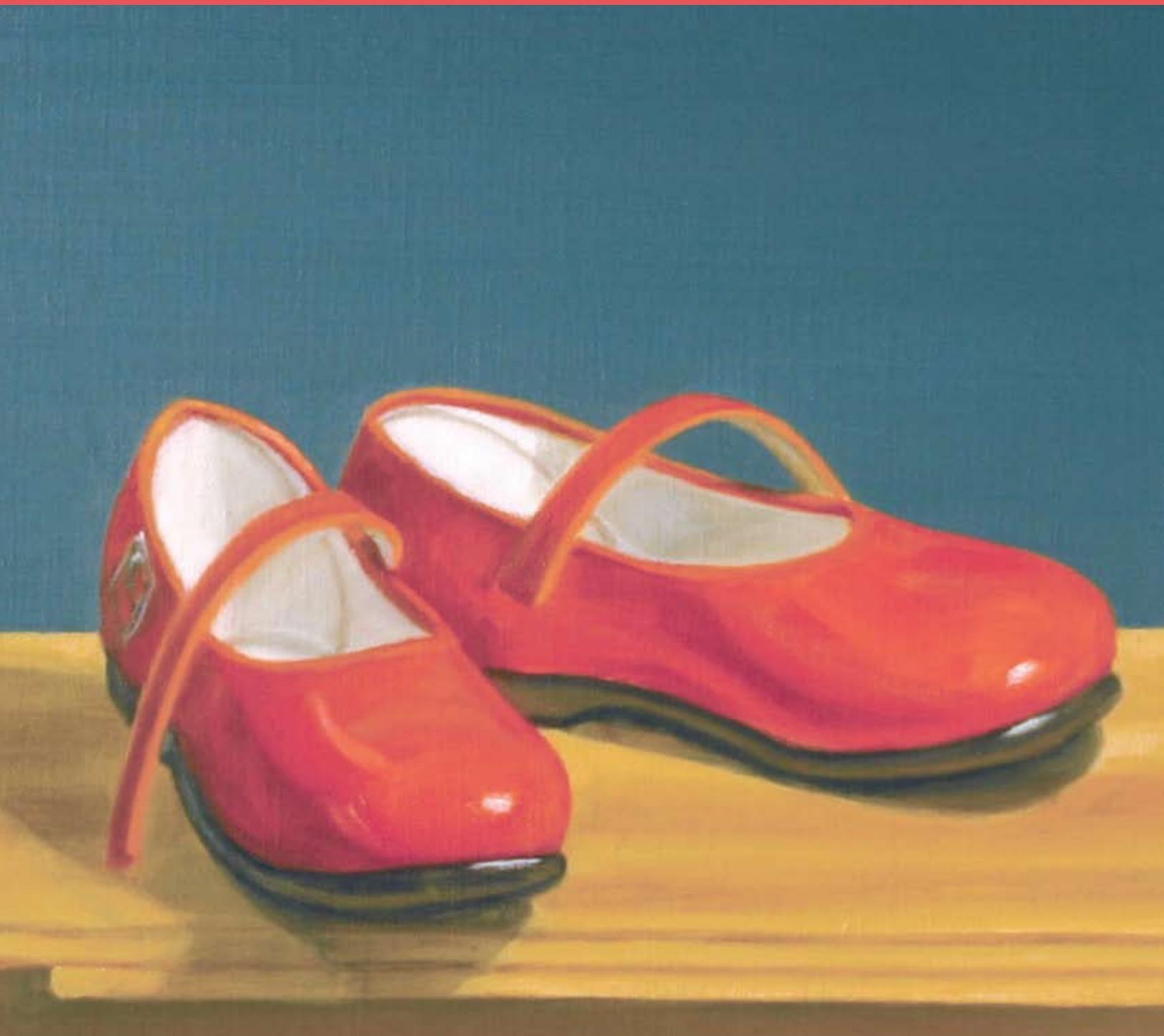


The Francis and June Spiezer Collection

July 17 - September 27, 2009

Sponsored by Art in the Garden



RAM

Exhibition TeacherGuide

The Francis and June Spiezer Collection

Curator's Statement

The Francis and June Spiezer Collection is the most celebrated gift to RAM's Permanent Collection to date. Longtime promoters of the Chicago art scene, the late Francis Spiezer and his widow, June, promised to donate their revered collection to RAM over 15 years, with 2009 marking its completion.

