THE CERAMIC SCULPTURES OF CARL WALTERS (1883-1955)

by

MICHEAL A. KARCZEWSKI

(Under the Direction of Janice Simon)

ABSTRACT

The ceramic animal and figural sculptures of Carl Walters are re-examined and new interpretations are offered for some of his works. Walters’s art is seen to be a continuation and transformation of the nineteenth century European animalier tradition into the twentieth century realm of American sculpture. His later works are a satirical reaction to both contemporary artists of his time and the development of Abstract Expressionism in American art. The influence of Edith Halpert and her Downtown Gallery in New York City is discussed as a major venue which helped to promote and place Walters’s sculptures into important museum and private collections.

INDEX WORDS: Carl Walters; Ceramics; American Sculpture; 20th century Art; Animalier
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This thesis is dedicated to Dr. Andrew Ladis,
whose enthusiasm for this project was a constant source of inspiration,
and to my parents,
for their constant love, support and encouragement.
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"No, my life is not this precipitous hour
Through which you see me passing at a run.
I stand before my background like a tree.
Of all my many mouths I am but one,
and that which soonest chooses to be dumb.

I am the rest between two notes
which, struck together, sound discordantly,
because death’s note would claim a higher key.

But in that dark pause, trembling, the notes meet,
Harmonious.

And the song continues sweet."¹

This poem by German poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) was read at the 1955 funeral of American sculptor Carl Walters (1883-1955).² The most striking aspect of the poem is the second stanza, containing the verbal description of a musical rest between two notes. The poem continues to suggest that in the space between the two notes is a harmonious pause in which two separate notes come together, “discordantly”, to create a unified duality, if you will. Rilke’s dichotomy of silence and sound, discordance and harmony, best expresses the indefinable quality of certain aspects of Walters’s œuvre. His art can be seen as composing two notes, one practical and straightforward in medium and presentation. Several lithographs, narrative in subject matter, exist, and there are a few known early paintings (one specifically known to be extant as of this writing). His ceramic vessels, plates, and bowls, are decorative as well as functional objects. The other “note” in his œuvre is idiosyncratic in subject and form: ceramic animal figures, a few notable human figures and what he termed his “figures-in-cabinet.”³ It is this note of his œuvre, these latter, non-vessel pieces that will be examined in this thesis.

Very little has been written or explored about Walters. The information available is of a biographical nature; a few periodical articles, and brief statements or paragraphs in ceramic art surveys and exhibition catalogs. The only single volume devoted solely to his work is a small, eight-page exhibition catalog published in 1958. With his methodical and scientific mind, he wrote extensively on his chemical and mechanical processes, and his ideas for inventions. Yet it appears that he wrote almost nothing of an art historical nature, or anything of an explanatory nature regarding his art. If he did, nothing has survived. After re-examining Walters’s life and his oeuvre, the absence of a concentrated monographic examination has been the impetus for this thesis.

Dualities and contrasts abound in Walters’s life and art. It will be demonstrated that as Walters was both modern and anti-modern, conservative and progressive (in his personal life as well as his art), elements of all of these concepts informed his art. He was reverent in his use of ancient ceramics as a source of influence and, as I will argue, the bronze animalier traditions of the late nineteenth century, a genre that he adapted and transformed for the twentieth century. Walters’s development as an artist during the age of a machine aesthetic, and a period of renewed interest in folk art, especially its naïve and primitive qualities, can be seen in his work. His art is whimsical, and not academic in its sculptural presentation to the viewer, owing to a surging interest in American art capturing aspects of circus culture, animals, acrobats and performers. These whimsical, circus elements, reflected in both Walters’s sculptures and the art of other contemporary American artists, will be discussed in this thesis, along with the importance of the role of Edith Halpert, a modern art dealer who championed and sold Walters’s

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6 The one art historical document that may possibly be attributed to Carl Walters (there is no signature or name listed) is a six page typewritten manuscript with corrections, in which it appears Walters (or someone else) narrates his discovery of clay, ceramics, and the elusive Egyptian blue glaze. See Carl Walters papers, 1859-1956.
ceramic sculptures to wealthy collectors and important clients, and also became a pioneering voice in the resurging interest in American folk art. Although some influence of this renewed interest in folk art may be seen in Walters’s sculptures, I would argue, however, that Walters is not a folk artist, and should not be seen as one. Folk art is often tradition bound, with little or no change over time, being passed down through oral tradition.\(^7\) The circumstances of the folk artist and his level of artistic knowledge or expertise often display a lack of formal training. Walters, then, cannot be a folk artist in the traditional sense as he was a professionally trained artist, who worked and lived in an artists’ colony, selling his works mostly through a New York gallery.

Finally, an analysis of Walters’s later ceramic works right before his death in 1955 reveals the unusual and satirical works he created with great imagination. His figures-in-cabinet pieces are intimate windows that reflect Walters’s thoughts on contemporary art movements and their creators. These works perform one of the oldest and most basic functions of art; that is, reflecting and commenting on the state of the fine arts and artists contemporary to him.

**EARLY ARTISTIC TRAINING**

Walters began his artistic pursuits as a painter. From 1905 to 1907 he took art classes at the Minneapolis Art Institute. He moved to New York in 1908 to study both under Robert Henri (1865-1929), and at the William Merritt Chase School.\(^8\) Robert Henri exerted a deep influence on an entire generation of American artists who attended his classes, instead of the artists subscribing to what he considered the stalled academic training.\(^9\) Walters married Helen Lawrence, a fellow painting student, in 1912, and the couple moved to Portland, Oregon. During

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his Portland period, Walters began painting seascapes and landscapes in an expressionistic manner, similar in style to his teacher Henri, and most notably created a series of lithographs of shipping yards. He and his wife Helen were active members of Portland’s artistic circles, and knowledgeable about current art movements and ideas, including the Armory Show of 1913.

WALTERS IN NEW YORK

In 1919, Carl and Helen Walters moved to New York City with only $500, made from his pursuits as a candle maker. They rented an apartment at 47 Greenwich Avenue. Walters experimented and created a blue candle of mutton fat, by mixing cobalt blue with hot fat into a paper mold. Walters started his candle business with Helen, who made the paper molds. He held a candle exhibit, which was a great financial success. Finally, he used brass tubes and soldered them to create molds for his candles, and eventually developed a machine to replace the American paper mold process into a mechanized metal system to produce the candles. This system of building a mechanized process to create individual art objects to sell would foreshadow Walters’s ceramic sculptures, which he would begin to create shortly.

In the first years of the 1920s, Walters became fascinated with the blue color of Egyptian pottery beads and a ceramic sculpture of a hippopotamus (Figure 1) at the Metropolitan Museum

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10 The Portland period of Walters has been well documented by Professor Michael Munk, in his article “The ‘Portland Period’ of Artist Carl Walters,” in *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 101, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 134-161. My thanks to Professor Munk for his thoughts and encouraging emails, which alerted me to his own work on Carl Walters. Email correspondence with the author.

11 Helen Walters kept a diary during this period, now housed in the Archives of American Art in Washington, D.C. One interesting fact she made sure to notate was when she viewed Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase no. 2*, while on exhibit at the Portland Art Museum in December 1913. Thanks again to Professor Munk for not only selecting and reproducing several diary entries in his article, but for also directing me to this source. See his article “The Diaries of Helen Lawrence Walters,” in *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 106, no. 4 (Winter 2005), p. 598.


13 The information in this paragraph is taken from a six page type written manuscript, annotated with corrections, found with his papers in the Archives of American Art. The manuscript may possibly be written by Walters himself, although there is no identifying signature. See *Carl Walters papers, 1859-1956*. 

4
of Art in New York City. He began experimenting to reproduce that color. He tried mixing and matching bits of blue and green glaze, but the results only turned brown. Looking up the color in the Encyclopedia Britannica, Walters discovered that Egyptians made blue glass by mixing sand, limestone, and malachite. The malachite was included not for its green color, but its mineral property as a form of copper ore. He built a furnace to experiment, and by trial and error began producing formulas to create the blue colors, which he would compare to the ancient colors of the past by taking trips to the Metropolitan Museum. During one of these trips, he thought to ask the curator of Egyptian art, who at that time was Forbes Watson, if he could have some pieces of pottery to compare. A Mr. Winlock sent Walters to the museum’s basement and a large box of fragments was dumped out for Walters to pour through. Using these fragments as the standard to which to aspire, Walters found that he developed a very good blue pottery glaze, and so began serious experiments in the ceramic medium. He built his own kiln out of firebrick and junk metal in a backroom fireplace in his Greenwich Avenue apartment. Having no potters wheel, objects had to be made using molds, which Walters also created himself. During the following summer he carried out successful experiments to replicate his Egyptian blue glaze for plates, which sold quickly.

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14 The sources for this paragraph are the six page typewritten manuscript op. cit., and William I. Homer’s essay for the exhibition catalogue Museum of Art of Ogunquit, Fourth Annual exhibition July 1-Sept. 10, 1956, both in the Archives of American Art. See Carl Walters papers, 1859-1956.

15 Another reason for Walters turning to ceramics may have been practical, as his candle business failed once ten cent stores began to carry dipped candles at 10 cents each, destroying the market on handmade candles. In building his own kiln, Walters used old plumber’s junk and found materials. He had been a tinsmith’s apprentice when he was 15, and later worked in a pattern maker’s store, where he made brass patterns for small elements of farming equipment. After his first winter at the Minneapolis School of Fine Arts, he worked as a third cook on a side wheeler down the Mississippi to Fort Madison, Iowa and spent the summer as a boilermaker’s apprentice. Having this knowledge of fabrication of the metals, he made candle molds, floor lamps with perforated metal shades, large mirror frames and a pair of torcheres, and later his kiln. See Carl Walters papers, 1859-1956.

16 Henry Varnum Poor (1887-1970) was an artist contemporary to Walters. Poor’s foray into the realm of ceramics mirrored Walters’s own experience, in a way. After commercial disappointment with his paintings, Poor had wandered into a show of ancient Cretan terra-cotta bowls and cups on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. These objects embodied the delicate balance between spirit and material. Poor said that he "started doing pottery for the pleasure of decorating it, of having something entirely in my control from beginning to end, so that both the
MACHINE MADE VERSUS HAND MADE

The above story illustrates an important dichotomy in Walters’s ceramic work. He teeters on the line between machine and anti-machine, two elements not normally associated with ceramics before Walters and his contemporaries. While Walters was beginning to focus on his ceramic animal sculptures, the world around him was beginning to focus on the machine. During 1920 to around 1945, modern industry, the machine and its products were becoming a part of everyday life. From the German Expressionist movement, Fritz Lang’s film *Metropolis* of 1927 gave viewers a science fiction vision of social class disparity amidst a world of technology and machines. In America, Elmer Rice’s play *The Adding Machine* described a world in which evolution will progress so far that machines will subjugate humans for industrial use in machines. While poking fun at such ideas, Charlie Chaplin’s humorous *Modern Times* of 1936 nevertheless reflected the subconscious fears of the public about the horror of the machine. The benefits of the machine came in Henry Ford’s assembly line, which provided rapid production and plentiful jobs. Objects that were formerly made by hand but became machine crafted objects, especially those mass produced, were often being included for display and sale in modern art exhibitions, including a groundbreaking exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in 1934.

