

# Only In Your State

By Kathleen McShane

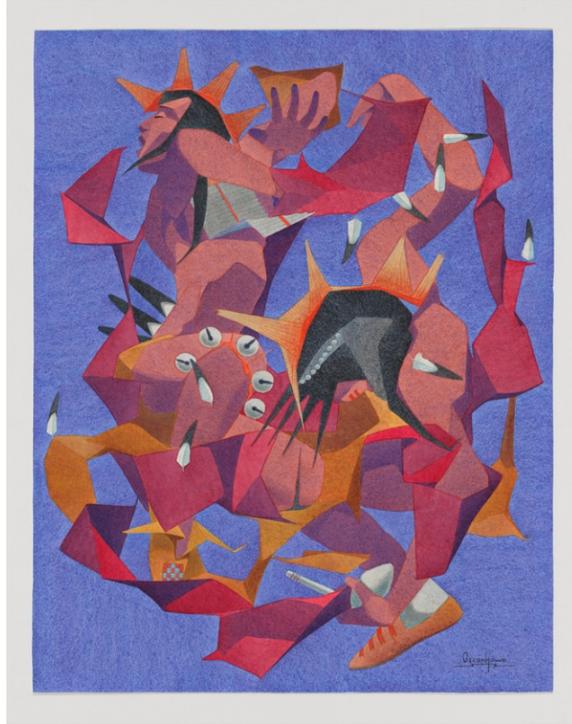
## Part 5: South Dakota to Wyoming

### South Dakota

**Oscar Howe** (1915-1983) was a Yanktonai Dakota artist from South Dakota. The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian called him one of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century's most innovative Native American painters. The artist's mature style is characterized by bold colors, pristine lines, and dynamic motion. Howe is credited with opening museums to a much broader range of styles and expressions by indigenous artists.

Howe's formal art education began at the Santa Fe Indian School, whose art program, The Studio, taught students the Studio Style of Native American painting. The style features a flat appearance and utilizes muted earth tones to depict traditional scenes of Native American life and culture. The Studio Style provided a foundation for Howe's work, but the artist began to develop a more individualistic, abstract style.

Howe experienced considerable pushback for his departure from the "traditional" style. In 1958, his submission to the Philbrook Museum (Tulsa, Oklahoma) annual competition for Native American art was rejected. The museum's curator for Native American art told Howe his piece was a fine painting, but it wasn't Indian. The artist refuted that claim, saying, "Whoever said that my paintings are not in the traditional Indian style has poor knowledge of Indian Art indeed. There is much more to Indian Art than pretty, stylized pictures. There was also power strength and individualism (emotional and intellectual insight) in the old Indian paintings. Every bit in my paintings is a true studied fact of Indian paintings. Are we to be held back forever with one phase of Indian painting that is the most common way?" Howe's protest led Philbrook to introduce a new category for the 1959 competition: Non-Traditional Painting.



