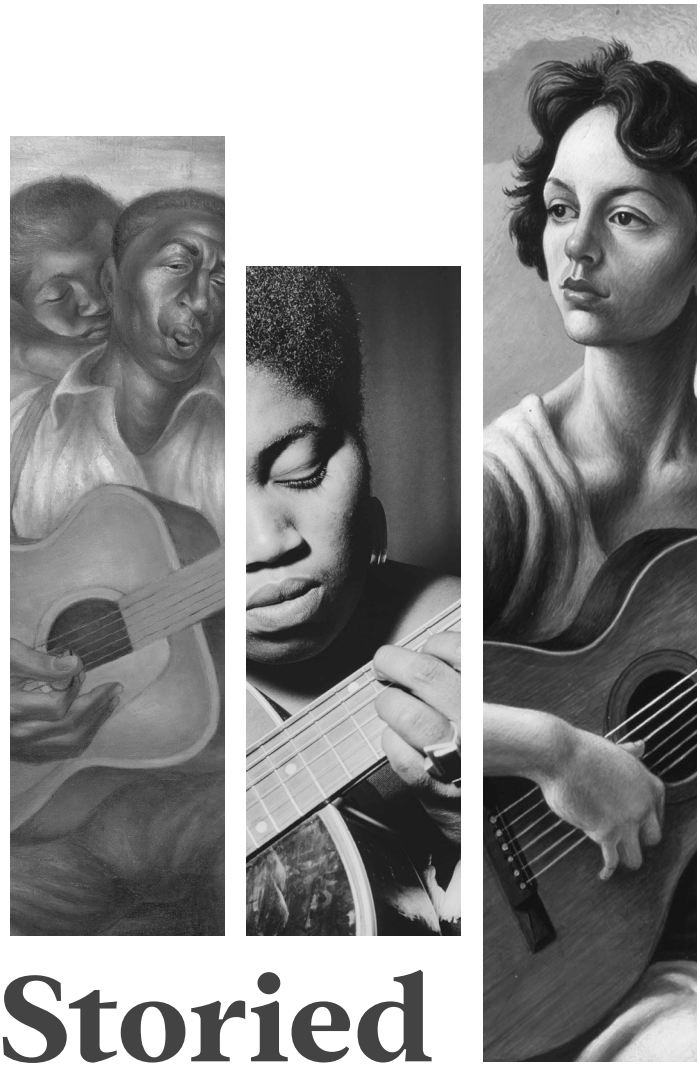


Storied Strings

The Guitar in American Art

SECTION 1

Parlor Games and European Prototypes

Charles Willson Peale
American, 1741–1827

The Edward Lloyd Family, 1771

Oil on canvas

British North Americans and other citizens in the early Republic played wire-strung English citterns—anticipating their playing, only slightly later, of the similar guitar. This painting likely shows one of the two citterns owned by the Lloyd family. The instrument here suggests an equation between musical and familial harmony and evokes broad conceptions of virtue. The painting reminds us that for 18th-century Americans, playing a stringed instrument joined dancing and needleworking as part of a socially sanctioned, class-specific domain of proper womanhood.

Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library, Delaware, Museum purchase, 1964.0124A

Thomas Middleton
American, 1791–1863

Friends and Amateurs in Musick, 1827

Wash drawing with touches of white on paper

Perhaps the earliest surviving drawing of a guitar to be produced in the United States, this rendering by amateur artist Thomas B. Middleton presents a humorous take on the musically infused interior. Among the fake symphony of string and wind instruments, the man second from right holds and perhaps plays the guitar; the man next to him, as Middleton remembered, was "at his old trick . . . endeavoring to excite our laughter by imitating the Bass on my Guitar case." Even in their lackadaisical state, the men announce their classical learning and refinement by way of their jovial attention to music. Like the paintings on the wall by Benjamin West and others, the men and instruments signify wealth and the things it can buy.

On loan from the Carolina Art Association, Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston, South Carolina, Gift of Mr. Henry Cheves, 1940.010.0001

Julian Alden Weir
American, 1852–1919

Idle Hours, 1888

Oil on canvas

Julian Alden Weir's *Idle Hours* enlists the guitar to communicate a mood of psychological absorption. Pictured on a lush, pillow-covered divan are the artist's four-year-old daughter, Caroline, and his wife, Anna. One art historian has questioned the plausibility of the scene, noting "the improbability of a mother and wide-awake child remaining motionless together in a state of repose for more than a few moments at most." Indeed, it is difficult to imagine Caroline strumming this instrument that appears to be considerably larger than she is.

In 1888 a committee of jurors for the American Art Association in New York awarded *Idle Hours* a $2,000 prize at its Fourth Annual Prize Fund Exhibition.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of several gentlemen, 1888 (88.7)

Amasa Hewins
American, 1795–1855

Interior—Lady at a Table, 1836,

Oil on canvas

With its mustache-style bridge, thin body, rosewood-and-maple fingerboard, and fancy inlay around the sound hole, the guitar featured in *Interior—Lady at a Table* is French in origin, likely from the early 1830s workshop of luthier Rene Lacôte. The same guitar, probably purchased by Hewins when he was in France, in 1831–32, appears in other works by the artist. Here it joins additional elements—writing desk, book, artwork—in the well-appointed parlor to indicate the class and refinement of the sitter.

Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Purchased through the gift of James Junius Goodwin, 1945.210

H. A. Weymann & Sons

Guitar, Style No. 648, ca. early 1920s

Materials unconfirmed

In the late 19th century and well into the 20th, relatively affordable guitars, such as those produced by the Philadelphia-based H. A. Weymann & Sons, made their way into parlors, dens, and other identifiably middle-class spaces. Likely inspired by contemporary Gibson models, the company produced a line of Hawaiian guitars with *f*-holes that lent them the classical, refined aesthetic of violins. The Weymann company ran a particularly healthy mail-order business.

Collection of Victor Gurbo

Gibson Mandolin-Guitar Manufacturing Co.

Archtop Guitar (O Model), 1919

Early Gibson acoustic guitars display a keen attention to decorative and aesthetic considerations. In this example, the oval sound hole, gradation from red to yellow, and the fleur-de-lis motif are among the artistic flourishes savored by players. The company's 1903 catalogue relied heavily on words like *beautiful, handsome, fancy,* and *rich* when describing the woods, finishes, bridge pins, and mother-of-pearl inlays of its new O series. The 1917 Gibson catalogue contained a testimonial that lauded the tone but used down-right superlative language to describe the appearance of their O model instruments, noting that they possess the "most splendid finish and artistic appearance possible to conceive."

Purchase, Amati Gifts, 2013, 2013.129a-c

Thomas Prichard Rossiter
American, 1818–1871

A Studio Reception, 1841

Oil on canvas

Thomas Prichard Rossiter's painting *A Studio Reception* highlights the guitar's role in cementing the bonds of friendship within a relaxed setting. The canvas recounts a salon-like gathering in the Paris apartment and studio that Rossiter shared with fellow American artists John F. Kensett and John W. Casilear. Such salons were often called *conversaziones*, and the work was first titled *The Artists' Conversaziones*. Perhaps a nod to 19th-century salons and receptions, which typically included artist demonstrations and lectures, the guitar joins the painting on the easel in facilitating the mission of the gathering—to elevate artistic refinement and aesthetic mindfulness in a friendly and comfortable setting.

Albany Institute of History & Art, Gift of Miss Ellen W. Boyd, 1916.4.1

Unidentified photographer

Susan Ella Austin, ca. 1855

Daguerreotype

This daguerreotype demonstrates the guitar's increasing role as a prop in photographers' studios, where it was inserted into portraits to underscore a child's cultural enlightenment and proper socialization. In her deportment, Susan Ella Austin possesses the sort of poise, social grace, and usefulness that financially resourceful Americans attributed to guitar-wielding women at midcentury. Perhaps her serious expression indicates her own understanding of what she symbolizes as she supports the comparatively large guitar.