Illustrations from the exhibition catalogue include objects like glass vases (Figure 2), designed by Walter Dorwin Teague (1883-1960) and produced by the Steuben Division of the Corning object and images it held would be equally mine.” See Harold E. Dickson et al., *Henry Varnum Poor, 1887-1970: A Retrospective Exhibition*, exh. cat. Museum of Art, the Pennsylvania State University, Sept. 14-Nov. 20, 1983, et al. (University Park, PA: Museum of Art, the Pennsylvania State University, 1983), p. 39.


Glass works, that were exhibited along with wooden salad and berry bowls, designed by Russel Wright (1904-1976) (Figure 3). Both the glass vases and wooden bowls, while formerly hand produced by artisans, were now being mass produced for public consumption. This interest in uniting the arts and the machine aesthetic began early in such ideas as Richard F. Bach’s industrial art program created at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1918. American designers found inspiration in the 1920s in the image of the machine with its attributes of speed, efficiency, precision and reliability. With all this technology came the urge to infuse painting and sculpture with the modern spirit and form.

The seemingly polar opposites of machine-made versus hand-made coexist together in Walters’ works. The artificial division between these two methods of production is hazy, or perhaps non-existent in Walters’ ceramic sculptures. According to the 1934 exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art, the method of hand-made, or handicraft “implies irregularity, picturesqueness, decorative value, and uniqueness,” while the “machine implies precision, simplicity, smoothness, reproducibility… The difference between craft and the machine lies in spirit and convention as much as in actual method of manufacture.” All the above adjectival elements for both machine-made and hand-made can be applied to Walters’ ceramic sculptures.

Although Walters created his ceramic sculptures during the modern age of the machine, one must not forget that the predominant artistic movement during his early career was the Arts and Crafts movement. Many of the ideas that came out of the Arts and Crafts movement can be seen in Walters’ ceramic work, especially since the Arts and Crafts movement was not quite

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21 Ibid., p. 27.

The Arts and Crafts movement was not simply a style, but an approach to making objects. The movement had to be both modern and anti-modern, as the service of modern art was to include the revival of traditional crafts. The quest of the movement was to find meaning in a time of radical social change, and the need was felt to retain a sense of the individual in mass society.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 11-19.} This concept is both true of the Arts and Crafts period, as well as the age of the machine. The Arts and Crafts ideals of simplicity, truth to material, and pride in hard work and construction are ideals that describe Walters and his methods. While Walters did not make the standard Arts and Crafts objects of simple, hand made construction for private interiors (i.e. furniture and other decorative but functional items), that does not mean that one cannot see elements of the Arts and Crafts movement in his ceramic works, including his animal sculptures.

The basic assumption of ceramics is the manual involvement of the clay, molding it by hand to whatever final shape the artist wishes. Walters did create his own animal models, but by using his own hand-created molds and a self-built kiln to fire the clay. The concept of Walters using machinery to create his art is further complicated by the fact that any machine or tool he needed, he often created himself.\footnote{Barbara Perry, \textit{The Diversion of Keramos: American Clay Sculpture 1925-1950}, exh. cat. Everson Museum of Art, New York et. al. September 9-November 27, 1983 (New York: Everson Museum of Art, 1983): p. xix.}

Though he used molds and machines, Walters was the spark of creation behind every object he made, no matter the method. Although there are instance where he may have used an outside pottery fabrication center, or an outside mold, he usually created the molds he needed.
himself. An example of such an adaptation of an outside work is Walters’ sculpture *Cock* (Figure 4). The sculpture is a ceramic figure of the body of a cock with a fluted cylindrical bottom, instead of feet. The bottom of the sculpture’s base is etched with two markings: one for Stonelain Art Pottery, where the main ceramic body of the figure was produced, and the other is Carl Walters’s signature.\(^{26}\) From these markings, one can deduce that the main mold of the sculpture was produced at Stonelain Art Pottery in New York, and Walters glazed and fired the sculpture in his signature style.

The sculpture *Cock* (Figure 4) seems to be an exception to the general rule that Walters created his own molds when sculpting his ceramic animal figures. He sometimes used the same mold to create animal figures, but after the mold had created the initial clay formation, he would build up the individual surface by hand, manipulating the clay of each sculpture to give them their own unique, autonomous features. He would also create different and distinct glazes, and sometimes title each sculpture differently, so that two sculptures from the same mold might be mistaken for individual works from separate molds.

For example, his *Hippo* from 1932 (Figure 5) is glazed with red and beige tones, colors associated with autumn.\(^{27}\) A leaf and vine motif meanders across the surface, creating an innovative pattern of detail for the eye to explore. Although the leaf and vine motif is associated with water, the natural habitat of the hippopotamus, the colors are divorced from the natural gray skin pigment of the animal. The figure is not rendered in a traditional or naturally representative way, but in a way in which ornament and decoration exist of their own accord: the idea of *l’art*...
pour l’art. Comparing the Hippo of 1932 (Figure 5) with the Hippopotamus of 1936 (Figure 6), a visual difference is evident in the color and decoration of the glazes, but closer inspection yields the conclusion that these two works were created from the same mold. The Hippopotamus of 1936 (Figure 6) is glazed with Walters’s famous Egyptian blue glaze, and compares nicely with the ancient Egyptian Hippo (Figure 1) that he studied in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The ancient sculpture has minimal decoration, with only lines and blossom motifs to suggest a natural habitat, presumably along the Nile River, hence the blue color and plant decoration. Walters followed suit on his sculpture with a leaf design to enhance and delineate the bulbous forms of his Hippo. Though Walters employed a leaf/vine motif for both sculptures, he differentiated a separate glaze design for each of his sculptures.

An earlier, more masterful use of surface decoration and the Egyptian blue glaze is his Figure of a Whale from 1927 (Figure 7). Walters used his Egyptian blue glaze and decorated the body of the whale with a multitude of marine animal and plant motifs, such as outlines of palm leaves and sea horses, and squid or jellyfish forms, to create and suggest the marine habitat of a whale. Walters’s use of an ancient source (the ancient Egyptian Hippo) as inspiration for his sculptures of a hippopotamus (Figure 6) and a whale (Figure 7) mirrors the use of ancient works of art for inspiration made by many early twentieth century modernists, such as Aristide Maillol (1861-1944) and Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978).

While Walters did not produce identical editions of his ceramic sculptures, he did sometimes use the same molds to create different individual sculptures, such as the two hippopotamus sculptures discussed above. For other works, he created only a single version of that sculpture, such as Cat in Tall Grass from 1939 (Figure 9), discussed below. With one mold being used to create several different sculptures, it may seem that dating would be problematic.
However, Walters had the foresight to sgraffito his signature and date on each work he produced, as in his *Figure of a Whale* (Figure 8). The molds may have been a few years old but the sculpture bears the year it was glazed and fired.\(^{28}\) This tradition of incising a signature and date into a work of sculpture goes back to earlier periods in art history, including, for example, works cast in bronze by such nineteenth century artists as Antoine-Louis Barye (1796-1875) and Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), among others.

**WALTERS AND THE ANIMALIER TRADITION**

While almost all authors who discuss Walters’s work do so in relation to the contemporary artistic movements of his time, I would suggest that a new direction must be argued: the past. Specifically, that Walters’s animal sculptures are a continuation, reaction, and progression of the bronze *animalier* tradition of the nineteenth century.

Unlike other areas in art history, most notably painting and sculpture, assigning the distinction of a singular master work by an artist in the realm of ceramics is problematic.\(^{29}\) Ceramic artists, especially potters, rarely produce one extraordinary work to be a major statement of both their art and *oeuvre*. Often, ceramics are serial in conception and production: several individual yet related objects come together as distinct portions of a coherent whole. Walters’s animal sculptures would therefore be viewed together as his master works, above his lithographs, vessels, and other surviving objects in his *oeuvre*. This is not to discredit those latter objects, or his artistic output as a whole, but Walters’s animal sculptures have come to be the most widely known, collected and discussed objects in his *oeuvre*. I use the phrase animal sculptures, and specifically the word sculpture, purposefully: for Walters’s animal figures are neither ceramic vessels (like Walters’s early work and that of his contemporaries) nor

\(^{28}\) Perry, p. 90.

architectural adornments (such as Pewabic decorative tiles). These animal sculptures, though produced in the ceramic medium, fall into the art historical category of sculpture, as defined by Herbert Read: a three dimensional tactile object with the independence of portability but the aesthetic effect of a monument, which the artist creates as a symbol of indeterminate feelings. As Read states, sculpture realizes “ideas as specific shapes.”  

Animals figure throughout the history of art, from ancient to contemporary times. With the Renaissance revival of classical antiquity, small bronze statuettes of animals appeared during the Baroque period. The animalier genre appeared in the nineteenth century to focus entirely on animal subjects in an independent manner. The English aristocracy’s love of sporting events was captured in “sporting pictures”, and artists’ interests in depicting animal subjects grew out of the demands of patrons rather than the seeds of an artistic movement. The demand for bronze sculptures to decorate the homes of the growing bourgeois class grew to great demand in the nineteenth century. Decorative bronze sculptures were made for both the French and English markets, though the animalier genre and its practitioners are primarily French.

Three stylistic and iconographic trends can be seen in the bronze animalier tradition: the Romantic expressionism of Antoine-Louis Barye (1796-1875) and his followers, realism tempered with picturesque sentiment as in the works of Pierre Jules Mêne (1810-1879), and the later sensitive influence of Impressionism in the works of Rembrandt Bugatti (1885-1916).

Like the word Impressionism, the term animalier was originally intended to be derogatory, used by a critic to slight the work of the French bronze sculptor Antoine-Louis

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32 Luciano, p. 5.
Barye. Barye moved towards raw and uncivilized emotion, injecting a “proud intensity” into his animal sculptures. These radical sculptures broke away from the emphasis on human figural studies, the predominant subject matter of the time. He rebelled against the Neoclassical and academic environment of the 1830s, challenging the hierarchy of the Académie des Beaux-Arts where he had been trained.

Barye’s bronze *animalier* sculptures are anatomically accurate, but sometimes exaggerated with additional pathos, in contrast to the hyper-realistic, domestic and pastoral sensitivities of his contemporary *animalière* painter and sculptor, Rosa Bonheur (1822-1899). Later, anatomical accuracy and naturalistic detail gave way to the Impressionist evocation of an animal’s essential nature, as in the bronze sculptures of Bugatti and Edgar Degas (1834-1917).