Oscar Howe, *Ecstasy (War Dance)*, 1956



Oscar Howe, *Medicine Man*, 1968



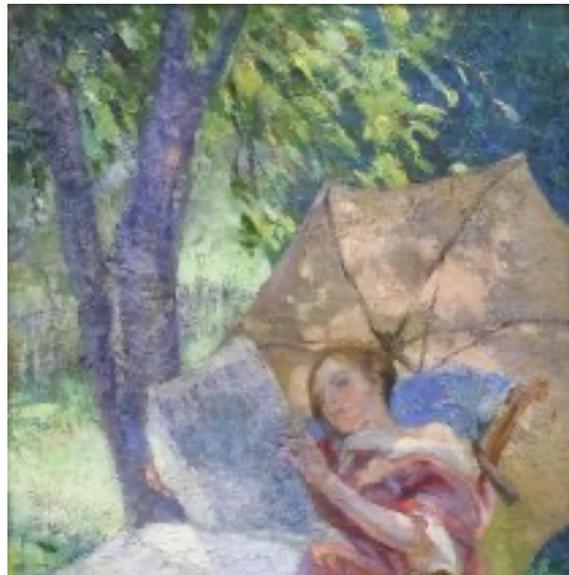
Oscar Howe, *War Dancer*, 1968

## Tennessee

**Catherine Wiley** (1879-1958) was an Impressionist artist from East Tennessee (born in Coal Creek, buried in Knoxville), called “perhaps the most active, accomplished, and influential artist in East Tennessee during the early twentieth century.” Her style has been described as an American adaptation of Monet. As an artist, her objective in painting people was to capture the inner life of her subjects. As Wiley put it, “Only when paintings make us realize more acutely the poetry that lies within us all, the romance that we ourselves feel, the power of our own spirit, the 'externalization' of our own soul, as it were-only, then it has meaning.”

Wiley was one of the first female students at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where she drew illustrations for the school’s yearbook. She taught art for 14 years at UTK, helping to transform its art program (which at the time was part of the School of Home Economics) into one of the best in the South.

At the pinnacle of her career as an artist (1926), Wiley experienced what was referred to as a “mental breakdown.” Her mental health may have already been deteriorating; her paintings had begun to veer toward Expressionism, with dark tones and hollow-eyed figures. Wiley was hospitalized at the State Lunatic Hospital in Norristown, PA, where she remained until her death 32 years later. Once hospitalized, she never painted again.



Catherine Wiley, *Young Woman with a Parasol Reading*, 1915



Catherine Wiley, *A Sunlit Afternoon*, 1915



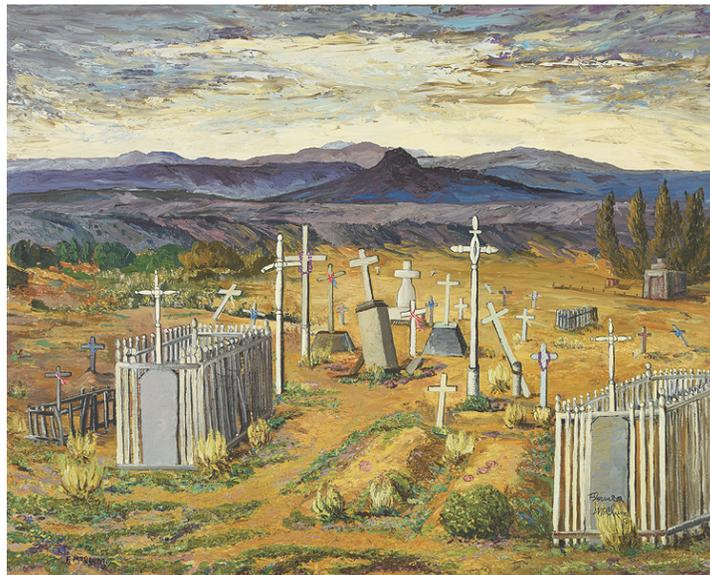
Catherine Wiley, *Lady with Parasol*, 1915

## Texas

**Florence White McClung** (1894-1992) was born in St. Louis, MO, but moved to Dallas, TX, at age five, where she lived until her death at 97. A regionalist artist, McClung often featured rural Texas and southwestern landscapes. In the chapter devoted to McClung in a book entitled *Making the Unknown Known: Women in Early Texas Art, 1860s to 1960s*, the author states, “McClung belongs at the top of the “sacred circle” of the Lone Star Regionalists. Based solely and solidly on the quality of her work and her exhibition record, her place in the pantheon of early Texas art is assured. McClung was one of Texas's most important Regionalist artists during the 1930s and 1940s.”

By 1939, McClung had become an established artist. That year, she became the first Texan to have a painting purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Despite the discriminatory practices against Texan women artists during the 1930s and 1940s, she managed to have solo exhibitions at various galleries, mainly in Texas.