The Spiezer Collection is comprised of more than 200 objects in two main focus areas – regional contemporary art and contemporary studio glass. This generous gift is considered the most comprehensive collection of post-1960s Chicago art. Comprised of seminal works by nearly every significant Chicago artist for three decades; the Spiezers' passion for life, art and artists is reflected in these diverse works.

Avid stamp collectors, June and Francis changed their area of focus after enrolling in an Art for Investment class in the early 1970s. The couple quickly immersed themselves in the Chicago gallery scene, focusing on amassing work by emerging artists as a way to encourage and give back to the creative community. In the process they became lifelong friends to many artists.

Early on, the twosome agreed to only collect pieces about which both were passionate. With a keen eye for spotting talent, they focused on affordable work by up and coming artists – many of whose careers have since soared to international fame.

If you spot June Spiezer during the exhibition be sure to ask her what her favorite piece is; she is likely to enthusiastically reply, "It is whatever I am looking at!" Her passion for art and life are truly contagious.

Patty Rhea

Exhibition Curator

From Another Perspective: The Francis and June Spiezer Collection

July 17, 2009—February 14, 2010

The Francis and June Spiezer Collection is the most celebrated gift to RAM's Permanent Collection to date. Longtime promoters of the Chicago art scene, the late Francis Spiezer and his widow, June, promised to donate their revered collection to RAM over 15 years, with 2009 marking its completion. The Spiezer Collection is comprised of more than 200 objects in two main focus areas – regional contemporary art and contemporary studio glass. This generous gift is considered the most comprehensive collection of post-1960s Chicago art. Comprised of seminal works by nearly every significant Chicago artist for three decades; the Spiezers' passion for life, art and artists is reflected in these diverse works.

Patty Rhea

Exhibition Curator

RAM

Exhibition Teacher Guide

The Francis and June Spiezer Collection

The following section contains information from interviews with Francis and June Spiezer about a few pieces in their collection.

ART FOR INVESTMENT

We took a class called “Art for Investment” – misnomer, misnamed, mis-*everything*, but it was a great course. The first session was a slide lecture showing a lot of things, and the second session was going down into the city to see art galleries. The first outing was to Nancy Lurie Gallery and others on Superior Street. This was an eye-opener for us. At any rate, we really went to Nancy Lurie a lot. She had primarily emerging artists – not that well-known, not that expensive. Since they were emerging, we could meet them and talk to them, and they would remember us when they got to be famous [laughs]. At any rate, they were affordable.

—June Spiezer, 2008

WHY ROCKFORD?

Very often people have asked us, since we’re not from Rockford, “Why Rockford?” I spent about four months in Rockford during the war at Camp Grant, close to where the airport is. I can’t remember any time during that period in Rockford where I had to buy a cup of coffee, a hamburger, a sandwich, or a meal. Someone always picked up the check. So I have a warm spot in my heart for Rockford. (In addition, I have a son and five grandchildren who live in Rockford.)

We decided on Rockford because the museum is small enough and new enough that the work would not wind up in the basement. I don’t know whether or not you’re aware of this, but the Art Institute has a tremendous, tremendous collection that nobody sees – it’s stuck in the basement. It gets shown maybe once a century. That is why we chose Rockford Art Museum.

—Francis Spiezer, 1994

JULIA FISH (American, b. 1950) *Great Divide*, 1986, oil on canvas

It doesn’t matter what the artist had in mind; it’s how the work affects you. When I saw this by Julia, I thought of myself. This is like a child, maybe me, in a carriage, looking up the stoop. And here is somebody flying a kite, with the sky behind it, with clouds. It has a good feeling. Childhood. I grew up in a Polish neighborhood; everybody had steps like this going up to the house.