Historic New England, Boston, Gift of Edgar J. Rollins, GUSN-253780

Jean-Antoine Watteau
French, 1684–1721

The Gazer (Le Lorgneur), ca. 1716

Oil on panel

The French artist Jean-Antoine Watteau depicted early versions of the guitar in several works, including his painting *The Gazer* (left), which was inspired by the popular Mezzetin character from contemporary Parisian theatrical productions. This painting shows the common technique of strumming the guitar above its sound hole. The guitar in *The Gazer* possesses five courses of two strings each, which would have been tuned to A-D-G-B-E, and which is similar to the modern six-course guitar, tuned to E-A-D-G-B-E.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 55.22

Michael Rauche
German (?), active in England, 1757–1784

18th-Century Cittern or "English Guittar,"
1764

The 18th-century cittern or "English guittar" was popular in the British Isles and its colonies. Typically played with the fingers, the guittar was praised in its day for its sweet tone, stable tuning, and ease of learning, which made it very popular for domestic music making. An estimated 12,000 guittars were made in the eighteenth century, from which only about 600 survive.

This guittar may be considered an entry-level model due its less figured wood and lack of rosette and other decoration. Similar guittars are found in paintings by Charles Willson Peale and Matthew Pratt in this gallery. While these do not appear to have been the fanciest models available, they possess an ornate rosette that was typically made from ebony, bone, and maple.

Collection of Andrew Hartig

Matthew Pratt
American, 1734–1805

Lucy Randolph Burwell, 1773

Oil on canvas

Some historical observers have written of proficiency of a musical instrument as "a useful accomplishment that a well-bred young Chesapeake lady should attain." A member of one of the wealthiest early Virginia families, Lucy Randolph Burwell plays a cittern as a sign of education and refinement. Her alert gaze and the positioning of her hands (indicating skilled playing) help signal her intelligence and well-heeled behavior.

Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Richmond, Bequest of Kate Harris Williams, 1951.35

Charles Cromwell Ingham
American, 1796–1863

Cora Livingston, ca. 1833

Oil on canvas

Cora Livingston came from a family of Francophiles. Her father, President Andrew Jackson's secretary of state, relocated the family to Paris shortly after Ingham painted this portrait. The guitar in this painting, in turn, helped suggest a tone of French refinement. The thick body, rounded headstock, ornate purfling and rosette, and tapering faux frets on the face strongly recall French instruments from the 1820s and early 1830s, especially those produced by the PetitJean workshop and René-François Lacôte.

National Gallery of Art, Andrew W. Mellon Collection, 1947.17.73

Nine-String Guitar, 1827, René-François Lacôte (French, 1785–1855). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2000.629

Christian Frederick Martin
American, born Germany, 1796–1873

Guitar, 1836

Materials unconfirmed

George Gruhn, Gruhn Guitars, Nashville

Ornament and aesthetic appeal have been critical considerations for American guitar players and makers alike—beginning with the first American guitar manufacturing firm, founded by German émigré Christian Frederick Martin. The earliest Martin guitars incorporate numerous flourishes (including the so-called Vienna-style scrolled headstock and the tapering fingerboard at the higher frets) showing the influence of the maker's former employer, the Austrian luthier Johann Georg Stauffer. The purfling and trefoil forms in the rosette decoration of this 1836 guitar—developed at the ends of the mustache-style bridge into "little hearts," in C. F. Martin's words—are further links to Stauffer models.

Charles Sheeler
American, 1883–1965

Group of Singers, 1933

Gelatin silver print

In this image, probably depicting a Christmas holiday get-together at Condé Nast headquarters in New York City, a guitar player accompanies a chorus of *House and Garden, Vanity Fair,* and *Vogue* staffers reading the magazines. In the 1920s and 1930s, Charles Sheeler worked as a fashion and celebrity photographer for Condé Nast, which published these and other periodicals. This photograph attests to the guitar's increasing presence at parties and in parlors alike, even during the Depression years. Unlike many staged depictions of individuals idly holding the instrument, here the guitarist is shown playing a barre chord with the partygoers opening their mouths in song, further emphasizing the sensation of sound.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The Lane Collection, L-R 1834.2001

SECTION 2

Martin and His Legacy

Martin & Coupa
American, active ca. 1840–1850

Guitar, ca. 1840

By the time Martin began partnering with his New York sales agent-distributor John Coupa (ca. 1840–1851), the company had begun to offer ivory bridges and fingerboards—further examples of the guitar functioning as an aesthetic template, like a blank canvas on which to add decorative touches.

A Spanish-born guitar teacher, Coupa played a critical part in American guitar history. He can be credited with promoting Martin's late 1830s and 1840s instruments with triple-bracing supporting the soundboard. Coupa performed with the Spanish émigré and renowned virtuoso Madame Delores Navarres de Goni in 1843, the same year that C. F. Martin supplied her with what was probably the first X-braced guitar.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Museum purchase with funds donated by William and Deborah Elfers, 2003.342

Christian Frederick Martin
American, born Germany, 1796–1873

Guitar, ca. 1838

As with the other early Martin guitars on display here, this instrument possesses the bridge and pins, body shape, tapering fingerboard, ornamental sound hole, and scrolling headstock also seen in guitars produced by the contemporary Austrian luthier Johann George Stauffer. Although not all Martin instruments are so elegantly appointed, this example is one of those with which Christian Frederick Martin forecast the course of American guitar design.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1979, 1979.380a,b

Christian Frederick Martin
American, born Germany, 1796–1873

Guitar, 1842

The solid, fan-shaped headstock of this guitar is one of several elements that represents a move away from the earlier influence of the Austrian maker Johann George Stauffer. Yet the rosette decoration and purfling (both of which would have been purchased by Martin from a catalogue), the binding (which is even found on the headstock), and the ivory bridge demonstrate Martin's persisting attention to ornament.

George Gruhn, Gruhn Guitars, Nashville

James Ashborn
American, 1824–1876

Guitar, ca. 1865

Relying heavily on local woodworkers on a production line, and benefiting with business relationships from music retailers in New York City, James Ashborn produced guitars and banjos in his fully mechanized workshop in Torrington, Connecticut. This mechanized approach afforded a steady output—well over twice Martin's during the pre–Civil War period. Artistic components of the present guitar include the V-shape headstock and ornate purfling. The earlier, smaller instruments increasingly graced parlors in middle-class homes, and are today called parlor guitars.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1998.194

SECTION 3 & 4

GuitarWielding Women
Alexander/Parlors & People

Michael J. Wright
American, active ca. 1858–1861

Untitled, ca. 1859–60

Daguerreotype

This untitled daguerreotype offsets the courtship theme and the sometimes-coquettish and silly appeal of guitar-wielding women shown in contemporary art. The woman appears to fingerpick a C#-seventh chord, without the root note. That chord is resolved by a F# chord, suggesting that the woman is depicted mid-performance, adding credibility and naturalism to the evocation of sound—even though she is clearly posing. The complex chord structure, gloves (worn for hand agility and ease of performance), direct gaze, and confident playing all suggest that she is an adept guitarist and perhaps a professional musician.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Floyd D. and Ann C. Gottwald Fund, 2021.584

William Merritt Chase
American, 1849–1916

Girl with Guitar, ca. 1886

Oil on panel

The women in Chase's music paintings are depicted with a sense of action and immediacy. They pivot their torsos and turn their heads to acknowledge the viewer or to concentrate on their instruments, which are impressive, professional models. The shiny, metallic tailpiece seen here was one of the improvements that William Tilton patented in the 1850s, and it would appear on guitars by such makers as Zogbaum & Fairchild. Chase's subject, therefore, articulates gravitas and wherewithal by way of the up-to-date guitar she plays.

Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, Maine, The Lunder Collection, 2013.043

Guitar, ca. 1865–75, Zogbaum & Fairchild. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

Thomas Cantwell Healy
American, 1820–1889

Charlotte Davis Wylie, 1853

Oil on canvas

Healy trained in Paris under his older brother, the artist G.P.A. Healy, whose *Young Woman Playing a Guitar* may have provided an inspiration or even a template for this portrait. Healy painted Charlotte Davis Wylie when she was about sixteen years old. Known for catering to an elegant middle- and upper-class clientele, Healy here has taken measures to show a guitar of commensurate quality with the woman's clothing and jewelry. She maintains a demeanor approaching that of a trained musician, and she appears to be about to make an F-major seventh chord. Just as the sitter's elegant rings, earrings, and silk dress are fancy, so too is the guitar.

Collection of Charlotte Boehmer Fraisse, Ocean Springs, Mississippi, From the Estate of Mary Swords Boehmer

Young Woman Playing a Guitar, 1834, G.P.A. Healy (American, 1813–1894). Private collection

Sue Hudelson
American, born 1967

Julie, 2006

Archival pigment print

Sue Hudelson's *Julie* depicts the figure standing tall, gazing soberly upon the viewer, her height emphasized by the camera's relatively low angle. Most pictures of guitar-wielding women depict the instrument either in the player's hands or on her lap. The 1974 Harmony Stella guitar here, however, is not recumbent; it seems to have a life of its own, standing upright with presence and autonomy, as does Julie herself. Hudelson's image marks both a zenith and a rupture in the visual tradition of the woman guitarist, who has here shifted from passive to active and from submissive to empowered.

Courtesy of the artist

Michael C. Thorpe
American, born 1993

Sister Rosetta Tharpe, 2021

Quilting cotton, fabric, thread

Michael C. Thorpe based this quilt on a famous 1938 publicity photograph of the pioneering guitarist Sister Rosetta Tharpe (among those directly influenced by her are Bob Dylan, Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis Presley, Little Richard, and Muddy Waters). Flanking her with musicians playing clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, and drums, the artist retains the early 1930s National Triolian resonator guitar from the photograph but reimagines the instrument as an electric guitar with a cord and accompanying amplifier. This is a significant tribute to Tharpe's status as one of the first women to play electric guitar.

Private collection, Courtesy of LaiSun Keane, Boston

Sister Rosetta Tharpe, 1938, James J. Kriegsman, photographic print. Cornell University Library, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections

Elizabeth Catlett
American, 1915–2012

I Have Given the World My Songs, 1947

Linoleum cut on paper

Part of a series addressing the struggles and strength of Black women, the sculptor and printmaker Elizabeth Catlett's woodcut *I Have Given the World My Songs* suggests that the guitar motif is uniquely poised to both acknowledge and protest racism in the United States. A hooded Klansman beats a Black man with a club in the background; in the foreground, however, Catlett's seated protagonist plays guitar beside—one might say against—a burning cross. This historical onus is also the very focus of blues music, which finds an analogue in this print addressing music as a form of protest against oppression.

Loaned by Margaret N. and John D. Gottwald

Gregory Orloff
American, born Ukraine, 1890–1981

Guitar Player, 1932

Woodcut on paper

With her no-nonsense gaze and adept guitar playing, the woman in Gregory Orloff's woodcut print appears to sidestep the gendered floral and domestic associations of the garden environment in which she sits. In this way, she foreshadows later musicians—including Kim Gordon, Chrissie Hynde, Courtney Love, Carrie Brownstein, Annie Clark, and P. J. Harvey—whose guitar playing offers a gender-defying check on the macho antics of male musicians who often sexualize their instruments and performances.

University of Michigan Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Colton Storm, 1949/1.140

Adolph Wever
German, active in America, mid-19th century

Scenery on the Ohio River, 1842

Hand-colored lithograph

This print is one of hundreds of pre–Civil War town views that foreground the stock imagery of the American Industrial Revolution: tree stumps, civic architecture, and the river—which fueled economies as channels of transportation and water for agriculture. Against this backdrop, Wever depicts a male guitarist wooing a woman. Their appearance indicates that economic success afforded them time for leisure activities—such as dating. The woman faces the man suggesting that she is observing and listening, as the guitar presumably helps his cause.

Palmer Museum of Art, The Pennsylvania State University Partial gift and purchase from John C. O'Connor and Ralph M. Yeager, 86.632

Mary Hallock Foote
American, 1847–1938

A Pretty Girl in the West, 1889

Ink wash, opaque white, and graphite on gray paper

Produced for a series of articles titled "Pictures of the Far West," in *The Century* magazine in 1888 and 1889, *A Pretty Girl in the West* pictures a man looking at and gesturing toward a woman who plays guitar while reclining in a hammock on a porch. The illustration accompanied Mary Hallock Foote's essay "The Pretty Girls in the West" and warns against "pretty girls" from "the East," who simply spend "the red summer twilights on the ranch piazza" and tune their guitars "to the ear of a single listener." The drawing dramatizes the irrelevance of music—as a romantic tool, as a leisure activity—in a western setting.

Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Prints and Photographs Division

Susan Watkins
American, 1875–1913

Woman Playing a Guitar, 1901

Oil on canvas

With the guitarist angled away from the viewer and gazing down in concentration on the unseen sound hole and her picking hand, Susan Watkins asks her viewers to consider both the gravitas of this woman's musicianship and the psychological charge of performance or practice. No mere muse to a male artist, the guitarist plays for herself rather than an audience—unlike the idle and passive guitar-wielding women who appear in many other paintings and illustrations. A photograph of Watkins in her studio seated with this painting on an easel suggests an analogy between women painting and women's musicianship, both presented as legitimate, serious work.

Thomas H. and Diane DeMell Jacobsen Ph.D. Foundation

Portrait of Susan Watkins, ca. 1900, albumen print. Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk

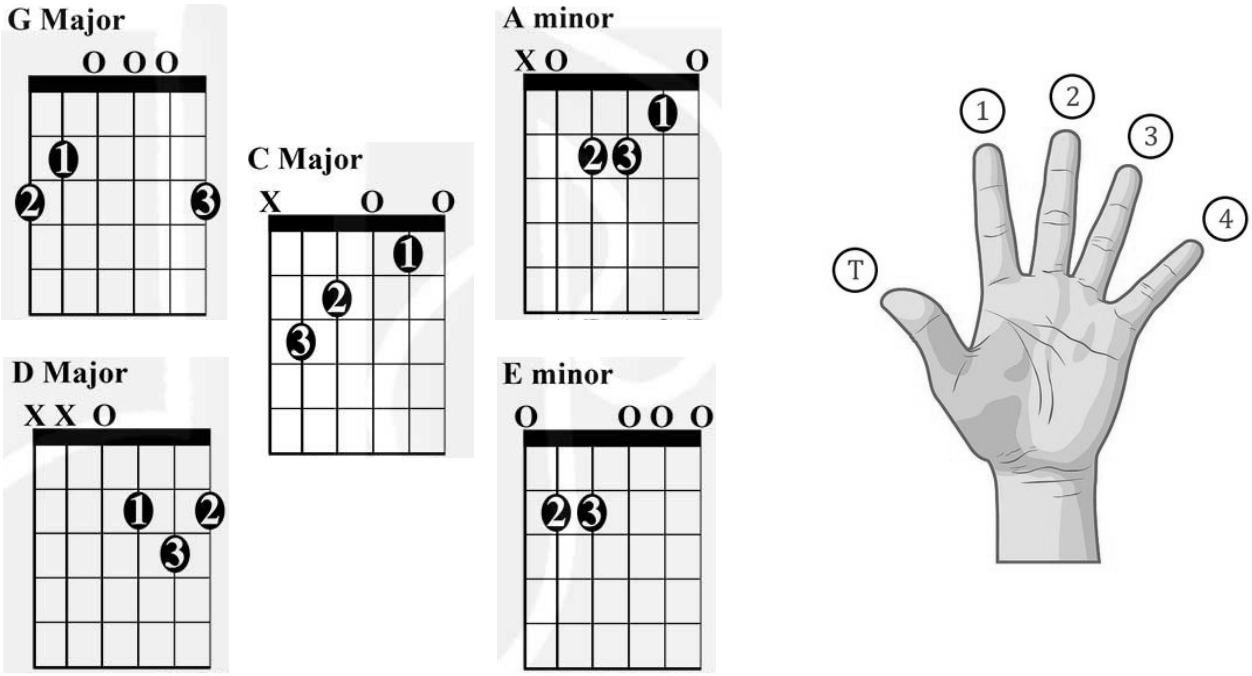
John White Alexander
American, 1856–1915

