

The Elmhurst College Art Collection

Chicago Imagist and
Abstractionist Art



About the Collection

At the heart of the Elmhurst College Art Collection is an extraordinary collection of works by Chicago Imagist and Abstractionist artists.

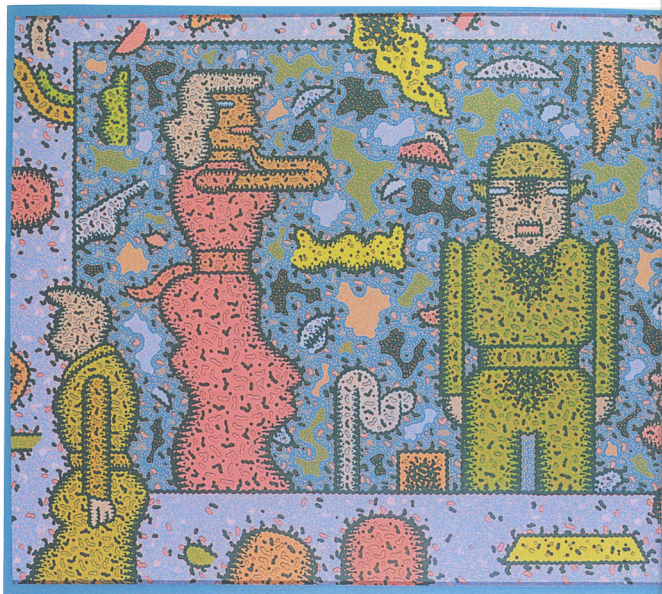
Focusing on artists working in Chicago between about 1950 and the present, the collection displays a broad range of artistic ideas and influences. From Ed Paschke's psychedelic colors to Roger Brown's dreamlike silhouettes, the collection represents what art critic James Yood called "the best single overview of art from 1966 to 1985 in any public institution."

Elmhurst's collection dates to 1971, when the College received federal funding to purchase art for the newly built A.C. Buehler Library. With the goal of buying art that had a particular meaning, the College focused its collecting on the works of a group of emerging and affordable Chicago artists—a group that would later be known as the Chicago Imagists. The first 10 pieces included Jim Nutt's *Toot Toot Woo Woo*, Roger Brown's *Performance*, Christina Ramberg's *Glimpsed*, and Miyoko Ito's *Chinoiserie*.

Over the years, the College has added many more works to the collection, thanks to matching grants from the Illinois Arts Council, bequests from artists, and generous donors. Today, the College's professional collection comprises more than 80 works of art, including many important works by major Imagists and Abstractionists.

Numerous pieces in the collection have traveled to retrospective and thematic exhibitions at major museums throughout the United States and Europe. Jim Nutt's *Toot Toot Woo Woo*, for example, represented the United States at the 1972 Venice Biennale in Italy and has since served as a pivotal piece in many more exhibitions. "There's rarely a retrospective of the so-called Imagist artists that doesn't include Elmhurst," said the art critic James Yood.

The collection is housed in the A.C. Buehler Library on the Elmhurst campus, where it inspires and enriches the College community, the Chicago arts community, and the general public. The exhibit is open free of charge during regular library hours. For exhibit hours and information about guided tours, please contact the Library at (630) 617-3172.



About the Chicago Imagists

In 1966, six recent graduates of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago held a groundbreaking exhibit at the Hyde Park Art Center on Chicago's South Side. Calling themselves the Hairy Who, the group thumbed their noses at the art establishment, producing works that were outrageous, aggressive, humorous, and scatological.

Hairy Who members—Art Green, Jim Falconer, Gladys Nilsson, Jim Nutt, Suellen Rocca, and Karl Wirsum—shared an interest in the art of popular culture. Reflecting



Roger Brown, *See Seven Cities*, 1971



Ray Yoshida,
Arbitrary Approach, 1983

*The Imagist movement
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bright color, patterning, and precise craftsmanship, the group's exhibitions incorporated such features as comic book catalogues, discount-store price tags, linoleum-covered walls, and displays of thrift-shop finds.

Other groups soon joined the Hairy Who at the Hyde Park Art Center. The Nonplussed Some debuted in 1968, featuring the work of Ed Paschke and four other young artists. That same year saw the first show by the False Image, a group that included Roger Brown, Christina Ramberg, and Phil Hanson.

These young, irreverent artists shared an affinity with an earlier group of Chicago artists, dubbed the Monster Roster, that had emerged in the late 1940s and early '50s.

Inspired in part by Jean Dubuffet's famous 1951 lecture that pointed to the world of primal feeling as the origin of art, Monster Roster artists were heavily influenced by Surrealism, tribal art, and "outsider" art. Leon Golub, Robert Barnes, Don Baum, Dominick Di Meo, Evelyn Statsinger, Theodore Halkin, and the other members of the Monster Roster produced works that were psychologically charged, intensely felt, and very personal.

In 1972 the term Chicago Imagists was coined by art historian Franz Schulze to describe both the Monster Roster artists and the later generation of artists that emerged in the '60s. The Imagists were connected by certain commonly held beliefs, rather than a single recognizable style; they rejected Abstract Expressionism, the popular idiom of the day, and produced works that featured imagery, primarily of the human figure. Again and again they returned to the human image, casting it in numerous roles, distorting it, and layering it with personal meaning.

The work of the Chicago Imagists has gained national and international recognition. In 1973, members of the later generation of Imagists represented the United States at the prestigious Sao Paulo Bienal exhibition in Brazil. In 1981, the “Who Chicago” exhibition brought Chicago Imagist work to England, Scotland, and Ireland. Today, Imagist work can be found in museums and important collections throughout the world.

It is no accident that these highly talented artists bursting with originality and creativity emerged in Chicago in the 1950s and '60s. Existing outside the artistic mainstream and in an atmosphere that fostered unique sensibilities, they were encouraged to develop and express their personal visions. The result is a highly original and authentic movement that marked an important moment in the development of the art of the 20th century.

Suellen Rocca

Curator and Director of Exhibitions, Elmhurst College



Gladys Nilsson, *In Vertical Shade*, 1984

The Elmhurst College Art Collection includes works by more than 40 artists. Here are some of the artists represented.

Gertrude Abercrombie	Richard Loving
Don Baum	Gladys Nilsson
Vera Berdich	Jim Nutt
Phyllis Bramson	Ed Paschke
Roger Brown	Frank Piatek
William Conger	Christina Ramberg
Jordan Davies	Suellen Rocca
Dominick Di Meo	Barbara Rossi
Roland Ginzl	Evelyn Statsinger
Ted Halkin	Franz Schulze
Philip Hanson	Hollis Sigler
Richard Hunt	John Pitman Weber
Miyoko Ito	Margaret Wharton
Sandra Jorgensen	Karl Wirsum
Richard Lostutter	Joseph Yoakum
Thomas Kapsalis	Ray Yoshida



Learn more. For more information about the Elmhurst College Art Collection, please contact the Library at (630) 617-3172.

On the cover: Ed Paschke, *Cobmaster*, 1975