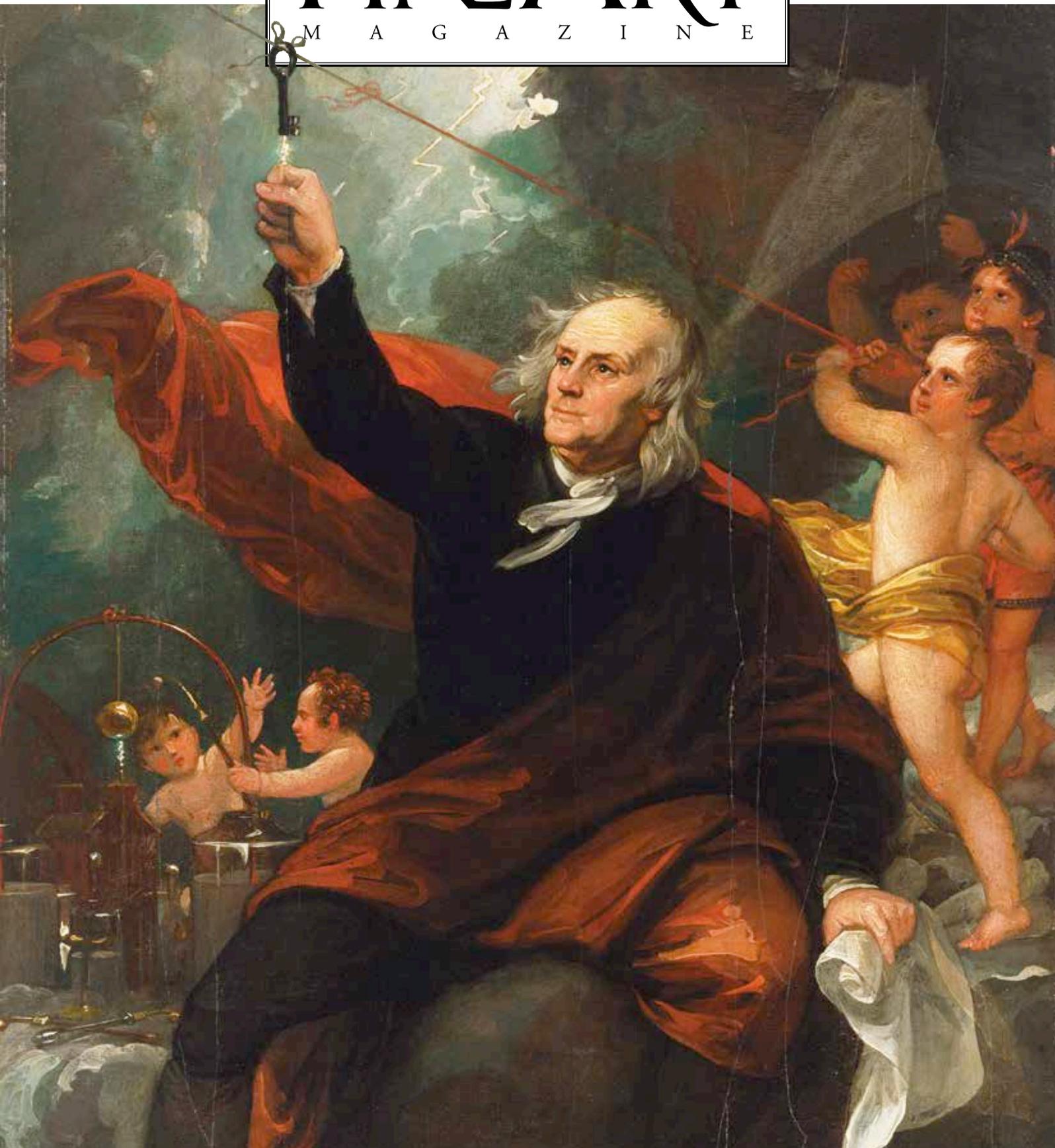


ISSUE 26

AMERICAN FINE ART

M A G A Z I N E

MAR/APR 2016



Paintings and Sculpture

Jerald Melberg Gallery hosts two solo exhibitions with works by Wolf Kahn and Ida Kohlmeyer

Through March 5

Jerald Melberg Gallery

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by John O'Hern

In the early 1930s when Ida Rittenberg Kohlmeyer (1912-1997) was an undergraduate at H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College in New Orleans, Newcomb Pottery was still in its heyday. It was considered one of the most significant American art potteries

of the early 20th century.