Like prints, small bronzes were produced in “editions.” In the tradition of bronze sculpture from the Renaissance to present, the clay, wax, or plaster model sculpted by the artist may be the only work that can be attributed to the artist. The initial casting in bronze would be traditionally finished by assistants or a foundry, and the artist may have chased the finished surface, to exact the final details. Future bronze castings of a work removed from the artist’s time and place could cause questionable attributions. Unlike Barye and other artists working in bronze, Walters molded, glazed and fired all of his works himself, with no anticipation or want of future reproductions. Several of Walters’s Woodstock colleagues portrayed him drawing an idea or firing one of his ceramic works in his kiln, so we know his personal touch is probably on...
most if not all his ceramic sculptures.\textsuperscript{37} Just as Walters and his sculptures are often categorized in the nebulous area between early twentieth century modern art and the revival of folk art, Barye bridged the gap between being a fine arts sculptor and being a \textit{bronzier}, earning his nickname as the “Michelangelo of the menagerie.”\textsuperscript{38}

The \textit{animalier} tradition in the United States is not a stylistically or intellectually cohesive body of work, like its nineteenth century French counterpart.\textsuperscript{39} American artists turned to producing \textit{animalier} works in a variety of contexts, mostly relating to subjects in the context of the American West, with such artists as Frederic Remington (1861-1909) combining human and animal figures, as in his bronze sculpture \textit{Bronco Buster}. Women artists, such as Anna Hyatt Huntington portrayed pets in the domestic sphere, while Herbert Haseltine created modern bronze works influenced by Egyptian art and Near Eastern Art, an influence shared by some of Walters’ ceramics works.\textsuperscript{40}

The perfect example of an animal sculpture by Walters that expands the \textit{animalier} tradition into the twentieth century, and also pays homage to sculpture of the past, is \textit{Cat in Tall Grass} from 1939 (Figure 9). Like the lost wax casting process used for creating bronze sculptures, Walters used molds to create this work. However, the flexibility of the medium of clay as opposed to bronze allowed Walters to alter the surface topography of his sculptures and add differing and distinctive details as necessary. Certainly, bronze sculptors were known to

\textsuperscript{37} For depictions by his fellow artists of Walters working, see \textit{The Maverick: Hervey White’s Colony of the Arts}. exh. cat. Woodstock Artists Association and Museum, New York, August 5, 2006-November 5, 2006 (Woodstock: Woodstock Artists Association and Museum, 2006). In a mirror reflection of Walters and his association with the Woodstock colony, as a painter Barye was closely associated with the colony of artists at Barbizon, i.e. Jean-François Millet and Théodore Rousseau, who worked from the late 1820s on natural landscape paintings, often \textit{en plein air}, breaking away from the usual fare at the Paris Salon. See \textit{Untamed: the Art of Antoine-Louis Barye}, p. x.

\textsuperscript{38} Théophile Gautier called Barye the “Michelangelo of the menagerie,” while Prince de Joinville referred to Barye’s work as a “masterpiece worthy of Benvenuto Cellini.” See \textit{Untamed: the Art of Antoine-Louis Barye}, pp. x, 38.

\textsuperscript{39} Luciano, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{40} Both artists created rather melancholy works telling the unity and cooperation between man and beast, a change in the \textit{animalier} tradition stemming from the reliance of men and women on animals in the American West. See Luciano, p. 8.
chase their sculptures with additional details once cast. As opposed to the subtractive process of bronze chasing, the additive and flexible nature of the ceramic medium allowed Walters to add more clay to the final wet model before final firing, and surface decoration in the glaze could be created independently to allow for sculptures to be similar in form, but distinctive in presentation. To demonstrate his additive clay method and use of molded forms, Walters illustrated the creation of his 1930 sculpture *Mandrill* for his chapter “Ceramic Sculpture” in Brenda Putnam’s 1939 book *The Sculptor’s Way: a Guide to Modelling and Sculpture*. One can see the first stage (Figure 10) and the final stage (Figure 11) of the sculpture *Mandrill* now in the Ogunquit Museum of Art in Maine (Figure 12). One can also see Walters’s method of using one mold to create multiple sculptures, but giving each an individual glaze, by comparing his *Cat* (Figure 13) and *Tiger* (Figure 14), both from 1938. The yellow and orange glaze with black hatching marks creates a pattern similar to a tiger’s coat, differing from the linear striped pattern of *Cat*. At a first glance of only surface details, these two sculptures do look distinctive, but comparing the molded forms of the sculptures, the very close measurements and the identical dating illustrates that both sculptures came from the same mold. Walters’s *Cat* (Figure 13) from 1938 may be seen as a forerunner for his *Cat in Tall Grass* of 1939.

*Cat in Tall Grass* (Figure 9) is a whimsical depiction of a cat, painted in a black and ivory pattern slightly resembling that of a zebra. While striped felines are common, black and white striped felines are not. The proportions of the body elements are not quite true to actual feline proportions, which suggest they have been stylized. The stiff verticality of the sculpture’s legs attached to a base, and then rising to support the rigid body and erect head, suggests the

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41 Walters generally used three methods in building his works: modeling by hand for intricate sculptures, throwing clay on a wheel for his vessel objects, and creating molds to use in the production of original sculptures to be glazed and decorated differently. See Perry, p. 89.

influence of ancient ceramics, particularly Chinese and Persian, which Walters admired. The Egyptian influence can be seen by comparing this sculpture to feline decorative images used on ancient Egyptian furniture, like items discovered in 1922 by Howard Carter in the tomb of Tutankhamen. The ancient Egyptian worship of the feline goddess Bast, and the tall grass of the African savannahs or papyrus reeds along the Nile may be seen as contributing factors in the title and subject of this sculpture, hence the linear design on the sculpture’s surface. Although it has been suggested that this sculpture was inspired by the artist’s own cat, Old Lady, Walters did not use actual live models for his sculptures: he would “start with a clear mental conception and begin at once to realize it in clay. I am not interested in literal representations ... I take liberties with proportion and anatomy. It is really a problem in creative design.” While the Egyptian influence can be seen, and perhaps the artist’s own pet served as a reference (though no photograph has come to light), I would also suggest another popular and cultural reference that Walters may have made with Cat in Tall Grass. The sculptured suggestion of a wide smile, pointed triangular ears, and elongated legs are very similar to the popular Felix the Cat cartoon character of the 1920s (Figure 15) and the Kit-Cat clock with moving tail and eyes, popular in the 1930s (Figure 16).

The idea of an animal with anthropomorphic qualities can be seen in popular imagery in early twentieth century, especially in the medium of the cartoon, both printed and animated. George Herriman (1880-1944) create his black and white comic cartoon Krazy Kat, similar and perhaps a predecessor to Felix the Cat, which ran in weekend City Life sections of Hearst

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Newspapers from 1916 to 1935.\footnote{John Carlin, “Masters of American Comics: An Art History of Twentieth-Century American Comic Strips and Books,” in \textit{Masters of American Comics.} exh. cat. Los Angeles, The Hammer Museum and The Museum of Contemporary Art, November 20, 2005-March 12, 2006, et. al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 42.} In terms of animation, Walt Disney’s \textit{Steamboat Willie} from 1928 (Figure 17) is a prime example of anthropomorphic animals (i.e. Mickey Mouse), who have human qualities of speech, thought, and comedic action.\footnote{According to the Metropolitan Museum of Art accession sheet for \textit{Cat in Tall Grass}, the sculpture was produced in Woodstock in 1939, with Walters’s signature and date on the base. It is listed by the artist as a single, unique model. \textit{See Carl Walters papers, 1859-1956,} reel 198 and \textit{American Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volume 2,} p. 721. Also, composer John Alden Carpenter, in collaboration with George Herriman, created a ten-minute ballet \textit{Krazy Kat} in 1921. The ballet was a festival theme in 1926, during Walters’s active period at the Woodstock colony. \textit{See Tom Wolf, “Hervey White’s Maverick Colony and its Artists” in \textit{The Maverick: Hervey White’s Colony of the Arts.} exh. cat. Woodstock Artists Association and Museum, New York, August 5, 2006-November 5, 2006 (Woodstock: Woodstock Artists Association and Museum, 2006), p. 31.}

\textit{Cat in Tall Grass} is the only model created from that particular mold, with no other copies produced.\footnote{\textit{Cat in Tall Grass} was shown in December, 1942, in a loan exhibition entitled “Artists for Victory” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The jury for sculpture included Alexander Archipenko, Paul Manship, and Carl Milles. Out of 305 sculpture entries, \textit{Cat in Tall Grass} won sixth prize and was one of thirteen selections accessioned by the museum. \textit{See American Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volume 1: A Catalogue of Works by Artists Born before 1865,} ed. Thayer Tolles. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), p. xxiii and \textit{American Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volume 2,} p. 722, note 3.} This sculpture was judged by contemporary sculptors and awarded a prize, which speaks highly of Walters.\footnote{Critics of Barye were negative and positive, denouncing his work in general as having anatomically impossible poses and just a passing fancy or vogue. But they also commented how Barye put movement and force into his}

Comparing \textit{Cat in Tall Grass} to an \textit{animalier} work creates a visual record of the progression of this tradition from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An example of a typical \textit{animalier} work by Barye would be \textit{Tiger Devouring a Gavial} from 1831 (Figure 18). As in Barye’s work, Walters has placed his feline upon a base to support the sculpture. But while the serious emotion, anatomical accuracy and narrative subject matter in the Barye are indicative of the \textit{animalier} genre, Walters has not created a narrative per se: the eyes of the feline appear to gaze forward at the viewer with a slight smile. Walters’s sculpture seems rigid, static and silent, while the Barye implies motion and sound, with the jaws of both animals open, the tiger devouring the gavial, and the gavial seeming to emit cries of pain.\footnote{Critics of Barye were negative and positive, denouncing his work in general as having anatomically impossible poses and just a passing fancy or vogue. But they also commented how Barye put movement and force into his} One can see in these two
examples how Barye conveyed complex, emotional drama through his works, while Walters avoided this impetus for psychological narrative by creating his sculptures in a direct, simple manner. If Barye domesticated the sublime wild kingdom for the picturesque private interior, then Walters subverted the sublime and dramatic into the modern and humorous. The Barye also contains two animals within its composition, something common in the *animalier* genre but very rare in Walters’s work. All of the known animal sculptures by Walters in public institutions are of single animals only, probably due to the practice of using molds to create the works. One unifying factor between these two works, and the common thread linking Walters to the *animalier* artists, was the marketability of his sculptures. These works are often table top size, small enough in scale to be easily sold, transported and displayed in the home. The bright colors and bold outlines Walters often employed in his glazes would have made his sculptures quite striking in a private, domestic setting, with the glaze probably reflecting ambient light.