She was associated with a group of artists called the Dallas Nine, a group of painters, printmakers, and sculptors active in Dallas in the 1930s and early 1940s, who turned to the land and people of the Southwest for artistic inspiration. (The name is somewhat misleading because the group expanded and contracted during its active period).



Florence McClung, *Spanish American Cemetery, Taos NM*, c. 1946-7



Florence McClung, *Triple Underpass* 1945



Florence McClung, *Junius Street, Dallas*, 1940

## Utah

**Jann Haworth** (1942-present) has lived and worked in Utah since 1997. She is associated with the British Pop art movement of the 1960s. A pioneer in soft sculpture, Haworth “has extended the reach of what had been deemed craft for eons into the realms of fine art. She is a staunch advocate for female representation in the arts.

Haworth is best known for collaborating with her then-husband, Peter Blake, on the cover of the Beatles’ 1967 album *Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* (shown below). Looking closely in the lower right-hand corner, Haworth’s soft sculpture, *Old Lady I*, is to the left of the Shirley Temple doll lying in the chair. Haworth and Blake won the 1968 Grammy for Best Recording Package, Graphic Arts.

Haworth has also been a significant force in several murals created in Salt Lake City. In 2016, she collaborated with her artist daughter, Liberty Blake, to create a traveling collage titled *Work in Progress* that depicts 180 women who helped shape the world through their contributions to various fields. With her son, Alex Johnstone, Haworth created *A Celebration of Women*, commissioned to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Women’s Suffrage, and unveiled in Salt Lake City in 2020 for Women’s Equality Day. The mural celebrates 250 women who have shaped Utah’s culture.



Jann Haworth and Peter Blake, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album cover, 1967



Jann Haworth, *Old Lady II*, 1967



Jann Haworth and Alex Johnstone, *A Celebration of Women*, 2020

## Vermont

**Norman Rockwell** (1894-1978) was part of a vibrant artist community in Arlington, VT, which included Rockwell Kent and the poet Robert Frost, as well as four other illustrators for *The Saturday Evening Post*. Rockwell bought a farm in Arlington in 1938, where he and his family lived until 1953. Rockwell had been illustrating for *The Saturday Evening Post* for over 20 years when he moved to Vermont. As an artist, Rockwell was immune to the beauty of the Green Mountains nearby. The story goes that a friend once commented on the gorgeous landscape, to which Rockwell responded, “Thank heavens, I don’t have to paint it.” He was more interested in vignettes of small-town life; his neighbors and friends in Arlington provided him with plenty of material.

A local Arlington telephone operator, Mary Doyle Keefe, posed for Rockwell’s iconic 1943 Rosie the Riveter painting at 19. While Keefe was quite petite, Rockwell painted her with large arms, hands, and shoulders to highlight her strength. Twenty-four years after she posed, Rockwell sent her a letter calling her the most beautiful woman he’d ever seen and apologizing for the hefty body in the painting. “I did have to make you into a sort of a giant,” he said. The painting (not to be confused with the “We Can Do It” poster) is part of the collection of the Crystal Bridges Museum in Bentonville, Arkansas.

Mary Whalen, also of Arlington, was Rockwell’s favorite model. Paintings by Rockwell featuring her appeared on three different *Saturday Evening Post* covers. Perhaps the most famous is *Outside the Principal’s Office* (also known as *The Young Lady with the Shiner*; see below), where Mary sports a black eye. Mary did not actually have a black eye, and Rockwell had trouble painting it. He tried rubbing charcoal under it but did not achieve the desired effect. He ended up advertising for one and found a boy with two black eyes which Rockwell photographed.



