

# By the Light of the Silvery Moon: After Dark in Painting and Print

This exhibition, drawn entirely from works of art in the Mead's permanent collection, presents a selection of nighttime scenes reflecting the range of moods captured by artists as they render the world after dark. From romantic, visionary moonlit vistas to modern realist images based on the Apollo space missions, artists have long been captivated by the moon and its effect on the imagination. The twenty-four works of art in the exhibition include *Boston Harbor at Night*, an early work by Albert Bierstadt, and Grant Wood's rare and provocative print *Sultry Night*. Among the more intriguing works are an etching of the dramatically lit, futuristic Electric Building at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair and a poster celebrating Paul Van Hoeydonck's aluminum humanoid sculpture placed on the moon by astronauts in 1971. Also on view are nineteenth-century Japanese prints and later American works they inspired. The images were chosen to include a variety of media, from watercolor to pastel to oil, and to represent a range of print techniques: woodblock prints, etchings, lithographs, and photographs. The equally diverse nocturnal scenes are variously mysterious, enchanting, and, in some cases, amusing.

Organized by Pamela Russell, Head of Education and Andrew W. Mellon Curator of Academic Programs, this exhibition is made possible with generous support from the David W. Mesker and Hall & Kate Peterson Funds.

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Warren Davis  
1865–1928 Brooklyn, NY

**Evening**, undated  
Etching

Gift of Edward C. Crossett (Class of 1905)  
1951.928

A lithe dancer forms a perfect arc, reminiscent of the crescent moon with its mountains and valleys outlined by shadows. The nude also calls to mind the athletic Diana, Roman goddess of the moon.



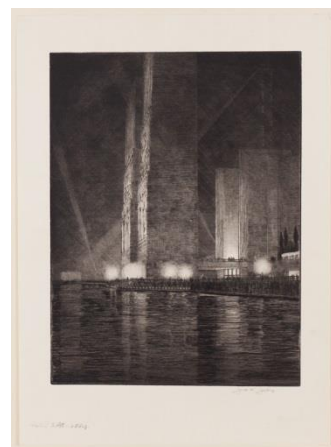
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Gerald Geerlings  
Milwaukee, WI 1897–1998 New Canaan, CT

**Grand Canal, America** [also known as **Electrical Building at Night**], 1933  
Drypoint

Gift of Edward C. Crossett (Class of 1905)  
1951.1098

Although this image has an otherworldly, sci-fi quality, it documents the real, if temporary, Electrical Building complex at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, or A Century of Progress International Exposition. The fair's motto was "Science Finds, Industry Applies, Man Conforms." Two colossal pylons, here dramatically illuminated at night with man-made light, formed the Water Gate facing the South Lagoon, which Geerlings called the Grand Canal, evoking the famed waterway in Venice. Stylized flying figures on each pylon personify Light and Sound.



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Samuel Palmer  
London 1805–1881 Redhill, England

**The Rising Moon; or, An English Pastoral**, 1857  
Etching

Gift of Edward C. Crossett (Class of 1905)  
1951.1867

A rising full moon casts its pale light on a diminutive shepherd with a flock of robust sheep. Lamps within village homes shine in the middle distance. Palmer's early work, mystical and visionary in tone, was influenced by poet and artist William Blake, whom he had met as a young man. Palmer began as a painter, but enthusiastically took up etching later in life and was apparently very demanding. A printer remarked he would "rather see the Devil himself than Palmer with a plate to proof." Although a later work, this lyrical image evokes the romantic mood of his youthful style.



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James Swann  
Texas 1905–1985 Chicago, IL

**Night in Chicago**, 1940  
Drypoint

Gift of Edward C. Crossett (Class of 1905)  
1951.2052

In 1940 Swann, a leading Midwestern artist of the mid-twentieth century, was awarded first prize by the Chicago Society of Etchers for this scene of a rainy night at the corner of Lake Shore Drive and Michigan Avenue in Chicago.



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Martin Jackson  
Philadelphia, PA 1919–1986

**Night Fair**, undated  
Oil on canvas

Gift of the National Academy of Design  
1952.107

The moon vies with a town's sparkling electric lights as well as the boys' small campfire in this lively nocturnal scene of a festive fair. The painting came to the Mead through an arrangement whereby the prestigious National Academy of Design purchased paintings from its annual exhibition and donated them to worthy public collections. When it arrived at Amherst in 1952 it was deemed a "very swell picture." Charles Morgan, the Mead's first director, wrote to the head of the Academy that the painting would help provide "first-class original examples of American painting to our undergraduates, a part of our program which we regard as of the utmost importance."