So when I met Julia, I said, “I love this! It gives me such a good feeling! Ah, youth, here I am!” She said, “No, no. You don’t understand! You’re not looking up, you’re looking *down*. This is a landscape. You’re in an airplane! This is a road. This is—no, no!” But whatever she thought [laughs], I couldn’t help it. I still look at it, and think of the kid in the carriage. I’m glad she told me. It gave me a good feeling, and I bought it.

—June Spiezer, 2004

The Francis and June Spiezer Collection

JACQUELINE MOSES (American, b. 1946)

***Vestiges of Time (Monument Valley III)*, 1991, oil on canvas**

This is the reason why we buy from Chicago dealers. We saw a work of Jackie's someplace out of town, I think in Philadelphia. We went to a gallery, and here was a show that I really, truly liked. I said to the gallery dealer, "That's really a very nice show. Who is this artist?" She said, "Jackie Moses." I asked, "Oh, where does she live?" She replied, "Someplace outside of Chicago – in Skokie?" I said (laughing), "Thank you." So we came back home and went to Gail Harvey's gallery in Chicago and found this painting.

Here is one artist where we agreed on what she thought. To me, this is life and death. Jackie called it *Vestiges of Time*, and I said, "Here is something that died, this is alive, and this is in between." She said, "That's exactly what I had in mind!" That made me feel good. It really wouldn't have mattered, but I really did like it.

—June Spiezer, 2004

ED PASCHKE (American, 1939—2004)

***Red Sweeney*, 1975, oil on canvas**

This is Ed Paschke's first one in a series. Really, he was a little more than emerging, but he wasn't famous. We had seen his show at Deson Zak Gallery on Ontario Street. The owner said, "Why don't you go take a look at his studio?" We did, which was above the Adelphi Theater.

The paint was barely wet on this. My husband said, "You didn't sign it on the front." Ed said, "No, I don't sign on the front. I sign them on the back, because if I put it on the front, it detracts from the painting." (At the time, we were still buying art fair things; we had just gotten into contemporary art a few years before that.) Francis said, "No, I have to have this signed on the front!" Ed said, "No, no, no," and Francis said, "Yes, yes, yes!" So he signed it on the front! And it's right here—it says "Ed Paschke '75"—so Ed knows who I am. Every time he sees me, he says, "Aha! *Red Sweeney!* *Red Sweeney* sleeps in your house! Yes, he lives there."

This has traveled – it's been in a lot of exhibits. It went to France; and right after we bought it, it was gone for a year in a traveling exhibit. It's probably one of his best-known paintings. It's always one you talk about.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Ed signs almost every painting now on the front.

JS: Now! But not *then!* Not then – "No, no, no! On the back!" [smiling]

—June Spiezer, 2004

The Francis and June Spiezer Collection

JOEL PHILIP MYERS (American, b. 1934)

White Hand, 1973, blown glass

This was our first piece of glass, before we were really into collecting art. We went to a gallery on Francis's birthday. He saw this and liked it, so I bought this piece for him.

When we went down to Bloomington and met Joel about eight or nine years ago, we told him, "We have one of your white hands." He said, "Will you sell it back to me? I want that!" Because he only made twelve – some black, some white, but very few of these and he wanted it. I said, "You can't have it." I love it. (This kind of glass fascinates me; it looks like a painted ceramic sculpture.)

—June Spiezer, 2004

HOLLIS SIGLER (American, 1948—2001)

It Keeps Her Going, 1991-92, oil on canvas

When we first started going to galleries, we particularly liked the one that was run by Nancy Lurie. (These were really emerging artists that hadn't had big shows.) She had a show for Hollis—I saw many of them—and I really liked her work, and wanted one. Francis said, "No, no, I don't want a painting with writing on it. What's this thing with the words? No, I don't like it." I said, "OK," so we didn't get one.

Later on—Hollis's dealer was Andre Stone—there was a show at the Chicago Cultural Center that Francis and I went to and saw this Hollis Sigler painting. I really fell in love with it, and he said, "OK, OK." I said, "If it's available, I want to get it." I went home and called Andre and asked about the dimensions because I couldn't really tell. She told me and I said, "No, it's too big. I want it over the sofa." So after the show came down, Andre called me back and said, "I gave you the wrong dimensions. *This* is what it is." I said, "Fine, I want it," and told Francis, "You wouldn't get it for me when it was one-tenth the price, but now that it's so expensive... I still want it." He said, "All right, we'll get it. I can live with it." After we got it home, he really did like it. So that was the start of our Hollis Sigler.

