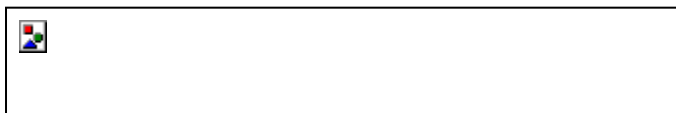


CHANCE, CHOICE – RALPH COBURN IN CONTEXT LECTURE FINDING AID & TRANSCRIPT

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Video Description

In conjunction with the exhibition *Arranged by Choice: The Art of Ralph Coburn* that was on view at the Cape Ann Museum from November 10, 2012, through January 31, 2013, this lecture by curator and art historian Karen Quinn discusses the innovative artistic environment in America and Europe within which Ralph Coburn (1923-2018) was working and highlights the artists that may have influenced his own creative explorations. Coburn began visiting Cape Ann in the



late 1940s and purchased the Folly Cove Designers' old barn in the mid-1970s for use as a summer home and studio. As the years went by, his style continued to evolve, but he never abandoned the sensitivity to color, light, and the mathematics of space that informed his work from the very beginning.

Subject list

Ralph Coburn	Boston Expressionists
Jean Arp	School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Philip Leslie Hale	New York School
Winslow Homer	Karen Quinn
Fitz Henry Lane	

Transcription

00:01

Courtney Richardson:

It's a really beautiful day out there today, so thank you so much for coming in and missing the hustle and the bustle of the holiday season.

00:08

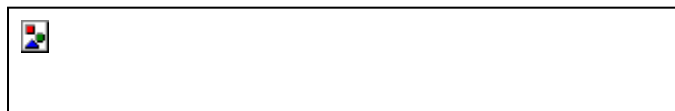
Just a reminder, there's still time to get presents for your friends and family in our museum shop. Consider giving the gift of membership, or perhaps, I meant to bring one with me, but the beautiful 2013 Folly Cove Designers' calendar. One of a kind, this is the only place to get it. And don't forget members receive 10% off in our shop.

00:35

We are truly celebrating Folly Cove this season, not only with longtime Folly Cove artist and residence Ralph Coburn's exhibition, but also with the reinstallation of the Folly Cove Designers' collection upstairs on the third floor. This room is a little vacant. I don't know if you realized, and the sound has changed. So please let us know if you're having a hard time hearing, but we lost that nice backdrop, that little buffer with all those textiles.

01:04

We have a large series of related programs for children and adults over the next several weeks. Highlights including a screening of the award-winning film "Virginia Lee Burton: A Sense of Place", a block printing demonstration upstairs in the gallery with artists Mary Rhineland, and



the Saturday showcase family concert of “Katy and the Big Snow” Symphony that was written a few years ago. So that will be here at the end of January. So hopefully you'll be able to join us. And grab one of our Folly Cove design decorated winter-at-the-museum schedules on your way out, if you don't have one.

01:44

Thank you, and I'd like to introduce Ronda Faloon, the Director of the Museum.

01:55

Ronda Faloon:

Good afternoon. It's hard to believe that it's been a year, that we're at the end of the year. I've spoken at a couple different events recently and let people know that 2012 has been an amazing year for this museum. We've had some great programming and exhibitions. Our donations have increased, our membership has increased, and just recently (meaning this week), we received a gift of a John Sloan painting of the paint factory. So our collection has grown. We're very grateful to people who recognize that we continue to collect and are keeping us in mind with their giving, so we appreciate it. Each program and exhibition that we offer delves deeper and deeper into subjects that are of interest to all of us. And it's this interweaving of all these stories that makes this museum special. It's our greatest strength, offering a fuller and richer appreciation and understanding of this place that we all love. Next month in January, in an effort to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to visit the museum, (We do this every year) we're making the museum available admission-free to all Cape Ann residents. We really want people to come through and recognize the treasures that are part of this city and part of this region. And it's also our membership month. And so for any of you who are members, we really thank you for that and also encourage you to bring people through the museum next month. Usually once someone comes in here, they're not disappointed. It's just getting them through the doors. And membership supports all of the activities that we do, so we really are looking to educate people to support the museum through memberships.