NORMAN ROCKWELL MUSEUM

Norman Rockwell, *Rosie the Riveter*, 1943



Norman Rockwell, *The Gossips*, 1948



Norman Rockwell, *Outside the Principal's Office*, 1953

## Virginia

**Cy Twombly** (1928-2011) was born in Lexington, VA, but spent much of his artistic life in Rome. *Artland Magazine* said that Twombly “was one of the greats of 20<sup>th</sup> century art. He is remembered for his signature energetic scribbles, his simultaneously wild and spare canvases, and his bold digression from the general tendencies of American postwar abstraction.” Some critics and many viewers have dismissed Twombly’s work as something a five-year-old could have done. When the Metropolitan Museum of Art held a retrospective of his work in 1994, the exhibition’s curator felt compelled to pen an essay entitled *Your Kid Could Not Do This, and Other Reflections on Cy Twombly*. Twombly himself addressed the criticism, saying, “My line is childlike but not childish. It is very difficult to fake...To get that quality, you need to project yourself into the child's line. It has to be felt.”

Twombly was very interested in Roman and Greek mythology and often sought to express mythological stories through his art. Among his best-known works is *Leda and the Swan* (1962), which refers to the Roman myth in which Jupiter transforms into a swan and seduces Leda. The painting sold for \$53 million in 2017. His 1978 cycle of ten paintings called *Fifty Days at Iliam* represent the end of the Trojan War as chronicled in Homer’s *The Iliad*.

The artist is also known for what are called “the blackboard paintings”, because they were inspired by the notion of the classroom blackboard. The “blackboard paintings” (1966-1971) reflect Twombly’s fascination with Leonardo da Vinci’s studies of water called the *Deluge* drawings (1517-1518).



Cy Twombly, *Leda and the Swan*, 1962



Cy Twombly, *The Shield of Achilles* (from the *Fifty Days at Iliam* series), 1978



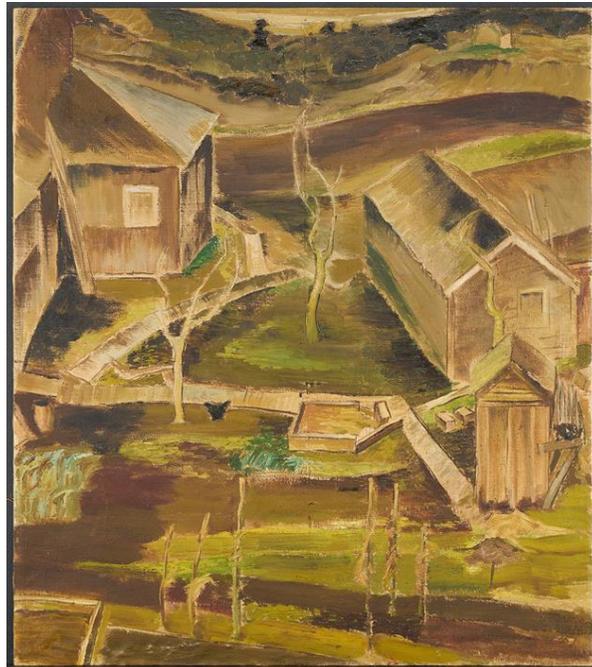
Cy Twombly, *Untitled* (a "Blackboard Painting"), 1968

## Washington

For the State of Washington, I chose the “Big Four” of the Northwest School: **Guy Anderson** (1906-1998), **Kenneth Callahan** (1905-1986), **Morris Graves** (1910-2001), and **Mark Tobey** (1890-1976). The Northwest School is an art movement that combines shadowy textures, earth tones, Asian aesthetics, and natural elements from the Puget Sound/Skagit Valley area, including traditional Native American aesthetics, as well as Asian. The four became widely known regionally for their spiritual interpretations of Northwest life, focusing on symbols from nature, such as the diffuse light of the Skagit Valley. *Life Magazine* thrust the “Big Four” into the national limelight in 1953 with an article entitled *Mystic Painters of the Northwest*.

Many of Anderson’s works were inspired by Native American iconography and Greek mythology. He often drew from symbols such as circles, eggs, seeds, and spirals. Callahan’s earlier paintings were often scenes of laborers and the Northwest landscape in a rough-hewn style with broad brushwork, while his later works were more abstract. Graves, a self-taught artist, often combined birds, flowers, chalices, and other images to explore consciousness-related themes, reflecting the influence of the ideas and iconography of Zen Buddhism. Asian calligraphy methods inspired Tobey.; his signature “white writing” style included light-colored calligraphic symbols overlaid on an abstract field.