A similar tradition to the bronze *animalier* genre, in terms of domestic settings and portability of objects, is the ceramic production at Staffordshire, and the ceramic animals produced there.

One can see the similarity between Staffordshire figures and Walters’s sculptures, especially *Cat in Tall Grass* (Figure 9) and *Figure of a Cat* (Figure 19) from circa 1760. Both are feline figures with black and white linear patterns on their surfaces. The Staffordshire *Cat* has additionally brown eyes and blue ears. One can see a difference in the sculpting of the body forms, however. The Walters has a great deal of negative space under the body and between the animal sculptures unlike the immobile, static depictions of animals in the past. Critics praised *Tiger Devouring a Gavial* (Figure 18) and marveled at the “genius” who could create such a dramatic, and expressively powerful work from a couple bags of plaster. See *Untamed: the Art of Antoine-Louis Barye*, pp. xi, 16-19. Rodin, a student of Barye, noted that Barye had solved the mystery of rendering movement, and one can see muscular similarities between Barye’s animals and Rodin’s figural torsos.

49 This sculpture was formerly in the collection of Bernard and Judith Newman. It was sold at Sotheby’s Important Americana New York sale on Friday, January 21, 2005, lot 238.
legs of the feline, whereas the Staffordshire figure is a somewhat bulky, solid mass. In terms of production and marketability of each object, the Walters sculpture is the only one from its specific mold, while the Staffordshire was mass produced in multiple quantities. The Walters was entered into a competition and purchased by a museum, as discussed above, while the Staffordshire *Figure of a Cat*, like almost all pieces of Staffordshire, were mass produced to be sold in shops for general consumption by the public at large.

By 1820, the Spode Pottery at Staffordshire had risen to prominence over other types of china produced at that time, and Staffordshire became the focal point of porcelain production in England.\(^{50}\) Tea, dessert, and dinner wares, as well as other useful and functional objects in decorative patterns were created, in addition to figures based on current events of the Victorian period. Some of Walters’s sculptures were created based on subjects of modernity, such as his circus figures, to be discussed below. He created nothing quite so journalistic, however, as the Staffordshire sculpture *The Death of Munrow* (Figure 20) from circa 1825 to 1835, based on a popular news item of the day.\(^{51}\) Comparing the *The Death of Munrow* (Figure 20) to Barye’s *Tiger Devouring a Gavial* from 1831 (Figure 18), one can see the difference between the naturalistic rendering of Barye, and the generalized treatment and adjusted proportions of the Staffordshire figure, in which the tiger hardly looks ferocious, and the figure of Munrow more like a doll than a man. One can notice how indebted the group of artisans creating the Staffordshire work were to Barye, as they copied his compositional structure of a tiger on a base, with jaw open clutching a figure in its teeth. The Barye becomes a consciously created work of


\(^{51}\) This sculpture was formerly in the collection of Josephine & Walter Buhl Ford II. It was sold at Sotheby’s Property from the Collection of Josephine & Walter Buhl Ford II sale in New York on Friday, October 6, 2006, lot 225.
art, and the Staffordshire figure a three dimensional illustration of a popular new item. While one could see both of these traditions informing the ceramic sculptures of Walters, I would stress the animalier tradition as the primary means of influence, rather than the popular art of the Staffordshire figures, as the animalier tradition is part of the cultural history of the fine arts which Walters carries forward into the twentieth century. Both traditions are important, though, as Walters’s bridges the two traditions together: the duality of a fine arts tradition and popular imagery in the ceramic medium are bridged in Walters’s art. He takes the ceramic medium used for popular figurines (and vessels) and utilizes it for his animal sculptures of fine art, instead of using the medium of bronze. Walters opened the animalier tradition to other media beyond bronze, in his case ceramics, destroying the prejudice that a fine arts tradition is dependent upon a specific medium.

FROM ANIMALIER TO MODERN: WALTERS AND BRANCUSI

Walters consciously created animal sculptures that resembled the basic shape of their respective animal model, following the animalier tradition in which the animal is recognizable to the viewer. However, Walters abandoned the dramatic naturalism of the animalier tradition, so as to make him comparable to his contemporary Constantin Brancusi (1876-1957), famous for modern sculptures of animals in which their forms are simplified to an abstract essence. If the animalier tradition and Brancusi were two polar extremes, Walters worked in between these extremes, taking cues from both mindsets.

Brancusi’s sculpture Bird in Space (Figure 19) was involved in litigation with the United States Customs Office, which claimed that the sculpture was not a work of art, but an object of
manufacture. Walters must have known of this legal and artistic debacle, as the affair was carried in the newspapers. *Bird in Space* had also been exhibited at Wildenstein and Brummer galleries in New York in 1926. Comparing *Bird in Space* (Figure 19) from 1924 and *Figure of a Whale* (Figure 7) from 1927, one can see that although Walters is considered modern, Brancusi is avant-garde, creating a sculpture much more abstract and streamlined. Walters is considered modern by definition because his works of art are about the thought process, and physical and compositional structure of each sculpture, not necessarily about a narrative or mythological allusion. According to an early 1917 article by Arthur Wesley Dow, an important artist in his own right, Brancusi and his sculpture would be considered modern since his art created a rebellion against the accepted and traditional forms of art previously created and exhibited. This rebellion would be Brancusi’s creation of a streamlined metallic form to constitute and symbolize the form of a bird.

While Walters stylized his animal figures, as in *Cat in Tall Grass* from 1939 (Figure 9), his abstraction did not go as far as Brancusi’s, such as *Fish* from 1926 (Figure 20), exhibited at Brummer Gallery in New York. While Walters formed the basic anatomical feline features for *Cat in Tall Grass*, and created a stylized surface glaze pattern, Brancusi simply let the natural veins of the marble decorate the surface, and simplified the curves of the form, to evoke rather than delineate anatomical details.

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53 As Robert Storr eloquently remarked, “Modernism…is that art that takes itself-its compositional techniques, methods of image making, physical presence, and constructive or destructive relation to the tradition of art-as its primary subject. Before modernist art is about anything else-an image, a symbol, the communication of an experience-it is about the logic and structure of the thing that carries meaning, and about how that thing came into being. In this respect, all modernist art is essentially abstract, even though only some modernist art looks it.” See Robert Storr, *Modern Art despite Modernism*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000), p. 28.


55 Geist, *Constantin Brancusi*, p. 108.
As his teacher Henri had taught, Walters was “interested not in the incident but in the essence of his subject.” This struggle of Walters, whether machine versus anti-machine, or figural representation versus abstract, is all part of Walters’s innate modern sensibility. One definition of modern is being “suspended between tradition and revolt, nationalism and internationalism, the aesthetic and the civic, and between belonging and alienation.”

A sense of alienation, or perhaps respite, could be what caused Walters and his wife Helen to leave New York City, and move to Woodstock, New York in 1922, where they joined other artists in the Maverick art colony. Artists went to Maverick to escape city life, and to live and work within nature, an interest Walters must have favored.

At Maverick, Walters built his kiln and his ceramicist career flourished. Walters continued the ideals of an arts and crafts colony, by respecting both craft and art, making original and personal statements in each. Walters is described by his friend Hermon More as “taking an almost child-like delight in non-conformity,” a key idea that describes most of Walters’s ceramic sculptures and defines his artistic modernity.

EDITH HALPERT AND HER ROLE IN WALTERS’S ART

Although spending most of his time living and working in Woodstock, Walters still exhibited works in New York City and must have commuted back and forth for various

58 Considering that one of the authors prominently featured in Walters’s scrapbook was Henry David Thoreau, it is not surprising that Carl and Helen Walters eventually followed Thoreau’s example by eschewing urban living and moving to Woodstock and specifically the Maverick art colony. See Carl Walters papers, 1859-1956, reel 2007.
59 Tom Wolf, “Hervey White’s Maverick Colony and its Artists” in The Maverick: Hervey White’s Colony of the Arts, p. 27. Above Walters’s shop was a working belfry he designed and built to strike the hours and keep time. This demonstrates just one example of Walters’s scientific mind at work, a man who produced several inventions and attempted patents. Because of the L-shape of the courtyard outside the shop where the kiln was positioned, Walters would hold firing parties given after dark, uniting his work with enjoyable social functions. See William B. Rhoads, “Hervey White and the Architecture of the Maverick,” in The Maverick: Hervey White’s Colony of the Arts, p. 52-53.
activities. The most prominent and influential art gallery venue in New York City was the *Downtown Gallery*, run from 1926 to 1970 by Edith Halpert (1900-1970), who would play a major role in Walters’s art. The *Downtown Gallery* made a difference in shaping a taste of modern American art and folk art. Halpert’s commercial art gallery gained a wider audience and recognition for modern American art, by selling or “placing” works in major American museums that were currently opening (Museum of Modern Art, New York), or expanding (The Detroit Institute of Arts). While previous art galleries were “genteel” and quiet, Halpert aggressively marketed her artists and her gallery, traveling and working with curators and collectors in Los Angeles, Detroit, Kansas City, and elsewhere. She visited the gallery 291, which was run by Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946). During the 1930s, Halpert would create an alliance between her *Downtown Gallery* and Stieglitz’s gallery *An American Place*.\(^6^1\)

Halpert held regular seasonal shows in December for the holidays, and in May or June, at the end of the season, thereby creating a tradition of unique works of affordable art to be bought as Christmas gifts and wedding presents. In 1932, and from 1935 until 1939, the *Downtown Gallery* annually featured “Ceramics by Carl Walters” for gift giving in December.\(^6^2\)

Halpert supported an entire roster of artists who benefited from her exhibitions, including Walters, who is listed on the 1937 roster of Halpert’s artists.\(^6^3\) It was the year before that Halpert sent an invitation to one of Walters’s most prominent patrons, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt. Mrs. Roosevelt was impressed on her visit to the *Downtown Gallery*, and she mentions specifically

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63 Ibid., p. 220.
both Walters and his work in her daily newspaper column “My Day.” This column was syndicated throughout the country, no doubt adding great marketing value to Walters’s works. Mrs. Roosevelt later purchased ash trays made by Walters, and is also listed as a former owner of Walters’s sculpture *Wart Hog*.

Walters was important and valuable as an artist to Halpert, so much so that in the 1940s, after moving locations to a better uptown address, the *Downtown Gallery* reduced its roster to fourteen painters, plus ceramics by Walters and sculpture by William Steig (1907-2003).