03:44

Before I introduce the speaker, I'd like to acknowledge all my colleagues and thank them for all the hard work that they put in this amazing year. I'd like to particularly acknowledge our curator Martha Oaks for brilliantly assembling the comprehensive survey of Ralph Coburn's work. And she was ably assisted by curatorial assistant Leon Doucette. Thanks also to all the institutions and the private collectors who lent to the exhibition.

04:08

So this afternoon, we're joined by Karen Quinn, Kristin and Roger Servison Curator of Paintings in the Art of the Americas with the Museum of Fine Arts. Karen has long ties with all the artists who worked on Cape Ann and long ties with this museum, which I'll talk about in the few minutes. Since joining the MFA in 1987, Karen has organized exhibitions and contributed to numerous exhibitions and catalogs on Edward Weston, John Singleton Copley, Ansel Adams, Martin Johnson Heade, Georgia O'Keeffe, among many others. She was project manager and wrote for

“The Paintings of America 2012”, the MFA’s first online catalog, scholarly collection catalog. She earned her bachelor's degree at McGill and her master's at the University of Pennsylvania, and she wrote her dissertation on the wood engravings of Winslow Homer for her thesis. Karen has, as I mentioned before, a lot of history with this museum. We all worked together, in particular on the Emma Fordyce MacRae exhibition done in 2009. And we are continuing to work with Karen and her MFA colleagues on ongoing research on working method of Fitz Henry Lane, which is a subject near and dear to all of our hearts. So please join me in welcoming Karen Quinn.

05:31

Karen Quinn:

If you're not a member, you must join. This truly is one of the great gems. And as Ronda said, once you get your foot in the door, anybody's foot in the door, they are amazed by the phenomenal collection here and quality of the artists who worked on Cape Ann. I'm honored to be here. I'm thrilled to be talking about Ralph Coburn, someone whom I met in the 1990s, didn't know who he was, and I'm so excited that he has an exhibition here, where he spent so much time in the later part of his career. And also, to start, as we've started over the past decade to really give him his due, he is an artist who will, I think, really join the annals of the so-called canon of great painters of the 20th and early 21st century.

06:26

I introduce him to you on the screen in a drawing, a self-portrait he made in 1949. And just want to remind you of a few things about Ralph that I feel are so critical to the development of his art. He went to MIT, which is very different for an artist in Boston. And I will compare him to some of other painters in Boston at the same time. And just think of the mindset that an aspiring artist going to MIT -- what that means. He was rigorously trained in architecture. And I think if you look at his work, you can see where that comes in. And at the same time, I would argue there's a soulfulness to his work that belies the fact that it's so mathematically precise. There's something about Ralph Coburn's work that's lyrical and very personal. He also was influenced by architects while working at MIT, in particular, Walter Netsch, who also introduced him to contemporaries like Merce Cunningham and John Cage, who also if you can think of their work, would really help explain what Coburn himself would ultimately do. Coburn also said at the time, he was very much influenced by introduction to artists like Mondrian and also architects like Walter Gropius, who, of course, had come to Harvard to work in architecture and there built his house out in Lincoln.

08:08

In 1949/50, Coburn created this work, the first work by Coburn to enter the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, one of his earliest works, one which was on view at an exhibition in the Boston University Art Gallery called *Visionary Decade*. I knew nothing of Ralph’s early work when that show came up and was just blown away. This is not as simple as it looks. He been to France, he'd been working, he was interested in creating what he called a relief sculpture out of canvas. And that's what this is. I defy anybody to find anything like it. It's called *Black Abstraction*. If you look

at it, you can't tell from the slide, but the ovals are all cutouts, so that it's an actual combination of the wall behind it creating the white climate, which Ralph admitted was the way he wanted it shown. And then the long lozenge shape or however you want to describe that shape, Christmas tree ornament shape, whatever, is actually painted on there. And what he wanted -- this is how creative Ralph was at this time -- it's the back and forth between the wall and the work that he had painted. And he invites us to create a much more environmental experience. And this is something critical to the experimentation that he was doing in the late 50s, late 40s and early 50s, as he'd gone to France several times and came back to Boston. And this is the only one he ever created like this. He went on to completely experiment with other methods of collages as I will show you and other painted forms.

