inks on paper mounted on linen

Circa: 1891

Size: 35 5/8" (w) x 40 1/2" (h)



*Temple of Solomon - Jerusalem - Subt'r'n
Excavations (detail)*

George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)

Colored inks on paper mounted on linen

Circa: 1891

Size: 41 1/8" (w) x 22 5/8" (h)

during his years in Leadville that he embarked on the Masonic art that his family would call “his life’s work.” The mounting of the paper charts on linen with wooden dowels suggests they were meant to be unrolled and displayed, yet they were passed down in his family for four generations rather than being part of a Masonic lodge. Still, the square and compass that appear on a shield behind Silsbee’s signature on three of the charts—stonemason’s tools that are the most recognizable symbols of Freemasonry—affirm his work as that of a Masonic artist.

By the time Silsbee created these pieces at the end of the 19th century, the iconography and symbolism of fraternal societies had become largely standardized through the mass production of paraphernalia. Whereas the majority of fraternal society objects in the 18th century were crafted by local artists or were homemade, the huge boom in 19th-century membership led to a mail-order business for costumes, banners, décor, and anything else needed to turn a clubhouse in an ordinary American town into an

Explanatory MARKS of JEHOVAH'S Private TEACHER'S

JEHOVAH'S (Private Instructions To HIS SELECT THREE AND ONE

ST GO CT SG SU IN RI JE SU SC HR IS TO NE 31

HI HI AT AS ON NE GH OS TI OE ZO CA AS HI AU DC

CA LM AR YN RC KZ UN AG OA TS HA TY RS

YE CO ME TH OU ME DY AO RS AV IO RS 31

SO NO FG OD ONE I NT HR EE 3I NI ONES HE

INR CHRIST JESUS SON OF GOD THREE IN ONE

I AM THAT I AM I AM I AM I AM I GOD JEHOVAH OM

THAT AM I AM I AM HOC SIGNO VINCES IN HOC SIGNO VINCI

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I AM I AM I AM I AM I AM I AM I AM I AM I AM I AM

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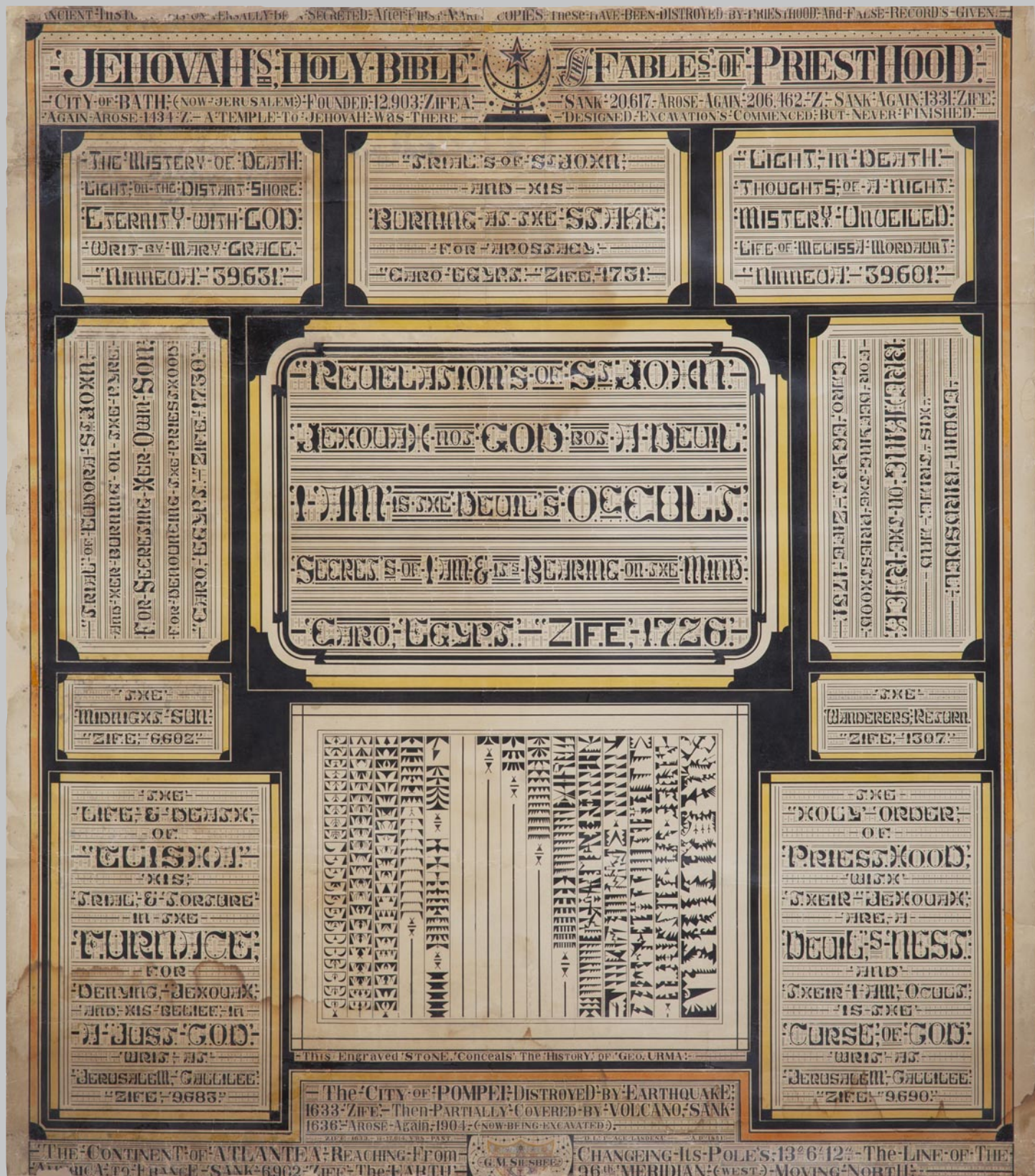
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I AM I AM I AM I AM I AM I AM I AM I AM I AM I AM

G.M.S.

Explanatory Marks of Jehovah's Private Teacher's
 George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)
 Ink on paper mounted on linen
 Circa: 1891
 Size: 21 1/2" (w) x 25 3/8" (h)



Jehovah's Holy Bible / The Fables of Priesthood
 George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)
 Colored inks on paper mounted on linen
 Circa: 1891
 Size: 35 5/8" (w) x 40 1/2" (h)

occult temple to higher truths. While Christianity and the Bible were often at the center of these societies' systems, they had an added theatricality through an appropriation of the ancient and "exotic" drawing in Victorian architectural and art movements ranging from Egyptomania to Moorish Revival. Silsbee's experience as a Civil War veteran and worker in a rapidly industrializing society would have been akin to many of his fellow members who sought a community that was also an escape from modern life and its responsibilities.

Silsbee's work in its style stands apart from other Masonic art of the late 19th century. Degree charts and paintings were common in Masonic lodges, however, they tended to be figurative with allegorical scenes and vibrant symbols. Aside from a stylized map and an illustration of an inner sanctum, Silsbee's charts are mainly ink on paper and only have a few figurative elements amid the stark typography and shapes. A small all-seeing eye overlooks a network of



Jupiter (detail)

George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)

Colored inks on paper mounted on linen

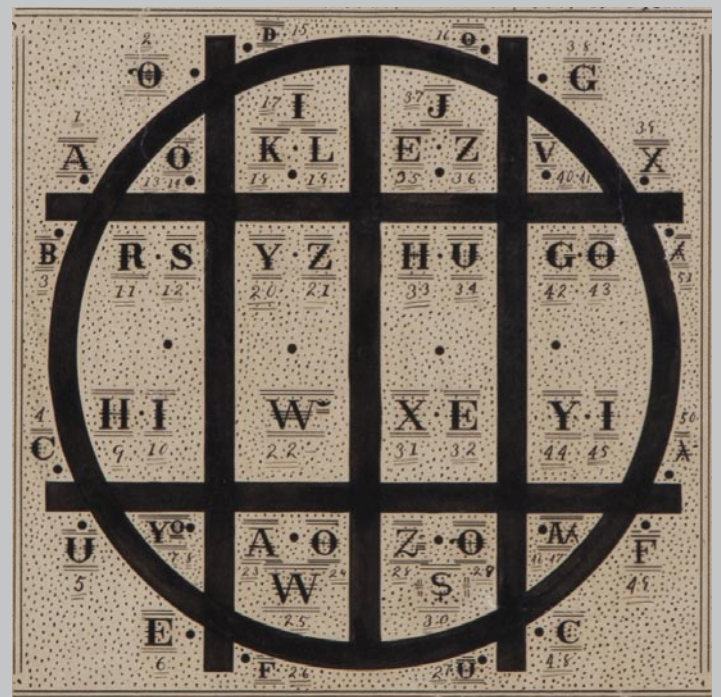
Circa: 1891

Size: 41 1/8" (w) x 22 5/8" (h)

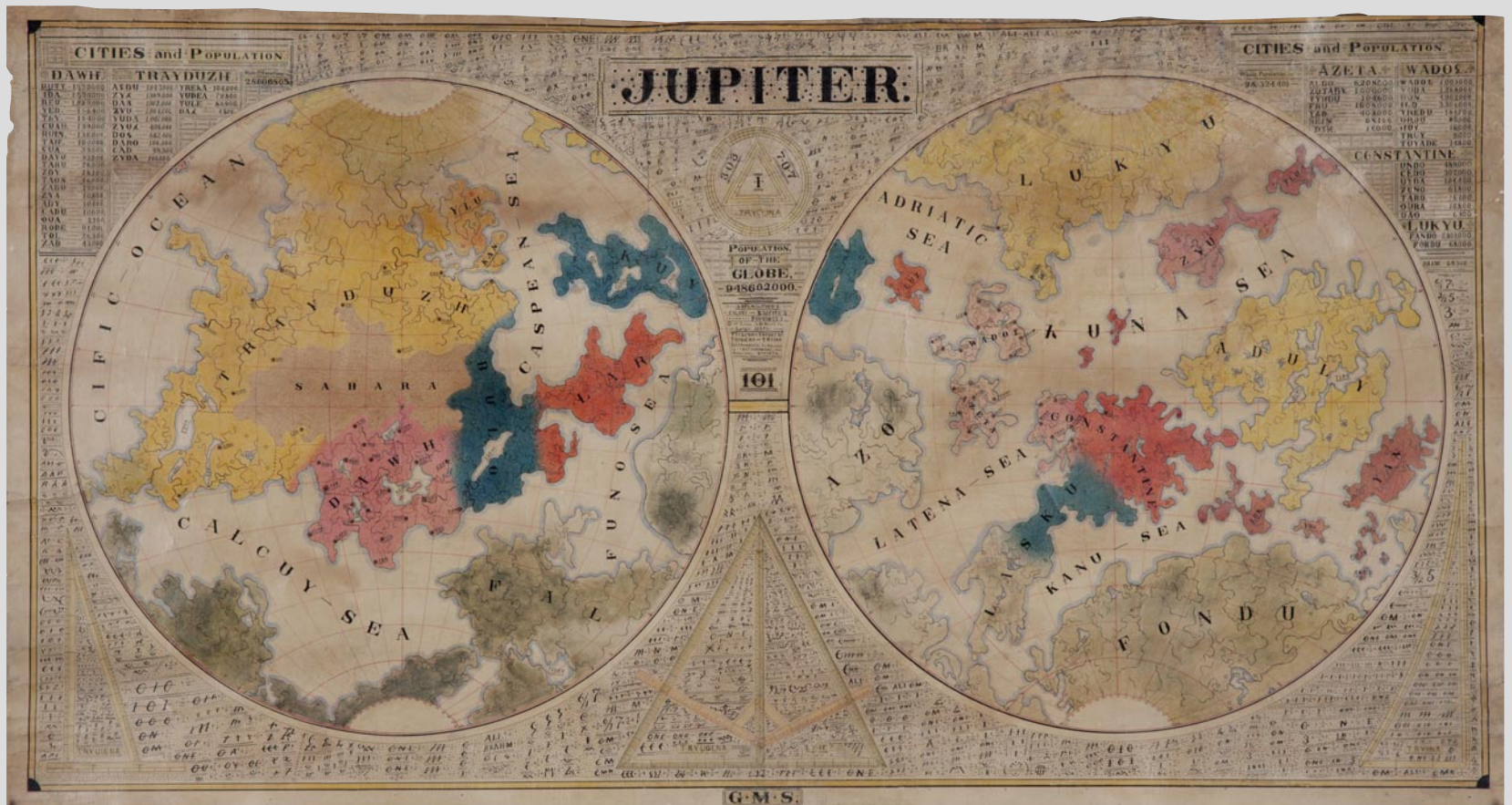
calligraphic flourishes; three abstracted faces stare out from the text announcing the names of the gods Jabulon (a uniquely Masonic term believed to represent a secret name of God), Pan, Zeus, and Jehovah, as if linking them all to one divine power.

In the cryptic text and symbols, his charts are more similar to Masonic ritual books than other forms of fraternal art. These publications were mnemonic aids for candidates learning the initiation ceremonies that would allow them to progress through degrees. To an outsider, the writing in these books looks like nonsense as its reading relied on an existing understanding of Masonic information, with the shorthand and symbolic prompts intended to help with memorization and personal study. Like Silsbee's work, these books offered a way to ruminate on knowledge while upholding the candidate's oath to "not write, print, paint, stamp, stain, cut, carve, hew, mark, or engrave" any Masonic secrets.

