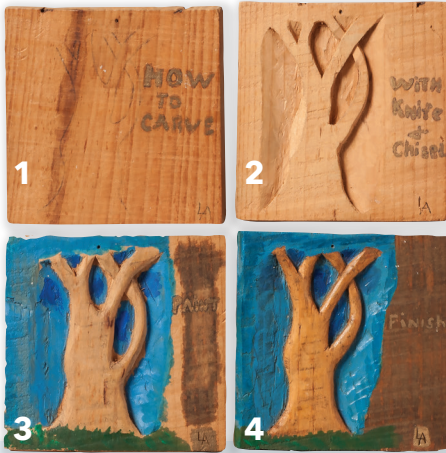


A Cut Above

Wood Sculpture from the Gordon W. Bailey Collection



Through October 30

A Cut Above: Wood Sculpture from the Gordon W. Bailey Collection demonstrates how a single medium inspires a wide range of creative mastery. From discarded or inexpensive manufactured board to naturally occurring branches, roots, and stumps, wood is widely available to artists without access to or interest in traditional art supplies. Use this resource to explore the art of wood carving as it connects to teaching and learning objectives in your classroom.

Left: Leroy Almon (American, 1938-1997), Artist's Teaching Tablets, 1980, wood, paint, and marker, gift of Gordon W. Bailey in honor of Leroy Almon and Family, 2016.10.a-d.

Bas-Relief Wood Carving

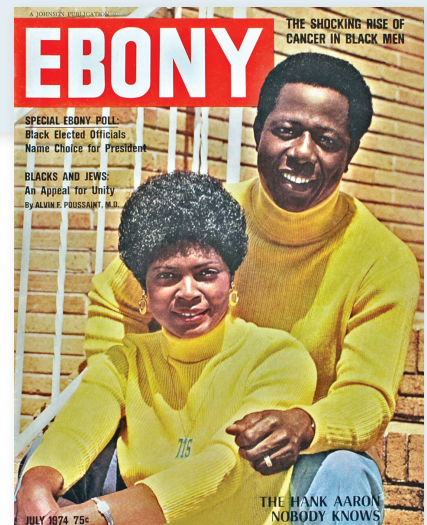
This exhibition features several artists who communicate ideas through finely cut bas-relief panels. Bas relief, also referred to as low relief, is a kind of sculpture in which imagery is carved so that it is only slightly higher than the background.

Students can create their own bas reliefs using easy-to-carve materials such as linoleum blocks, soap, balsa foam, or clay. Have students reflect upon the process. What advantages and challenges did they face when creating these artworks? What skills do they think the wood carvers featured in this exhibition needed in order to be successful?

Elijah Pierce

Originally from Mississippi, Elijah Pierce was one of millions of African Americans who left the South during the first half of the twentieth century. He settled in Columbus, Ohio, in the 1920s. Pierce began carving as a young boy and continued this work throughout his adult life. He also held jobs as a barber and minister.

In 1974, when Atlanta Braves star Hank Aaron hit his 715th home-run and broke Babe Ruth's record, Pierce carved the iconic portrait *Mr. and Mrs. Hank Aaron*, which refers to an *Ebony* magazine cover.



Right: Elijah Pierce (American, 1892-1984), *Mr. and Mrs. Hank Aaron*, 1974, paint and wood, gift of Gordon W. Bailey in honor of Henry "Hank" Aaron and Billye Aaron, 2016.42. Photo courtesy of Gordon W. Bailey Collection.

Ask students to compare and contrast the *Ebony* cover with Pierce's sculpture.

- How are the two similar?
- What artistic choices did Pierce make? Why might he have done this?

Consider:

- Why were Pierce's accomplishments significant?
- What obstacles did he face in his career?
- Why might he have chosen to create this sculpture?

Have students emulate the bright colors in Pierce's work by creating tempera batiks that respond to black history milestones in the United States. Encourage students to research and use popular-culture artifacts such as advertisements, magazine covers, and newspaper articles as inspiration for their work.

For a list of black history milestones, visit: <http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-history-milestones>.

Leroy Almon

Following in the footsteps of his mentor, Elijah Pierce, artist Leroy Almon carved both religious and popular subjects.

Almon created a detailed panel to commemorate the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta.

Right: Leroy Almon (American, 1938–1997), *Atlanta Olympics*, 1996, wood, paint, and newspaper, gift of Gordon W. Bailey, 2016.13. Below: Bessie Harvey (American, 1929–1994), *Untitled*, 1980s, wood, paint, and beads, gift of Gordon W. Bailey, 2016.36.



Ask students

- What colors, lines, or shapes do you see in this sculpture?
- Which symbols stand out to you? What do you think the symbols represent?
- Which sports or events has Almon identified in this work? How can you tell?

Allow this work of art to spring-board individual or group research of the positive and negative impacts of the 1996 Olympics on the state of Georgia. Students should consider factors such as economics, pollution, crowding, transportation, and employment. In a written response, students can reflect upon the positive and negative effects that Almon points to in this sculpture.



Driftwood Sculptures

Several artists featured in this exhibition take a different approach to wood sculpture by transforming tree fragments into creatures. Using paint and other media, Hawkins Bolden, Bessie Harvey, and Ralph Griffin brought to life a scarecrow, root spirit, and wizard from found boards, roots, and driftwood.

Ask students to describe the driftwood sculptures featured in this exhibition. What colors, lines, and shapes stand out to them?

- Have students go on a nature walk to collect sticks, rocks, or other objects. Challenge students to envision how a single object from nature might be transformed to look like something else. Students should create a series of sketches.
- Provide students with materials to create their own nature-inspired sculptures. Use simple materials such as rubber bands, string, or paper clips to connect objects. Provide students with paint to add additional features and details to sculptures.