When the Museum of Northwest Art in La Conner, WA, was founded in 1981, it was dedicated to the works of the “Northwest Mystics” and the artists they inspired.



Guy Anderson, *Cabin in the Woods*, 1935



Kenneth Callaghan, *Exodus*, 1956



Morris Graves, *Bird of the Spirit*, 1943



Mark Tobey, *Fish Market*, 1943

## West Virginia

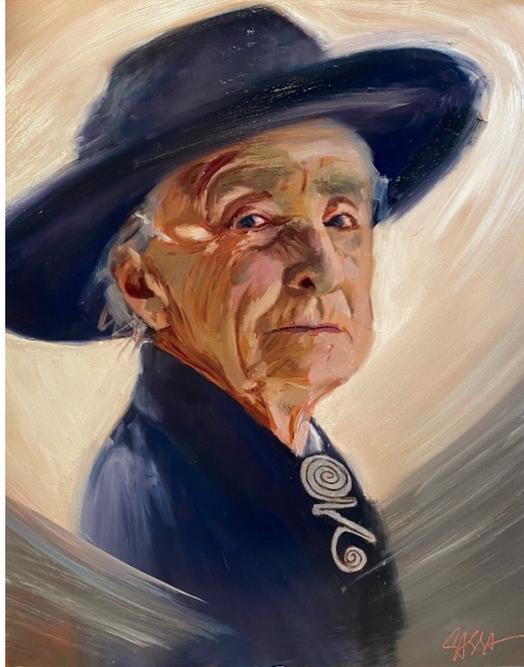
I chose **Sassa Wilkes** for West Virginia. You may never have heard of her. I had not. She was born in West Virginia in 1981 and lives in a small town outside Huntington, WV. Wilkes trained as an artist and teaches art. She is particularly interested in rendering human faces and bodies.

What fascinated me about Wilkes was her pandemic project. When Ruth Baden Ginsburg died in September 2020, Wilkes decided to paint her. The artist realized there were 100 days left in 2020, so she painted one inspirational woman a day for the rest of the year. Each painting took about 10 hours. Wilkes did not choose a particular day's subject until the morning when she started the painting. Each day, Wilkes would post the finished portrait on social media when it was complete. In 2022, the entire series of paintings, *100 Badass Women*, was exhibited at the Huntington Museum of Art. You can view the whole series at this link: <https://iamsassa.com/100-badass-women>

Wilkes has also been responsible for several public art projects, including murals in Huntington and a 15-foot statue installed in Harris Riverfront Park, Huntington.



Sassa Wilkes, *RBG*, 2020



Sassa Wilkes, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 2020



Sassa Wilkes, *Frida*, 2020

## Wisconsin

Perhaps this is a strange choice for Wisconsin, but I chose **Georgia O'Keeffe** (1887-1986) for this state. Born in Sun Prairie, WI, O'Keeffe is considered a native daughter of the state. More than 150 O'Keeffe prints and photographs, letters, and books honoring the artist are inside the Sun Prairie Historical Library and Museum.

O'Keeffe started learning to paint and draw at an early age. She and two of her sisters would make the seven-mile round-trip trek to downtown Sun Prairie twice a week to take lessons. By age 12, she had decided to become an artist. At boarding school in Madison, WI, a mentor critiqued her rendering of a hand as "too small". From then on, O'Keeffe drew big.

As early as 1920, O'Keeffe was recognized as one of the most important and successful American artists, known for her skyscrapers and enlarged flower paintings. Typically associated with New Mexico, O'Keeffe first visited that state in 1929, whose landscape and culture inspired a new direction in her art. In 2014, O'Keeffe's 1932 painting *Jimson Weed/White Flower No. 1* sold for over \$44 million, more than three times the previous world auction record for any female artist. After her death, the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum was established in Santa Fe. The museum's collection has close to 150 of O'Keeffe's paintings and hundreds of works on paper, the largest repository of works by the artist.