Panel for Music Room, 1894

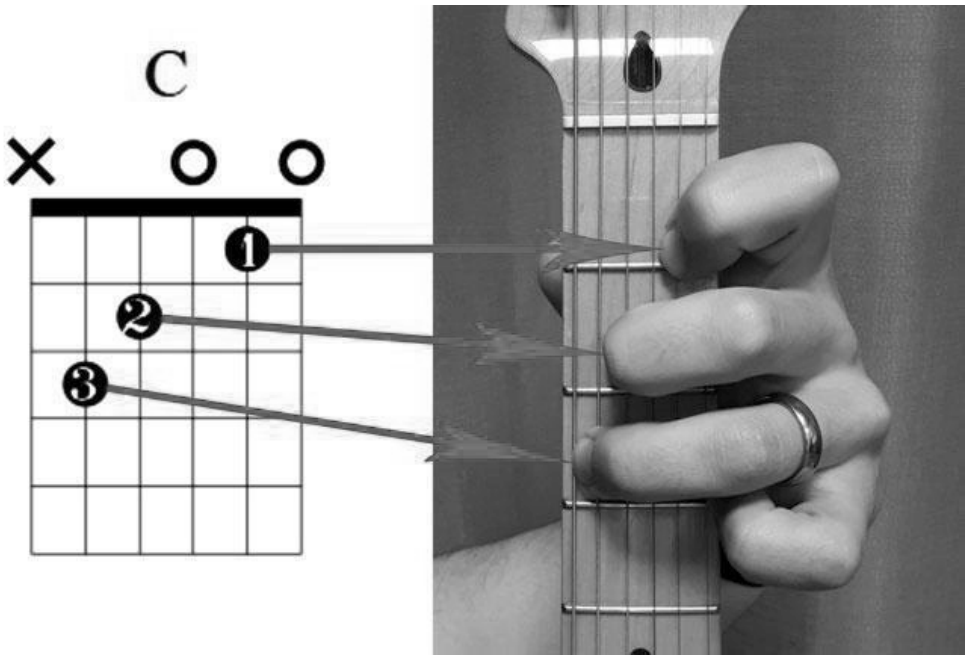
Oil on canvas

Panel for Music Room is one of many works influenced by James McNeill Whistler's contention that art should evoke the soothing character of music. The identifiably French guitar in this panel joins the recumbent figures, muted lighting, and limited palette to equate formal, artistic properties with the softened quietude of a parlor or sitting room. Painted in Étretat, Normandy, as a commission by the artist's in-laws (for a music room that was never built), it shows the same woman in two different poses: leaning back and resting sideways on a divan. *Panel for Music Room* demonstrates the guitar's perceived ability to soothe and calm. Evoking both conspicuous consumption and coziness, the guitar and upholstery suggest the meeting of gentility and domesticity, of culture and comfort.

Detroit Institute of Arts Founders Society Purchase, Beatrice W. Rogers Fund, Dexter M. Ferry, Jr. Fund, Merrill Fund, and Eleanor and Edsel Ford Exhibition and Acquisition Fund, 82.26



In the diagrams above, the numbers refer to fingers.
The horizontal lines represent the frets and the vertical lines are the strings.
The X denotes strings you do not play, and O marks strings you play open, not pressed down.



For example, here is what your fingers should look like when you play a C chord.

SECTION 6
Hispanicization

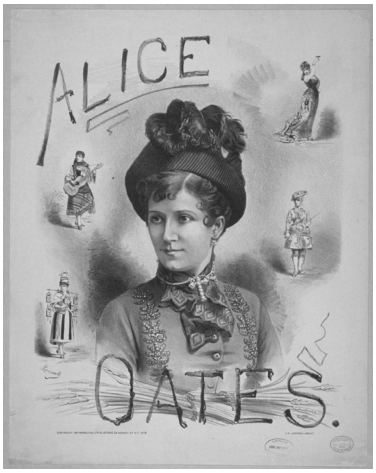
Jose Maria Mora
American, born Cuba, 1849–1926

Alice Oates, ca. 1880–85

Albumen silver print

At the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, the prolific celebrity photographer José María Mora produced and presumably exhibited a group of photographs of women as allegorical figures representing selected nations. Although Ada Thayer here performs a tableau vivant of Spain, the guitar she holds is probably Spanish only insofar as the designation differentiates it from English guitars. Its mustache bridge and scroll-style headstock more resemble those of instruments made in Germany and Austria—or American guitars following those European prototypes.

Mora also circulated a photograph of actress Alice Oates against a backdrop similar to the Thayer picture. The owner of a comic-opera company bearing her name, Oates appears here wearing stereotypical Spanish dress. Suggesting that her music making was but one aspect of her stage identity, this image of the guitar- holding figure resembles an engraving in an 1879 poster that includes vignettes of Oates in other roles. Like the other portrayals on the sheet, the guitar inset facilitates the creation of a type and role. With her guitar, hairstyle, and fringed dress, the actress tells would-be employers that she is fully capable of performing Spanish-ness.



National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution,
Gift of Francis A. DiMauro, S/NPG.2007.329

Alice Oates, 1879, engraving. Library of Congress, Washington, DC

Jose Maria Mora
American, born Cuba, 1849–1926
Miss Ada Thayer as Spain in a Tableaux for the Women's Centennial Union, 1876
Cabinet card albumen print

Museum of the City of New York, F2012.58.1227

Robert Henri
American, 1865–1929

Gypsy with Guitar (Gitaño), 1906

Oil on canvas

Throughout the modern era, selected art and literature has derisively typecast the Romani (individuals from northwest India who began immigrating to Spain in the early 1400s) as dirty, deceitful, over-passionate, and careless "gypsies." Henri's understanding of this constellation of traits informed his depictions of the Romani, including a man named Ramon playing the bandurria, a mandolin-like instrument that had become popular in the 1880s when groups modeled after The Spanish Students (Estudiantina Española Figaro) toured North America. The artist reminisced: "I painted [Ramon] in his loose swing, a Spanish guitar in his hands playing and his face in a reckless devil may care song." Henri would not have been alone in conflating the bandurria with the guitar—both could evoke a misleading evocation of a Spanish type.

Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, Virginia, Gift of Walter P. Chrysler, Jr., 71.501

Jan Matulka
American, born Bohemia, 1890–1972

Spanish Girl with Guitar, 1925

Lithograph

In this lithograph, Jan Matulka flattened the composition, minimized naturalistic details, and emphasized edge, contour, and masses and voids in a manner consistent with synthetic Cubism. He likely looked for inspiration to Spanish painter Pablo Picasso, who was well known for his guitar subject matter. Matulka joined a long line of modernists in identifying the guitar as a visual shorthand for Spanish culture. In the only two works by Matulka that designate a Spanish sitter, the women whom he depicts hold guitars.

Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Gift of W. Douglas Van Loan, 2014.0173

Untitled (Spanish Woman Playing Guitar), ca. 1923–24, Jan Matulka, etching on paper. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC

George Luks
American, 1867–1933

Pedro, early 1920s

Oil on canvas

In his painting *Pedro*, the early 20th-century realist artist George Luks used the guitar as a means for staging Spanish-ness. Casually seated at a café table and shown with an open mouth, as if in conversation, the guitarist appears to take a break. Averting his gaze, holding a cigarette (a recurring emblem in this type), and leaning his instrument against the table, the figure matches portrayals of Spaniards seen in 1920s American fiction and film shorts. *Pedro* is one of the very few works of art in which a guitarist performs his Spanish-ness without holding or even touching his guitar.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Mr. and Mrs. William Preston Harrison Collection, 27.7.11

Dorothea Lange
American, 1895–1965
Coachella Valley—Mexican Laborers around Camp, 1935
Photonegative print

This image dates to Lange's 1935 visit to a work camp in California's Coachella Valley, where she was on assignment from the Resettlement administration. The photograph is one of thousands that the Administration used to publicize Depression–era economic hardships for agricultural workers. Lange reminisced, "I had begun to talk to the people I photographed. . . . In the migrant camps, there were always talkers," adding, "This was very helpful to me, and I think it was helpful to them. It gave us a chance to meet on common ground." We might therefore surmise that the Mexican laborer seems to communicate with Lange by way of his guitar, much as she uses her camera to connect and "talk" with him.

