

To mark the fifth season of our Works on Paper Gallery, we celebrate with an exhibition that looks back at our collecting of works on paper over the last ten years.

Works on paper are defined as any works of art that use paper as their primary substrate. These include drawings, watercolors, fine prints, and photographs, and even woven, cast or collaged paper. Their appeal often lies in their intimate scale and immediacy. Often the action of the artist seems “right on the surface,” each touch and gesture recorded in graphite, charcoal, ink, or watercolor.

Bennington Museum has collected works on paper since we opened to the public in 1928. Early on, the museum focused on historic materials of regional interest, including prints and photographs depicting historic people, places, and events, and art and artists with ties to this region. Over the course of the last decade we have placed increasing emphasis on collecting 20th-century and contemporary works, to bring our collections up-to-date and ensure that they are relevant in the 21st century.

It’s our goal in this exhibition to highlight the diversity of our collection and collecting practices. Some of these works build on pre-existing strengths in the collection, such as mid-20th century representational art. Others have been collected to give context to existing strengths. In particular, works by self-taught artists give context to the museum’s unparalleled collection of works by Grandma Moses. However, the main focus of our recent collecting has been to fill significant gaps in the collection, especially modernist and contemporary photography and Bennington Modernism—works created by artists connected to Bennington College in the decades after World War II.

Playing off the eclectic nature of the works in this exhibition, they have been installed to bring out a web of interconnecting relationships. Works have been placed in proximity to create complex visual, historical, thematic, or conceptual dialogs. The gallery checklist provides background on when and how the works entered the collection, and insights into their overlapping relationships.