Examining each of Silsbee's works is like focusing on something through a



Cross's of Jehovah and Yahoveh (detail)
 George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)
 Ink on paper mounted on linen
 Circa: 1891
 Size: 21 1/2" (w) x 25 1/8" (h)



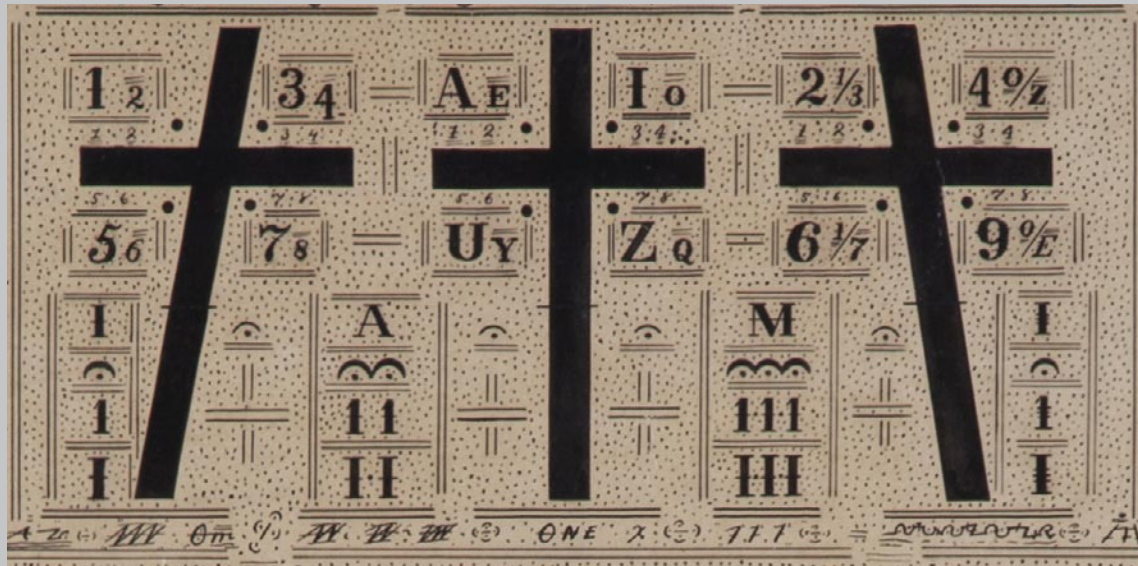
Jupiter

George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)

Colored inks on paper mounted on linen

Circa: 1891

Size: 41 1/8" (w) x 22 5/8" (h)



Cross's of Jehovah and Yahoveh (detail)

George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)

Ink on paper mounted on linen

Circa: 1891

Size: 21 1/2" (w) x 25 1/8" (h)

microscope, every approach revealing more and more detail that contributes to a greater comprehension of the whole. The incredible depth and variation of symbolism, from rune-like forms on the “Cross’s of Jehovah and Yahoveh” to the pigpen cipher key embedded at the top of “Temple of Solomon. Jerusalem. Subt’rn, Excavation’s,” show a deliberation where every mark is imbued with meaning. They include fragments of narratives referring to the Bible and the classical world, from records hidden in the Roman catacombs to the destruction of Pompeii, sometimes evoking subjects that would have been expressed in Masonic rituals, such as

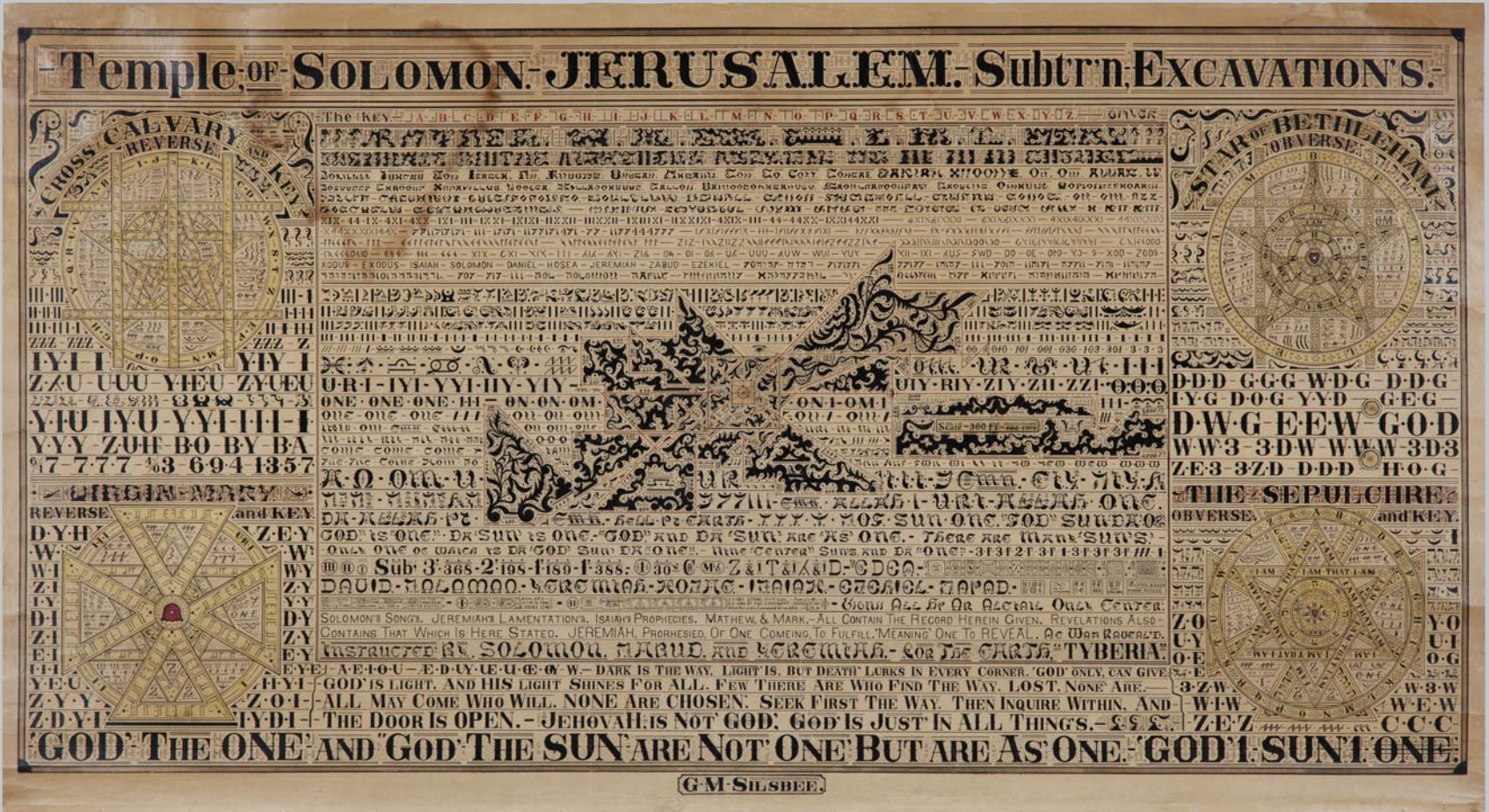
Explanatory Marks of Jehovah’s Private Teacher’s (detail)

George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)

Ink on paper mounted on linen

Circa: 1891

Size: 21 1/2" (w) x 25 3/8" (h)



Temple of Solomon - Jerusalem - Subt'r'n Excavations

George M. Silsbee (1840-1900)

Colored inks on paper mounted on linen

Circa: 1891

Size: 41 1/8" (w) x 22 5/8" (h)

the “flaming sword” and its guardianship of the Garden of Eden that was frequently represented in Masonic lodges as a weapon with a wavy blade. Abstract patterns reminiscent of semaphore flags, signaling something to the viewer in their shapes that transform like an animation in parts, appear in a chart for “Jehovah’s ‘Holy Bible’,” while on “Temple of Solomon” the Star of Bethlehem is interpreted an otherworldly celestial presence with a lattice of intersecting lines, adorned with a rhythmic motif of dots and words.

Even without understanding the exact intentions behind each element of these works, it is easy to get pulled in by the repeating of phrases and characters that Silsbee used to build these pathways to knowledge of something ancient and spiritual. Moving through the scripts of “Explanatory Marks of



*Temple of Solomon - Jerusalem - Sub't'r'n
Excavations (detail)*
George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)
Colored inks on paper mounted on linen
Circa: 1891
Size: 41 1/8" (w) x 22 5/8" (h)



Records Dating Back 386,000 Y'rs - Ancient History

George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)

Colored inks on paper mounted on linen

Circa: 1891

Size: 41 1/4" (w) x 34 3/4" (h)



Records Dating Back 386,000 Y'rs - Ancient History (detail)

George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)

Colored inks on paper mounted on linen

Circa: 1891

Size: 41 1/4" (w) x 34 3/4" (h)

Jehovah's Private Teacher's," where black curls of ink and ciphers add to its aura of deep meaning, the phrase "I am" emerges again and again like a mantra: "Christ Jesus Son Of God Three In One I Am That I Am I Am I Am I Am I Am I God Jehovah ... I Am God I Am I Am One Of Three 3 In One." It goes on and on, letters interrupted by numbers, symbols, and combinations that resemble equations. A textural pattern of tiny dots joins it all so you can almost hear the meditative tap of Silsbee's hand reverberating through each line, trying to find a way to communicate sublime mysteries whose complexity could not be expressed by terrestrial images.

We are now witnessing these works far from their original context, not knowing the specific rite they were designed to guide, or the contemplation they were meant to inspire for those who understood the shared secrets. It is also possible we are only



seeing part of a larger body of work that Silsbee created in his attempt to make the mystical into something navigable for those who were dedicated to learning. Now that Silsbee's work has come to light, there is an opportunity to consider its intricacies as well as broaden the appreciation for the breadth of 19th-century fraternal art. Although it was likely made for clandestine purposes — to be engaged with by the select members of these groups — this art speaks to the human drive to connect with something

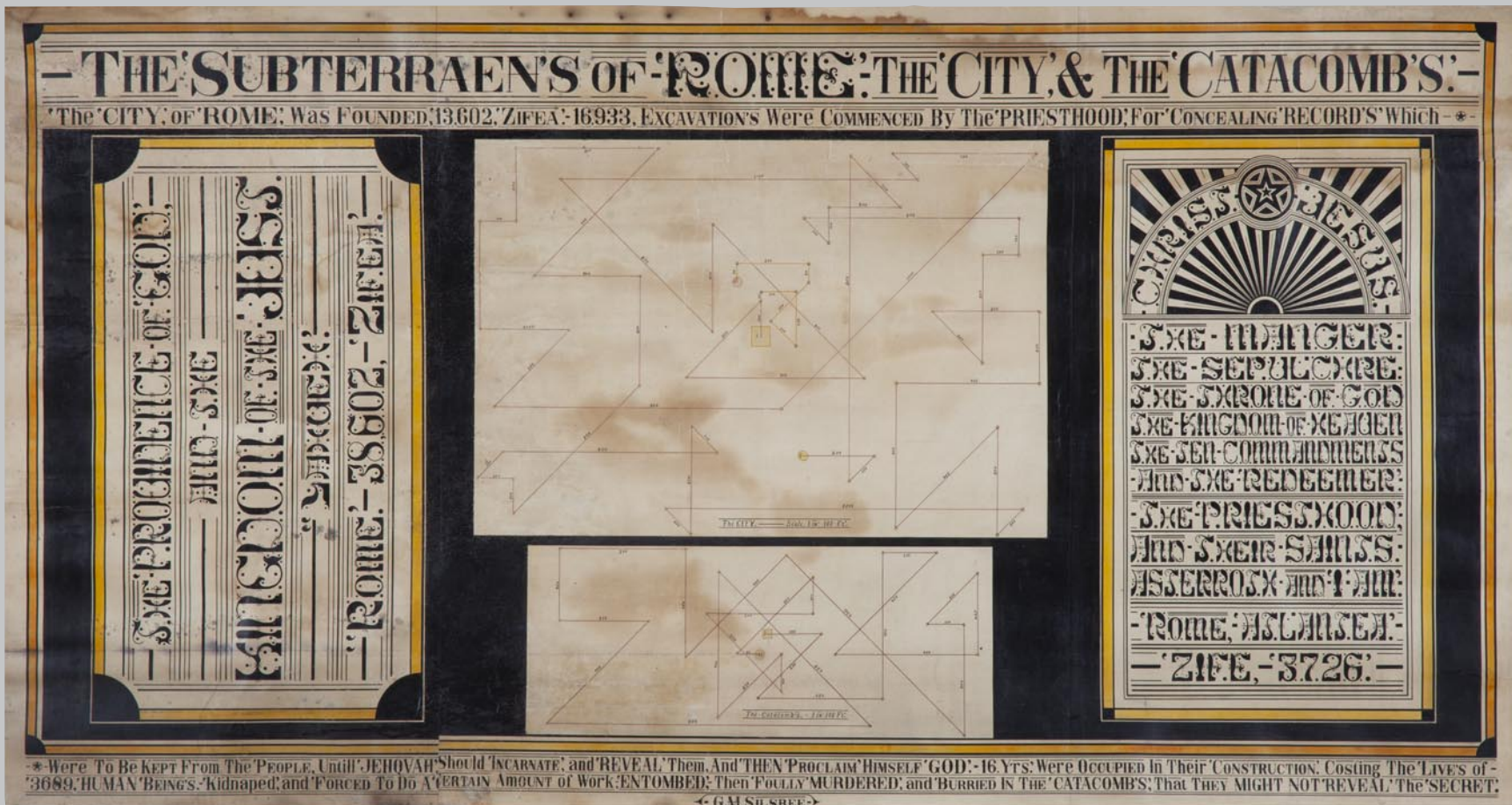
The Subterraens of Rome - The City & The Catacombs (detail)

George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)

Colored inks on paper mounted on linen

Circa: 1891

Size: 41" (w) x 22" (h)



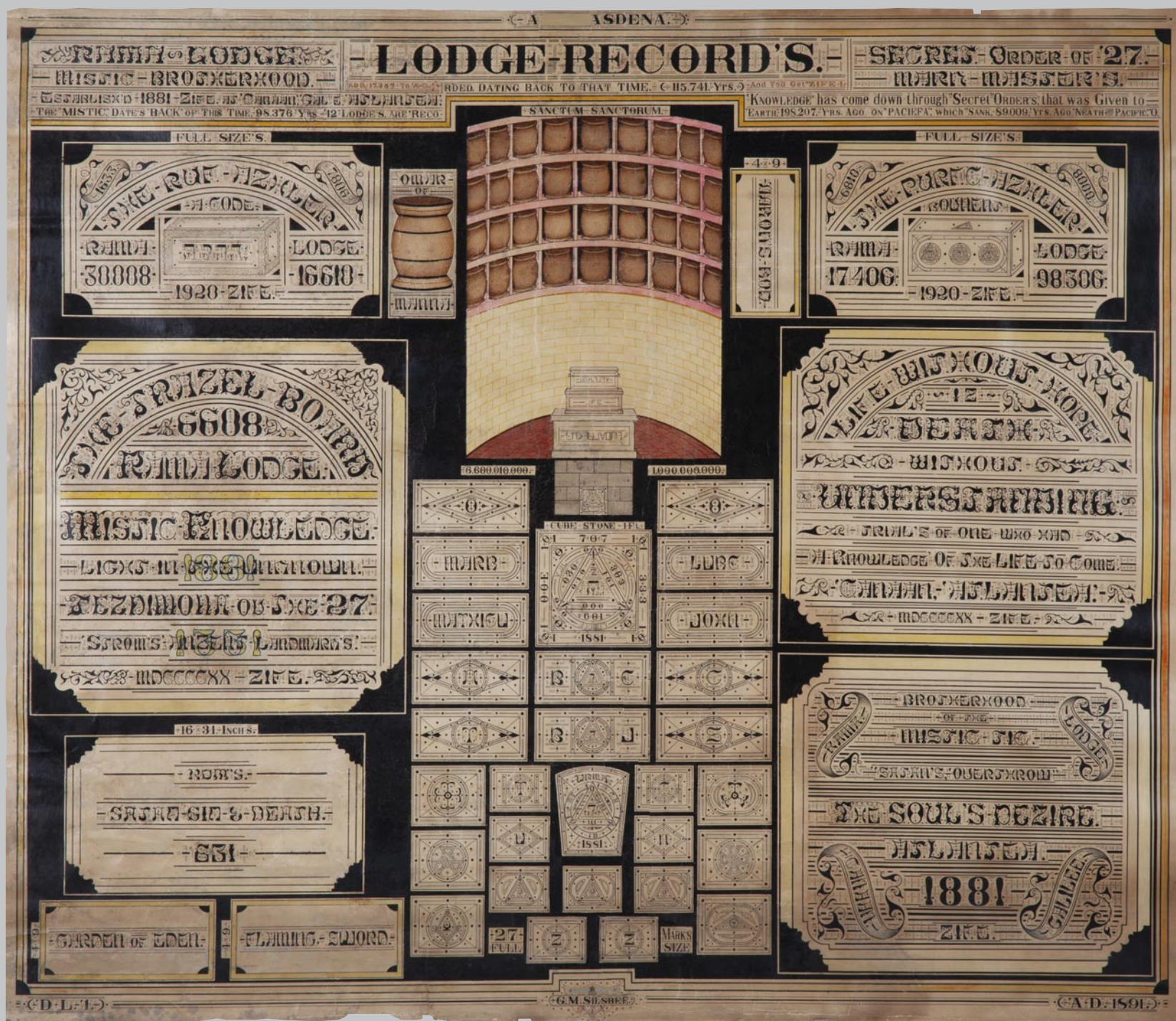
The Subterraens of Rome - The City & The Catacombs