Ernest Martin Hennings
American, 1886–1956

Spanish Musicians, Taos, n.d.

Oil on canvas

Ernest Hennings's *Spanish Musicians, Taos* presents the guitarist as an active producer of a musical environment. Evoking a larger commercial-entertainment setting, and far from simply posing with the instrument, the guitarist strikes a chord on the third fret and opens his mouth to sing. The curling A, D, and G strings on the headstock suggest that the musician only recently changed the guitar strings. The abraded varnish adjacent to the sound hole that results from repeated striking with a strumming hand or a plectrum indicates the instrument's history of habitual use.

The authenticity and immediacy evoked by these details saves Hennings's sitters from the misleadingly exotic romanticizing perpetuated by many artists and instrument makers who were eager to appropriate and market the guitar's Spanish-ness.

Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas, Partial Bequest of H.J. Lutcher Stark, 1965, and partial Gift of Nelda C. Stark, 1975, 1965.2.541

José Espert Arcos
Mexican, born Spain, 1907–1951

Mexico, 1945

Offset lithographic color poster

The poster *Mexico* shows how the guitar figured in the Mexican Tourism Association's massive, mid-20th-century campaign to market Mexican tourism to audiences in the United States. The association banked on the instrument's connection with all things Hispanic. Arcos recast the cactus's crown as a head and its arms as human arms (one of which holds the guitar). The guitar motif reassured prospective tourists that, even amid the budding cosmopolitanism of Mexico City and other urban hubs, a generically folksy authenticity awaited them—even in modern Mexico.

Library of Congress

Thomas Hicks
American, 1823–1890

The Musicale, Barber Shop, Trenton Falls, New York, 1866

Oil on canvas

The guitar player in this painting is part of a noteworthy musical ensemble depicted here performing in a barbershop on the grounds of the posh Trenton Falls Hotel, a famous 19th-century resort.

The patron of the work, Charles Tefft, sits at left, his chin in his hand. Yet the diverse group commanding his attention is significant. Famous for his singing, the barber and gate-keeper, William Brister, stands holding his hat; behind him is a Black violin player. A cellist sits in front of a man playing a guitar, its neck pointing toward a smiling woman, evoking period understandings of the instrument's role in courtship and romance. The guitar and cello players are presumably Anglo-Americans, making *The Musicale* one of the first American paintings to depict an integrated musical group.

The North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, Purchased with funds from the State of North Carolina, 52.9.15

SECTION 6

The Guitar in Black Art & Culture

Romare Bearden
American, 1911–1988

Three Folk Musicians, 1967

Collage of various papers with paint and graphite on canvas

Romare Bearden has stated that scholars have suggested both Harlem and the artist's native Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, as inspirations for his *Three Folk Musicians*. The artist, however, contended that the composition harkens to the guitar players who made after-supper visits to his grandmother's boarding-house in Pittsburgh. Guitars figure prominently in several dozen works by the artist, but here they share space and intersect with a banjo, reminding us of the roles of both instruments in blues, jazz, and folk music. The two guitars in *Three Folk Musicians* are both brighter and larger than the banjo, which seems pushed back to make way for the overlapping guitar. Suggesting visual analogues for the rhythm, syncopation, and timbre of jazz and blues, the work honors the music that inspired African American artists, beginning with the Harlem Renaissance decades earlier.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Endowment, 2016.336

Palmer Hayden
American, 1890–1973

Untitled (Dreamer), ca. 1930

Oil on canvas

Born in Widewater, Virginia, Palmer Hayden was among the first African American artists to travel to Europe for study and inspiration. Hayden painted this canvas in Paris (he was there from 1927 to 1932). The trumpet, guitar, and drum emerge from wavy expanses, meant to evoke clouds, with the illusion that the instruments and their sounds dominate the sleeping figure's dreams. By the time Hayden went to Paris, Cubist and Fauvist painters had been incorporating African aesthetics in their art as a sign of "primitive" authenticity for about twenty years. Hayden may well have known that the closed-eye motif—found in many African masks—signified a turning inward, a reckoning with dream-world spirits, appropriate for the sleeping figure in this painting.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 2016.234

William H. Johnson
American, 1901–1970

Blind Musician, ca. 1940

Oil on plywood

Johnson's *Blind Musician* is based on an outdoor performance on a corner in Harlem, but it also references musical encounters from the artist's youth. A woman plays the guitar and a blind man stands beside her, his eyes shut, his gray cup for change pressed against his chest, and a tambourine in his hand. This reverses the usual formula of "lead *boys*" guiding an itinerant male musician. One art historian has compared the pictorial flatness and limited palette to the "plaintive harmonies and modest, threadbare appearance of real-life street musicians." This interpretation reminds us that it was the Depression itself that left many individuals with few options besides becoming street musicians.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1967.59.670

William H. Johnson
American, 1901–1970

At Home in the Evening, ca. 1940

Oil on canvas

The presence of farming implements partially hidden by the house in this painting helps qualify the guitar playing shown. To the right of the house, a plow and a cart or wheelbarrow suggest that these tools facilitate plowing the neat crop rows in the background. In this work context, guitar playing emerges as a leisure activity; the man has time to handle the musical instrument when he is not handling farm implements.

At Home in the Evening evokes not just music but blues. It achieves this in part through the theme of work in an agricultural setting, with the suggestion that guitars and farm utensils are equally integral and, in a general sense, interchangeable instruments in a farmer's life. The guitar occupies a position shared with an intersection of roads and coexists with the plough, cart, and fence.

Private collection, Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York

Gibson Guitar Corporation

ES-150, 1936

In 1936, Gibson introduced its ES-150, one of the first commercially viable electric guitars. Replete with its trademark hexagon-shaped pickup, the model here dates from that inaugural year. The *ES* stood for "Electric Spanish" and the 150 denoted the total price of the instrument (around $100.00) together with an amplifier ($50.00)—a hefty sum in the middle of the Great Depression. The first musician to make a living playing electric guitar, Charlie Christian, played an ES-150 in Benny Goodman's famously integrated band. So identified with this model is the musician that the ES-150 is often called a "Charlie Christian."

Courtesy of Vintage Blues Guitars, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Charlie Christian playing his Gibson ES-150 at the Waldorf Astoria, New York, *Downbeat Magazine*, December 1, 1939

John Cohen
American, 1932–2019

Pete Seeger (with Alan Lomax), 1959
(printed 1997)
Gelatin silver print

A musician (he played in the New Lost City Ramblers with Pete Seeger's half-brother Mike Seeger) as well as photographer, John Cohen here depicts the mixed-race trio rehearsing for a Carnegie Hall concert. Folklorist Alan Lomax plays a smaller bodied Martin acoustic guitar in the image. Cohen and Lomax were considered anthologists, taking special measures to preserve the music of passing folkways of life before they might be eclipsed by modern life. With Lomax's Martin and the Gibson ES-125 electric guitar played behind him, Cohen's photograph makes a case for the guitar's role in facilitating such narratives.

Alan Lomax

American, 1915–2002

Bill Tatnall, half-length portrait, seated, facing left, playing guitar, Frederica, Georgia, 1935

Photographic print

Alan Lomax and his father, John, were folklorist-musicologists who helped create the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress. They formed that archive with their recordings of individuals, primarily in rural settings, whose songs, the Lomaxes believed, offered glimpses of an authenticity otherwise lost in modern life. On his 1935 jaunt to Georgia, in the largely abandoned town of Frederica, on the western side of St. Simons Island, Lomax encountered guitarist Bill Tatnall. Lomax is better known for his vast corpus of recordings than for his photography, but the open mouth and finger picking of a C chord yield a sonic suggestion of the moment he sought to memorialize.

Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Prints and Photographs Division

Marc Burckhardt
American, born Germany, 1962
The Soul of a Man: Who Was Blind Willie Johnson?, 2010
Acrylic and oil on board

This work accompanied a 2010 article in *Texas Monthly* by Michael Hall about the Texas slide guitar pioneer Blind Willie Johnson. Hall includes the non-heroic and unflattering aspects of Johnson's life while recognizing his well-documented musical influence, on slide guitar in particular. The seated position and expression of the musician are based on the only known surviving photograph of Johnson. In the photograph, the slide on the guitarist's pinky finger is hard to discern, but artist Marc Burckhardt accentuates it in the magazine illustration, reminding viewers of one aspect of the musician's important legacy. On the right side, the rounded top, inscriptions, and winged skull suggest late 18th-century headstones.

Collection of Scott Wallace and Tara Coco

Hale Aspacio Woodruff
American, 1900–1980

Blind Musician, 1935

Woodcut on paper

Hale Woodruff's *Blind Musician* portrays a Black man playing guitar, seated before a wooden shack with nailed-in planks. The work taps into still-timely debates regarding the intersection of blindness, poverty, and race. The architecture, foreshortened instrument, and side view of the seated man point to the socio-economic conditions that Woodruff aimed to represent during the Depression years, while he was an instructor at a WPA community art center in Atlanta.

Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine, Gift of Kenneth and Kathryn Chenault, 2004.24

John Biggers
American, 1924–2001

Blind Boy and Monkey, 1948

Conté crayon and gouache on paper

This drawing situates the guitarist in the type of urban environment that had come to be considered the "natural" habitat of blind African American street performers at this time. At right, the crumbling stucco facade reveals underlying bricks and evokes physical and metaphorical dilapidation, which is appropriate for a portrayal of a panhandling street musician. The chain extending from the guitarist's left wrist to the monkey's right wrist evokes bondage. It also suggests a long tradition of organ grinders, who often enlisted costumed monkeys as workmates as they strolled urban thoroughfares.

Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York

James A. Porter
American, 1905–1970

On a Cuban Bus, 1943

Oil on canvas

Artist, art historian, and curator James A. Porter taught at Howard University for most of his career and wrote the first history of African American art in 1943. He painted *On a Cuban Bus* during his 1945–46 sabbatical in Haiti and Cuba, where he studied aspects of the African diaspora that persisted into the modern era. With city bus passengers holding a guitar and a gamecock, the painting offers an illuminating window into nonsegregated daily life in Cuba—precisely when large numbers of Cubans voiced increasing disapproval of segregation in the United States. The guitar's affordability and portability contribute to its ubiquity in urban settings as seen here.

Charles Henry Alston
American, 1907–1977

Blues with Guitar and Bass, ca. 1948

Oil on canvas

Charles Alston counted among his close friends the musicians Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters, and Chick Webb. As members of the so-called Dawn Patrol, Alston and his friends went from one nightclub to the next seeking out the best musicians. He later commented about this period: "And you sort of did a tour. In the evening you'd pop from place to place."

The guitarist in *Blues with Guitar and Bass* may be a composite of those musicians Alston encountered with the Dawn Patrol. The guitarist—close to the beholder in the fore-ground—and the blues tradition for which he stands represent a vital aspect of life as lived, as authentically experienced.

High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Gift of Daniel J. Whitner, Jr., 1992.58

SECTION 7

Leadbelly & the Lomaxes

Charles White
American, 1918–1979

Goodnight Irene, 1952

Oil on canvas

Acquired through a lead gift provided by Sarah and Landon Rowland through The Ever Glades Fund; major support provided by Lee Lyon, in memory of Joanne Lyon; Sprint; James and Elizabeth Tinsman; Neil D. Karbank; and The Sosland Family; Generous support provided by John and Joanne Bluford; The Stanley H. Durwood Foundation; Gregory M. Glore; Maurice Watson; Anne and Cliff Gall; Dr. Sere and Mrs. MaryJane Myers and Family; Gary and Debby Ballard; Dr. Loretta M. Britton; Catherine L. Futter, in memory of Mathew and Erna Futter; Jean and Moulton Green, Jr., in honor of Rose Bryant; Dr. Willie and Ms. Sandra A. J. Lawrence; Randall and Helen Ferguson; Dr. Valerie E. Chow and Judge Jon R. Gray (Ret.); Gwendolyn J. Cooke, Ph.D.; Dwayne and Freida Crompton; Leodis and N. June Davis; Kimberly C. Young; Tom and Karenbeth Zacharias; Jim Baggett and Marguerite Ermeling; Rose Bryant; Tasha and Julián Zugazagoitia; Antonia Boström and Dean Baker; Sarah Beeks Higdon; Kathleen and Kevin Collison; Katelyn Crawford and John Kupstas; Kimberly Hinkle and Jason Menefee; Stephanie and Brett Knappe; Jan and Michael Schall; and Michele Valentine, in memory of Marcella Hillerman, 2014.28

Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City

John A. Lomax
American, 1867–1948

Alan Lomax
American, 1915–2002

Negro Folk Songs as Sung by Leadbelly, 1936

Bound volume

John and Alan Lomax get credit for having "found" Huddie Ledbetter in the Louisiana State Penitentiary, but they also exploited him. Their 1936 volume *Negro Folk Songs as Sung by Leadbelly* presents Ledbetter as mentally challenged and sexually rapacious. They were not alone in belittling him by reducing him to his Blackness. The Lomaxes had intended to call the book *Leadbelly and His Songs*, but, fearing that Ledbetter's fame had waned, their publisher, Macmillan, shortly before going to press, insisted on adding "negro" and "folk" to the title. This phrasing joined the frontispiece photograph in foregrounding Ledbetter as exotic but accessible.

The Margaret R. and Robert M. Freeman Library, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Charles White
American, 1918–1979

Leadbelly, 1975

Oil wash and graphite on paper

In this final rendition of the singer, a publicity drawing from 1975 commissioned for Gordon Parks's movie *Leadbelly*, White isolated the shackled musician and his guitar, so that they appear as one solitary, self-contained unit. The drawing repurposes a well-known photograph of Ledbetter published as the frontispiece for John and Alan Lomax's 1936 book *Negro Folk Songs as Sung by Lead Belly* and later as the opening image for a racist *Life* magazine article from 1937. The 1975 drawing repeats the seating, open mouth, chord fingering, and arm and leg positions of the photograph (on display nearby). Gone are the bandana, western overalls, and general ebullience, however, replaced with prison stripes and a sober gaze aimed directly at the viewer.

Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York

Berenice Abbott
American, 1898–1991

Huddie Ledbetter, ca. 1945

Gelatin silver print

Charles White first depicted Ledbetter in his 1943 mural *The Contribution of the Negro to Democracy in America*, which represents the musician at lower right with an open, singing mouth, an anguished and plaintive facial expression, and large, flattened hands upon his guitar. About two years later, Berenice Abbott produced a very different image of Ledbetter, a photograph taken to promote an international tour the musician would make. With the musician wearing a gingham shirt and a bandana, Abbott's image shows the ease with which artists and illustrators could fabricate a generic western sensibility—often at the expense of the guitarist's identity. Abbott's print promotes the sellable Lead Belly while diluting the violence, difficulty, and racial charge for which Ledbetter had come to stand.

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, NPG.76.82

The Contribution of the Negro to Democracy in America, 1943, Charles White (American, 1918–1979), mural. Hampton University Museum, Hampton, Virginia

Charles Pollock
American, 1902–1974

Alan Lomax, 1938

Pencil, pen and ink, and brush and ink on paper

Charles Pollock's drawing of a relaxed and dapper Alan Lomax with his guitar implies an altogether different attitude toward music and this instrument from that held by Ledbetter. Lomax's apparent professionalism, propriety, and detachment suggests that he was rarely on equal socioeconomic footing with those musicians, such as Ledbetter, whom he and his father recorded in the American South during the Depression.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Transfer from the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Collection of Elizabeth Pollock, 1976.65.5

SECTION 8

Personification

Milton Avery
American, 1885–1965

Untitled (Guitar Player), n.d.