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Albert Bierstadt  
Solingen, Germany 1830–1902 New York, NY

**Boston Harbor at Night**, undated (probably 1857 or 1858)  
Oil on canvas

Bequest of Judge and Mrs. Daniel Beecher (Class of 1907)  
1955.123

The silhouetted dome of the Massachusetts State House is visible to the lower left of the thin sliver of a new moon. Bierstadt came to America as a one-year-old, when his immigrant parents settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts. This evening scene was probably completed soon after his return to the States in 1857, after a four-year stay in his native Germany, where he studied art. Bierstadt achieved commercial success by 1860 and became famous for his sublime depictions of the grandeur of the American West.



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Stow Wengenroth  
Brooklyn, NY 1906–1978 Rockport, MA

**Moonlight**, 1937  
Lithograph

Gift of Miss Elisabeth Ball  
1956.63

Two boats rest at low tide in the inner harbor of Rockport, Massachusetts, on a moonlit night. Wengenroth expertly manipulated the subtle tonal shifts offered by lithography to create rich contrasts of dark and light in his masterful prints. Like Andrew Wyeth, who admired Wengenroth's talent, the artist favored scenes of New England's coastal life.



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Unknown artist  
or  
Ralph Blakelock  
New York, NY 1847–1919 Elizabethtown, NY

**Silvery Moonlight**, undated (probably 1880s or 1890s)  
Oil on canvas

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Wiesenberger in honor and in memory  
of Miner Tuttle, Class of 1913  
1958.43



In a manner typical of Blakelock's style, the light of a silvery moon here spills like mercury over a dark and moody landscape. Blakelock was America's most admired artist at the turn of the twentieth century, as is attested by the \$20,000 paid for one of his paintings by the Toledo Museum of Art in 1898—then the most ever paid for a work by a living American. Not surprisingly, his popularity led to numerous forgeries. Although this painting's provenance seems strong (supposedly endorsed by Blakelock's close associate Elliott Daingerfield [1859–1932]), Prof. Norman Geske (1915–2014), a leading expert on the artist, did not include it in his definitive inventory of authenticated works.

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Grant Wood  
Anamosa, IA 1891–1942 Iowa City, IA

**Sultry Night**, 1939  
Lithograph

Museum purchase  
1959.54



Far removed from Wood's austere **American Gothic**, this overtly sensual image depicts a farmhand taking a cold shower on a hot summer night. His nude body is compositionally embedded in a fertile field, while his masculinity is echoed in the powerful post and tree trunk to the right and in the prominent, nearly overflowing, water trough in the foreground. The Associated American Artists commissioned this print for its subscription series, but the postmaster general forbade its distribution by mail, deeming the image too erotic.

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Louis Michel Eilshemius  
Newark, NJ 1864–1941 New York, NY

**Girl in Moonlight**, 1910

Oil on board

Gift of Mr. Roy R. Neuberger  
1959.149

The full moon illuminates this enigmatic scene of a lone girl standing at the edge of a pond with a ruined wall looming behind her amid trees and wild bushes. The paintings of Eilshemius seem to have their own primeval mythology, exhibiting “a strange sense of displacement and transcendence” (according to journalist Donald Goddard). Eilshemius’s unique and perplexing vision captivated the sculptor Louise Nevelson, who owned an extensive collection of his work.



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James Hamilton  
Belfast, Ireland 1819–1878 San Francisco, CA

**Night Preparations**, ca. 1860

Oil on canvas

Gift of Herbert W. Plimpton: The Hollis W. Plimpton (Class of 1915)  
Memorial Collection  
1969.79

As a brilliant moon illuminates the tops of billowing clouds, sailing vessels and a smoking barge rest in harbor. Hamilton moved to Philadelphia as a teenager, where he gained renown as a painter of maritime scenes. He much admired the paintings of J.M.W. Turner, whose work he knew primarily from engravings. In 1854, he traveled to England to see Turner’s luminous work firsthand. Thus inspired, Hamilton became known as “America’s Turner.” In Philadelphia, Hamilton had a number of art students, among whom was Thomas Moran, later a leading painter of the American West. Hamilton died in San Francisco at the start of a planned trip around the world.