George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)

Colored inks on paper mounted on linen

Circa: 1891

Size: 41" (w) x 22" (h)



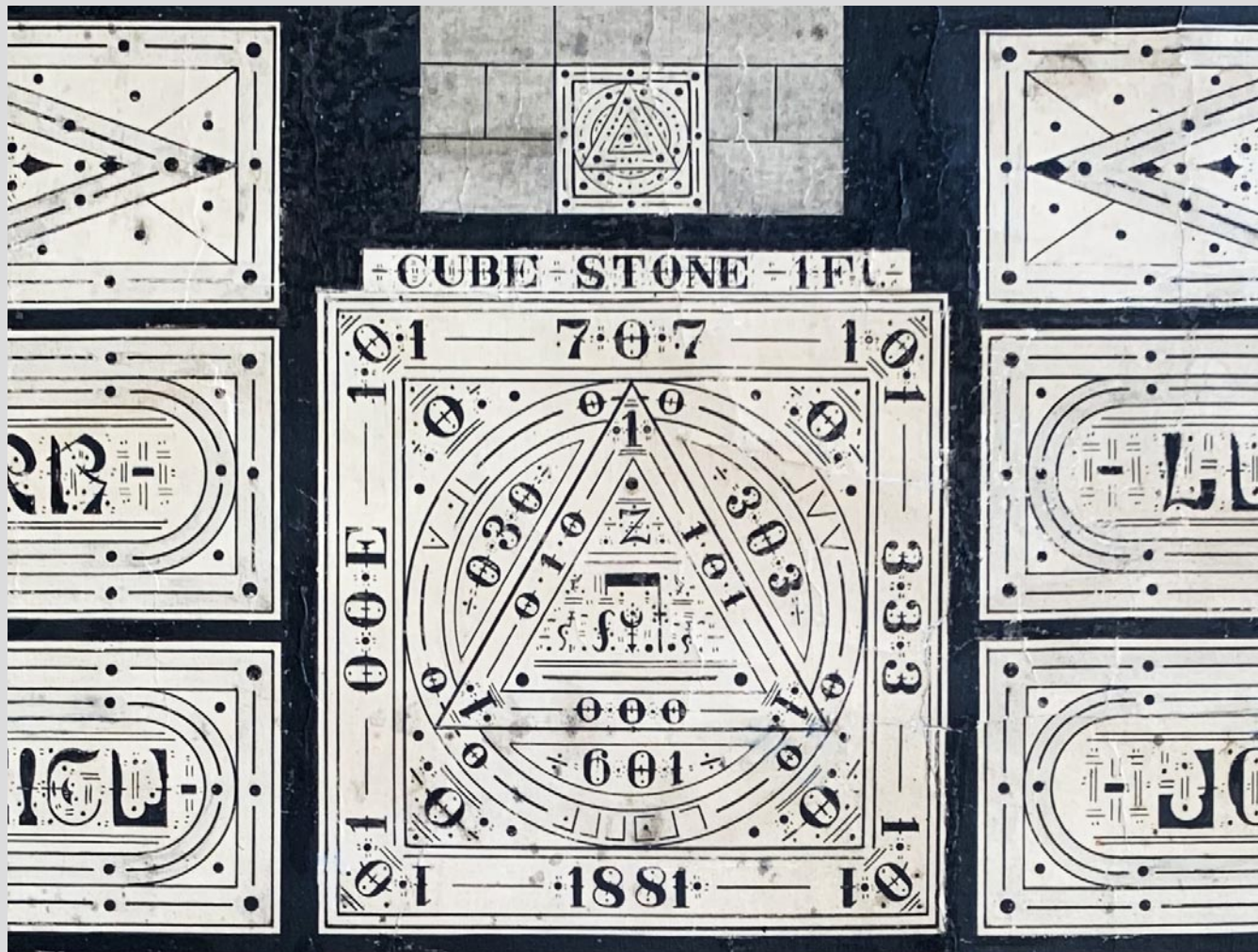
Lodge Record's

George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)

Colored inks on paper mounted on linen

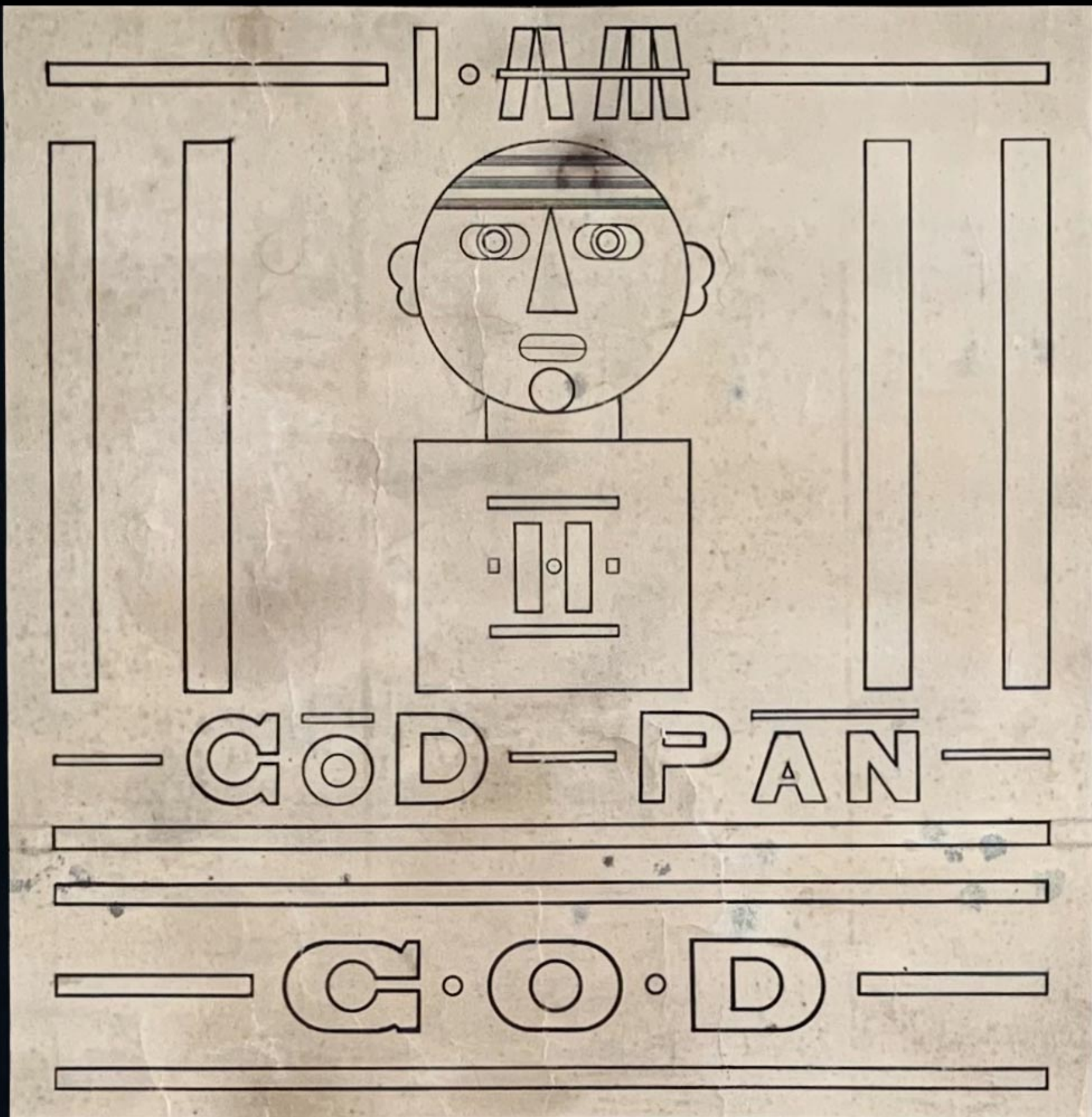
Circa: 1891

Size: 40 5/8" (w) x 35 1/8" (h)



Lodge Record's (detail)
George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)
Colored inks on paper mounted on linen
Circa: 1891
Size: 40 5/8" (w) x 35 1/8" (h)

sacred, to feel part of a long thread that through stories and rituals links us to the past. In these puzzles of symbols and words, much of Silsbee's intentions remain enigmatic, but in exploring the obsessive patterns and ornate texts there is a powerful experience accessible to anyone who takes the time to look closely and let themselves be transported.



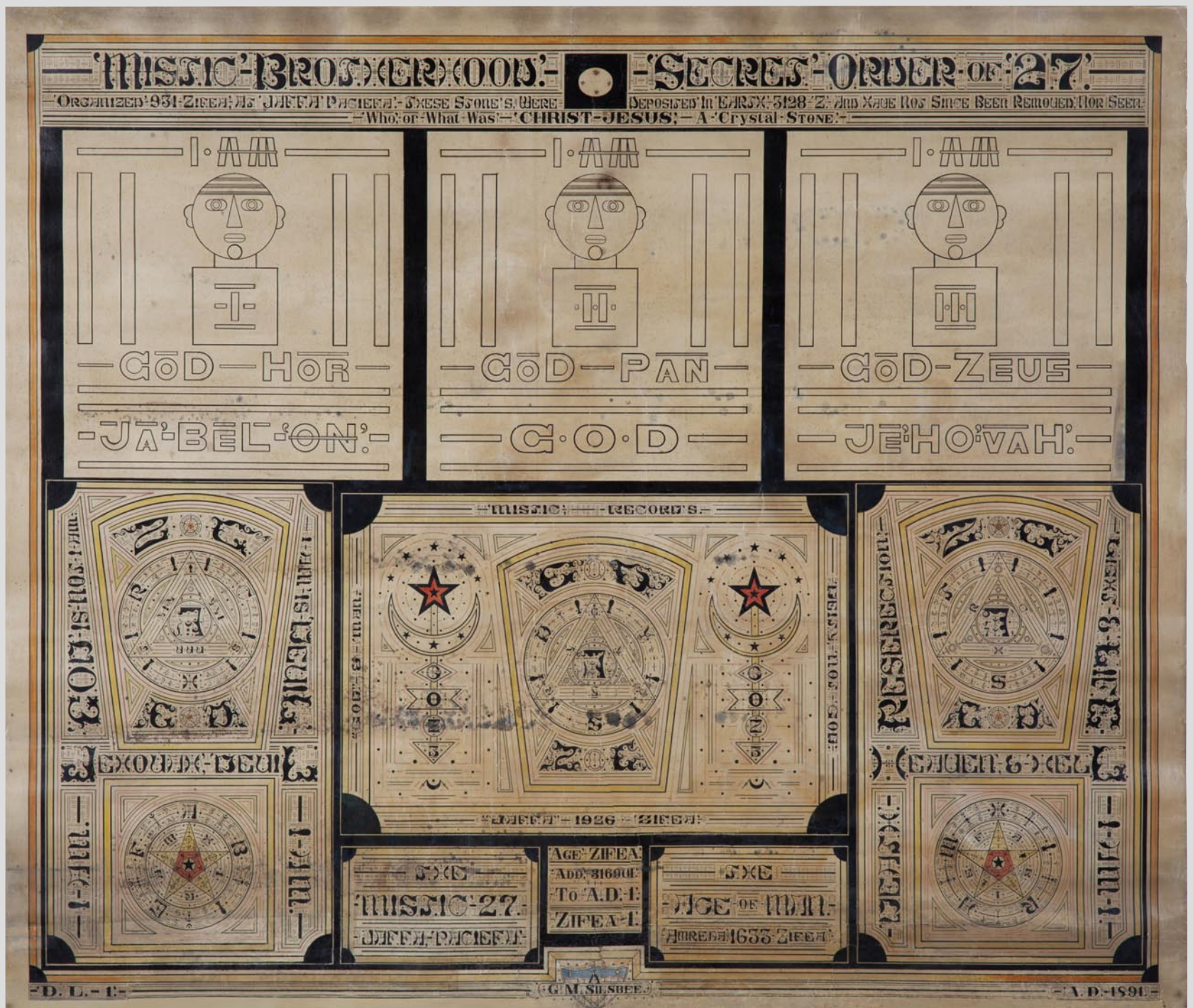
Mistic Brotherhood - Secret Order of 27 (detail)

George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)

Colored inks on paper mounted on linen

Circa: 1891

Size: 41 1/4" (w) x 35" (h)



Mistic Brotherhood - Secret Order of 27
 George M. Silsbee (1840–1900)
 Colored inks on paper mounted on linen
 Circa: 1891
 Size: 41 1/4" (w) x 35" (h)

John Kane (1860-1934)

Escape

Circa: 1928

Size: 28" (h) x 23" (w)

Provenance: Valentine Gallery; Knoedler Gallery; Private Collection.

Select Exhibitions (see catalogue raisonne, plate 47 for full extensive history): MOMA, 1930/31, MOMA Masters of Popular Paintings 1938; Carnegie Institute, 1966; Corcoran Gallery, 1967.

Literature: Arts Weekly, April 2, 1932; John Kane Painter, Catalogue Raisonne, plate 47.

Born in Scotland, Kane is celebrated as one of America's foremost self-taught artists. Kane spent his adulthood working various jobs as a laborer in and around the railroad business. In 1891, he had a work-related accident that severed his left leg below the knee. In the 1910s Kane began painting on the job on discarded boards found at construction sites. By the 1920s Kane was painting more ambitious works and submitting them to local art shows. In 1927 he had a work accepted into the Carnegie Internationals which was sponsored by the Carnegie Museum of Art and the story of a self-taught painter caught the local papers.

Kane was shown at the newly formed Museum of Modern Art as early as 1930, of which the painting herein was shown. Kane died of tuberculosis in 1934. Kane was included in the influential show, Masters of Popular Painting: Modern Primitives of Europe and America, at MOMA in 1938. His self-portrait, 1929 is one of the great self-portraits of the 20th century and currently hangs at The Museum of Modern Art.



JOHN RUSSELL
1854-1910

EST. 1896

1910



John Kane (1860-1934)

Child Seated On Wall

John Kane (1860–1934)

Circa: 1930

Size: 6" (h) x 10" (w)

Provenance: G. David Thompson; JB Neumann; Paul Kantor Gallery; Clifford Odets; Zabriskie Gallery; Galerie St. Etienne; Private Collection.

Literature: John Kane Catalogue Raisonne, Arkus, plate 38.