09:58

But I just wanted also to put this in context, in that other artists were doing these, but they were doing them as sculpture. On the left is a Jean Arp called (I love this wonderfully descriptive title) *Six White Forms and One Gray Make a Constellation on Blue Ground*. And then on the right is one of Ellsworth Kelly's early reliefs, Ellsworth Kelly being one of Ralph's great friends to this day and also someone with whom Ralph traveled throughout France. And this is Kelly's *Relief with Blue*, which is kind of washed out in the slide here, but was inspired by him seeing stage sets of *Hamlet* that had curtain windows. But both of these are made of wood, whereas Ralph's is painted. So there is a very big difference there. In Ralph's again the key difference is the relationship with the space around it; it moves beyond the object itself. And in the late 1940s and early 1950s this is a really revolutionary idea.

11:11

Meanwhile, in Boston, what's going on? In Boston at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, which is the major training ground, was the major training ground at the time at least formally, for artists in addition to what's now Massachusetts College of Art, we had artists gathered around the artist on the left, who is Karl Zerbe. Karl Zerbe came from Germany, and he brought with him a basically second-generation German expressionist style. This is his painting called *Job*. He worked with encaustic, which is a paint mixed with wax. He was getting sick from working with it, and so related himself to Job, the biblical figure Job, in what is this self-portrait. Some of his students included, in the center, Hyman Bloom. This is called *Female Corpse Back View*, really not a beautiful, traditionally beautiful, image but a very powerful image – beautifully, beautifully painted, rich, jewel-like colors, wonderfully thick, rich paint, but a truly troubling subject. He went to hospitals in Boston and studied cadavers there. And now on the right, actually younger than Bloom, is David Aronson who is still alive. This is his large painting called *Golem*, which is inspired by the Old Testament as well. All these artists together form a group that were referred to and are still referred to as the Boston Expressionists.

12:46

And it was this background that Ralph came into. When he started to study at MIT, he was distinctly different from the students at the school in the Museum of Fine Arts, but he made great friendships with them. He, of course, in the end remained distinctly different from what

they were doing there and never produce anything of this kind of expressionism, nothing of this wonderfully rich and juicy paint emphasis. However, Ralph's sense of color is just as sophisticated as any other painter, I would say, possibly ever.

13:24

Other artists working in Boston at the same time included Jack Levine, at the upper left, who came out of the museum school, was associated also with the Boston Expressionists but went on to New York and became much more popular in New York and much more well-known really than his Boston Expressionist cohort. Oh, just as a blip backwards to Hyman Bloom in the center. Both Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning, whom I'll show you in a moment, called Hyman Bloom the first abstract expressionist.

14:02

And then other artists working in Boston include John Wilson at the bottom there. John Wilson, also trained at the museum school. This is one of his early works before he goes to Mexico and is influenced by Mexican artists. I'm not sure if it's still up, but there was an exhibition on Newbury Street of John Wilson's Mexican work. And then at the right, Allen Crite. Crite lived in the south end of Boston. He never formally enrolled at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, but he did have associations there. And his typical subject matter was the streets of the south end at the time, which were nowhere near as tony as they are today. And also he was very influenced by religious art as well and did a number of triptychs and other altarpieces for churches in the area. This is his *Tire Jumping Outside My Window*. And all of these are roughly – the John Wilson and the Levine, the Levine is called *Street Scene Number One*, the Wilson, called *The Dressing Table*. These are all comparable in time to the early work of Ralph Coburn, as I just showed you. One thing you should note through all of these artists is the emphasis (and this seems to be a trait for the museum school) on the human figure. And that is certainly something that Ralph never undertook in the same way. You saw his self-portrait; he could certainly draw the human figure just as well as anybody else. But he chose instead to go in a very different direction. Even when artists do take on landscape and are trained at the museum school -- somebody like Bernard Chaet, this is his *Mount Monadnock* at about the same time -- even when they take those subjects on, they have taken them on in an expressionistic manner, in a manner that is very juicy. And certainly his early work is very much influenced by his time at the museum school as well.