Pencil on paper

In the 1940s, the artist Milton Avery produced a group of works exploring the guitarist's embrace of the instrument. A study related to the larger paintings in this series, this drawing reveals the artist experimenting with two versions of the player leaning into the instrument as she plays.

The Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation

Max Ferguson
American, born 1959

Michael with Guitar, 2013

Oil on canvas

A guitar player himself, artist Max Ferguson savors "the feeling of the wood vibrating against my body," and has called it "a sort of musical hug." For Ferguson, who began teaching his two sons to play guitar when they were young, playing the instrument is something of a family affair. *Michael with Guitar* depicts the artist's seven-year-old son seated on the floor, his back to a wall, playing a small instrument that he holds close to his chest. If the child is enjoying a similar "musical hug," it is difficult to read. The lines of the floor act as orthogonals leading to the boy, who meets us with his gaze, but whose guitar is a sort of buffer between the viewer and himself.

Collection of the artist

Otto Hagel
American, born Germany, 1909–1973

Odetta, 1958

Gelatin silver print

The documentary photojournalist and film-maker Otto Hagel here presents a close-up portrayal of the folk singer and civil rights activist Odetta (born Odetta Holmes)—one of the few women who performed at the 1963 March on Washington. Holding her Gibson J-45 guitar close to her body, she certainly would have felt and heard the vibrating strings—however softly they may have vibrated. Thanks to Hagel's close-up composition, the beholder has visual access to and an intimate view of the instrument she holds against her upper torso.

Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Tucson 98.117.66

Robert Gwathmey
American, 1903–1988

Girl with Guitar, 1965

Oil on canvas

In Robert Gwathmey's *Girl with Guitar*, a woman embracing a guitar sits on a red bench in front of a barn or shack. Her left hand fingers a chord, and her right hand extends below the guitar's face, suggesting that she may have just strummed the chord. Perhaps most striking is the figure's severely angled head—not quite horizontal but sufficiently pivoted to make its contours rhyme with the edge of the instrument's curving waist. As if reaching down and listening very intently (although her hair covers her ears), the head functions like a limb, continuing the work of the arms in holding the instrument's body close to her own.

Catherine Dail Fine Art, New York and Los Angeles

Marion Perkins
American, 1908–1961

Guitar Player, ca. 1945–50

Terracotta

Artists have used a wide range of formal strategies to suggest the bond between player and guitar. Few, however, go as far as Marlon Perkins endeavored in *Guitar Player,* where figure and instrument join as if one, emerging from the same ceramic cylinder of form. Rather than modeling three-dimensional forms with individualism and specific physical traits, as he often did, Perkins treated both the guitar and its player to abridged and stylized conventions. Perkins likely produced *Guitar Player* at Hull House (a settlement house and educational center in Chicago), where he took a ceramics course at this time, and where music played an important role in the curriculum.

The John and Susan Horseman Collection, Courtesy of the Horseman Foundation

William Wiley
American, 1937–2021

Muddy Waters, 1983

Woodcut

Biomorphic treatments of the guitar appear in selected modern and contemporary art. William Wiley's large woodcut *Muddy Waters* transforms the instrument's sound hole into an open mouth, with teeth visible at top, and the screened holes featured on the Dobro resonator guitar have become upturned eyeballs. Wiley was a prolific musician, and *Muddy Waters* is a direct woodcut of an actual guitar he made. With his vast corpus of guitar subjects, Wiley sought "to get people . . . to do other than just look." He also wanted "to get the viewer involved." Substituting for the headstock in Wiley's print is a stele-like heart bearing the initials "MW," a reference to the iconic blues guitarist after whom the work is titled.

Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Gift of Joyce and Don Omer, 2013.02

William Wegman
American, born 1943

Slow Guitar, 1987

Archival pigment print

The artists in this section of the exhibition go to varying lengths to suggest a conjoining of individuals and their guitars. The photographer William Wegman, on the other hand, stands out for having meshed *dog* and guitar forms. In this image, his longtime canine model, the Weimaraner Fay Ray, lies on her back on a purple fabric-covered couch. She seems perfectly content to remain recumbent in an embrace that, per the dog's demeanor, suggests a friendly attitude toward the instrument. That the instrument is inanimate does not matter here; the guitar is a body to hold, to envelop within one's limbs.

Courtesy of the Artist/William Wegman & Imago Galleries, Palm Desert, California

Helen Turner
American, 1858–1958

A Song of Summer, ca. 1915

Oil on canvas

In her painting *A Song of Summer*, Helen Turner modeled the woman, guitar, and landscape with similarly broken brushwork and dappled sunlight, suggesting the merging of instrument, flora, and figure. All three appear formed of tesserae in the same mosaic. The painting exemplifies the natural settings, broken brushwork, and reflective light that characterize the most iconic French and American Impressionist painting. Playing and not merely posing, the woman fingerpicks—plucking the E string while she picks the strings of higher pitch, below—and makes what is almost certainly an A-seventh chord.

The Johnson Collection, Spartanburg, South Carolina

SECTION 9
Women in Country Music

C. F. Martin & Co.

D-18 Guitar (played by Lulu Belle), 1946

Lulu Belle Wiseman (born Myrtle Eleanor Cooper), of the Lulu Belle and Scotty duo, owned and played this Martin D-18 modified with an elaborate trapeze bridge and neck custom-fit with triangular inlays. This guitar offers a rare glimpse into the culture of the *National Barn Dance* and Belle's later career. Lulu Belle had been playing on the *National Barn Dance* (a wildly popular radio program broadcast on Chicago's WLS-AM) in 1932. Patsy Montana, Lulu Belle, Kitty Wells, and other singing cowgirls used guitars to understand, romanticize, and critique the myth of the "prairie."

Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, Nashville, 3.X.150

Earnest Patton
American, born 1935

Dolly Parton, 1988

Acrylic on wood, copper wire

Earnest Patton's inclusion of an axe, saw, pocketknife, and house paint in this image highlights the powerful presence of one of the most important living musicians. Dolly Parton has been writing songs and playing guitar since her childhood in Sevierville, Tennessee. Holding a carefully carved guitar, the singer is depicted with an elongated face, which echoes the columnar treatment of the figure. With her left hand holding the instrument and her visage boldly facing the viewer, Parton effectively makes a visual offering to the beholder, physically intimating what her voice and guitar will also achieve.

Collection of William and Ann Oppenhimer

Arkansas Traveler (depicting Patsy Montana),
1941
Sheet music cover

Collection of Louise Hancox and David Harp

Arkansas Traveler (depicting Essie and Kay),

1941

Sheet music cover

In 1941 the Chicago-based Calumet Music Company published at least two versions of the sheet music for the popular song "Arkansas Traveler," one of which features a photograph of a guitar-playing Patsy Montana on its cover. Montana had recently appeared, along with Gene Autrey, as a yodeling guitar player in the 1939 film *Colorado Sunset*. In her music and movie work, she effectively asserted that her romantic partner was not a man but rather a mythic land called "the West."

Another "Arkansas " cover features the duo Essie and Kay, stage names for Esther Martin and Kay Reinberg, also called the Prairie Sweethearts, who had just joined the guitarist Les Paul as new members of the "talent staff" at Chicago radio station WBBM. By this time, the duo had attracted wide notice for their guitar playing throughout the Midwest, on radio station WLS's *National Barn Dance*, and on Mexican radio, yet virtually none of their press mentioned their musicianship.