*Study of a Male Nude &
Young Highlander with
Raised Arm*

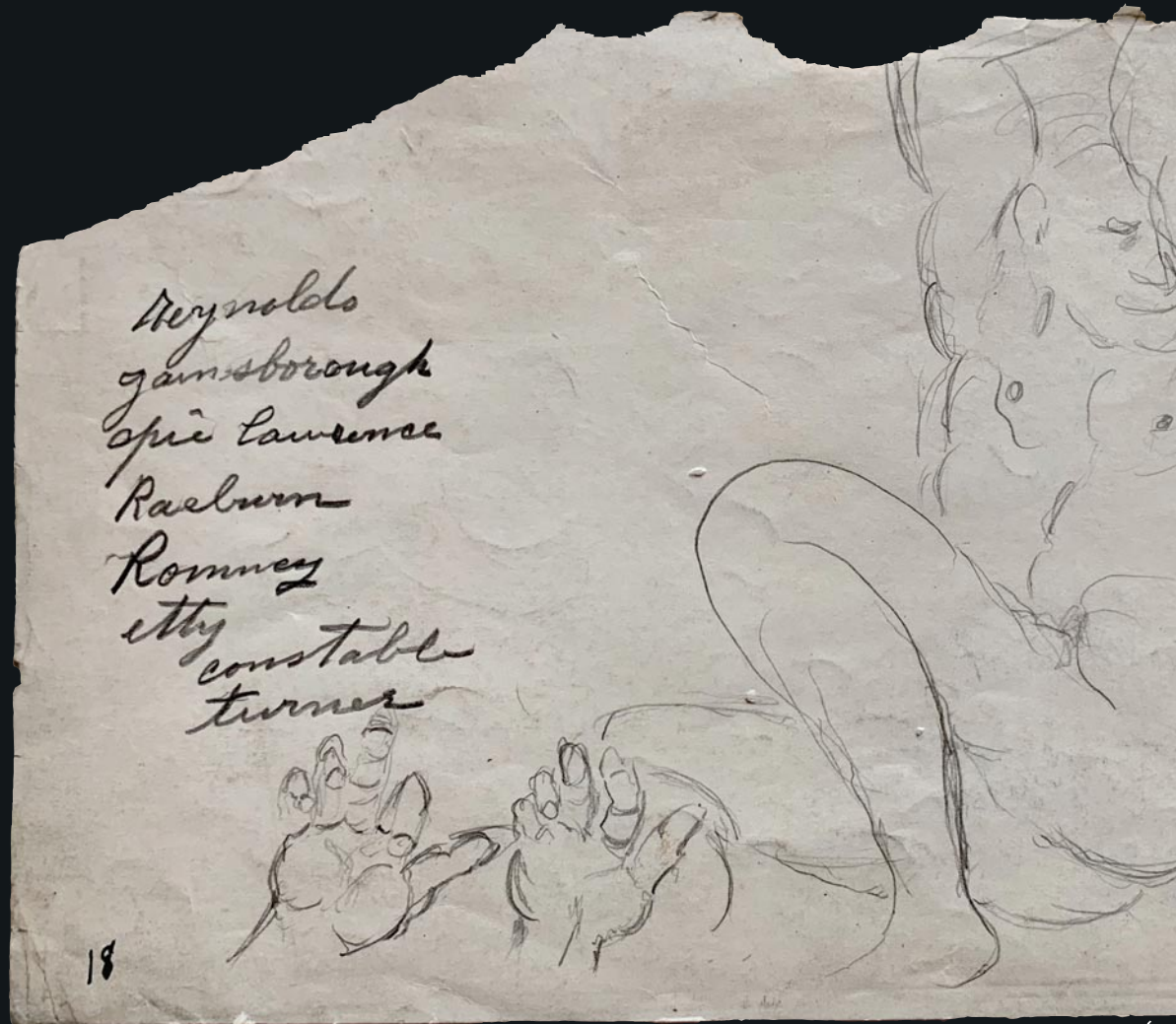
John Kane (1860–1934)

Circa: 1930

Pencil on note paper

Size: 8 1/2" x 5 1/2"

Provenance: Galerie St.
Etienne

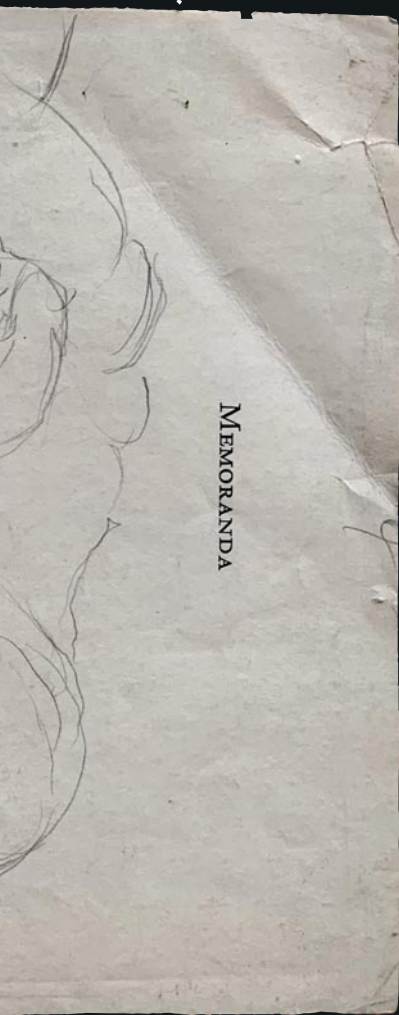


A rare John Kane double-sided pencil sketch. Kane is regarded as one of the masters of self-portraits.

On the above or recto, note how Kane makes room for the hands to complete the sketch—while drawing the figure's arms, so he placed them to the lower left. Above the hands, Kane lists the names of English painters that he must have been studying.

The verso illustrates a young boy in a Highlander outfit (Kane would use this figure in a few paintings). The writing on this side lists the colors of the rainbow (Roy G. Biv).

References: The Highland boy relates to figures in the following; Highland Hollow, Scotch Day, and Scotch Day, Kennywood (Arkus 68, 71 and 73).



MEMORANDA

-taught American

e ran out of room
e lists 18th-19thC

w finished

a Day at Kennywood



red
orange
yellow
green
blue
indigo
violet

MEMORANDA

verso



1822

Painted by a Maniac
Confined in the Cells
of the Almshouse J.P. H
The design his own





Indian Encampment

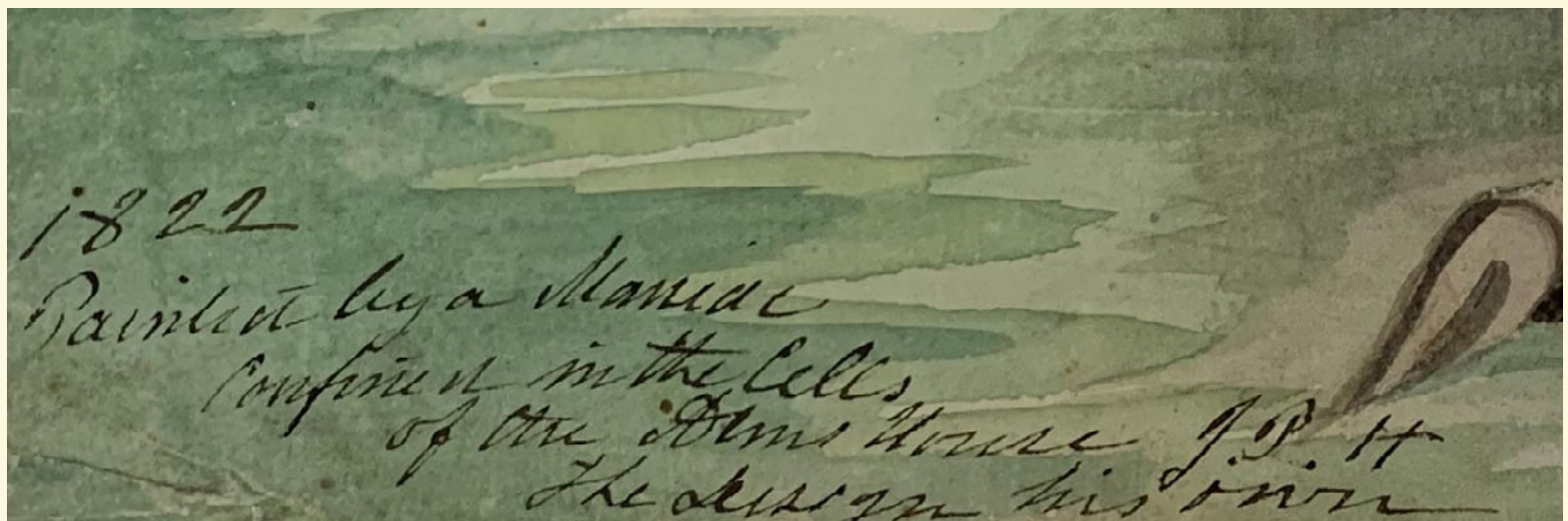
attr. Richard Nisbett (1753-1823)

Watercolor on paper mounted

Circa: 1822

Size: 13" (w) x 7 3/4" (h)

Provenance: John Pennington Hopkinson, thence by descent.



Richard Nisbett (1753-1823)

This remarkable watercolor from 1822 is one of the earliest American asylum works extant and likely the earliest in private hands. Further, it is attributed to Richard Nisbett, a published author and poet of note, and a patient at Philadelphia Hospital's asylum ward.

The painting is inscribed on the lower left, "1822. Painted by a maniac confined in the cells of the Alms House—the design his own." It is initialed "J.P.H" for John Pennington Hopkinson (1801-1836). Dr. John P. Hopkinson was a Philadelphia physician, author, and professor and was the son of Congressman Joseph Hopkinson, and Francis Hopkinson's grandchild, signer of the Declaration of Independence.

The two known works by Nisbett are in institutional collections, a "Mappa Mundi" from 1819 (collection of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania) and "Antarctic Scenery," 1816 (collection of The Library Company of Philadelphia). The three works share an illustrator's technique of using mixed proportions on specific details as a device to emphasize certain information. Stylistically, the painting herein relates more with the Antarctic Scenery painting versus the Mappa Mundi, which is quite a bit more complicated than either.

It has been well recorded that as a patient, Nisbett wrote poetry (including a hundred-page epic poem) and painted watercolors. Both works mentioned above and the work herein have strong narrative qualities. It has been suggested that Nisbett's watercolors may have been works created to accompany his poems.

It is also interesting to note that an inscription on the back of the "Antarctic Scenery" painting refers to Nisbett as "a maniac."

In Nisbett's epic poem, *The Notioniad*, Nisbett writes of a long voyage and references "The Susquehanyans" [Susquehannock Native Americans]. At one point, Nisbett tried the life of a farmer in Catawissa, PA; however, he found clear-cutting and tilling the

land problematic. The image here with Native Americans (Susquehannock) at rest in a clear cut field may relate to Nisbett's experiences — that they were better suited than he at such tasks.

Below, the scholar Max Cavitch expands on the life of Nisbett and his *Mappa Mundi*.

Richard Nisbett's Map of the World

By, Max Cavitch, Ph.D.,
University of Pennsylvania

Richard Nisbett (1753-1823) is an obscure figure who, like many obscure figures, led a remarkable life. In 1773, he was a member of the West Indian plantocracy, engaged in a pamphlet war over slavery with Benjamin Rush. By 1800, he was a Quaker convert confined as a psychiatric patient in Philadelphia's Pennsylvania Hospital, where Rush was a physician. This stunning transition, from being a champion of the enslavement of others to being himself the subject of perpetual confinement, is recorded in a variety of disparate and





Richard Nisbett, *Mappa Mundi*, ca. 1819, watercolor, 19¼" x 24." Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia PA.

discontinuous sources, including manuscripts and paintings that Nisbett himself produced while he was a patient. It's possible that Nisbett created his watercolors, including this map of the world, to illustrate or accompany the epic poem, *The Notioniad*, that he also wrote while in confinement. (Never published, the original bound manuscript of

The Notioniad is in the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.)

It's likely that Nisbett was born in Greenwich, England, and he may have been Oxford-educated. He spent part of his youth in the West Indies, first as a plantation overseer and subsequently as a merchant and owner of slaves. He married Frances Clifton in 1779 on the island of St. Kitts, where she had been born around 1756. Nisbett fathered six children with Frances. In time, his increasingly meliorist views on slavery led to his removal to Pennsylvania and, ultimately, his conversion to Quakerism in the 1790s.

In Pennsylvania, he continued to tilt his lance at a variety of occupations, but failed at each one, probably because he was being overtaken by mental illness. He was held temporarily at the Pennsylvania Hospital in the late 1790s, and he wound up permanently confined there from 1800 until his death in 1823.

While in the Caribbean, Nisbett had published not only the defense of slavery that Rush attacked but also various poems on religious matters and a book on the spiritual instruction of slaves. Later, as a patient, Nisbett continued to write—mostly poetry—and to engage socially with visitors and the hospital’s staff. Indeed, he became the favorite of one of the hospital’s chief benefactors and lay-caregivers, Samuel Coates (1748-1830), who kept sporadic notes on his encounters with various patients, but who wrote more about Nisbett than about anyone else—even to the point of transcribing some of their conversations.

At first, one can only stand back and marvel at the map’s surprising beauty—and consider, with humility, how far beyond the range of our observation and interpretation Richard Nisbett really is. Multicolored words, figures, and cartouches defy comprehensive inventory. The place names are a mixture of the actual, the mythological, and the personal. Many of the continents, countries, and cities that we recognize by their proper names have been completely repositioned, geographically. Sardinia, for example, is next to Scotland. And South America abuts Asia Minor.

Yet having access to the Coates memorandum book helps us to identify, at least, and possibly make some sense of, various elements of Nisbett’s world-system. For example, despite Coates’s understanding that he was born in London, and educated at Oxford, [Nisbett] will not allow it—he says, “there is no such place in my Maps, which are admitted every where, to be the most correct of any in the known world. It is true, there was once a little Island, falsely called Great Britain, but the Divine Alma, sunk it 60 fathoms deep in the Sea, about 50 years ago. It has never been seen since that time.”⁵

Indeed, on Nisbett’s map one finds (however radically dislocated) Wales, Scotland, and Ireland—but no England. Why? Resentment or confusion over his own origins? “About 50 years ago” would have been around the time of his birth—could Coates

have been transcribing a terrifying fragment of infantile historical truth? Or does Nisbett's effective destruction of England have more to do with his later conversion to Quakerism and his anti-slavery views? One thinks of John Wesley's assertion, in his *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (1774), that it would be best if the sugar islands "were all together sunk in the depth of the sea."

Another salient and overdetermined feature of Nisbett's map is its canny sense of how globalization puts places in touch with one another—for example, Philadelphia and China's Pearl River Delta, which are placed side by side. Like other Philadelphians in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Nisbett lived his life against a teeming backdrop of Sino-American exchange. Ever since regular U.S. trade was established in the 1780s, accounts, images, and objects from China had been rapidly accumulating in Philadelphia, which was at that time the nation's principal seaport.

Nisbett's map is one of just a few of his watercolors known to survive, and, as such, it is one of the earliest as well as one of the most visually impressive examples of *Outsider Art* in American history.

¹ That this psychiatric patient was the same Richard Nisbett who published *Slavery Not Forbidden by Scripture* (Philadelphia: John Sparhawk, 1773) has been repeatedly affirmed by modern historical scholarship. See, for example: Stephen Fried, *Rush: Revolution, Madness, and the Visionary Doctor Who Became a Founding Father* (New York: Crown, 2018), 425; Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the "Racial" Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 69; and Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, 2nd ed. (University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 306.