16:11

If you head to New York, working roughly at the same time as the earliest of Ralph Coburn's work, and this is where I *really* want you to think about things, is Jackson Pollock. This is his *Number 10* of 1949. He is firmly ensconced in his drip style, in what we would consider his most signature style. And then de Kooning, still working with the figure at the bottom left. This is *Woman 1*. And then somebody like Franz Kline on the lower right at roughly the same time. And this is called *Gray Abstraction*. This is what becomes known as the New York School. This is also current with Coburn's earliest endeavors.

17:02

A generation before but still very much prevalent in New York at the same time are artists like Arthur Dove. And I actually feel very strongly that Ralph Coburn has probably more in common with Arthur Dove than anybody else. And this may just be my predilection towards Arthur Dove. But I think Dove worked with color and form and shape and has a sensitivity to these that is similar to Coburn, even though Coburn tends to look, in some instances, very much more mathematically precise. I just think they're coming at it at a slightly different angle. But I do think that Dove, with his *Roof Tops* on the left, or *That Red One* on the right from the mid 40s, are artistically related to what Coburn would produce in the 50s and 60s/70s and on.

18:00

Also working in the same generation is someone like Georgia O'Keeffe, and she's still working. Dove is dead in 1946. So he's not working anymore. But Georgia O'Keeffe is still working in the 1950s and still showing in New York. So she's still another artist. Even though she is, as I said, a generation earlier than someone like Coburn, she is still a similar force in the sense that she is abstracting more directly, perhaps than Coburn, but she is abstracting forms now in the Southwest, predominantly, with *Patio with a Black Door* at the top or in the *Patio IV* at the bottom, and I think with the sense of geometry, the sense of taking and distilling the object from reality. Even though sometimes we don't look at Ralph Coburn's work as being tied to the visual world, it still did start there. And that is something that you see in the earlier generation with artists like Dove and like O'Keeffe, both of whom in the 19 teens were completely abstract artists and then took steps to move back towards some sense of a tie to the visual world.

19:16

Colbert also mentioned that he was influenced by artists like Mondrian, working in Holland, came over to the United States like so many European artists as Nazism grew in Europe, and certainly these artists coming to the United States in the late 30s and early 40s are so important to the influence on American art at the same time. But I think the sensibility of the artists who are influenced more directly by someone like Mondrian, or here on the left we have a Josef Albers painting, which is called... (I always forget the names). They're all variants on the square, variant *Three Reds Around Blue*. And then on the right an artist quite directly influenced by Mondrian, **Leopold Toski**. This is his *Spiral Movement*. I think the difference is that although Ralph Coburn was very much aware of these new European precedents, he also didn't quite so faithfully work in the same mindset as somebody like Albers, who had come from Germany, and worked in the Bauhaus in Germany, and established his teaching methods at Yale University, or someone like **Wollo Toski**, who admittedly, readily admitted, his debt to someone like Mondrian. Ralph was absolutely conscious of these artists, but, I think again, it comes from a slightly different place. And that may be what we can describe is his American roots, and his roots in a very different upbringing in Florida in Miami, where he readily admitted he was influenced by the land, sea and sky. And in many instances, I think, as abstract as Ralph gets there still is a tie to the land.

21:22

Ralph's work and certainly the idea of "arranged by choice" goes back to "arranged by chance" with European artists like Jean Arp, working in the 19 teens, the earliest surrealist artists, the Dada artists. This is one of Arp's most famous collages, and it's technically untitled but called *Collage with Squares Arranged According to the Laws of Chance* and dates to 1916/1917. So basically, what he's done is he's ripped up paper, let it go, and then the way it landed is what the composition was. And Coburn met Arp, along with Ellsworth Kelly and Jack Youngerman, met Arp in France, went to his studio, and takes this idea of arranged by chance, takes this idea of the lack of interference by the artistic process in a very different direction. But we cannot not acknowledge this debt that he has to this idea. He takes it quite a bit in a bit different direction.