Kohlmeyer graduated with a degree in English literature in 1933. During her honeymoon in Mexico her interest in art blossomed as she was drawn to the ceramics of the area. After raising a family, she returned to Newcomb to get a Master of Fine Arts degree in 1956, concentrating on representational painting.



Wolf Kahn (b. 1927), *Morandi (Misunderstood) I*, 1948. Pastel on paper, 9 x 12 in. 1948-9842-P.



Ida Kohlmeyer (1912-1997), *Synthesis 93-3, 1993-94*. Mixed media on canvas, 44 x 51 in. JMG09799.

Clyfford Still (1904-1980) visited Newcomb when Kohlmeyer was a student and she asked him where she should study next. He suggested she attend a school run by Hans Hofmann (1880-1966) in Provincetown, Massachusetts. She recalled, "I became an abstract painter overnight at Hofmann Studio...after that summer of '56, I was an abstract painter."

At another time she ruminated about her turn to abstraction. "I owe it to a series of personal relationships that miraculously occurred one right after the other. First there was Hofmann, and upon my return from his school, Mark

Rothko came to Newcomb as a visiting artist...The impact Hofmann and Rothko had on my thinking about what art is, or should be, was tremendous. I came to realize and believe that a painting must be a revelation to the artist and the viewer, not an imitation or a supplication of nature."

Ten years earlier Wolf Kahn had begun studying with Hofmann at his school in New York. Kahn became Hofmann's studio assistant and, in 1951, graduated from the University of Chicago with a Bachelor of Arts degree.