² Susanna Dillwyn to William Dillwyn, 14 June 1793, box 2, folder 9, Dillwyn and Emlen family correspondence, 1770-1818, Library Company of Philadelphia.

³ <http://brigittegastelancestry.com/royal/plantagenet/gervasecliftondesc+1588.htm>. Accessed 2 January 2021.

⁴ Elaine Forman Crane, "Biographical Directory," in *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, vol. 3 (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 2191.

⁵ Coates, "Memorandum Book," 70.

⁶ John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1774), 40.

⁷ Philadelphia was both a terminal destination and a dissemination point for Chinese imports. Philadelphia residents also invested heavily in ventures out of other U.S. ports, such as New York.



Emery Blagdon (1907-1986)

The Healing Machine by Emery Blagdon is one of the most remarkable, wonderous works of private art created in the 20th century. From the 1950s through the mid 80s, Blagdon bent steel and copper wire, used magnets, foil, masking tape, beads, parts from discarded appliances and other found objects to create what he believed was a genuine healing machine.

Blagdon believed his machine could prevent, heal and cure disease through electromagnetic energy created from or transmitted through the thousands of deliberately wrought componants/elements he created. As well as through the paintings he painted.

Through his complex multi-tiered chandelier-like constructions and individual elements, Blagdon repeated shapes and forms as if he were looking at precise schematic drawings. His decades long commitement to this architecture of wire was a catharsis for dealing with the pain that loss can leave you.

The piece herein uses steel and copper wire to form an “A” framed ladder of sorts laid atop a bed of masking tape. Convinced that the taped form might be more than

Element #05

Emery Blagdon (1907-1986)

Steel wire, copper wire,
baling wire, masking tape

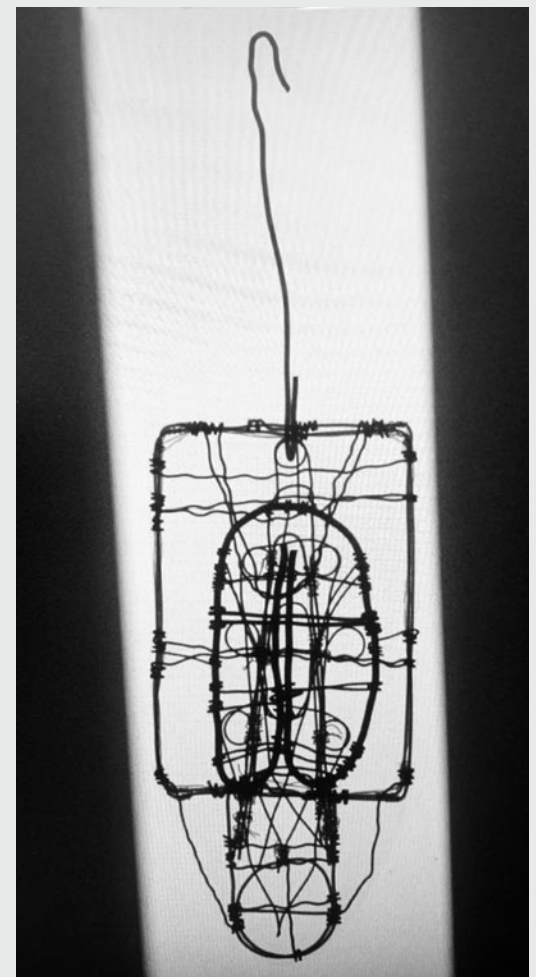
Circa: 1954-1986

Size: 12" (h) x 3 1/2" (w)

meets the eye, I had the

piece x-rayed and was

blown away by the results. Underneath the opaque masking tape, Blagdon created a complex and orderly wire diagram which, one can suppose, acts as an invisible enegy field for the A framed piece above it.



X-ray of Element #05 showing the wire work hidden by the masking tape.



Moses Ogden (1844-1919)

At the turn of the 20th century, Moses Ogden was known locally as "The Jackknife Artist," a well-known personality and carver in and around Angelica, NY. However, after he died in 1919, his extensive body of strange burl and root carvings would fade into obscurity.

In the late 1970s, Richard Rockford, an antiques dealer, collector, and artist near Buffalo, New York, purchased a large cache of strange and mysterious anthropomorphic and zoomorphic carvings that had recently been put to the curb. Rockford was fascinated with the odd carvings and saw that they were good—though at the time the carver was unidentified and a mystery. Rockford began combing Allegany County for related works and soon had a collection of about forty works. Rockford sold the collection of related works by this "anonymous" carver to the legendary dealer, Peter Tillou. No sooner than a





Standing Boy

Moses Ogden (1844–1919)

Circa: 1900

Size: 24 1/2" (h) x 7" (w) x 5" (d)

Provenance: Private Collection; Steve Powers; Peter Brams Collection.

few months later, Rockford purchased a real photo postcard that showed "Mose Ogden's Wonderland, Angelica, NY," which showed Ogden seated among a garden of fantastic carved wooden creatures. Rockford solved the mystery, and Ogden was identified as the carver he had been looking to identify. Over the years, several other works by Ogden have been found and attributed.

Ogden was called a "genius" by The Buffalo Review for creating an elaborate chair that he constructed from 1200 pieces of naturally shaped knots, branches, and burls, from fifty different tree species that he exhibited at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, NY. A photo from the period shows Ogden standing next to the chair. (The chair was shortly thereafter purchased by a furniture store in Cuba, NY; however, its present whereabouts are unknown).

Ogden had a long thin face, and pictures show him wearing a bowler hat—the not so odd thing is that Ogden looked like some of his carvings—particularly a small portrait work herein which also sports a bowler hat. This small carving holds a special place within this concise collection. The collector Peter Brams first came



Moses Ogden's, "Inferno" as pictured in Popular Science, September, 1917.

across the small carving in the late 1980s, "in the wild" at an NYC apartment sale. At the time, Brams was collecting contemporary art but was powerfully drawn to the quality of the face and purchased it as an anonymous carving. Brams soon learned that the carving was by Ogden and began collecting other works by Ogden. Brams sold his esteemed Folk Art collection, including his Ogdens, in 2001. Ogden's work stuck firmly with Brams, and years later, when given the opportunity to reacquire the small portrait, he did so readily.

Though much of what we think of with Ogden's work is wild, twisted, mysterious, and sometimes scary, Ogden created a wide range of works from representational portraits and animals to abstracted creatures.

In 1917, Ogden caught *Popular Science* magazine's attention, and the magazine published several pictures and a short story on Ogden and his "Curio Den."

The Angelica Free Library provided me the following obituary from *The Angelica Advocate*, Thursday, May 1, 1919. [condensed and edited]

Moses F. Ogden



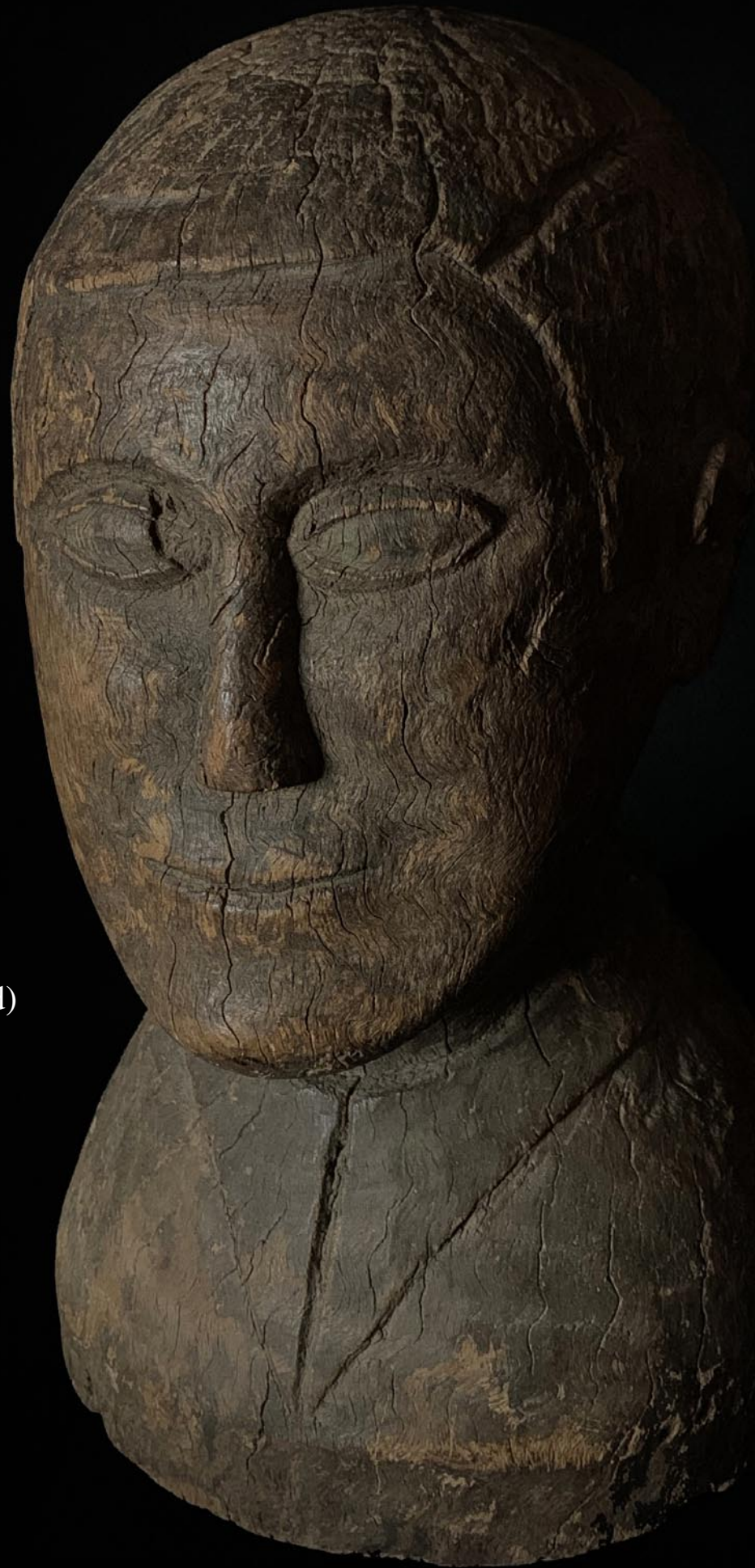
Man in a Bowler Hat

Moses Ogden (1844–1919)

Circa: 1900

Size: 4 1/2" (h) x 2 1/2" (w) x 2 1/2" (d)

Provenance: Richard Rockford; Peter Tillou; Private Collection; Peter Brams; Arne Anton; Private Collection; Joey Lin; Justin Enger; Steve Powers; Peter Brams Collection.



Portrait Bust

Moses Ogden (1844–1919)

Circa: 1900

Size: 14 1/2" (h) x 8 1/2" (w) x 7" (d)

Provenance: Roddy Moore; Richard Rasso; Betty-Ann Rasso; Sotheby's 2007; Steve Powers; Frank Maresca; Justin Enger; Steve Powers; Peter Brams Collection.

Known to everybody in and around Angelica as "Mose" Ogden. He was born on May 30th, 1844. His parents were Samuel and Deborah Ann Ogden. Early in life, he learned the wagon makers trade.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, he enlisted with others and served nearly four years. After the war, he returned to Angelica and for 21 years was employed at his trade in the Seiver Carriage and Wagon shops. After ... he retired from business and devoted the remainder of his life to his curio business. He had the peculiar faculty of seeing lifelike figures in old stump fences, trees, and branches, and he loved nature so much that he spent a great many days traveling over the country and gathered together a collection of natural curios, which we believe, has not been duplicated anywhere. He was an expert with the jack-knife and other tools, and his handiwork can be seen at every turn in and about his home. His was a good nature, and he loved a good time and wanted others to share with him. For years his familiar figure could be seen on the park croquet ground and at that game, he was an expert. He always took a great interest in the G. A. R. and on the one or two occasions gave campfires, which were original and unique.

It was the writer's good fortune to have known him long and well, and we only knew him to esteem him. Today we miss his kindly smile and friendly greeting, his jovial laughter, and his genial presence. Mose and his Curio Den will long linger in the memory of the many who knew him.

Ogden was injured in the Civil War at the bloody Battle of Cold Harbor and later discharged on its account. It has been speculated that Ogden was a prisoner at the notorious Andersonville Prison in Georgia and suffered from PTSD and he turned to carving as a way to deal with the horrors he saw there. Though no contemporary accounts of Ogden's life confirm this, the Angelica Free Library owns a picture frame created by Ogden—and curiously enough within the frame is a print of Andersonville Prison.



Twisted Head

Moses Ogden (1844–1919)

Circa: 1900

Size: 9 1/2" (h) x 4 1/2" (w) x 6" (d)

Provenance: Richard Rockford; Peter Tillou; Private Collection; Don Olson; Arne Anton; Peter Brams Collection.



Creature

Moses Ogden (1844–1919)

Circa: 1900

Size: 13 1/2" (h) x 9 1/2" (w) x 8" (d)

Provenance: Richard Rockford; Peter Tillou; Private Collection; Arne Anton; Justin Enger; Steve Powers; Peter Brams Collection.

Literature: Popular Science, September, 1917.

Rooster

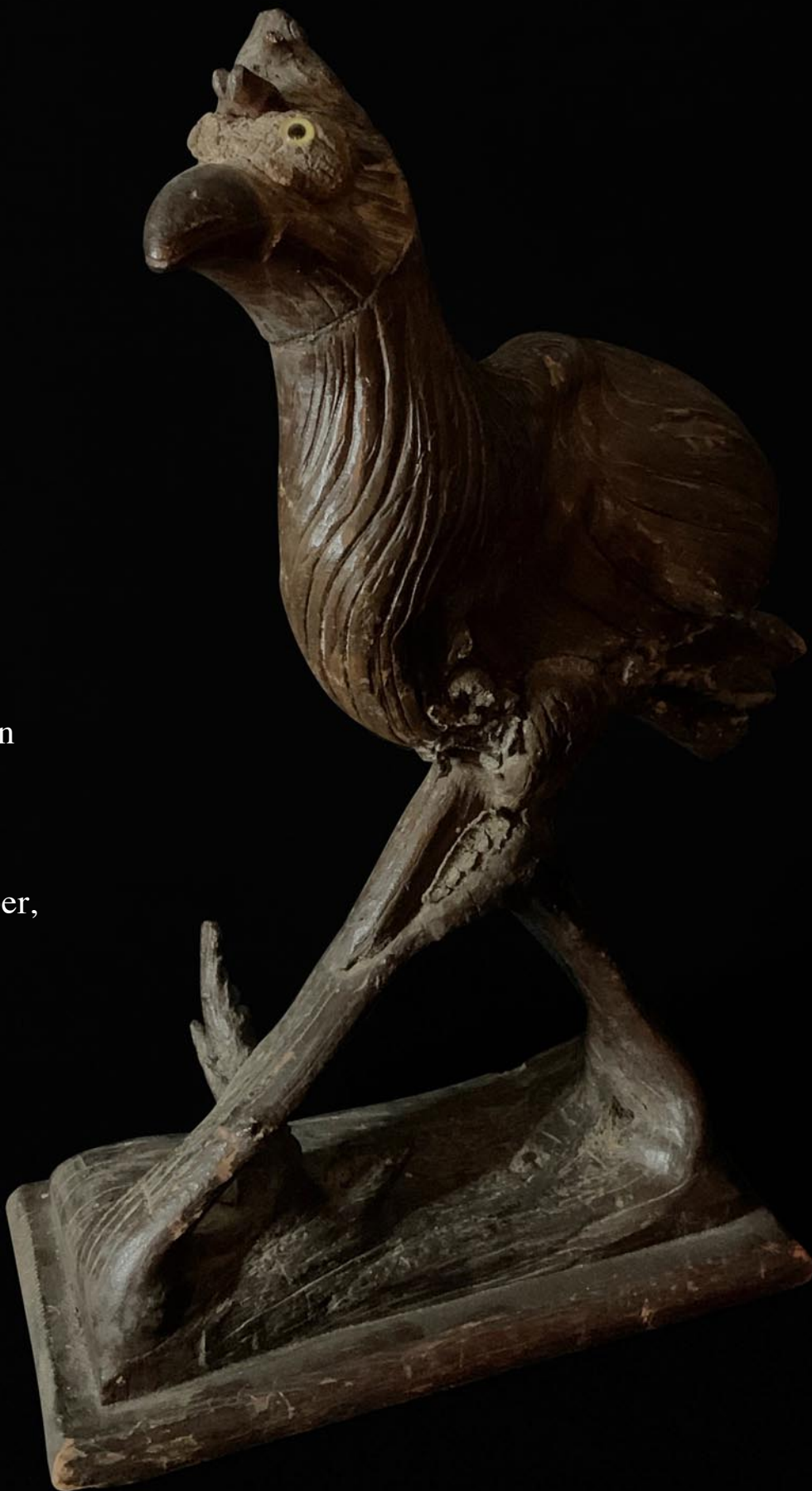
Moses Ogden (1844–1919)

Circa: 1900

Size: 17" (h) x 14" (w) x 6" (d)

Provenance: Private Collection; Justin
Enger; Steve Powers; Peter Brams
Collection.