22:47

On the right is *Blue, White, Green* Coburn painted between 1949 and 1950. And this is 35 individual canvases. Each one of them about so big. And you can see there are several different compositions. There are eight different compositions. And what Coburn has done here is he has basically come up with this grid and then said, whoever hangs it, whoever owns it, curates it, whatever, can arrange it any way they want. So it's related to the art in the sense that there's some idea of chance there. It's also related to Coburn's earlier things like *Black Abstraction* in the sense of the interaction of the viewer or the space around. There's an active creative process here necessary as far as you and I are concerned, if we are the person putting these 35 canvases together.

23:58

This was acquired by the Museum of Fine Arts a few years ago. And when we first saw it, it came in a box, 35 canvases, and we had no idea how to arrange it. We had no idea if it should be seven or eight this way, they should all be all the same composition, should be together, should, you know, should they all be alternating? There was no sense and Ralph couldn't remember how, at that point, how he had actually arranged it. Fortunately, fortunately, an archival photograph surfaced. Fortunately for those of us who hung up on these things, an archival photograph, which is very washed out here, of Ralph Coburn and **Steven Trapanese**. It was probably the only time this painting was exhibited, before it went to the MFA, at Boris Mirski's gallery in Boston. And with the information that was gleaned from the back there (you can see the painting behind it), we were able to come up with this arrangement as the original arrangement that Coburn intended for this painting.

25:10

It was a long process, however, and one which involved us also grilling Ralph on what kind of frames were used. And he claimed that he used originally, because artists are not particularly wealthy, he used the metal side of formica countertop as his frame. So our framer went to town on trying to figure out how he could replicate that archivally, so that it would work here. And then come up with a way...we came up with seven individual vertical bands, so each of these are in seven bands. Each of the five in one band hung next to each other. And they can, they're not there permanently, they can be pulled off the velcro that's keeping them there, and rearranged. Probably not anytime soon, simply because it looks so easy, but it really isn't. This is the thing

that's so amazing about this work, he makes it look easy. But it's subtly different. Each one of these...the relationships they make with each other is critical. And I'm a person who came into the 20th century kicking and screaming as far as history is concerned, and would probably, early in my career, have looked at this and not gotten anything out of it. But knowing Coburn, knowing his history with MIT, with Miami, and the colors, the choice of colors is critical here, the blue, the white, and the green, and it does distill the colors of landscape down to barest minimum. I see plenty of relationship to landscape in this work. It's so important, this idea of inviting the owner of the painting or the hanger of the painting or the gallery, whatever, to arrange it however they want. For the artists to let go of their work of art is so rare. And then, of course, we're all hung up on how did you really wanted to go.

27:41

We actually decided that this would be a great educational piece in one of the interactives that we developed for 20th century paintings. So in the American wing of the Museum of Fine Arts up on the 20th century level, we have this huge interactive table, where we can explore artists' choices. And the four artists that we use are Edward Hopper, Charles Sheeler, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Ralph Coburn. Ralph Coburn, we hope, will come out of this more of a household word, along with Sheeler, O'Keeffe, and Hopper, and the idea was to explore how artists create their compositions. So here's where...this is the opening page...you have Ralph's great quote about Miami Beach. You've got some of his works. We now have 11 of Coburn's works at the MFA. And also, this is what...you're ready to start to start with the composition entirely, and you can touch any one of them. And you can ??????. It's like one of those tile games that you can move around. You can create your own Coburn, and you can send it to the center of the interactive and share it with other people who are working with the interactive. And this, we felt, was such a great educational opportunity, 'cause the 20th century is so difficult for our viewers. And to have someone like Hopper. And Hopper we were able to move objects in and out of composition, using one of our paintings that is called *Room in Brooklyn* that has a woman sitting in a room. And my favorite part of it (I should have brought an image, but I didn't) is that in the Hopper, it has these bilious green window shades in three different windows at three different levels. And I wanted to be able to put them all at the same level. So we've added that component to it. You can change the woman for a man, you can add a telephone, and so forth. In the Sheeler you can work with his photographs into a composition, work with color, and in the O'Keeffe you can take typical O'Keeffe objects like shells and leaves and create your own composition. So it's a way to get your head into the artists' choices. And we felt this one was such a unique opportunity to show what the final image looks like. And really, I would argue why it works so well the way Ralph originally intended it to be.