—June Spiezer, 2004

RAY YOSHIDA (American, 1930—2009)

Playful Private Pricking, 1982, acrylic on canvas

Ray Yoshida [who taught at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago] was having a show at Phyllis Kind Gallery and Francis and I went to see the show. We liked his work, but couldn't decide whether we wanted to buy one or not. Ray walked over to us and said, "I understand you have a lot of paintings by my students, and you don't have one by me?!" And we said, "OK, OK!" So we got one. And we really liked it. (I think I liked the name of the painting as much as the painting, which is called *Playful Private Pricking*, because I've got a dirty mind anyway.)

—June Spiezer, 2008

RAM

Exhibition Teacher Guide

The Francis and June Spiezer Collection

LORRAINE PELTZ (American, b. 1959)

Graph #2, 1994, oil on canvas

This is called *Graph*. It's really about romance. The yellow roses are for romance. There are thirteen because twelve is an entity, while thirteen implies that romance should continue beyond the twelve. Thirteen means it goes on. It's never stable or level. It goes up and down, like a graph. (This is what Lorraine told me when I asked her what it was about and why she called it *Graph*.) I told Francis, "I really like this painting. I really have to have this." So my husband thought about it, went back several times, and then said, "oooh—kay." It didn't mean exactly what it meant to Lorraine, to me—the thirteen roses, I don't know—but I knew there were roses, and it was nice to look at. It just makes me feel good.

—June Spiezer, 1994

SUSANNE DOREMUS (American, b. 1953)

Interior with Mirror, 1984, oil on canvas

It's called *Interior with Mirror*. Susanne had done several paintings; they were all outdoors – outdoor color, feeling, open. This is the first *Interior* she had done. We went to the gallery before the show was open and they were still mounting the artwork. I looked through, saw this, and immediately went into a frenzy – I had to have it. Francis looked at it and said, "I don't know why you like this. What is there?" I said, "I really don't know. I really don't know what it means. I don't care. I just like looking at it." I asked Susanne to explain it to him and she said this was a stream of consciousness, and it had to do with home, and she didn't know what it was going to be until it was finished, and so forth. When she was done talking with him, he understood – and he liked it.

We have three sons, so I knew that it was a little boy in front of the mirror. I asked Susanne, "What is this child, looking at this mirror?" She said, "Of course, it's a little boy." (It *has* to be, because little boys do that. Little girls stand up and preen! You would never find a little girl doing that.) Because we had little boys, I related to the little boy – to the whole painting, honestly. And it *happens* to match the room.

—June Spiezer, 1994

JOHN PHILLIPS (American, b. 1953)

Work With Me Annie, 1993, oil on linen

One of the gallery dealers took us to see a one-man show of John Phillips. It was a big deal, and I loved it. At first I thought, "What is this?" As you look at this piece for awhile, you realize it has to do with music – and music is the rhythm. If you look at it long enough you'll feel the rhythm. John delivered it to our house.

The Francis and June Spiezer Collection

There were three paintings we wanted. I said, “I really don’t care; whichever one fits.” This is also another criteria in buying. Sometimes you see twenty of them that you have to have at one time. (Not just one – anyone can fall in love with *one* piece!) But if you look at twenty and you say, “I don’t care which one; just give me one of these. I love it, I have to have it,” then you will never get tired of it, and you’ll know *this* is for you.

Anyway, I like this one. It’s very large – and fortunately it fit! I did ask him what this piece is all about, and he said, “Well, I’m into music, into jazz...” And I got it!

—June Spiezer, 1994

JOSH GARBER (Canadian, b. 1963) ***Swim*, 1995, welded steel**

This work is by Josh Garber, who is an absolute doll. It is a Rorschach test (“What do you think of when you see this?”). It reminded me of when I was very young and had a birthday party. The tissue paper went *here*, the ribbons went *there* – and these are the ribbons. Now, every artist—every one!—I ask them, “What do you think of when you look at this?” They say a torso. So if you thought a torso, you are an artist, whether you know it or not! My skinny little granddaughter says, “Ah, linguini!” So it depends, but this is Josh Garber, and he told me this is the only piece like this he has made.