Literature: Popular Science, September,
1917.



Wonderfully Strange Doll Body

Circa: 1840-1860

Size: 10 1/2" (h) x 3" (w)

Provenance: Aarne Anton, Frank Maresca
Collection.

A strange doll that admittedly is a bit of a mystery. The open tongued-mouth, concentrically carved circle eyes and large lobed ears are striking, however these confounding features make it a bit difficult to pin down.

The head and torso would have had applied arms and legs. The wood appears to be something like poplar. Striking!





White Venus

Maker unknown

Baltimore Maryland

Carved Architectural Marble

Circa: 1900

Size: 10 1/2" (h) x 4 1/4" (w)

**Contributed by Joshua Lowenfels*







Hedonistic Hell

Signed: Rodriguez

Oil on canvas

Circa: 1940-1950

Size: 23 1/4" (h) x 31 3/8" (w)

This extraordinary and ambitious painting is by an unidentified painter named, "Rodriguez" (signed lower right).

The hedonistic painting illustrates several nude women embracing a capital vice (lust, vanity, greed, wrath, sloth, and envy) while a gluttonous man drinks wine and gorges on watermelon bananas.

The cavernous landscape hints at death with grottos that mimic the shape of human skulls with dark, vacant eye sockets.

While not all the vignettes are precise, which sin they portray, some like the woman transforming into a Jaguar in front of a bifurcated snake is quite remarkable — as is the woman straddled on a large flying dragon.

The whole has the feeling of Gustave Dore illustrations for Dante's Inferno and The Divine Comedy.

Satan's Strange Fruit

Anonymous

Graphite and crayon on paper

Circa: 1960s

Size: 11" (h) x 14" (w)

A graphically strong anonymous drawing with demonic beasts and semi-mythological beings.



George Mesisco (1918-1991)

Paint and embroidery on paper

Circa: 1950s-1960s

Size: 4" x 5 1/4" (each) / 11 3/4" x 17 1/2" (framed together)

Though little is known about this artist, a small handful of works have been attributed to him. Ironically the work is either comically banale (cartoon elephants and deer) or explicitly sexual—nothing in between. The two works here are of the latter ;-)

Small works on card-stock with embroidered figures on a painted ground.

Literature: for a related work by Mesisco see, *Folk Erotica: Celebrating Centuries of Erotic Americana*, Simpson, 1994, p. 99.





Edwin Lawson (1911-1980)

Fashions 1870

Crayon, pencil on paper

Circa: 1977

Size: 17 1/2" (w) x 24" (h)

Exhibited: Museum of Sex, Known/Unknown, 2017

Literature: Forbes Magazine Online, January 18, 2017.



1977 R

FASHIONS
1870

Bill Anthony

Fetish Chicks

Richmond Virginia

India Ink on illustration board

Circa: 1955-65

Size: (each approx.) 7" (h) x 6" (w)

**Contributed by Joshua Lowenfels.*





Alluring Lures

Found in Maine

Wood, paint, pencil

Circa: 1930s

Size: (mounted on a board)
24" (w) x 16" (h)

Six Decoys meant for ice fishing. Carved wood and paint decorated with images of Bathing beauties.

**Contributed by Joshua Lowenfels.*





Sweetheart Sailors

Signed: F. Manor

Oil on canvas

Circa: 1939

Size: 19 1/2" (h) x 13 1/2" (w) (sight)

Provenance: Peter Brams collection



Morton Riddle (1909-1992)

Three Articulated Wood Carved Figures

Carved wood (white elm?)

Circa: 1970

Size: (largest) 20 3/4" (h)

Literature: Related figures carved by Riddle were shown in the "Pioneers in Paradise: Folk and Outsider Artists of the West Coast," exhibit 1984-1986 and illustrated in the catalog.

Born in Kentucky, Riddle had an aptitude for carving as a young child and created and sold works throughout his life (most of his work is undocumented). In his mid-fifties Riddle and his wife moved to Whittier, California where he was a clockmaker and repairman. On this side Riddle continued carving and created these articulated figures, that relate to artist's lay figure models, but have an uneasy personality to them— with their slight expressions on their faces.

Though it is not known if they knew each other, the unfinished wood figures resemble the work of fellow contemporary Kentuckian carver, Edgar Tolson (1904-1984).





*Unusual Folk Art Sculpture of A
Naked Man Seated on a Snake*
Circa: late 19th century
Size: 15 (h)" x 4 1/2" (w) x 4
1/2" (d)

An unusual piece of American
Folk Art - have not seen a
similar precedent. A carved and
painted naked man wearing a
top hat sits upon a coiled green
snake on top of a pedestal
which when hooked up to a
water source would stream
water through the snakes mouth
and the man's hat!

Must have been something to
see!





Rare Cuir Bouilli Figural Case

Tooled leather, wood, paint

Italy or France

Circa: 16th century.

Size: 11 1/8 (h)" x 4" (d)

Provenance: Sylvie Lhermite-King, A La Façon de Venise, Paris, France.

An important and remarkable case in the form of an African-European man's head. The portrait features stylized eyes, a well-groomed mustache, a head wrap (turban), or a cap with radiating lines on the top, possibly representing strung pearls or gemstones.

The container separates at the lips and reveals a cylindrical cavity inside.

African-Europeans during the Renaissance were both free and enslaved. While many Black persons were enslaved, there was a working and merchant class of free Black persons throughout Europe—with some Blacks working as African ambassadors. Venice, in particular, had one of the more diverse societies.

"Revealing the African Presence in Renaissance Europe," an exhibit at The Walters Art Museum in 2012, showed numerous works of African-Europeans as subjects or players in paintings and decorative works of art during this time.



Two portraits of unknown black men, painted in the early 16th century, either of which may be the earliest paintings depicting a particular African-European person. Both show expensively dressed men of wealth, standing, and respect. Similar to the figure on the case, both have facial hair and caps.

Though stereotypical "blackamoor" or "moor" subjects are depicted in Renaissance period decorative arts and paintings as exotic "others," the subject of this leather case feels personal and specific—as if it is a portrait custom made for the owner or a gift representing a particular likeness.

The case is made of cuir-bouilli or "boiled leather." A thin wood armature and cork provide the "bones" of the case while the whole is covered with a thin leather that is heated and tooled and then finished with linseed oil. Heating the leather as such makes the skin durable and able to hold a tooled decoration.

Figural cases as such are exceedingly rare; in fact, this is the only anthropomorphic case I have come across (N.B. an ichthyomorphic case is in the Jacques Hollander cutlery collection (n°695)).

Though this case's purpose is unknown, the maker possibly created it to house important personal documents relating to its owner. Regardless of utility, it serves as an important secular Renaissance object.



Jan Jansz Mostaert (1474?– 1552)
Portrait of a Black Man
Circa: 1520–25.
Oil on panel,
30 × 20.3 cm.
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Flemish or German (?)
Portrait of a Wealthy African
Circa: 1530–40
Oil on panel
23.3 cm
Private Collection, Antwerp





Folk Art Bacchus on Barrel
Northern France
Circa: Mid 19thC
Size: 7 1/2" (w) x 9 1/2" (h)

A rare folk art ceramic sculpture of a grotesque magistrate atop a brandy keg.

The earthenware figure has a manganese glaze with kaolin highlights to his facial features and hands.

The CT Historical Society has a trade sign for the Bacchus Inn or Norwich, which features a man atop a keg. This highly stylized piece of folk art is a variant of the Dutch 'Bobbejakken.'

Literature: A related example is pictured in, *Poteries et céramiques anciennes du Cotentin* by Leberruyer Pierre, Lepoitevin Lucien, p. 168, plate 99.





Rare Masonic Sun Faces

France

Carved and painted wood

Circa: 1780

Size: 9 3/4" (w) x 9 3/4" (h)



An exceptional pair of beautifully carved hardwood panels featuring a sun-face representative of early Masonic imagery. Each face with alternating squiggle and straight light rays framing expressively carved and painted faces. The four corners with carved hearts.



*17thC Folk Art Family Tree -
Great Fish*

Germany

Watercolor on paper

Circa: 1680

Size: 12" (w) x 19 1/2" (h)
(sight) / 22" x 29" (framed)

Super graphic early
watercolor on paper of a
German Folk Art family tree.

Have not done the research
into the families, but some of
the names observed are
Hoffman; Steiner; Pabst; and
Haberman.



Fisherman's Suitcase

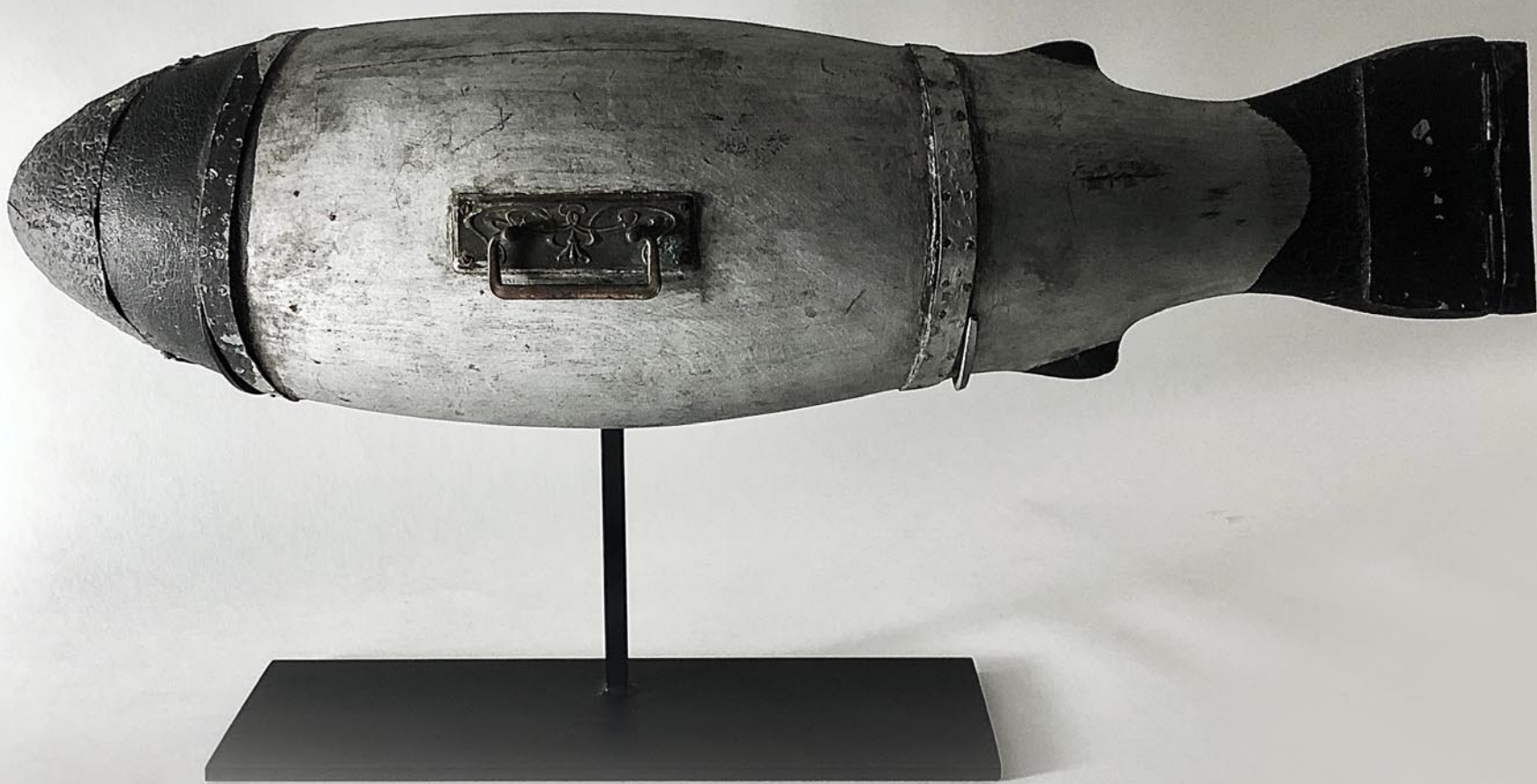
Midwestern United States

Carved and painted wood with door hinge and decorative drawer pull.

Circa - 1930-40

Size: 24" (l) 22" x 4" (d) x 12" (height with base)

**Contributed by Joshua Lowenfels.*





First Rate Sheet of Tattoo Flash Art
Texas

Watercolor on paper

Circa: 1930s

Size: 9" x 11" (sight) / 13 1/4" x 15 1/4" (frame)

First-rate sheet of tattoo flash art. All works appear to be by the same hand. This sheet is part of a group that are believed to have been first collected and assembled in the 1940-50s in Texas.





Memento Mori Pomander in the form of a Skull
Silver

probably Germany

Circa: 1625

Size: 1" (h) x 7/8" (w) x 1" (d)

Pomanders are scent containers used from the middle ages through the 17th century and worn as aromatic talismans to ward off pestilence and odors when causes and cures for infections and other diseases were little understood containers as such provided comfort and olfactory relief.

In the form of a skull, the object served as a reminder that life could be fleeting and the phrase, "Memento Mori" (translation, 'remember that you will die') inscribed within reinforced that potent reminder.

The interior contains a compartment divided into six sections with a cover identifying various spices, including schlag (a composite of ambergris, musk, and civet), citron, muschat (nutmeg), canel (cinnamon), and rosewater. The open bottom mandible and large zygomatic bones are unusual and robust features of this exceptional example.