O'Keefe and her husband, the photographer Alfred Stieglitz, were the subjects of the 2009 biographical drama TV show *Georgia O'Keeffe*, which received numerous Emmy nominations in 2010. The historical novel *Georgia* by Dawn Tripp (2016) brings to life Georgia O'Keeffe, her love affair with photographer Alfred Stieglitz, and her quest to become an independent artist.



Georgia O'Keeffe, *Red Canna*, 1919



Georgia O'Keeffe, *Red Canna*, 1924



Georgia O'Keeffe, *Ram's Head White Hollyhock and Little Hills*, 1935

## Wyoming

Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) was born in Cody, Wyoming. His wife, Lee Krasner, was also a renowned artist. A major player in the abstract impressionist movement, Pollock is best known for flinging and dripping thinned enamel paint onto an unstretched canvas on his studio's floor. These works became known as “drip paintings” or “action paintings.” One author of his obituary would call him “Jack the Dripper.”

Pollock used sticks, trowels, basting syringes, or knives to drip, fling, flick, and splatter paint. Pollock’s drip paintings met with skepticism initially. One year after their debut, a *Life* magazine article queried, “Is he the greatest living painter in the United States?”

Later in his relatively short career, Pollock would pour paint directly from the can, creating works that were called “black pourings.” Unlike his drip paintings, Pollock’s “black pourings,” which have been described as a middle ground between abstraction and figuration, were a commercial failure.

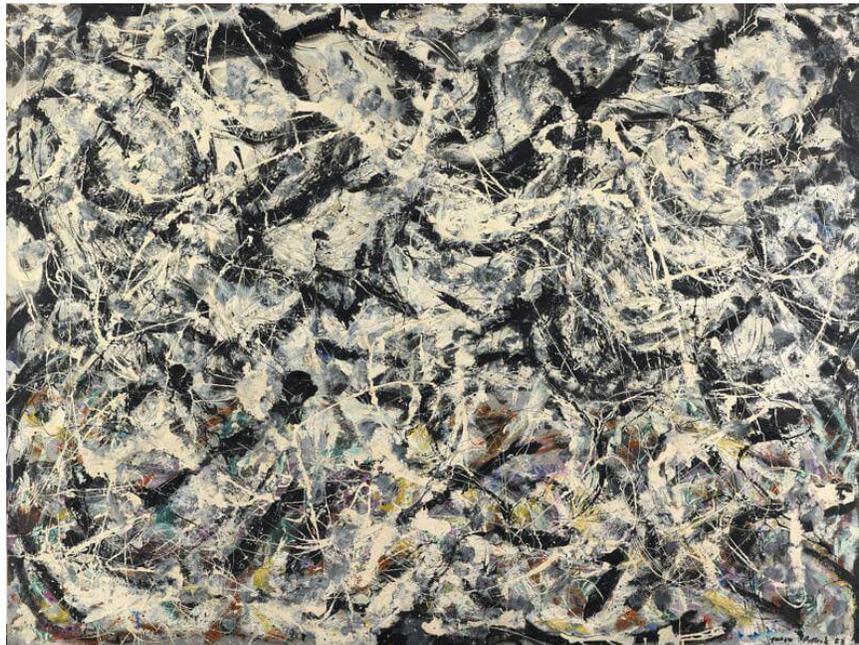
Pollock fell into a downward spiral of depression and drinking. For several years, he painted virtually nothing. In 1956, he crashed his car into a tree at 80 miles an hour, killing himself and a passenger and badly injuring another (his mistress).



Jackson Pollock, *The She-Wolf*, 1943



Jackson Pollock, *Full Fathom Five*, 1947



Jackson Pollock, *Greyed Rainbow*, 1953