30:34

Member of the Audience

I love that photograph. Do you think it's by chance that the chair rail and wainscotting remains that way?

30:42

Karen Quinn

I don't know. That's a good question. It certainly keeps it going a little bit further. Who knows, but it's really a quite wonderful extension. And, of course, Coburn with the viewers space was probably very conscious of that. He's so reticent. That's the problem that we have found with him. That's a problem. I usually count myself very fortunate that very few artists (I apologize for this) that I work with dead artists for the most part, because they don't talk back. Whereas Colburn is one of those people it is like pulling teeth to get him to tell us what he wanted, how he liked his things to be hung. *Black Abstraction*, we had to come and talk to him and say, "What color wall would you like it hung against?" And it really was quite a process.

31:39

From the 50s on he continues to experiment, but sometimes not quite as gleefully, if you will, or as freely as the *Blue, White, Green*. But he does work in collage. At the top is an early collage he did that also is separate pieces. You can see there. But he actually gave instructions in this instance on how he wanted it to be displayed. So that's a little different, moving forward, than the idea of being able to move everything altogether. And then later in the 60s, consolidates these (and there are some of these upstairs) into the collages he works with both tile and with -- this is **selatack**, this collage here. And this is one of four that we have now at the museum where he arranged them carefully but permanently. So it's a very, again, different mindset from moving anything you want, to being able to move it but this is the way I want it, to you can't move it at all. And the interesting thing also is the experimentation with materials that he's using. The *Blue, White, Green* is paint; it's acrylics, whereas, these are both collages. These are paper on paper, so there's that experimentation with materials as well.

33:15

Also working in the early 50s, late 40s and early 50s, so this is the same thing that's going on with those other painters that I showed you before, people like Pollack and Kline, with people like Bloom, people like Jack Levine and so forth. And the sense of the grid is very important. It seems to be a resounding theme throughout Coburn's career, the fact that the grid underlies so many of these compositions no matter how liberated they are. And this pull and push between the control and letting go are something that he is grappling with, I think, throughout his career -- how much to let go, how much to pull in. And it's a very personal journey for him. It's not something that he's looking outward at and trying to come up with a response. I think he's looking at it inwardly and trying to see where it will go with him. He's also not interested, unlike virtually every other artist, not interested in letting this work out. Another issue that has arisen with Coburn is nobody has heard of him. Nobody knows who Coburn is. And yet his experimentation is so important and so different as far as mid-20th century art is concerned.

34:45

He also is very much a Cape Ann artist, and he's been coming to Cape Ann since probably the late 40s. He buys the barn of the Folly Cove Designers in the mid-70s and has lived here ever since. And Folly Cove became a very important subject for Coburn throughout. In fact, this is actually an early Folly Cove painting here using the grid. Some of them are a little bit more

visually related. The painting on the left (it's got a number to it) *Folly Cove 7 Sketch Fourth January 1980*. And I want to put it in the context of Cape Ann artists as well, with whom I also think he resonates. On the right is a Philip Hale of Folly Cove; and the Hale family, Ellen Day Hale and her colleague Gabrielle de Veaux Clements came to Folly Cove in the 1880s. They had a studio in Folly Cove, not that far from where Coburn's barn is, called The Thickets, and Ellen Day Hale's brother and his wife came to The Thickets as well. And this is a Hale overlooking Folly Cove in the style of the late 19th century American impressionists, of which he was one. Very different in feel than what Coburn is doing there. No matter how visual, it's hard. When you see this in person, you can see how controlled every brushstroke is in the Coburn. Even though it might look slightly impressionistic, it doesn't have the same freedom of gesture. It doesn't have the same glopiness of paint and painterly quality. But interesting, too, Coburn isn't trying to paint the expanse of Folly Cove, the distance of the ocean and the sky. Instead, he's closed it off, and he's exploring the relationships between the linear quality of the waves against the accents of the granite behind him.