We have some other pieces of his, but this one is unique. He never made another—with straps, whatever—and I said to him, “What do you call this? It has to have a name, because I don’t like *Untitled*.” Josh said, “It doesn’t have a name.” I said, “Give it a name!” Everything he makes has four letters, so he called this *Swim*.

—June Spiezer, 2004

JIM LUTES (American, b. 1955) ***I Should Have Called*, 1989-90, oil on wood**

This is by Jim Lutes, whom I adore. (He wasn’t emerging. There were two paintings we have that were not by “emerging” artists. He was one; Hollis Sigler was the other.) Mostly, the artists come to our house and install their own paintings, or whatever work it is. So when Jim brought this I said, “Take it away.” He said, “What’s the matter?” I said, “It matches the loveseat! No, no, no! You can’t have something to match the furniture! This is terrible!” He said it doesn’t matter what I paint, whatever I bring is going to match something.

This is called *I Should Have Called*. (Love this thing!) Here is the telephone booth, and you can see the telephone wires! Before Jim and his wife were married, he made the mistake of not calling her about something. So this painting is a biographical piece.

—June Spiezer, 2004

The Francis and June Spiezer Collection

ROGER BROWN (American, 1941—1997)

View of the Earth from Outer Space, 1980, oil on canvas

This painting is by Roger Brown—who is no longer with us—and it is one of his better ones. At the time, we had bought another piece that we sold (before we thought of ourselves as “collectors”). But we had something by a New York artist, and I really wasn’t fond of it. We saw this at Phyllis Kind Gallery and I really liked it, so we sold the other piece for a lot of money and were able to buy the Roger Brown.

This is *Earth, As Seen from Outer Space*. I talked to Roger about it, and these are really not spaceships – they are spermatozoa. Because it was a dirty picture, he had to make a clean title, and so: *Earth, As Seen from Outer Space*.

—June Spiezer, 2004

MIKE LASH (American, b. 1961)

Life Has a Way of Getting to You, 1989, painted Formica on wood

This is Mike Lash, whose mother lives in Rockford. (I believe he grew up here also.) June insisted on putting this over my desk because it typifies my reaction, “I often worry when things go too well.”

—Francis Spiezer, 1994

CHUCK WALKER (American, b. 1951)

Hospital Tree, 1985, oil on canvas

We bought this painting because we thought it was very pretty. It reminded us of a schoolyard. And about two weeks after we bought it, I was determined to send it back, to give it back for nothing! The reason being, all of our boorish friends who came and saw the other artworks we had would always say, “Did you pay money for that!?” This painting was the exception. When they came and looked at it, they would say, “Hey, do you want to sell me that? How much did you pay for it?” We thought that if they all like it, it has to be bad! (Actually, this painting is of Children’s Memorial Hospital in Chicago.)

—Francis Spiezer, 1994

MATTHEW SCHILLINGER (American, b. 1991)

Some Guy, 2005, ceramic

Matthew happens to be my grandson. He was only 14 when he made this piece. I think the work is so strong it needs to be recognized as part of this collection.

—June Spiezer, 2009

RAM

Exhibition Teacher Guide

The Francis and June Spiezer Collection

Exhibition Related Vocabulary

Blown glass: The shaping of glass by blowing air through a hollow rod into the center of molten glass.

Functional art: Functional objects such as dishes and clothes that are of a high artistic quality and/or craftsmanship; art with a utilitarian purpose.

Fused Glass: Glass that has been heated in a kiln to the point where two separate pieces are permanently joined without losing their individual color.

Lithography: In the graphic arts, a method of printing from a prepared flat stone or metal or plastic plate, invented in the late eighteenth century. A drawing is made on the stone or plate with a greasy crayon or tusche, and then washed with water. When ink is applied it sticks to the greasy drawing but runs off (or is resisted by) the wet surface allowing a print — lithograph — to be made of the drawing. The artist, or other print maker under the artist's supervision, then covers the plate with a sheet of paper and runs both through a press under light pressure. For color lithography separate drawings are made for each color

Mosaic: A picture or design made of tiny pieces (called tesserae) of colored stone, glass, tile or paper adhered to a surface. It is typically decorative work for walls, vaults, ceilings or floors, the tesserae set in plaster or concrete.