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Charles Burchfield  
Ashtabula, OH 1893–1967 West Seneca, NY

**Moonlight in June**, 1961  
Watercolor

Bequest of Mary Louise Whittemore in memory of Eugene B. Whittemore  
(Class of 1924)  
1975.71

On June 10, 1961, Burchfield wrote in his journal that he found notes he had written forty-six years earlier about the moon's reflection in a creek near his childhood home. "It evoked memories of June twilights and nights . . . and of thick white mists lying low in the chilly meadows; of myriad fireflies; and ghostly arrowhead flowers. Today I painted a moonlight fantasy based on these memories, with enormous elm-shaped phantoms rising up toward the moon, white-crowned—a 'never-never land' that fills me with happiness."



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Julian Alden Weir  
West Point, NY 1852–1919 New York, NY

**The East River, Night Scene**, undated  
Pastel

Gift of Hall and Kate Peterson in memory of Mrs. Barbara Babbott  
(Mrs. Edward F. Babbott)  
1978.33

Weir's debt to Japanese aesthetic sensibilities is evident in this dreamy view of New York's East River at sunset. Weir obscures the industrial and commercial elements of the scene with myriad tones of blue in a veiled atmosphere. Like the older James Abbott McNeill Whistler, whom Weir's father had taught at West Point, Weir sought to emphasize mood and sentiment over narrative clarity, especially in his evening scenes, or "nocturnes."



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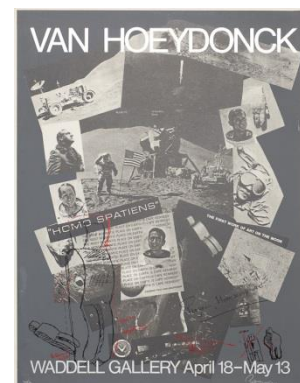
Exhibition poster, Waddell Gallery, New York, NY

**Project Moon Sculpture, Paul Van Hoeydonck, 1972**

Offset lithograph

Given in memory of Richard Waddell, Class of 1945, by his children  
Sandra and Karen Waddell  
1978.90.m

This poster promotes an exhibition celebrating a small aluminum sculpture that was deposited on the moon on August 1, 1971, by Apollo 15 astronaut David Scott as a memorial to fourteen men who died in the course of space exploration. The three-and-a-half-inch humanoid figure was created by Belgian artist Paul Van Hoeydonck (born 1925), who saw it not as a **Fallen Astronaut**, as it has come to be called, but as a brave pioneer gazing toward the stars. The sculpture, with a memorial plaque, remains on the moon, near the Hadley Rille, or channel, in the northern part of the Montes Apenninus at the southeastern edge of the Mare Imbrium.



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Garry Winogrand  
New York, NY 1928–1984 Tijuana, Mexico

**Cape Kennedy, Florida 1969**, printed ca. 1978

Gelatin silver print

Gift of Dr. Daniel C. Schuman  
1979.23.1

While the men in the crowd watch the liftoff of Apollo 11 on July 16, 1969, the one woman turns around to snap Winogrand, and thereby aims her camera at this photograph's subsequent viewers. Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins made up the mission's crew, and on July 20 Armstrong and Aldrin became the first humans to walk on the moon.





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Marion Patterson  
Born San Francisco, CA 1933

**North Face of Mt. Everest by Moonlight with  
Star Tracks**, 1981  
Cibachrome print

Bequest of Richard Templeton (Class of 1931)  
1989.38

In a four-hour exposure on the night of November 6, 1981, Patterson captured the majesty of Mount Everest bathed in the light of a first-quarter moon. Patterson once worked for Ansel Adams, renowned for his photographs of dramatically lit mountains of the American West. His influence may be evident in this striking image.



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Lowell Nesbitt  
Baltimore, MD 1933–1993 New York, NY

**Untitled** (from **Moon Series**), 1969  
Silkscreen

Gift of Reese Palley and Marilyn Arnold Palley  
1991.78.3

This image is inspired by Buzz Aldrin's iconic photograph of his own footprint, which he took about one hour into his moonwalk on July 20, 1969. His photo was taken to document the quality of the moon's soil, but it has assumed broader significance as a symbol of human space exploration.



Lowell Nesbitt  
Baltimore, MD 1933–1993 New York, NY

**Untitled** (from **Moon Series**), 1969  
Silkscreen

Gift of Reese Palley and Marilyn Arnold Palley  
1991.78.6

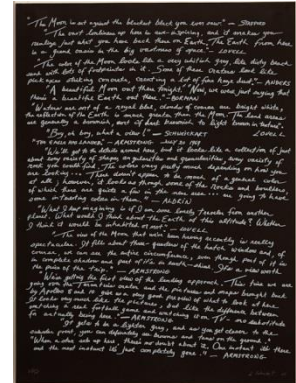


Nesbitt's **Moon Series**, printed in an edition of ninety-eight on distinctive black paper, was completed soon after the historic Apollo 11 spaceflight that included Neil Armstrong's "giant leap for mankind." This image of the moon at close range is one of eight in the series, three of which are on view in this exhibition.