37:11

I would also suggest that Coburn relates to Winslow Homer. On the left is Homer's, quite possibly, earliest painted seascape of Cape Ann – this is Manchester, but in 1869, it's called *Rocky Coast and Gulls*. And then another Coburn of Folly Cove on the right. The sense of honing in on the details is Coburn's difference here to Homer still, as Homer often does, gives you that out, gives you that distance, gives you that sense of the power of the ocean. Coburn also, living here year-round, is unusual in that he paints winter. That's a very, very rare subject, with the exception of some people like Hibbard and so forth, although they headed to Vermont mostly. But really painting winter in Folly Cove is a very, very unusual subject. Again, the sense of the architecture, if you will, of those granite rocks, which really must have appealed to Coburn, that sense of organization, the layers of the rocks, when compared. So basically, what I'm doing is I'm putting Coburn into the tradition of American landscape in the 19th century and 20th century.

38:32

And how can I not compare him to an artist, of course, near and dear to my heart and that's Fitz Henry Lane. And I think if you take a look upstairs, and you take a look down on the first floor, and you get the sense, of course, Coburn is interested in color, less obviously in white, very much in the mathematics of the spaces that he's painting. And studies have shown that Lane, too, is very interested in a sense of space, the expanse, the sense of organization of the spaces that he is painting. On the right is his *View of Coffin's Beach* from 1862, contrasted to one of Coburn's on the left of, again, a view outside his window from his studio in Folly Cove. And as you walk through the gallery, one thing that you see over and over again is, in spite of the precision of Coburn's work, there is this amazing sense of color. And the color, like you see on the left, really is impacted by the light of where he's living. And living on Cape Ann as you all do, you see the light here isn't like anywhere else. It has its own very specific quality, and that's why it keeps attracting artists to this day. That it has this specialness to it, that dawn and dusk here is even more luminous than in other parts of New England -- even much more so, dare I say, than the other cape and even further down the coast as well. There's this sense of the color here that

both Coburn and Lane are capturing via very different styles. But they still have that sense of this sense of color, light, and space.

40:32

And I would just like to complete this by pointing out that as far away as Coburn seems to get from his earliest work on the left, again, with the *Blue, White, Green*, look on the right, and you have the sense they look -- if you got this on your exam class as a comparison, you might not be able to do much with it. I don't know. But I think you really could, if you know Coburn's work. You get the sense of banding, the sense of the horizon being so important in many respects, either being there or not being there, and the sense of color and color relationships. And this is why I think he fits into the tradition of somebody like Lane, but also somebody like Arthur Dove, and on into the future. I think that sense of relating to the past and to where he is, his sense of place, is very important to him. It might have been Miami when he was younger. There certainly is something of France in his earliest paintings. And then obviously, something very important happens when he gets to Folly Cove.

41:44

And just to underscore my own feeling about Coburn -- and it's not really about education or studying Coburn in any art historical way -- But really, my feeling about him relating to these painters, other painters and the period -- In fact, as cold as the painting on the left might seem to some people, I still never felt it was a cold painting. And that's underscored when the critic for the Boston Globe, Sebastian Smee, wrote about an exhibition done by David Hall (who's here) in Wellesley of Ralph's early work, called and said, "His work is severely distilled and yet retaining a whiff of romanticism."

42:41

Thank you.

42:55

And one final coda. Before the American wing opened, Ralph was back here for a bit and came into the museum. One of the great thrills of my life was to be able to have him photographed with this painting as it was installed in the museum. So we have a record of him in 2010, in front of the painting as he was in 1950-ish, 60 years later. So I just wanted to add that and end with that.

43:27

Thank you.