Narrative art: Art that represents elements of a story.

Self-taught art: A genre of art and outdoor constructions made by untrained artists who do not recognize themselves as artists.

Three-dimensional: Having, or appearing to have, height, width, and depth.

Two-dimensional: Having height and width, but no depth; flat.

The Francis and June Spiezer Collection



Classroom Activities

Self-Portrait Printmaking

Students will design their own self-portrait based on Robert Arneson's piece *Untitled*, which will then be used to create a Styrofoam relief print.

Robert Arneson
Untitled
1983
woodblock print
Gift of Francis and June Spiezer

Discussion Questions

- What is the purpose of a portrait? What makes a good portrait?
- Do you think that this portrait represents a real person?
- Describe his mood. Use the visual elements to support your answer: color, angle of pose, type of gaze, body language.
- How is this different from the other portraits that you've seen?

Activity

- Using tracing paper, have students draw a portrait of their faces depicting an emotions (happy, sad, angry, confused, etc.).
- Place tracing paper upside down on their Styrofoam and secure using masking tape.
- Have students trace over their picture, pressing hard into the foam. If the tracing paper rips, that is okay. Students should be pressing hard enough so that their lines are deep, but not so hard to tear through the Styrofoam.
- Place a small amount of ink on the plexi-glass, cookie tray or glass sheet. Roll both ways to allow the roller to evenly pick up the ink. Roll until the ink comes up in little "points." Once the roller is "inked," roll onto the printing plate. You probably have to go through this process several times before enough ink is placed on the plate. Once the printing plate or block is "inked," place paper on top and using either your hand or a wooden spoon, rub lightly over the surface of the paper.
- Remove paper and repeat process for more prints.

The Francis and June Spiezer Collection

Materials

- Paint or ink
- Styrofoam meat trays
- Scissors
- Pencils
- Paper
- Soft rubber brayers (printing rollers that can be found at art supply stores). You can substitute small paint rollers or even paint brushes if rollers aren't readily available
- An old cookie tray or a piece of plexi-glass to roll the ink out on

ISBE Standards: 4AB, 25AB, 26AB, 27A

Paper Mosaic

Students will create a paper mosaic based on Chuck Beckwith's piece *Untitled*.



Chuck Beckwith

Untitled

1991

wood inlaid with ceramic mosaic

Gift of Francis and June Spiezer

Discussion Questions

- Is this a functional or non-functional object? What purpose do you think it serves?
- Look closely at Chuck Beckwith's piece. What sort of materials do you think he used?
- Do you notice any patterns within the piece?

The Francis and June Spiezer Collection

Activity

- Provide students with brief history of mosaics: Traces of Roman mosaics exist throughout the Roman Empire. They originated with rounded smooth stones, mostly used on the floor. Early mosaics were of marble and limited to the natural stone variations of browns, whites, grays, rusts, and tans. They resembled carpets, with symmetrical borders. Later mosaics depicted animals, birds, flowers, intertwined leaves, portraits of gods, or scenes of battle. The mosaics seen on walls in churches and homes originally used marble, then evolved into *tesserae* (small pieces of brilliantly colored glass). Although mosaics might have originally been based on fresco wall paintings, later, more elaborate, designs were probably inspired by illuminated manuscripts.
- Have students choose a functional object (or objects) that they use at home (furniture, glass, jewelry, toys, etc.)
- Have them lightly sketch their object on a piece of dark construction paper using a white colored pencil. Emphasize shape and design for their object.
- Have students cut or tear small pieces of colored construction paper for use on their mosaic.
- Using a glue stick, have students work a section at a time to glue down their colored paper pieces, leaving a space between each piece so that the background color is visible. Emphasize the use of color and pattern when they are filling their pictures.

ISBE Standards: 4AB, 25AB, 26AB, 27A