Related examples: The British Museum, 1978,1002.162, and 1978,1002.219; The Metropolitan Museum, 60.55.8a, b





Gold Finger and Safety Ring

14k gold, 1.31 oz.

Size: as mounted 3" (oal)"

An unusual and unique gold finger and safety ring. Not sure if this jewelry ensemble was used as a prosthetic finger or a fashion accessory for a dandy or quaintrelle that thought it was fabulously fashionable.

The finger looks to be cast and chased from a real finger. The interior is hollow and fits over a thin finger. The ring is hinged and coupled with the chain would provide adequate protection if the finger fell off.

Reminds one of the work of influential goldsmith, Bruno Martinazzi (b. 1923).



May Wilson
(1905-1986)

Wrapped Baby Doll

Circa: 1970

Size: 12" (h) x 5 1/2" (w) x 4" (d)

Wilson was an American artist and figure in the 1960s to 1990s New York City avant-garde art world. A pioneer of the feminist and mail art movement, she is best known for her Surrealist junk assemblages and her "Ridiculous Portrait" photocollages.

Wilson's work is in the collection of The Whitney, The Brooklyn Museum, and the Baltimore Museum of Art.





Folk Art Clown/Jester Knockdown

Circa: 1900-1920

Size: 11 1/2" (h) x 4" (w) x " (d)

Carved and painted folk art figure painted as a clown or jester with a heart and diamond painted on the cheeks. As this was a knockdown there is scattered wear and paint loss, especially to his nose.





Exceptional Folk Art Carving

- Lion & Snake

Mansfield, PA

Circa: 1860-80

Size: 8" (w) x 7" (h) x 2 1/2"
(d).

Not many folk art carvings display this much drama and dynamic tension. A masterpiece carving attributed to "The Mansfield Carver," Mansfield, PA. The subject is from Aesop's Fables and has been a subject in sculpture for centuries.

Carved from the solid, a spotted snake is coiled around a lion and is shown at the point before striking. A true tour-de-force of carving and a masterpiece of 19thC vernacular art.



The States Eagle.



The States Eagle

New England

Circa: 1800-1820

Pen, ink and watercolor

Size: 8 3/4" (h) x 7" (w)

Provenance: David Wheatcroft

The artist focused solely on the American eagle as its subject—without any flourish or extraneous paint to the paper ground. The rendering is highly stylized, bold, and direct—powerful—iconic!



Oh pray accept this trifling gift,
This token of good will;
For though it may seem far from you,
Yet I shall look upon it still.

Though cruel Fate has parted us,
From my dear friends and me;
Yet may I soon return again,
To see from you the same.

William Winter and His Family

Ireland

Pen, ink and watercolor.

Circa: 1816

Size: 7 1/4" (h) x 11 3/4" (w)

Inscribed "Oh pary accept this trifling gift/This token I am far from you/Yet I shall love you still/Though cruel fate has parted me/From my dear friends and loves/Yet may I soon return again/No more from you to roam"

Provenance: Robert Young Antiques

Literature: Young, R. Folk Art, London, 1999. p. 94-95 (illustrated) and also illustrated on the back cover.

Masterpiece of a Folk Art family portrait with each member arranged my height (and probably age) with little ones at the mother's leg and in her arms.



Harlem Home

Oil on masonite, in
artist made frame

Circa: mid 20thC

Size: 28" (w) x 14" (h)

**Contribued by Joshua
Lowenfels.*

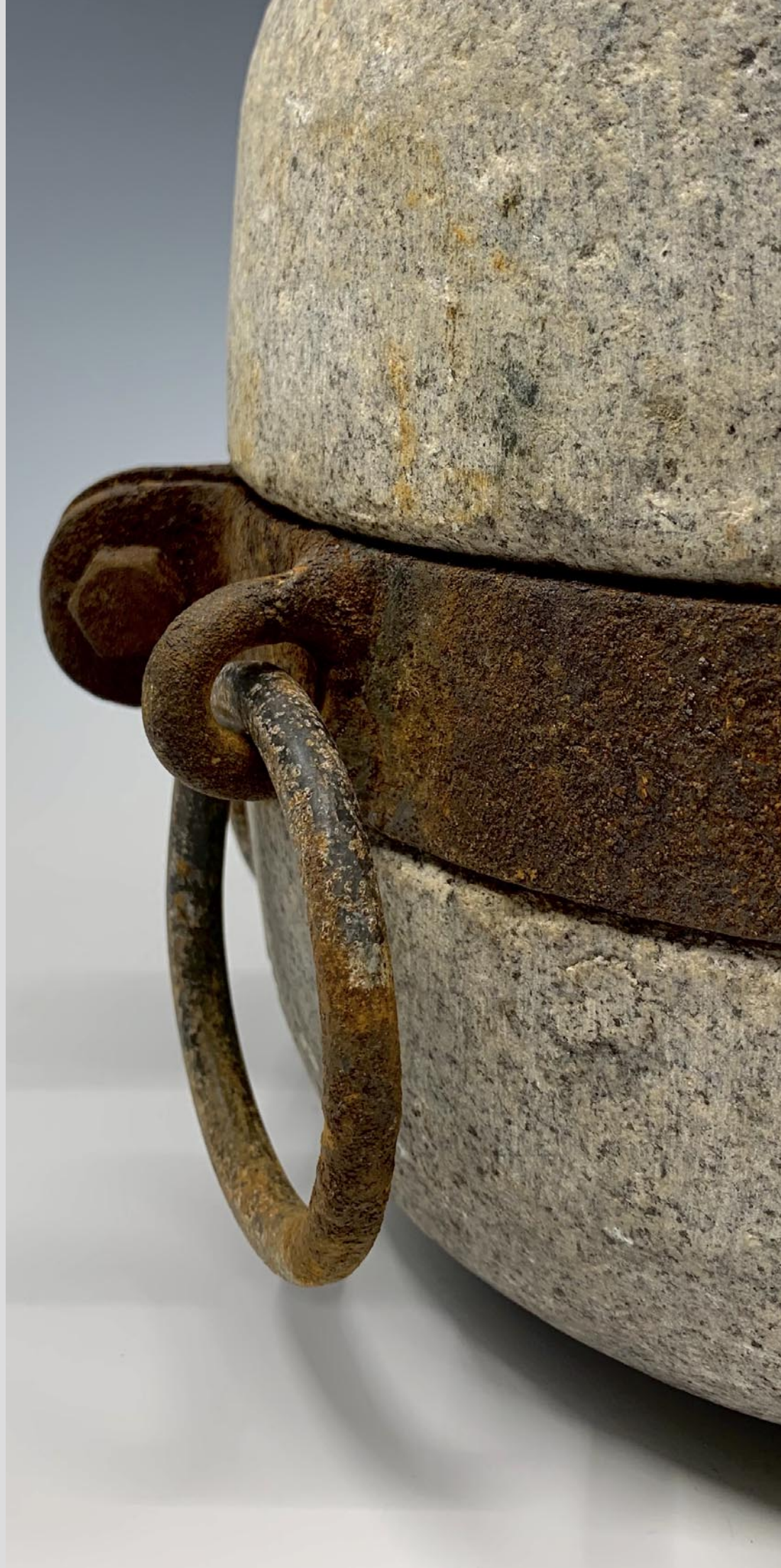




*Rare Iron & Stone Pounder
for Japanese Inoko festival*
Circa: 19th century
Size: 9 (w)" x 8" (h) x 8" (d)

A rare Japanese stone pounder for an Inoko festival, which is an autumn festival celebrating the young boar. Children would tie strings to the iron rings and in unison lift the heavy stone and pound it to the ground. They would go home to home and pound the floor near the entrance while singing the Inoko song.

The stone is a beautifully carved pellet-like form with the iron band set into a recessed channel carved in the stone so it is flush with the body of the stone. Though fairly small, the sculpture weighs 34 pounds.



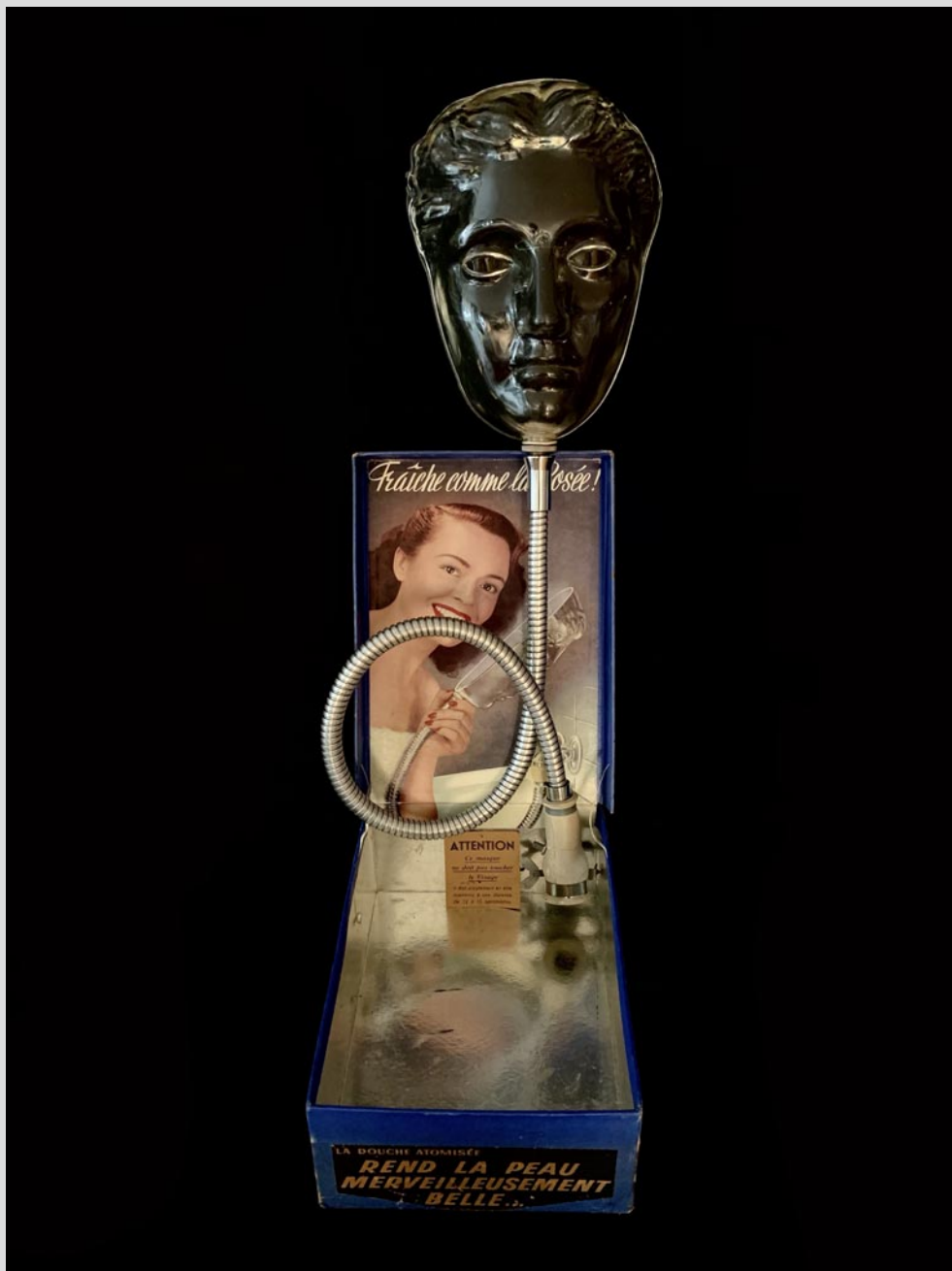
French Facial Douche Mask

Circa: 1930-40s

Size: As mounted 22" (h) x 9" (w) x 5" (d)

A rare early, clear plastic beauty mask modeled after Aphrodite. The design is quite graphic and displays as nearly invisible (not sure what kind of plastic or resin they used as most from this period turn yellow over time).

Custom wall mount and original box.



Bronze statuette of Aphrodite
ca. 150–100 B.C. Metropolitan
Museum 12.173



Fraîche comme la rosée!





American Folk Art Monkeys Cane

Circa: 1910-1920

Size: 35" (oal) x 2" (w).

"There are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy and the tired."

— Nick Carraway, *The Great Gatsby*

An atypical vernacular cane carving, in that the carving of the cane and the figures are not characteristic of the language of other folk art cane carvers—this carving is very much its own.

The monkeys are more anthropomorphic than monkeys usually are and have tension within their interaction. Great piece.





BIG-FLAT - A. L. KNICKERBOCKER.

Big Flat

A. L. Knickerbocker

Circa: 1930

Size: 11" (h) x 14" (w) / 13" (h) x 16" (w) (framed)

This small, highly stylized painting of two bears encountering an animal skeleton in the woods is boldly signed by the painter, "A. L. Knickerbocker," however no information or additional works by Knickerbocker can be found.

The painting was found over 40 years ago in this blue and gold diamond painted frame, likely the original.

Big Flats is a small hamlet on the Southern Tier of New York State and was once called "Great Plains."



Church Quire [sic]
George E. Morgan (1870-1969)
Oil on canvas board
Dated: January 1964
Size: 9" x 12"

An atypical work by George Morgan who is known for his bird's eye views of Maine towns. The patterning of the flowers is quite extraordinary. Signed, titled and dated on the back and Morgan gives his age as, "age 93 last Oct - 9."

Provenance: Anne K. Wardwell; Mr. & Mrs. Sumner and Helen Johnston; Joe Wetherell; Raymond Saroff and Howard Rose; Peter Brams.

Exhibitions: The Playhouse, Boothbay, ME 1963; Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, ME, July 16 - October 11, 1998; The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art, Chicago, IL, February 5 - April 10, 1999.



Bird of Paradise

George E. Morgan (1870-1969)

Oil on canvas board

Circa: 1964

Size: 9" x 12"

This work features an idealized bird hovering over an idealized landscape including a white picket fence, flowers and green fields. Morgan painted this when he was 93-94 years old.

Provenance: Anne K. Wardwell; Mr. & Mrs. Sumner and Helen Johnston; Joe Wetherell; Raymond Saroff and Howard Rose; Peter Brams.

Exhibitions: The Playhouse, Boothbay, ME 1963; Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, ME, July 16 - October 11, 1998; The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art, Chicago, IL, February 5 - April 10, 1999.



Memory Painting of Riga

Anonymous

Oil on plywood with taped labels

Circa: 1950-1960s

Size: 35" (w) x 18" (h)

A massive wave of Latvian immigrants came to the United States after World War II. Having Suffered through Soviet and Nazi occupations, hundreds of thousands fled and spent years in European refugee camps before some of them immigrated to the United States in the early 1950s.

The work calls to mind the paintings of George Morgan, who composed memory paintings from a bird's-eye's perspective. Intuitively we use this aerial device as a method of recall.



TOPIVA K

ZARUŠ

LICHUŠ

ZARUŠ

R. KUNOVKA

R. BENEŠ

BIPERNIAK
No. 30

VEJNEZ

MEJSEZ

KOTLA RIVER

VARL
UPST

KRACES

DOLES SALA

TOPIVA K

Untitled [scrool]

Melvin Way (1954-)

Black ink on paper

Circa: 2001

Size: 4" (w) x 3" (h) (sight)

An early work by Way that I believe is not incidentally in the shape of a school bus—with the words “scrool; scrol / whreel” written (think, “the wheels on the bus go ‘round and ‘round...”).