The role of patronage in Walters’s art is significant. Owing to Halpert’s clientele, Walters’s patrons would have been wealthy upper class individuals who bought works of art from Halpert. An example of this type of patronage would be the circumstances which linked Halpert and two ceramic works by Walters to the city of Detroit and the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Edith Halpert’s husband, Samuel Halpert, had moved to Detroit, working there as an artist. Robert Tannahill, a prominent Detroit philanthropist, was a regular client of Halpert’s, and it was mainly through Tannahill that Halpert took an interest in keeping up to date with shows and the art scene in Detroit. Tannahill also encouraged the collecting activities of his

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65 The current whereabouts of this sculpture are unknown. See Homer, *A Catalogue of the Ceramic Sculpture of Carl Walters: 1883-1955*.
66 Tepfer, p. 234.
67 A notable exception to this general rule was fellow American artist Charles Demuth, who owned a sculpture by Walters. See *Carl Walters papers, 1859-1956*.
69 Tepfer, p. 49 and 71, note 14. Halpert had exhibited *Home Sweet Home* from 1931 by Charles Sheeler (1883-1965) at the *Downtown Gallery* in November and December of 1931, which was later purchased by Robert Tannahill and donated to the Detroit Institute of Arts in 1945. See Tepfer, p. 96. The Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts, in cooperation with Edith Halpert, planned a joint Sheeler and Edward Hopper exhibition in 1935, and Halpert also mounted an exhibition of paintings by John Marin (1870-1953) and Georgia O’Keeffe (1887-1986) at the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts in January and February 1934. This became Marin’s first show in the Midwest and O’Keeffe’s first show outside New York City, with Halpert championing her roster of artists to new patrons. The Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts’s second exhibition, organized in part by Halpert, had works by important American artists of the 1930s, including Charles Burchfield (1893-1967), Stuart Davis (1892-1964), Charles Demuth (1883-1935), Marsden Hartley (1877-1943), Gaston Lachaise (1882-1935), Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1893-1953),
cousin Eleanor Ford, wife of Edsel Ford and daughter-in-law of automotive pioneer Henry Ford, who he recommended to Edith Halpert. Mrs. Ford even purchased a pair of roosters from Walters.

One of the most important patrons from Detroit was Lillian Hinkel Haass, who was also acquainted with Halpert. Haass collected modern art, as well as purchasing and donating art to the Detroit Institute of Arts, including providing funds to the Institute to purchase a ceramic work by Walters titled *Caterpillar* (Figure 21).

*Caterpillar* (Figure 21) is dated 1945, and is glazed in bright green with purple spots. Like Walters’s other works, the *Caterpillar* stands on all its feet motionless. The bulbous shapes create a rhythm of form, and upon hearing of the intended acquisition of this work by the Detroit Institute of Arts, Walters wrote a letter to the Institute, remarking that he felt the glazing on *Caterpillar* was the finest glazing he had ever done. With technical skill and sensitivity, complete harmony of form, texture and color, Walters created a virtuosic piece in his *Caterpillar*. With its large lively eyes, motionless legs and antennae calmly curled and folded back, it is as though the insect has paused and looks at the viewer. The appropriate naturalistic elements of form and color describe the figure of the *Caterpillar* much like its actual counterpart.

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70 See Harth, p. 66.

71 See Tepfer, p. 205 and 229, note 38.

72 See Harth, p. 11. Lillian Henkel Haass was one of the original members of the Friends of Modern Art auxiliary group at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Haass was named to Board of the Detroit Institute of Arts in 1934 and made President of Founders Society from 1948 to 1955. She was actively involved with the Arts and Crafts exhibitions of the 1930s as well as the [Detroit] Artists Market and Friends of Modern Art. She was a patron of Edith Halpert’s [Downtown] Gallery, where she purchased American folk art. She also had a distinguished collection of modern art, from which she made a number of gifts to the Detroit Institute of Arts between 1929 and 1949. These included works by Despiau, Eilshemius, Grosz, Rohlfs, Rodin, Barlach, Maillol, Braque, and Weber. See Tepfer, p. 75, note 30, and p. 153.

73 Unpublished correspondence to Paul Grigaut, Assistant to the Director, the Detroit Institute of Arts, January 30, 1948, from Pegeen Sullivan, Director of Gallery of Associated American Artists, Inc. See the Curatorial file for Carl Walters, *Caterpillar*, 1945, accession number 48.6, the Department of American Art, the Detroit Institute of Arts.

in nature, but also hint at a cartoon-like nature in its modernity. Walters probably knew of literature’s most infamous caterpillar, the inquisitive hookah-smoking caterpillar from Charles Lutwidge Dodgson’s 1865 novel *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, written under his pseudonym Lewis Carroll. In the novel, the main characters are animals who display anthropomorphic qualities, mimicking human speech and behavior. Sir John Tenniel (1820-1914) illustrated the first edition of 1865, and other artists, such as Gwynedd M. Hudson and Arthur Rackham (1867-1939), also created illustrations for subsequent editions. The Tenniel illustrations were reprinted over the years, joined with reprints of other editions, all of which may have been seen or read by Walters. If we compare three such illustrations, Tenniel’s *Advice from a Caterpillar* from 1865 (Figure 22), Hudson’s *Advice from a Caterpillar* from 1922 (Figure 23), and Arthur Rackham’s *Advice from a Caterpillar* from 1907 (Figure 24), one can see the basic composition of a caterpillar smoking a hookah, seated upon a mushroom, looking down at Alice. While the positions of the caterpillars’ bodies in the illustrations are different than Walters’s sculpture, all share similar shades of green as their color. The repetition of shapes and rhythmical forms in the Walters sculpture also relate the sculpture to its mechanized creation, combining elements of machine art and natural representation.\(^75\) Perhaps the choice of a caterpillar is intentional, as Walters is transforming clay and paint into the figure of an insect which itself is a natural symbol of transformation: from caterpillar to butterfly. Walters grasps the essential spirit of each animal and bases his representation on that spirit and feeling, and adds to it whimsical humor and decorative charm.

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\(^75\) The “beauty of machine art depends often upon rhythmical as well as upon geometrical elements—upon repetition as well as upon shape.” See the Foreword in *Machine Art*, exh. cat. Museum of Modern Art, New York. March 6-April 30, 1934 (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1934), unp.
The second work acquired by the Detroit Institute of Arts is *Before Adam* (Figure 25) from 1949. William Homer described this work as “an imaginary creature of the twilight realm between man and beast.” The work has a sculptured toadstool acting as a table for its structural base. The figure is decorated as though dressed in bright circus “clothing”, a diamond-patterned shirt with short sleeves, a bracelet or watch on his right arm and a ring on the left finger. There is intimation of combed, parted hair, eyelashes, mustache, and beard stubble on the face of the figure.

This strange sculpture is unlike Walters’s other works. The title *Before Adam* could refer to the clay which formed the first man Adam, in Genesis. The biblical name and the animal characteristics could also refer to the idea of evolution, creating possibly a duality of the biblical myth of creation versus evolution, perhaps even a satire on the idea of evolution, that man is descended from animal. The figure is certainly animal-like, but has anthropomorphic qualities, such as the clothing among other details. Walters has possibly created a dualistic figure, both

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76 The sculpture *Before Adam* was accessioned by the Detroit Institute of Arts under the title *Lemur*, and has remained misidentified until now. I believe the Detroit sculpture should be correctly reattributed under the title *Before Adam* for the following reasons: The 1958 catalogue by William Homer lists two entries, one for “Lemur” with the location listed as the Detroit Institute of Arts, and one for “Before Adam” with present location unknown. By this date, the confusion over the misnaming had caused *Before Adam* to join the ranks of Walters’s works with unknown whereabouts. The measurements recorded for *Before Adam* in the Homer catalogue are 9 ½ x 6 x 11 inches (height x width x length). The current measurements for the Detroit sculpture (Figure 25) are 9 1/8 x 6 x 11 5/8 inches (height x width x length). The measurements, taken approximately 45 years apart, are close enough to warrant consideration. The sculpture was exhibited at the Whitney Museum of Art in 1951 under the correct title *Before Adam*. The Detroit sculpture is signed on the base “Walters 1949.” The listing in the Homer catalogue for *Before Adam* lists the same date of 1949. Finally, perhaps the most conclusive pieces of evidence are the description given above by William Homer which describes the Detroit work (Figure 25) exactly, and a photograph of the Detroit sculpture, photographed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1951, with the correct title “Before Adam” written on the back of the photograph. The possible reason for the misidentification may be Walters himself, who appears to have referred to *Before Adam* as *Lemur* in an acquisitions letter dated June 11, 1953 sent to the Detroit Institute of Arts, acknowledging the purchase of *Before Adam/Lemur* and that he was shipping the sculpture to Detroit. It could be possible that two exact, separate sculptures existed, but this is unlikely given Walters’s eschewing duplicates of his work. Therefore, I would infer that both titles refer to the same piece, with *Before Adam* being the earlier and correct title. See the Curatorial file for Carl Walters, *Lemur*, 1949, accession number 53.263, the Department of American Art, the Detroit Institute of Arts. See also *The Annual & Biennial Exhibition Record of the Whitney Museum of American Art: 1918-1989* (Madison, CT: Sound View Press, 1991), p. 408; Homer, *A Catalogue of the Ceramic Sculpture of Carl Walters: 1883-1955*, and *Carl Walters papers, 1859-1956*, the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., reel 2030, frame 266.

77 William Innes Homer, “Carl Walters, Ceramic Sculptor.” *Art in America* 44 (Fall 1956), p. 47.
animal and human simultaneously. Both *Before Adam* and *Caterpillar* relate to the concept of transformation, and the idea of being caught or teetering between two different forms, much like Walters’s work in general.

If Walters has an *Adam* sculpture, then his Eve would be his *Snake Charmer* from 1929 (Figure 26). The combination of a nude female and a serpent immediately conjures the biblical figure of Eve,\(^78\) emphasized by the gold color used on the details of the snake, but also the figure’s nipples and toenails. The body of the figure is rather athletic and not thin, with generalized forms and large smooth areas of surface. As Walters played with dualism in *Before Adam* (human and animal), with *Snake Charmer* Walters plays with the notion of gender, giving the figure short-cropped hair, a masculine, athletic build, but also bestowing her with female breasts and genitalia. An air of seriousness is present about the figure’s face, which may relate to the fall of Eve.

**WALTERS AND THE AMERICAN CIRCUS**

The *Snake Charmer* sculpture is similar to most of the human figures in Walters’s *oeuvre*, in that it alludes to the circus, a favored new subject matter and genre theme during the 1920s.\(^79\) The subject matter of the circus in America, its “golden age” from 1871-1917 with such notables as Barnum & Bailey Circus, coincides with the artistic exploration of the subject by artists in late nineteenth-century Paris, such as Edgar Degas, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Auguste Renoir, James Tissot and Georges Seurat. Paris itself had three permanent venues for constant circus entertainment in the city.\(^80\) The most recognized European figure for circus

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\(^{78}\) Perry, p. 94.


imagery in the early twentieth century would be Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), and his images of acrobats and harlequins during his Rose period.

