



A View from Home: Landscapes of Virginia

*One may say Virginia sits securely by her sea and mountains, certain of capturing the admiration of all American generations.*

— Wallace Nutting, *Virginia Beautiful*, 1930

Each year, VMFA on the Road: An Artmobile for the 21st Century travels across the landscape of Virginia from the Eastern Shore to the mountains of the Southwest. This exhibition of paintings, photographs, woodblock prints, and engravings from the museum's permanent collection explores the diversity and beauty of these natural realms. The collection showcases artists of various styles and periods, who together record both the sublimity of unspoiled nature and the impact of human activity throughout the commonwealth.

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts was founded in early 1936, during the depths of the Great Depression, for the benefit of the citizens of Virginia. In the years since, the collection has grown, as has its commitment to the education and enrichment of Virginians. The museum's permanent collection encompasses more than 40,000 works and spans more than 5,000 years of world history. VMFA's outreach programs include lectures, workshops, and classes. From 1953 to 1994, the world's first Artmobile traveled the roads of Virginia. Its modern descendant continues the journey with the following landscapes.

**ADÈLE CLARK**

American, 1882-1983

*Cherry Tree, 1930s*

Oil on Board



Gift of Adèle Clark, 56.26

Adèle Clark, a tireless advocate for women's suffrage, often set up her easel on Richmond's street corners to attract a crowd and spread her message of equality as she painted. Clark was a founding member of the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia, which educated women—particularly African American women—about the Nineteenth Amendment and their voting rights. This scene of the artist's Chamberlayne Avenue garden was inspired by a tree that was in bloom: "It looked so lovely with the cherries all over it that I painted a picture of it."

**HULLIHEN WILLIAMS MOORE**

American, born 1942

*Appalachian Trail and Mist, Shenandoah National*

*Park, 1994*

Pigment print



Gift of the Artist, 2010.92

Virginia encompasses 554 of the more than 2,180 miles of footpath that form the Appalachian Trail—more than any other state. This photographic print is from Hullahen Moore's series

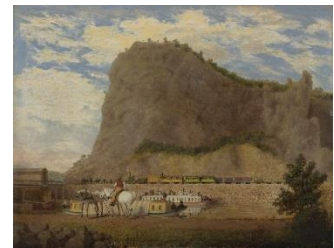
of Shenandoah scenes, a twenty-year project connecting the beauty of the wilderness to the beauty of its history. His exquisite photographs convey a sense of personal and natural history, while revealing the artist's visual and emotional relationship with the landscape. He documents change, both growth and destruction. Using a 4 x 5-view camera, he works with black-and-white film and makes his own prints in the darkroom. With patience and the ability to perceive the most compelling viewpoint or angle, the richest light and strongest shadow, Moore captures the significance of a place in a way that makes us look beyond the particular. He makes intelligible that which we already know but have forgotten or overlooked.

**GEORGE HARVEY**

American (born England), 1799-1880

*Scene of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, ca. 1837-40*

Oil on panel



Floyd D. and Anne C. Gottwald Fund, 2011.73

George Harvey, a British artist who immigrated to the United States in 1820, traveled widely to paint scenic views of the young nation—including this view of Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia). The image depicts the region's renowned natural features, dominated by the massive rock bluffs that loom above the meeting of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers. Harvey also documents the region's latest technological advances in

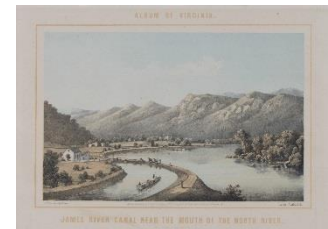
transportation and commercial competition. Both the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad had recently established a terminus in the bustling port town. Harvey's inclusion of the passenger train, which hugs the distant riverbank, adds significance to the canvas. This is one of the earliest American landscapes to picture a railroad.

**EDWARD BEYER**

German, ca. 1820–1865

*James River Canal Near the Mouth of the North River, Rockbridge County, VA, from "Album of Virginia," 1858*

Lithograph



Virginia Fund, 71.13.32

In 1854, German artist Edward Beyer traveled to Virginia and toured the state sketching and painting what he saw. Fascinated with Virginia's many vistas and technological advancements, Beyer began working in painting and lithography. This view of the James River Canal in Rockbridge County was published in Beyer's *Album of Virginia*, which included forty-one lithographic landscapes. The portfolio is considered Beyer's masterwork, in which he captured the beauty of the state in all its peaceful glory. These works impart his great appreciation for the landmarks and sprawling landscapes that characterized the state.

**GEORGE H. BENJAMIN JOHNSON**

American, 1888-1970

*Idyll of Virginia Mountains*, 1945

Oil on canvas



Katherine Rhoads Memorial Fund, 45.10.3

George H. Benjamin Johnson, who earned his living in Richmond, Virginia, as a mail carrier, taught himself to draw and paint. In the 1910s, he penned dozens of editorial cartoons for the city's leading African American newspaper, many denouncing the inequities of segregation. As a painter, Johnson focused primarily on biblical and historical subjects, but he also produced still lifes and landscapes—*Idyll of Virginia Mountains* being one of his most expressive. Here he locates the viewer high up on a craggy promontory of the state's famed Blue Ridge range, defined in loose strokes of turquoise, violet gray, and brown. In places, touches of peach pigment suggest the glancing rays of the setting sun.