Lowell Nesbitt  
Baltimore, MD 1933–1993 New York, NY

**Untitled** (from **Moon Series**), 1969  
Silkscreen

Gift of Reese Palley and Marilyn Arnold Palley  
1991.78.1



Nesbitt compiled compelling comments from seven astronauts on the four manned moon missions before and including Apollo 11, which landed Armstrong and Aldrin on the lunar surface.

- Buzz Aldrin, born 1930, Apollo 11
- William Anders, born 1933, Apollo 8
- Neil Armstrong, 1930–2012, Apollo 11
- Frank Borman, born 1928, Apollo 8
- James Lovell, born 1928, Apollo 8
- Russell Schweikart, born 1935, Apollo 9
- Thomas Stafford, born 1930, Apollo 10

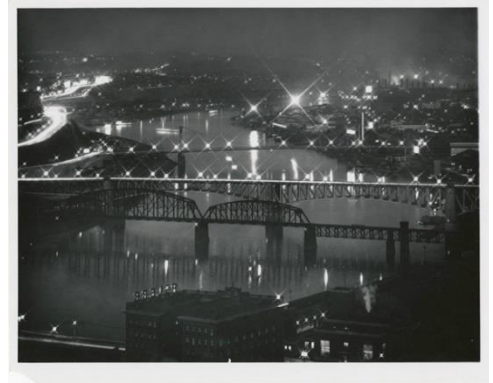
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W. Eugene Smith  
Wichita, KS 1918–1978 Tucson, AZ

**Bridges at Night**, ca. 1955–1956  
Gelatin silver print

Gift of Shana L. Rasmus  
1991.97

The piercing electric lights illuminating Pittsburgh's riverway challenge the night's natural darkness. This photograph is one of thousands Smith made as part of a two-year project, sponsored by Magnum Photos, to document one of America's leading industrial cities for its bicentennial in 1958.



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Utagawa Kuniyasu; Kagaya Kichiemon, publisher  
Japanese, 1794–1832; Japanese, active ca. 1815–1850

**The Courtesan Hanaogi of Ogiya Viewing the Moon from Her Balcony**, ca. 1830  
Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of William Green  
1998.51

A noted beauty gazes at the moon over Mount Fuji from the Ogiya House, a renowned brothel in the Yoshiwara, old Tokyo's pleasure district. The artist takes poetic license, however, since the iconic mountain is, in reality, not visible from the area.



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Andō Hiroshige; Maruya Jinpachi, publisher  
Japanese, 1797–1858; Japanese, active ca. 1759–1872

**The Summer Moon at Ryogoku**, from the series **Three Views of Famous Places of Edo**, 1843

Polychrome woodblock print

Gift of William Green  
2005.695

Fireworks for a summertime festival rise toward the moon by the venerable Ryogoku Bridge in old Tokyo. Pleasure craft fill the river so admirers can get a good view of both the natural and man-made spectacles. In this print, as well as the one to the left, the artist has placed the moon high in the composition, in a blue band fading from a deep saturation to paler tones, a scheme inverted here in the water below.



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Joel Meyerowitz  
Born New York, NY 1938

**Cape Canaveral, Moon Launch (Couple sitting on a car)**, 1968  
Gelatin silver print

Gift of Stanley and Diane Person  
2000.441.9

The first manned mission to the moon launched from Cape Canaveral on December 21, 1968. Apollo 8, with Frank Borman, James Lovell, and William Anders on board, orbited the moon ten times before returning to Earth six days later.



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Matt Brown  
Born Boston, MA 1958

**Moon over Mt. Desert Island**, 2010  
Polychrome woodblock print

Purchase with Trinkett Clark Memorial Student Acquisition Fund  
2014.27

Matt Brown, a 1981 graduate of Harvard College, excels at traditional woodblock printing, developed in eighteenth-century Japan, where each color in the image requires a separately carved block. He notes that the complex printing process involves a high degree of unpredictability. "In my work I seek to embrace this quality and enjoy it, using it to reinforce my acknowledgement that we are part players in a life always shifting and changing, a 'floating world.'" Here the moon floats over Mount Desert Island in Maine, home of Acadia National Park.