Walters would have been familiar with the idea of the American circus as an art subject from fellow artists he knew, such as Robert Henri, whom Walters studied with early in his career. Though Henri did not paint circus images, he called it an American subject and used it as instructional example. George Bellows, a fellow student of Henri whom Walters knew from Bellows’s time in Woodstock, and Samuel Halpert, Edith’s husband, also incorporated circus images into their paintings.\(^{81}\)

A contemporary of Walters, Russell Cowles (1887-1979), painted a work titled *Snake Charmer* (Figure 27). Cowles similarly utilizes his snake charmer, with her athletic build, although she wears sexy diaphanous clothing and high heels. Yet Cowles accentuates the switch of gender roles. His male figures in the painting have been emasculated. The right announcer has a look of horror on his face, and the clown dressed in white on the left stands contrapposto, with his right arm akimbo, in an effeminate manner. It is also interesting to note the lack of a distinctive bulge in both males’ genital regions, as though equating their bodies with the flat, triangular plane of the female’s genital region, gestured to by the announcer’s right hand. Both Walters’s and Cowles’s “charmers” seem to be keeping their snakes under control with brute strength, rather than simply charming them.

One of the most ingenious examples of Walters’s circus figures is his sculpture *Ella* (Figure 28) from 1927. *Ella* is a large, fat circus lady, nude like the *Snake Charmer*, but oddly proportioned to create bulbous fleshiness. The massive, heavy forms that compose the figure are comical, and perhaps poignant, since the main body of the sculpture balances upon a pair of tiny feet and a small stool. While its outward appearance is humorous, this sculpture is actually a

\(^{81}\) Ibid., pp. 15-21.
much more complex visual pun, incorporating references to other works in the history of art. Ella is dated 1927, and was probably created in that same year. Working in Woodstock, New York, and selling works in New York City, Walters must have seen new works of art by artists contemporary to him, either in person or in print. From March 7 to April 3, 1927, Alfred Stieglitz exhibited twenty sculptures by Gaston Lachaise (1882-1935) in his Intimate Gallery. Among the sculptures he exhibited was The Mountain (Figure 29). Two other sculptures by Lachaise were shown in the same year at Joseph Brummer’s 57th Street Gallery, a bronze version of Standing Woman (Figure 30) and a plaster model for Floating Woman (Figure 31). Lachaise’s female forms present an alternative to the idealized anatomy of Greco-Roman figures and academic studies. E. E. Cummings remarked on Lachaise’s ability to create an “economy of form through the elimination of unessentials.” Although it is not documented that Walters read Cummings’s essay, saw published illustrations in books and news articles of Lachaise’s works, or viewed the two exhibitions in New York in 1927, one cannot help but see the similarities in the bulbous hips, thick legs, fleshy thighs and ample breasts of Ella, The Mountain, Standing Woman, and Floating Woman. Comparing these four examples, one can begin to see the visual pun Walters has created with Ella. If one splits the name Ella into two syllables, it becomes Elle and La. Elle is the French female pronoun for she, which relates to the female forms of Lachaise. Elle is Woman, whether standing, floating, or reclining. Walters, however, significantly adds the delicate iron chair, a motif not present in Lachaise’s images of women. If one continues the word game, the French word for chair is chaise, or more properly with its definite article: la chaise

(the chair). Combining the two words creates Lachaise, the name of the French sculptor; with elle, or female, his main subject. Indeed, though it is difficult to determine exactly what type of card Ella holds in her right hand, the possibility of it being a playing card of some sort brings to mind the activity of playing games. In her left hand, she rests a small red hand mirror, hinting at the concepts of visual reflection and dual images. This ingenious construction of juxtapositions must have been designed by Walters to gently poke fun at his fellow artist’s sculptures.

In 1929, two years after Walters created Ella, the Whitney Studio Galleries in New York (a precursor to the Whitney Museum of American Art) held the exhibition The Circus in Paint (Figure 32), with the idea that American circus culture was a continuation and exploration of its European precedent. Walters is listed on the roster of artists included in the exhibition, as well as John Steuart Curry and Charles Demuth, among many others.85

John Steuart Curry (1897-1946) was a regionalist painter, associated with Kansas, but who lived on the East coast from 1919 to 1936.86 One may assume there might have been interaction between Walters and Curry, who were exhibiting works in the same show. This is proven by the visual evidence in Curry’s painting Baby Ruth (Figure 33) from 1932, which takes many visual cues from Walters’s 1927 sculpture Ella (Figure 28). Just as in the Walters sculpture, Curry has depicted a large, fat female circus figure, with short red hair, seated upon a chair and holding an object in her hand. Although Curry’s figure is clothed, one can still see the large calves and black shoes on her feet, just as in the Walters sculpture. The one card held by Ella has become three cards, tacked upon a wooden board in front of the figure. These cards appear to be illustrations of female circus subjects, and perhaps as well a reference to the 1929

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85 See Gustafson, in Images from the World Between, p. 48 and p. 83, note 57.
exhibition at the Whitney Studio Galleries. Here, Curry’s humor is similar to Walters, in that he
titled his painting *Baby Ruth*, calling to mind the famous candy bar invented around 1920, and
painting a female figure that clearly is not a baby, and may have eaten too many candy bars.\(^87\)

An earlier figural piece with a possible circus theme is *Fan Dancer* (Figure 34), from
1923, showing a fluid female figure, whose form twists and curves to suggest the pose of a
dancer.\(^88\) The figure is semi-nude, holding an orange and black fan across the lower torso. The
figure is balanced on the left leg, with the figure’s right knee bent and the foot lifted up. Both
feet appear to be wearing ballet slippers. The pale color of the figure is contrasted by the blue
theatrical cabinet enclosure, into which the figure has been set. The performance iconography of
this piece is self-evident, denoting a marine setting. The markings along the sides and base of the
piece visually relate to the marine markings on Walters’s *Figure of a Whale* (Figure 7) from
1927, suggesting that this early sculpture may set the precedent for Walters’s marine convention.
The top of the three walls of the cabinet appear to form waves of water, and the color scheme of
blues and greens, together with the shell shape of the fan, suggest an aquatic theme. The
serpentine quality of the figure’s limbs may even suggest tentacles, or crab legs, with the two
small dotted breasts resembling eyes, suggesting an early example of Walters’s love of merging
human and animal characteristics.

While implying more motion than *Ella* (Figure 28), *Fan Dancer* is still a static
composition due in part to the added cabinet element. Looking chronologically at *Fan Dancer*

\(^87\) The painting’s title also refers to an eight hundred pound circus performer named Ruth Pontico, who Curry may
have met during his travels in 1932 when he joined the Ringling Brothers-Barnum and Bailey circus on its spring
tour through New England. See both Lawrence Schmeckebier, *John Steuart Curry’s Pageant of America*. (New
York: American Artists Group, 1943), pp. 205 and 211, and Patricia Junker, “John Steuart Curry and the Pathos of
Modern Life: Paintings of the Outcast and Dispossessed,” in *John Steuart Curry: Inventing the Middle West*,
Patricia Junker, et. al. exh. cat. Madison, Elvehjem Museum of Art, University of Madison-Wisconsin, March 7-
This is the first published record of this sculpture. It does not appear anywhere else as of this writing.
one can see a progression of the female body types, from the thin and feminine grace of *Fan Dancer*, to the fleshiness of *Ella*, and finally to the androgynous, almost masculine quality of *Snake Charmer*. The distinct realms of the circus, with its different elements are also portrayed in these three sculptures. As Ellen Handy has written, the circus is an amalgam of “beauty, danger, virtuosity, and the grotesque,” which mix together into an atmosphere of “motion, spectacle, exoticism and a dazzling simultaneity.”

In terms of Walters’s sculptures, *Fan Dancer* would be the beauty and motion, *Ella* would be the grotesque and spectacle, and *Snake Charmer* would be the danger and exoticism.

A male example from Walters’s circus figures would be *The Strong Man* (Figure 35) from 1927, created the same year as *Ella*. The sculpture depicts a male figure, attempting to pick up a barbell weight with his right arm, while the left arm stretches around to support the lower back of the figure, as though the figure is straining his back under the weight. The musculature of the arms is emphasized, and the figure stands upon a decorated ceramic base, similar to *Before Adam* (Figure 25). The title *Strong Man* refers to the circus figure of a strong man, which here becomes purposefully ironic in Walters’s depiction of a figure that cannot lift a weight. The handle bends in a flexible way, showing that no matter how much the figure strains, the black dumbbells are not going to move. The face of the figure almost has lion like qualities,

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90 Fort, pp. 91-92. Fort refers to this sculpture by the title *Weight Lifter*. There is no listing for a *Weight Lifter* sculpture in the Homer catalogue. There is however a listing for *The Strong Man* from 1927, the same date Fort lists for *Weight Lifter*. Therefore, I believe the sculpture should be correctly titled *The Strong Man*, as this is also the proper term for the popular circus figure. See William Homer, *A Catalogue of the Ceramic Sculpture of Carl Walters: 1883-1955*. 

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obviously a reference to the popular circus animal, and as will be demonstrated later, a precedent for Walters’s later self-portrait.

Like both Snake Charmers, by Walters and Cowles, Walters here again plays with gender, what is masculine and what is feminine. Walters’s sculpture is two years later than a work by his contemporary, Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1889-1953). Kuniyoshi’s Strong Woman and Child (Figure 36) from 1925 also depicts a role reversal in the stronger gender, with a smaller male child, and a larger dominant female figure.

Walters’s fellow artist Charles Demuth (1883-1935) owned one of his works, Tattooed Man. Unfortunately, a sculpture by this title has not been traced, nor does it appear in Homer’s 1958 catalogue listing of Walters’s works. It is possible, given Walters’s penchant for multiple titles for a sculpture, that Tattooed Man may be another title for Strong Man. When looking closely at the figure in Strong Man, red marks and lines are noticeable on the arms, chests and legs of the figure, suggesting the patterns of tattoos. Tattoos are a motif in circus imagery, as illustrated on the figure of the acrobat in Acrobat in Red Vest (Figure 37) by Pavel Tchelitchew (1898-1957), painted in 1931.