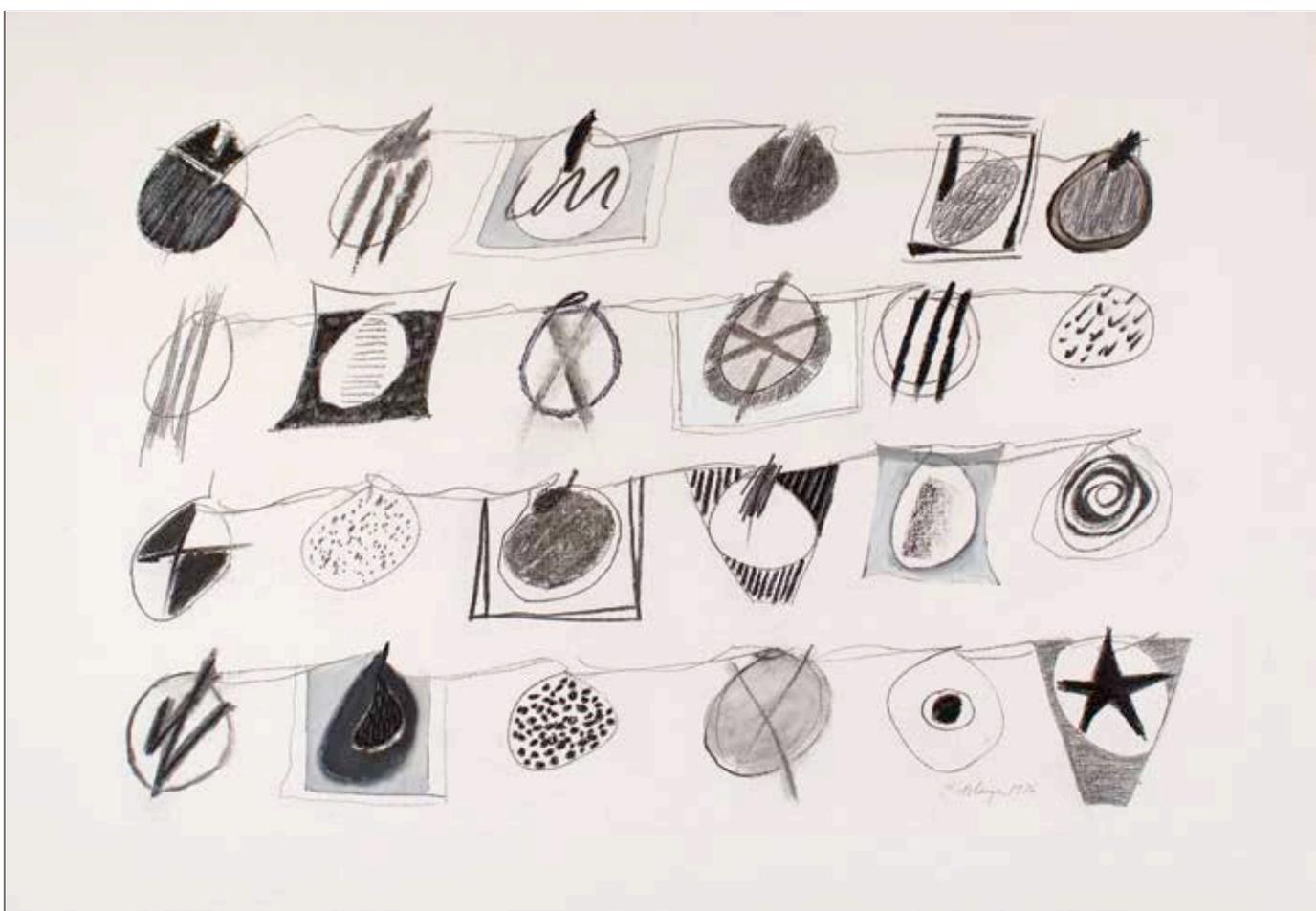
Kahn's early pastel experiments

with color and Kohlmeyer's drawings, paintings and sculpture from the later years of her career are displayed in two solo exhibitions at Jerald Melberg Gallery in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Melberg met Kohlmeyer when he was curator at the Mint Museum, which had mounted a traveling retrospective of her work. "She had become a nationally known abstract painter while continuing to live in the Deep South. She developed a personal set of glyphs that would permutate and repeat, sometimes in a large format and sometimes with a hundred or more in an image. I represented her when



Ida Kohlmeyer (1912-1997), *Composition 90-1A*, 1990-94. Mixed media on canvas, 24 x 57 in. JMG04842.



Ida Kohlmeyer (1912-1997), *Cluster Drawing 1-3*, 1976. Mixed media on canvas, 30½ x 43½ in. JMG17590.

she was alive and know she loved making the paintings. The pictures are very joyful yet they're the work of an enormously serious artist."

Although the symbols beg to be interpreted, Kohlmeyer wrote, "The

symbols are ambiguous and are not meant to be deciphered."

When Melberg was visiting Kahn several months ago, the artist showed him a portfolio of pastels done when he was in his 20s, including a series based

on a study of the great still life painter Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964). They are titled *Morandi (Misunderstood)*. "Morandi was a great influence on Kahn," Melberg observes. "He isn't known for still lifes but he revisited them in the



Wolf Kahn (b. 1927), *Emily Holding Baby*, 1960. Pastel on paper, 13⁷/₈ x 16⁷/₈ in. 1960-9254-P.



Wolf Kahn (b. 1927), *Pansies I*, 1962. Pastel on paper, 10¹/₂ x 13 in. 1962-9702-P.

early pansy pastels of 1962. There is a strong sense of mark making that shows how assured he was even as a young artist. There's a real freshness to them."

He continues, "It's important for people to see Kahn's roots. In the pastels of his wife Emily from the early 1960s, for instance, you can see the later tree pastels in his use of color, form and stroke."

Kahn is a master of color. He wrote, "The artist's alertness to the coloristic demands of each picture, the ability to respond to the picture's needs, to feed the color until its appetite is satiated; these are the true measures of a colorist's talent."

At 88, Kahn continues to respond to the picture's needs, pushing color relationships, "always trying to get to the danger point, where color either becomes too sweet or too harsh; too noisy or too quiet." ■