The Outsider Artist Melvin Way suffers from schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, and diabetes.

Way has stated, “All my works have to go thru emissions, baptisms, and transmigrations before I release them into the stratosphere, I carry 500 drawings at a time in my raincoat, and they go thru rain sleet and snow, sometimes staying in my pocket for 6 months at a time.”

Art critic Jerry Saltz says of Way’s work, “[He is] a mystic visionary genius....one of the greatest living American artists. Melvin Way makes knotted diagrams of numbers, letters, lines, and arrows that look like alchemical equations.”

III-1:II-VI-VI:0000

SCROLL; SCROL
WHEEL ●

J. BACQUES

$$(x-w^{\theta} \sqrt{n-fnf d^3 x d^3 v i n \varphi})$$

$$fnfd^3 x d^3 v$$
$$A^2 + 1 + D + D_2 + D_3 + \dots + P \lambda / t_2 a_1$$

$$\sqrt{25} fnfd^3 x d^3 v i n \varphi = 1$$

$$\sqrt{A^2 + 1 + D + D_2 + D_3 + \dots + P \lambda / t_2 a_1} = \dots$$

$$A^2 + fnfd^3 x d^3 v i n \varphi + D + D_2 + D_3 + \dots + P \lambda / t_2 a_1$$



$$(x-w^{\theta} \sqrt{n-fnf d^3 x d^3 v i n \varphi})$$

$$fnfd^3 x d^3 v i n \varphi$$
$$A^2 + 1 + D + D_2 + D_3 + \dots + P \lambda / t_2 a_1$$



Worker Badge-7820 (Carpenter)

Metal frame pin back with real photo,
Sewn between clear celluloid and cloth edging.

Norton Companies - Boston Mass

Circa: 1920's

Size: 2-1/2" (h) x 4" (w)

**Contributed by Joshua Lowenfels.*



7820

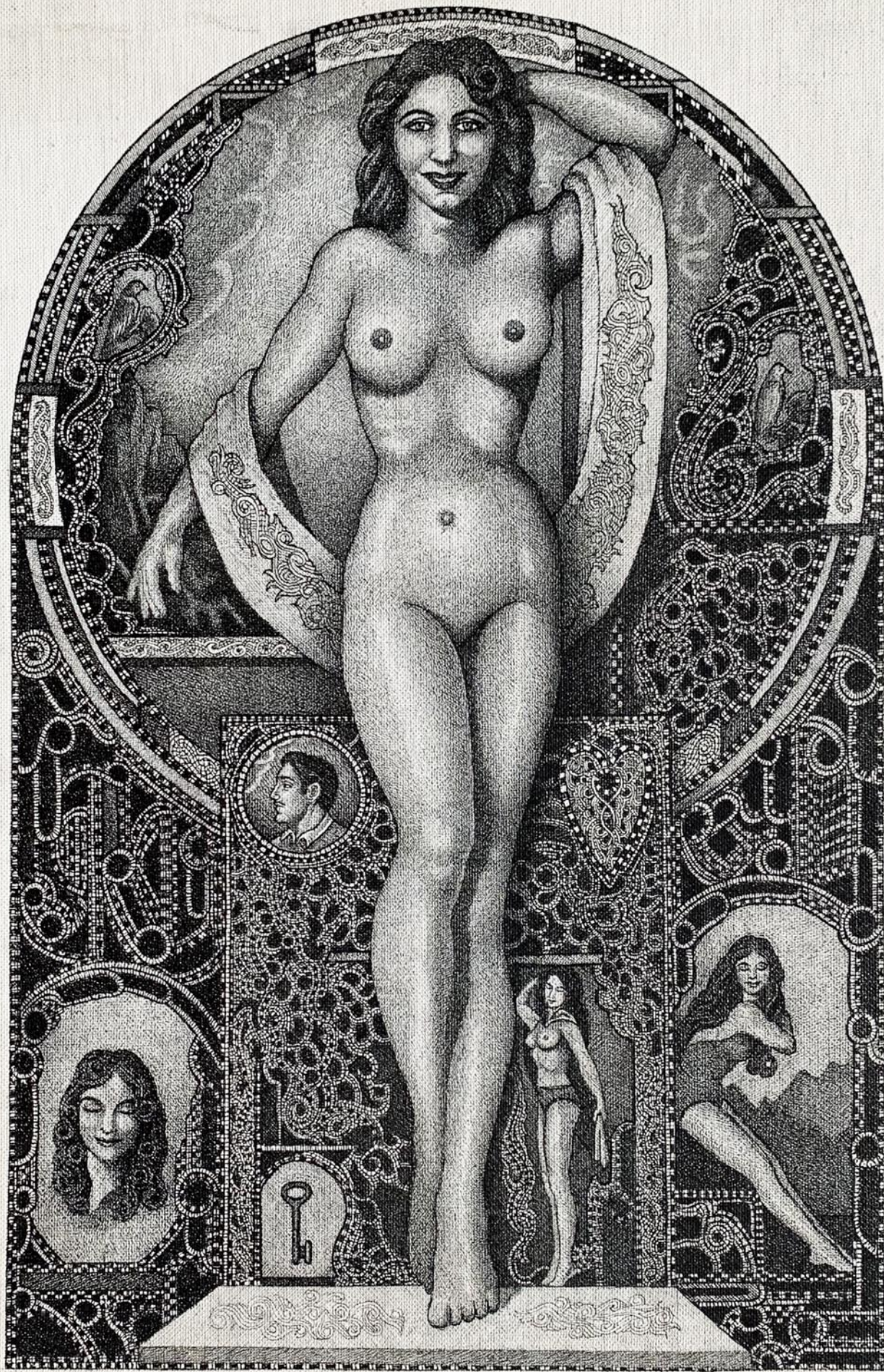
NORTON
CARPENTER
(SERVICE)
COMPANIES



The Key To My Fantasy
Pen & Ink on canvas board
Circa: 1960-70
Size: 16”(w) x 20” (h)

This is a remarkable illustration by an as of yet unidentified artist. The adeptly rendered nude figure and intricate design are masterfully worked and executed.

Atypically, the substrate is canvas board (not paper or bristol board). The artist must have used a steel pen versus a mechanical rapidograph-type pen as the tips would have broken over and over.



Cyanotypes of a Cadaver

Unique cyanotype photographs on paper

Circa: 1930-1940

Size: each 13 1/2”(w) x 36” (h)

Provenance: (l) Julie Saul Gallery / (r) Gary Edwards Gallery.

(l) Though both images were likely created for scientific purposes, this image of a male inner torso is strikingly beautiful with its deep blue tonal range and confrontational subject.

(r) This stark image of a male body with its poignant composition and delicate tonal ranges of cyan has an unintentional air of reverence—a haunting witness mark—not unlike the Shroud of Turin or a Buddhist scroll.

These works are part of a small group of cyanotypes by the same unknown photographer/physician. Others in the series are held in the collections of MOMA, The Metropolitan Museum, and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Reference: Burns and Wilson, *Cyanotypes: Photography's Blue Period*. Worcester Art Museum, 2016, pps.68-71





*Southern Folk Art Limestone
Carving of a Kissing Couple
Kentucky (found)*

Circa: 1930-40

Size: 8" x 8" x 9" (h)

A dynamic carving of a nude male and female embraced in a kiss with the man's hand on her upper thigh. She is not resisting, but her slight push may be a signal to slow it down a bit.

Carvings as such in limestone are quite rare in that this small sculpture packs a lot of life into the stone. The work is carved in-the-round, and the figures have remarkable tension between them.

It was found in a river 65 years plus ago in Prestonsburg, Floyd County, Kentucky.



Ray Materson (1954 –)

This small atypical work by Ray Materson from when he was imprisoned in 1994. According to Materson the piece was about redemption — "In 1994, I was in love with my wife (now divorced) and I was less than a year from being paroled from prison. Life was blooming like a beautiful rose and there seemed to be no thorns, no hurts to deal with."

From The American Visionary Art Museum, "Born March 15, 1954 in Milford, Connecticut, Raymond Materson grew up in the Midwest. He earned a G.E.D. and attended Thomas Jefferson College as a drama and philosophy major, but was plagued by a serious drug problem. To support his habit, he committed a string of robberies with a shoplifted toy gun, was eventually arrested and sentenced to 15 years in a state penitentiary in Connecticut. To keep himself sane Ray taught himself to embroider, using unraveled socks for thread and a sewing needle secured from a prison guard. He stitched miniature tapestries depicting life outside prison walls and sold his works to other inmates for cigarettes. Most of Materson's miniature embroideries include approximately 1,200 stitches per square inch and measure less than 2.5 x 3 inches.

Since his release from prison in 1995, Ray has worked as a teacher, counselor, caseworker, program director, design consultant and speaker. With the help of his former wife Melanie, he published his autobiography, "Sins and Needles: A Story of Spiritual Mending." In 2003, he became the first artist to ever receive the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Innovators Combating Substance Abuse Award.

Materson's work has been featured in numerous exhibitions at The American Museum of Folk Art in New York City, The American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore, MD, The Center for Contemporary Art in Seattle, WA, The Boston Metropolitan Museum of Art, and The New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York City to name just a few."

Provenance: Peter Brams Collection.

Exhibited at The New Museum, A Labor of Love, January 20 – April 14 1996.



Without Thorns (A Rose)

Ray Materson (1954 –)

Unraveled socks

Circa: 1994

Size: 2 1/2" (h) x 2 1/2" (w) (sight)

12 3/4" (h) x 11 1/2" (w) (framed)



Wrought Rose

Forged and chiseled iron

New Hampshire

Circa: 1900

Size: 8 1/2" (h) x 3 1/2"
(w) x 3 1/2" (w)

**Contributed by Joshua
Lowenfels.*



Award Winning Roses

Ethel Deuman

Oil on wood panel

Dated: February 25, 1960

Size: 24" (h) x 12" (w)

Folk Art painting still life of roses from the mail order flower business of Jackson & Perkins (founded 1872). Each rose is identified on the back of the painting with the date of each respective rose as introduced.

Jackson Perkins Roses
Finished - Feb. 25, 1960 by Ethel J. Deuman

1. Top left - Sterling Silver Lavender bud in 1958 book
2. " right Pageant Big red & yellow - 1954 "
3. Mardi Gras upper left - Red bud - 1954 "
4. Eclipse - Pale yellow large bud " "
5. Golden Masterpiece yellow Rose 7 inches across
This is the world's largest rose - 1957 book
6. White Queen - 1958 "
7. Better times under white Queen - 1958 book
8. Opera - under Mardi Gras Red rose - 1957 "
9. Mojave - orange buds - 1960 book
10. Zulu Queen - Black and red rose - 1957 "
11. Fashion Pink bud left - 1954
12. Tawny Gold - resting on vase - 1958
13. New Dawn - Pale pink lower right (Climber) 1958
14. Independence - 2 light red buds lower
and the four red buds - 1957







Parade of Pansies

Anonymous

Oil on canvas

Circa: 1890

Size: 36" (w) x 16" (h)

An unusual composition of pansies seemingly floating across a landscape. The flowers appear suspended in air, not really grounded.

Signed on the back, "Mrs. J. G. Loughlin," with a street address. This could be the painter or an early owner—regardless it is effectively anonymous.





Snake Den

Wood burl

Circa: 1900-1920

Size: 16" (l) x 11 1/4" (h)

A wonderful twisty burl mass resembling a writhing snake den. One snake is carved from a branch growing through the burl mass, while others have nail eyes upon their suggestive heads.





Veiled Nude

Found in Randolph County,
Liberty, North Carolina

Southern pine

Circa: early 19thC

Size: 13 1/2 (h) x 3 1/4 x 3 1/2"

**Contributed by Joshua Lowenfels.*

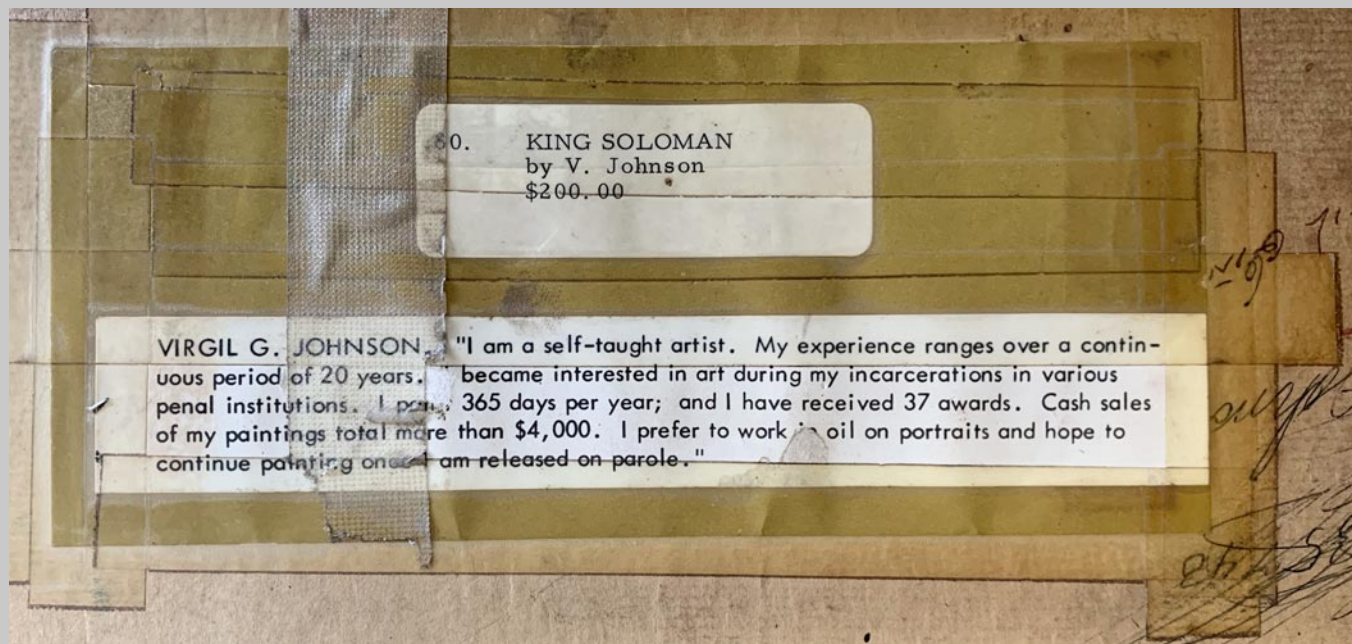




King Soloman [sic]
Virgil Gino Johnson
Oil on canvas board
Size: 24" (w) x 30" (h)
Circa: 1970

Though not identified, I am quite certain Johnson appears as King Solomon here as a self-portrait. The attention to detail in the face is studied and looks to be done from life whereas the women and baby look to be done from photographs.

Johnson was imprisoned in the Menard Correctional Center, Illinois, which is the states largest penitentiary.





Surreal Space 'Scape'
Anonymous
Crayon on paper
Circa: 1960s
Size: 12" (1) x 9" (1)

Provenance: Fred C.

Four well composed
surreal and outer-space
landscapes from a
anonymous works



apes

h)

Giampietro

ed and rendered
pacey
group of



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