LATER WORKS AND SATIRICAL IMAGERY

While single figures appear in the early years of Walters’s ceramic output, in his later years can be found his more interesting ceramic diversions from his usual animal subjects. His figures-in-cabinet have much more intricate subject matter and iconography, and are often satirical in tone. Resembling a stage play, or tableaux scenes, Walters created his figures-in-cabinet to have a narrative element. Although Walters used the figures-in-cabinet convention for his sculpture Fan Dancer (Figure 34) in 1923, he may have seen the shadow boxes created by

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Joseph Cornell (1903-1972) exhibited at Peggy Guggenheim’s *Art of the Century* gallery in New York during the 1940s.⁹²

Walters’s *Acrobats in Cabinet* (Figure 38) from 1946 presents a sexually charged male and female pairing. The male acrobat is clothed only in shorts, while the female figure is clothed in a two piece bathing costume. The male’s legs are phallic and upright, supporting the female acrobat, but also positioned within the curved opening she creates with her body, visually suggesting coitus between the two figures. The female figure appears to be stepping on the male’s genitals with her left foot, as if attempting to prevent any sexual occurrence. Two birds are placed on top of the supine female figure. The birds appear to glide across the female’s stomach, while her legs and arms dangle down, as though in the shape of a waterfall, with the male figure as the spout, and the top of the cabinet suggesting waves of water, as seen before in *Fan Dancer* (Figure 34). The acrobatic nature of the composition relates to such performances in the circus, as also seen in Demuth’s *The Circus* (Figure 39) from 1917. The water, birds, sexual and reproductive imagery may allude to the myth of Leda and the Swan, a mythological subject popular in Renaissance images. This possible allusion to past academic artistic subject matter may strengthen the satirical and critical message of Walters’s other figures-in-cabinet from 1946, his *Death of Art* (Figure 50).

In *Death of Art*, two figures are engaged in a violent, sexual battle, with a male figure on top of a female figure, trying to stab her. The opposing gender forces are further symbolized by an open vessel on the left (for the female) and a phallus on the right (for the male). A rectangular frame above the figures shows a bold design of paint drips in indigo, green, rose, and white. The

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splatter design readily calls to mind the paintings of Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), who produced similar paintings during this time, such as *Gothic* (Figure 51) from 1944. The male figure in *Death of Art* symbolizes the often chauvinist Abstract Expressionist painter subduing the traditional female nude or muse in art history, much as non-objective Abstract Expressionist art overtook traditional modes of narrative and figurative art. One can imagine Walters’s dismay if he had seen Pollock’s *Bird* (Figure 52) from between 1938 and 1941, an expressionistic and violent representation of the animal, compared with Walters’s sculptures. This complex work by Pollock includes the duality of man and animal, with two heads framing a phoenix, which rises in front of a threshold of color, similar in composition to Walters’s figures-in-cabinet with figures in front of a colored background.

By the 1950s the art world had moved on from the earlier artists of the century, hailing the Abstract Expressionists like Jackson Pollock and, later in the 1960s, the Pop artists, such as Andy Warhol. The generation of artists between the two World Wars had been dismissed as old-fashioned, and the new development in America art, Abstract Expressionism, became the zenith of the development and achievement of non-representational works of art. Much of the earlier figurative and decorative sculpture in public institutions, such as Walters’s works, were considered passé, and either relegated to storage or deaccessioned. In Walters’s case, his later works, especially *Death of Art*, were not advancing toward the goal of non-representation, or use of popular culture objects, a goal that contemporary artists such as Pollock and Warhol were trying to achieve. While his earlier ceramic sculptures were considered progressive, his later work was seen as regressive. This precarious position highlights yet another dichotomy in Walters’s art.

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94 Pollock, p. 2.
95 Connor and Rosenkranz, p. 7.
Walters’s earlier sculptures in the *animalier* vein and his figurative satirical references of circus imagery all come together in his masterful self-portrait *Portrait of the Artist as a Lion Dormant* from 1955 (Figure 53). Walters himself gave this sculpture its title. The human elements and characteristics personified in the *Lion* are obvious. A poignant sculpture, this was the last work done before Walters’s death. It is one of his few unglazed, terracotta sculptures. Without a glaze, Walters relied on form and texture, not color. He personified his features into the lion, giving the face a contented, satisfied sleeping visage. This work is a fitting tribute to Walters and showed not only how important were his ceramic animal sculptures, but also how meaningful they were to him. That he chose to create his own self-portrait as an animal, a lionized ceramic sculpture, demonstrates his affinity for his subject matter. Unlike Kafka’s character who becomes disturbed at having transformed into a beetle in his 1915 story *The Metamorphosis*, Walters seems happy with his choice of animal form. It is probable that Walters knew of the work of the French *animalier* painter Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904). Gérôme created several paintings with lions as the subjects, such as his *Tiger and cubs* from circa 1884 (Figure 54), which would have been on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1936 onwards. The lion paintings of Gérôme reflect his love and esteem of animals. He wrote in a 1902 letter that “the character of animals is often better than that of this cruel world,” and one may notice the connection between the lion and his given name of Léon (from the latin Leo). Gérôme, like Walters in his *Portrait of the Artist as a Lion Dormant* and other animal sculptures, gave his animal subjects anthropomorphic qualities. Gérôme depicted his lions with a naturalism common in *animalier* art, but titled his paintings to suggest that lions shared human emotions. In

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97 Perry, p. 92.
The Two Majesties (Figure 55) from circa 1882 or 1883, Gérôme depicts a seated lion on a cliff, staring at a large depiction of a sunset. The title refers to the sun and the lion, as though each were a royal personage greeting the other. His painting Solitude (Figure 56) from 1890 depicts a solitary lion peacefully lying on a sandy beach, next to an expansive view of an ocean and the sky. This slightly melancholic view visually suggests that the lion experiences a (human) state of solitude.

Walters’s Portrait of the Artist as a Lion Dormant (Figure 53) and his other ceramic animal sculptures have an important facet in common, one that relates to the Rilke poem that was read at Walters’s funeral. That element from the poem is silence. All of the sculptures, both figural and animal, have mouths that are closed. Of course, sculptures by their very nature are unable to produce actual sound, but Walters did not create sculptures with open mouths, giving them an appearance of inherent or imagined sound as Barye did in his bronze animalier sculptures, for example. It is this silence that gives Walters’s sculptures a reticence from scrutiny, as though reinforcing the enigma surrounding Walters and his art.

WALTERS’S LEGACY

Walters was an important fine artist, not a dilettante, of the early twentieth century, who unfortunately has been largely forgotten since his death. Today, the one museum to regularly display the ceramic animal sculptures of Walters is the Ogunquit Museum of American Art in Maine, which contains the largest surviving portion of his oeuvre. Walters never reproduced his works in large numbers, even though he made most by machine or mold, leaving few editions, all signed and dated.99 His sculptures were not for mass consumption, but for individual sales, mostly through Edith Halpert and her Downtown Gallery. His work has whimsy, and a buoyant

A contemporary critic of Walters expressed that he “has so instinctive a response to the way animals look and feel and move, that he can start to model a dachshund from real life, and come out with an idealized coach dog with polychrome spots, and literally not lose a trick in the process.”

William Homer has compared Walters’s work with the colors of Matisse, but suggested that the true genius of Walters is his technique, not just color. Homer has also compared Walters’s animal sculptures with the animal paintings of Franz Marc (1880-1916). While Marc may seem a valid comparison, his animals and art are serious and spiritual, even meditative; not the whimsical aspect of Walters’s sculptures. Marc attempted to create innovative paintings which embodied organic rhythms of nature, pantheist compositions of animals and trees with color emphasizing movement. Walters created sculptures which critiqued personalities of American popular culture and entertainment. However, Marc and Walters both explored anthropomorphic elements in their art, and studied examples of ancient art for use as sources of inspiration for their respective works. Based upon Marc’s letters, we know that he read Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, and Darwin’s theory on the unity of all life forms must have appealed to Marc, and perhaps Walters as well, given Walters’s exploration of the duality of man and animal in *Before Adam* (Figure 25). The very title alludes to a main element of

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100 Ibid.
103 Marc wrote that “the laws of nature are anthropomorphic not only in the general Schopenhauerian sense that these laws can only be children of our sensory organs…” See Barbara Eschenberg, “Animals in Franz Marc’s World View and Pictures,” in *Franz Marc: the Retrospective*, p. 53. For Marc and his interest in Japanese, Egyptian and Buddhist art, see Isabelle Jansen, “The Yearning of an Unspoilt World: Exotic Motifs in the Art of Franz Marc,” in *Franz Marc: the Retrospective*, p. 77-89. Though it is highly unlikely that Walters ever saw or knew of Marc’s few sculptures, it is interesting to note that Marc did create bronze and carved works: his limestone *Chimera* of 1914, bronzes *Panther* of 1908 and *Two Horses* of 1908-9, and his *Alabaster Cup* from 1910-11, which has horses carved around the outside surface. See *Franz Marc: the Retrospective*, pp. 303-307, 329.
Darwin’s research; the evolutionary descent of man from animal. Darwin’s influence can be seen in Marc’s 1913 oil painting *Mandrill*, a subject and title also used by Walters for his sculpture of 1930 (Figure 12).\(^{104}\)

After his death, Walters bequeathed his sculpture molds to Henry Strater, a friend and fellow painter.\(^{105}\) To protect the integrity of Walters’s sculptures and prevent possible fraudulent castings in the future, Henry Strater destroyed all existing molds of Walters’s works. This made the few, rare surviving examples all the more valuable and important.\(^{106}\)

In keeping with the idea that Walters teeters between machine and anti-machine, one must mention that Walters, unlike many amateur and professional contemporaries, not only perfected his own complex glaze recipes, but also built his own kiln at his studio in Woodstock and fabricated any molds himself that he might use in creating his ceramic animal sculptures.\(^{107}\) Walters also gathered his own clay and paints for his glazes. He incorporated the influence of ancient ceramic art, and expands upon the nineteenth century *animalier* genre with his own ceramic animal sculptures.

Edith Halpert’s *Downtown Gallery*, which blended folk art and modern art together, became a perfect vehicle for the exhibition and sale of Walters’s works. As previously mentioned, his works were purchased by important private collectors, such as Eleanor Ford and Eleanor Roosevelt, and major American museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and

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\(^{104}\) See Eschenberg in *Franz Marc: the Retrospective*, p. 53, 59 and 61.

\(^{105}\) Perry, p. 90. Henry Strater was an artist who lived in New York and later moved to Ogunquit, Maine. Strater was a connection between Walters and Lachaise (as discussed above), who sculpted a portrait head of Strater. See Carolyn Carr and Margaret Christman, *Gaston Lachaise: Portrait Sculpture*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1985, p. 96-97.

\(^{106}\) Walters’ ceramic animal pieces are rare, but tend to resurface in the trade, most notably his *Figure of a Whale*, 1927 (Figure 7). This sculpture was sold in New York, at Sotheby’s 20th Century Decorative Arts sale on Saturday, March 21, 1992, lot 207. It was acquired by the Connor-Rosenkranz Gallery. Author’s email correspondence with Janis Connor, 2 February 2006.

Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Almost all of these institutions were actively purchasing modern art and in some cases avant-garde art along with the sculptures of Walters and his contemporaries.

