

Music as Muse

February 20 - July 18, 2010

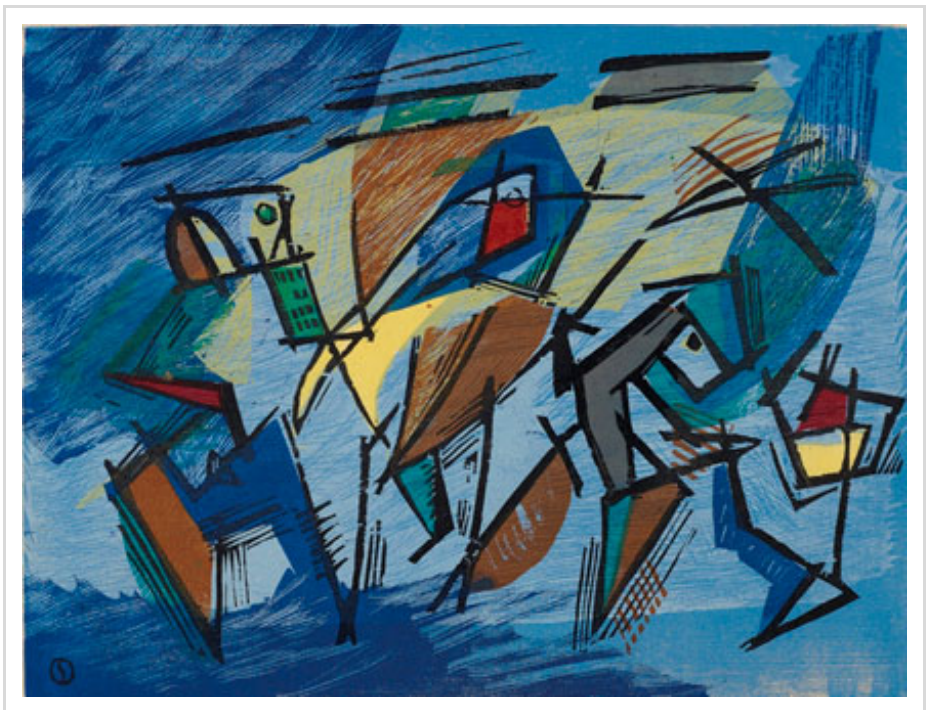
Music as Muse presents three centuries of rich and varied music-inspired artworks from the Museums fine and decorative arts collections. Divided into four themes, the exhibition brings together American and European artworks dating from the early nineteenth century to today with provocative pairings of historic and modern artworks. Rhythmic movement and vibrant colors characterize the works in the Music and Abstraction section, including Wassily Kandinskys Improvisation No. 23 (1911), Morgan Russells Cosmic Synchrony, (1913-14), and Kenneth Marchiones Light Dance (2002).

Musicians and their Instruments is a subject popular with artists. Some works, such as Thomas Hart Bentons The Music Lesson (ca. 1945), are intimate renderings of private scenes where musical interludes bring calm moments to busy working lives. By contrast, one can sense the raucous clamor in John Quidors Antony Van Corlear Brought into the Presence of Peter Stuyvesant (1839). The artworks also illustrate that the desire for music is not limited to a particular group or class. It resounds in a formal parlor, a cabaret, a classical Roman celebration or it fulfills a lone jazz player.

Papa Celestine, ca. 1953 India ink on paper Bruce Mitchell
American (1908-63) Gift of James M. Mullen, 2008.6

Celebrations often feature music and dance as seen in the works in the third section of Music as Muse. Native American music is vividly depicted in Louis Schankers Indian Dance (ca. 1940-50) and Red Robins Dance, Zuni Indians (ca. 1940). Sculptures in the exhibition express the graceful movements of dancers to music as seen in Oranzio Maldarellis large wooden relief, Dancers (1943).

The final section of the exhibition, Music in the Home, aptly illustrates the significance of music in our daily lives. Costly sophisticated domestic instruments such as the Utica-made mechanical organ of 1810, or specialty furniture like the music cabinet that is designed to hold bound volumes of sheet music, demonstrate the value homeowners placed on music. A variety of music boxes represent a longstanding tradition of making music available in a private setting.



Indian Dance, 1930-80 Woodcut on paper Louis Schanker
American (1903-81) Museum Purchase, 47.20

Return to Past Exhibitions



The Music Lesson, ca. 1945 Lithograph on paper Thomas Hart Benton American (1889-1975) Gift of Emogene Sternberg, 90.36.5