**FRANCES BENJAMIN JOHNSTON**

American, 1864-1952

*Upshur Burial Grounds, Warwick*, ca. 1930-36

Gelatin silver print



Gift of the Carnegie Corporation, 36.10.25

Built by Arthur Upshur, an immigrant from Essex County in England, Warwick became the family seat of Upshur's more than

2,000-acre holdings. It survived occupation, looting, and burning by the British during the Revolutionary War and remains the final resting place of many generations of the Upshur family. Francis Benjamin Johnston, one of the first professional woman photographers, traveled the country preserving scenes like this one. She placed equal emphasis on composition, lighting, and subject matter. Johnston believed that the best art always imitated the effects of nature on the eye and that the photographer's task was no different from that of any other artist.

**LAURA PHARIS**

American, born 1948

*Trout Fiddle*, 2000

Wood engraving on Japanese paper, mounted at upper corners to textured wove paper



Gift of One/Off Printmakers, 2013.844.7

Laura Pharis, a Roanoke, Virginia, native, loves the hands-on processes of printmaking and bookmaking. Pharis says her work is inspired by stories, memories, and dreams of alternate or interior worlds. She is currently the head of the studio art department at Sweet Briar College and was a founding member of the One/Off printmaking group. *Trout Fiddle* was created using wood engraving, a technique in which an image is worked into a block of wood and printed onto a surface using the relief-printing process. The ink is applied to the face of the block, as opposed to typical engraving, in which the ink is applied to the grooves.

**O. WINSTON LINK**

American, 1914-2001

*The Birmingham Special Gets the Highball at Rural Retreat, from Norfolk and Western Railway series, 1957, printed 2000*

Gelatin silver print



A. Paul Funkhouser Endowment Fund, 2000.102

O. Winston Link is best known for his photographs of Norfolk & Western's Virginia line, which operated the last steam locomotives on a major route in America. Link combined his mastery of large format black-and-white photography with precise control over lighting and placement of subject. He showed deep respect for the people being photographed as well as for the massive steam locomotives and landscapes.

In 1957 Link made what was to become one of his favorite photographs at Rural Retreat, Virginia. Around 11:30 pm, station agent James L. Akers raised his lantern to send a "highball"—a signal that indicates all passengers are aboard and the tracks are clear to move ahead. Link captured one of the last glimpses of this once-familiar scene, as steam passenger service ended on the Bristol line of the Radford division less than a week later.

**Miwako Nishizawa**

Japanese-American, born 1964

*Cape Henry Lighthouses*, 2014

Woodblock print; ink and color on paper



Rene and Carolyn Balcer Collection, 2014.419.11

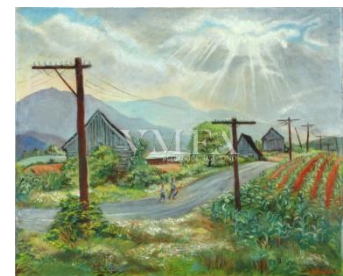
Part of Nishizawa's *Twelve Views of Virginia* series, this print employs *shin-hanga*—or Japanese woodblock printing. The artist begins with a sketch, carves the design into a woodblock (essentially creating a large stamp), coats the block in ink, and then applies the design to paper by pressing it against the block with a flat tool. According to Nishizawa, Virginia's natural colors are similar to those in Japanese landscapes, making woodblock a fitting medium for this series. The original Cape Henry Lighthouse was one of the first federally funded works of the newly formed United States government; it was authorized in 1792. In 1881 a newer lighthouse was constructed 350 feet from the original. This print shows both structures and suggests the circular sweep of the lighthouse lamp, the chill of the storm, and the turbulence of the ocean at the northern tip of Virginia Beach.

**ELIZABETH NOTTINGHAM**

American, 1907-1956

*Country Road, Amherst County, Virginia*, 1941

Oil on canvas



Gift of H. Talmage Day, 2005.100



The Federal Art Project, a New Deal program created to employ visual artists during the Great Depression, launched several community art centers in Virginia. From 1934 to 1940, Nottingham served as director for two of these—the Big Stone Gap and Lynchburg Federal Art Galleries. She worked tirelessly to make art accessible in rural Virginia and simultaneously drew inspiration from its country scenes. *Country Road, Amherst County, Virginia* exemplifies Nottingham's love of the Virginia countryside and painting from nature. She studied at Randolph-Macon Woman's College and the Art Students League of New York. She taught at Mary Baldwin College from 1941 until her death in 1956.

**BRIAN PALMER**

American, born 1964

*Untitled, Evergreen Cemetery, 2017*

Digital photograph



Brian Palmer is a Richmond-based photojournalist whose work has appeared in many prominent publications. He received a Peabody Award in 2019 for his work on the radio story "Monumental Lies," which explored the effects of taxpayer-funded Confederate monuments. Richmond's once-neglected Evergreen Cemetery, founded 1891, is the resting place of Maggie Walker, the first African American female bank president; John Mitchell, the influential editor of the *Richmond Planet*, one of America's first African American newspapers; and countless other members of Richmond's African American community—many of whom were born enslaved. By the early 1970s, the cemetery had fallen into disrepair. In 2017, the Enrichmond Foundation purchased the property and

committed to the facilitation the restoration of the long-neglected site. In the years since, organized volunteer efforts and donation campaigns have aided in the effort. In 2019, UNESCO named Evergreen Cemetery a "site of memory" associated with its Slave Route Project.