If we take Walters’s *oeuvre* as a whole, there are still many areas that need future research. Indeed, the art history of the interwar period in general encompasses a host of artists waiting to be reevaluated. No current or updated *catalogue raisonné* exists for Walters, and his lithographs and vessel pottery require further exploration.108

Walters’s renown as a sculptor was only lessened by the subtle stigma of his working in ceramics, a medium hampered by the poorer types of decorative art associated with it.109 Walters also worked outside of the traditional realm of ceramic art, which has placed him outside the art historical canon until now. His legacy of future ceramic art had not been established at his death, and I would argue that now we can see his important link between the ceramic art of his period, including the recently recognized ceramic art of Picasso, and the contemporary studio crafts movement that flowered in the second half of the twentieth century. While the terms “art” and “craft” are relevant in the field of art history, they cannot dictate the “use” or actual purpose of an object in terms of its cultural context or cultural history.110 It is these artificial distinctions which have compartmentalized the history of ceramics over the past century and a half, disrupting the chronological and progressive nature of ceramic art. By understanding that when referring to the studio craft movement of the second half of the twentieth century, the word craft

108 The 1958 Homer catalogue does contain a checklist of Walters’s ceramic works only, arranged alphabetically by object title. His other works, including vessel pieces and lithographs, are not listed nor discussed. Several are listed as present owner unknown, and as of this writing the catalogue is now a half century out of date. See Homer, *A Catalogue of the Ceramic Sculpture of Carl Walters: 1883-1955*.
can be replaced with art, since most objects in the media involved in this movement can be considered art objects, as they were created for aesthetic study, and not just simply the utilitarian connotation of the word craft.\footnote{The contemporary studio crafts movement of the second half of the twentieth century generally encompasses the following media: ceramics, fiber, glass, metal, and wood. See Burgard, “Bearers of Meaning,” in Burgard, The Art of Craft, p. 9.} A cohesive legacy of ceramic artists working after Walters’s death can now be studied, and similarities between their working methods, art objects and Walters’s sculptures can be seen.

The first major ceramic artist to begin experiments with the medium during Walters’s career was Picasso in 1947.\footnote{See Paul Bourassa, “Introduction,” in Picasso and Ceramics, exh. cat. Québec, Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec, May 6-August 29, 2004, et. al. (Editions Hazan, 2004), p. 15.} Picasso’s ceramics are an element of his oeuvre that is recently being reexamined, since his works both continue the vessel tradition, and breaks with that tradition, moving towards sculpture. Like Walters, Picasso also looked at ancient works of art for influence in his own ceramics. These included Cypriot ceramics in the Musée du Louvre, Tanagra figures, Mycaenean terracotta figurines, and red and black figure amphora and kraters.\footnote{See Leopold L. Foulem and Paul Bourassa, “Ceramics: Sources and Resources,” in Picasso and Ceramics, pp. 192-206.} Picasso created plates and vessels with abstract patterns, as well as figures informed with Cubist visual language. He also made objects out of hollow brick fragments found in clay dumps at potteries, which he titled “Fragments.”\footnote{See Bourassa, “Introduction,” in Picasso and Ceramics, pp. 19 and 77.} While not quite assemblage objects, these sculptures resemble abstract pieces of clay molded together, much like a three dimensional version of Picasso’s collage images.

At the beginning of the studio craft movement, even while Walters was still alive and producing his ceramic sculptures, developments in the medium of ceramics were happening, but separately, and often geographically isolated from each other. While Walters was in Woodstock and New York City, Maija Grotell from Finland (1899-1978) was beginning her ceramics.
department at the Cranbrook Art Institute in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan in 1938, and Viktor Schreckengost was making vessels and sculptures in Ohio.\(^\text{115}\)

Another ceramic artist who became a leader in the studio ceramics movement was Peter Voulkos (1924-2002). Voulkos was a leading figure in postwar ceramics, with his work showing the influence of Abstract Expressionist painting and developments in abstract sculpture. Unlike Arts and Crafts art potteries where art pottery was produced in a factory setting by artisan teams, a contemporary studio ceramist, like Voulkos and Walters before him, is the sole creator of a piece, from its conception through to its development and production.\(^\text{116}\) Voulkos destroyed the “craft” element in his work by moving past the vessel tradition, and creating his abstract series of stoneware “stacks.” The primary influence in his work was Zen Buddhism, which focused on the means, not the end of something, a receptiveness to chance and accident, and the calligraphic gesture as an expressive tool.\(^\text{117}\) Voulkos’s greatest influence was the ceramic art of Picasso: the energy between painted surface and form, and his manipulation and restructuring of three dimensional forms.\(^\text{118}\)

By reinventing the ideal of the vessel, the studio ceramic artists of the second half of the twentieth century opened ambitious and new means of sculptural expressions in the ceramic medium.\(^\text{119}\) The century old Arts and Crafts aesthetic of finely crafted decorative vessels in traditional shapes was eschewed, as innovative ceramic artists sought to break tradition by positioning their abstract, nonfunctional clay forms as high art. This reactionary movement was

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\(^\text{119}\) Ibid., p. 123.
preceded by Walters’s and his ceramic animal sculptures, which in their own time were revolutionary in the realms of ceramic art and sculpture. By depriving his sculptures of the functional connotation of their ceramic medium, Walters placed himself outside the normal ceramicist canon by creating works that were not simply functional objects, nor popular images, like Staffordshire, but sculptures imbued with a sense of cultural history and cultural patrimony. With European influence from the animalier genre, Walters did not simply mimic his sculptural predecessors, but built upon and transformed the traditions into an American vernacular of ceramic expression. This spirit of invention, and interest in technology are fundamentals of the American identity. Walters even furthers connects his art to the realm of fine arts with his scientific interest in glazes, mimicking the traditions of the Old Masters, who would mix their paints and colors themselves to achieve their desired effects. Walters’s art is not of symbolic gestures, not weighed down heavily with philosophies, but are tangible works of art as complex as they are subtle.
Figure 1
Figure 2
Corning Glass Works, Steuben Division; Walter Dorwin Teague, designer, *Vases*, glass.
Figure 3
Russel Wright Studio; Russel Wright, designer, *Salad bowl and small berry bowls*, wood.
Figure 4
Carl Walters, *Cock*, ceramic earthenware glazed with white, blue, and red, ca. 1948, 7½ x 4 x 10½ in. Collection of the author.
Figure 5
Carl Walters, *Hippo*, ceramic earthenware glazed with red and beige, 1932, 7 x 16 x 6 ½ in. Ogunquit Museum of Art, Maine (71.19)
Figure 6
Carl Walters, *Hippopotamus*, ceramic earthenware glazed with Walters’s Egyptian blue, 1936, 7 x 18 x 6 in. Formerly in the collection of Fred Silberman Gallery.
Figure 7
Carl Walters, *Figure of a Whale*, ceramic in white earthenware, glazed with Walters’s Egyptian blue, 1927, 17 in. Collection of the Connor-Rosenkranz Gallery.
Figure 8
Carl Walters, *Figure of a Whale*, 1927, detail showing Carl Walters’s signature and the date 1927 sgraffitoed on the sculpture.
Figure 9
Carl Walters, *Cat in Tall Grass*, glazed earthenware, 1939, 15 ½ x 13 ¼ x 4 ¼ in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (42.183)
Figure 10
Figure 11
Figure 12
Carl Walters, Mandrill, unglazed earthenware, 1930, 20 ½ in. Ogunquit Museum of Art, Maine (71.2)
Figure 13
Carl Walters, *Cat*, glazed earthenware, 1938, 11 ½ x 7 x 23 in. Everson Museum of Art, New York
Figure 14
Carl Walters, *Tiger*, glazed earthenware, 1938, 12 x 9 x 24 in. Ogunquit Museum of Art, Maine (54.16)
Figure 15
Still from the film *Felix in Hollywood* (1923), featuring Felix the Cat and Charlie Chaplin
Figure 16
The Kit-Cat clock.
Figure 17
Walt Disney, *Steamboat Willie*, 35mm film, black and white, sound, 8 minutes, 1928. Museum of Modern Art, New York
Figure 18
Figure 19
Staffordshire, *Figure of a Cat*, salt-glazed stoneware, ca. 1760, 5 1/8 in. Formerly in the collection of Bernard and Judith Newman.
Figure 20
Figure 21
Figure 22
Constantin Brancusi, *Fish*, marble, 1926, 5 x 16 7/8 x 1 1/16 in.
Figure 23
Carl Walters, *Caterpillar*, glazed earthenware, 1945, 4 7/8 x 4 3/8 x 16 ½ in. Detroit Institute of Arts (48.6)
Figure 24
Figure 25
Figure 26
Figure 27
Carl Walters, *Before Adam*, glazed earthenware, 1949, 9 1/8 x 11 5/8 x 6 in. Detroit Institute of Arts (53.263)
Figure 28
Carl Walters, *Snake Charmer*, ceramic earthenware, 1929, 12 ½ x 6 ½ x 4 ½ in. Ogunquit Museum of Art, Maine (58.3)
Figure 29
Figure 30
Carl Walters, *Ella*, ceramic earthenware, 1927, 16 ¾ x 9 3/8 x 9 ¾ in. Museum of Modern Art, New York (373.41)
Figure 31
Figure 32
Figure 33
Gaston Lachaise, *Floating Woman*, bronze, 1924, 12 3/4 x 6 1/2 in. The Detroit Institute of Arts (46.225)
Figure 34
Figure 35
Curry, John Steuart, *Baby Ruth*, oil on canvas, 1932, 26 x 30 in. Brigham Young University Museum of Art (820016900)
Figure 36
Carl Walters, *Fan Dancer*, glazed ceramic sculpture, 1923, 8 x 6 in. D. Wigmore Fine Art, Inc.
Figure 37
Carl Walters, *The Strong Man*, glazed ceramic sculpture, 1927, 9 ¼ x 7 7/8 x 5 ½ in. The Renee and Chaim Gross Foundation, New York
Figure 38
Figure 39
Pavel Tchelitchew, *Acrobat in Red Vest*, oil on board, 1931, 41 ½ x 39 ½ in. Curtis Galleries, Minneapolis
Figure 40
Figure 41
Figure 42
Carl Walters, Death of Art, glazed ceramic sculpture, 1946, 10 x 6 ¼ x 2 in. Formerly in the collection of the Woodstock Artists Association.
Figure 43
Jackson Pollock, *Gothic*, oil on canvas, 1944, 7' 5/8" x 56" (215.5 x 142.1 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York
Figure 44
Jackson Pollock, *Bird*, oil and sand on canvas, ca. 1938-41, 27 3/4 x 24 1/4" (70.5 x 61.6 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York
Figure 45
Carl Walters, *Portrait of the Artist as a Lion Dormant*, terracotta, 1955, 8 ¾ x 26 ½ x 9 in. Ogunquit Museum of Art, Maine (55.1)
Figure 46
Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Tiger and cubs*, oil on canvas, ca. 1884, 29 x 36 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (36.162.4)
Figure 47
Figure 48
Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Solitude*, oil on canvas, 1890, 11 3/8 x 18 5/8 in. Detroit Institute of Arts (60.66)
REFERENCES