Sibley Music Library, Special Collections Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester

Walden S. Fabry
American, 1913–1976

Kitty Wells, 1954

Silver gelatin print

Walden S. Fabry's photograph of Kitty Wells depicts the musician with her hand against her Martin dreadnought guitar. The halo of light behind the figure and her proximity to the beholder help to encapsulate musician and guitar as one discrete unit. The halo effect and guitar pose appear in other images of musicians by Fabry, who was among the most prolific photographers in the history of country music, but this picture is rare in its focus on singer and guitar as a unified duo.

Collection of George Gruhn, Gruhn Guitars, Nashville

SECTION 10
Hawiian Corner

Louis Ritman
American, 1892–1963

Reverie, ca. 1926

Oil on canvas

The "reverie" of this painting's title is conveyed by the woman's downward gaze and her cozy position between the dog and the back of the chair, suggesting that she is pleasantly lost in thought. It is also a function of the ukulele, a small guitar-like instrument whose music was popularized in Hawaii. Its ready evocation of trance-like bliss is apparent in a 1928 Gibson guitars catalogue, which states: "Like the Pipes of Pan, the Ukulele has drawn thousands of men, women, boys, and girls into the land of musical joy and happiness."

The Hawaiian music exhibit at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 in San Francisco marked the beginning of the ukulele's full association with Hawaii. Shortly thereafter, propelled by their appearance in Hawaiian-style orchestras and ensembles, ukuleles began eclipsing mandolins in popularity. Early sound movies, posters, and advertisements often matched the ukulele (and the lap steel guitar) with an easy, airy, tropical sensibility. Martin's sales of the instrument peaked in 1925 and began to wane in 1926, the year Ritman painted *Reverie*.

Based in Chicago, Ritman enmeshed the ukulele within a painterly tapestry of broad, cascading, loosely applied brush-strokes. With an emphasis on color-saturated patterns and very few hard contours, *Reverie* enlists formal devices to evoke ease and comfort—two terms that also characterized popular conceptions of both Hawaii and the ukulele that was so often cast as its musical attribute.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of Mrs. Louis Ritman, 80.24

National String Instrument Corporation

Style O, ca. 1930–32

Materials unconfirmed

From the Jerry, Joyce, and Zach Zolten Family Collection

Regal Musical Instrument Company

Hawaiian-Style Guitar, ca. 1930s

With stenciled designs of a green lagoon and winding palm trees descending from hilly banks, the widely distributed Regal guitar at right matches the romantic and exotic language with which retailers promoted a Hawaiian sensibility in the years between the world wars. The curving top of the headstock repeats the sinuous lines of the trees below, especially that of the palm at lower right. The faux purfling and rosette decoration accentuate the blatant artifice of the stenciled tableau, but the trees and island imagery match popular, if misleadingly generalized, conceptions of Hawaii.

Another stencil-decorated guitar, at far right, also depicts palm trees flanking the sound hole, but in this case a captain's wheel substitutes for the rosette decoration. With impossibly long legs that rival the reach of the palm trees, the woman at lower left looks seaward, her right hand presumably shading her gaze upon the deep vista across the watery inlet.

Walter Carter, Carter Vintage Guitars, Nashville

Unidentified maker

Tropical/palms guitar with captain's wheel around sound hole, ca. 1935–40

Walter Carter, Carter Vintage Guitars, Nashville

Lisa S. Johnson
American, born 1963

Hawaiian-Style Guitar Owned and Signed by Elvis Presley, 2018

Diamond dust giclée photograph

The pairing of Elvis Presley with Hawaii was in full force in the film musical (and his most financially successful movie) *Blue Hawaii* of 1961, as well as the movie *Paradise, Hawaiian Style* of 1966. In the wake of these productions, stenciled adhesives on instruments played by Presley frequently featured the trademark tropical subject matter by then associated with Hawaii, as seen on this circa 1937 Harmony Supertone guitar. Suggesting an equation between Elvis, the state, and guitars, this instrument counts as one of the more canonical usages of the guitar's surface as a template for the introduction of the tree-and-island motifs that had come to signify Hawaii-ness.

Courtesy of the artist

Robert Crumb
American, born 1943

Amos Easton Known as "Bumble Bee Slim",

1997
Pen and ink

The first resonator guitars were manufactured by the National String Instrument Corporation in 1927. Imagery of palms, clouds, and lagoons were frequently etched on the cover plates of these nickel-plated, steel-bodied guitars. Suggesting the growing popularity of these Hawaiian motifs, at least twelve variations on the National Style O's sandblasted tropical designs were sold (National premiered the Style O in 1930).

The National Style O has come to be associated with Hawaiian music, but Hawaiian guitar players have not historically gravitated to this model. Resonator guitar playing recurs in early country and blues genres, and the Style O is famously found in the music of, among others, the Piedmont musician Amos Easton, known as Bumble Bee Slim.

In the 1990s, the music and literary historian Jerry Zolten found the only extant recordings of Bumble Bee Slim's "Rough Rugged Road Blues" and "Honey Bee Blues," which became the basis for an illuminating biography of Slim that he wrote for *Living Blues* magazine in 1997. Using as his source material a famous photograph of Slim playing his Style O, Robert Crumb produced this drawing for the article.

From the Jerry, Joyce, and Zach Zolten Family Collection

Empire Photography
American (Los Angeles, CA)
A Hula Dancer and Her Band in Los Angeles, ca. 1920
Photographic print

In the years between the world wars, Hawaiian musical troupes found steady gigs in cafés, coffeehouses, and, ultimately, recording studios. Professional success was to be had on the mainland as well, and, unsurprisingly, a photography studio in the 1920s crafted a Hawaiian musical identity before a faux backdrop. This photograph depicts the woman at center playing a large-waisted instrument with a slotted peghead and ornate sound hole rosette. But it also shows a National metal-bodied resonator guitar—frequently used in Hawaiian music. This carefully staged image joined mass-produced records and sheet music in creating and responding to a market demand for Hawaiian guitars.

Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum, City of Industry, California

SECTION 11
Picturing Performance

Howard Cook
American, 1901–1980

Untitled—Altapass, NC—Man Playing Guitar,

1934
Charcoal on wove paper

Guitars and banjos frequently appear at fiddling contests, picnics, dances, fiddlers' conventions, country fairs—and usually with significant cash awards. In 1935, the artist Howard Cook happened upon a fiddling contest in Brookwood, Alabama, which inspired him to make a suite of works. Throughout his life, Cook gravitated toward sonic subject matter—from the sounds made by Bessemer converters to musical performers—but the Brookwood experience particularly inspired him. He noted that he "marveled at the nimble fingers of the raw country-men as they fiercely . . . played and at the red-blooded vigor of the stories that rolled forth."

Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, Gift of the artist, Friends of the Department of Art and Museum, 1967.1996

James McNeill Whistler
American, 1834–1903

The Guitar Player (M. W. Ridley), 1875

Drypoint in dark-brown ink on off-white paper; fourth state (of seven)

This composition points toward a convergence of sight, sound, and touch. The print depicts James McNeill Whistler's friend, the painter and etcher Matthew White Ridley, performing on the guitar. Always attentive to synesthetic possibilities, Whistler here uses an energetic network of lines to suggest analogues to sound and the subject's fingerpicking and motion. This is one of the few works by Whistler that crops out the guitar's headstock, a move that suggests the extension of the sound, or quietude, into the realm of the beholder.

Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, ME, The Lunder Collection

Dennis Miller Bunker
American, 1861–1890

A Bohemian, 1885

Oil on canvas

A guitarist himself, Dennis Miller Bunker depicts the performer here playing an F chord, barring the E and B strings with his index finger and reaching his hand all the way around the neck to thumb the low-E string and play the F note on the first fret. One might draw a comparison between the first-position F—which boasts a solid, low-end timbre—that the figure plays and the psychologically charged tableau and carefully muted lighting in *A Bohemian*.

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd, 1993.35.1

Thomas Eakins
American, 1844–1916

Professionals at Rehearsal, 1883

Oil on canvas

In *Professionals at Rehearsal*, Gilded Age American realist painter Thomas Eakins shows his students John Laurie Wallace and George Agnew Reid playing the zither and guitar, respectively. Inspired by Eakins's earlier watercolor *The Zither Player* (below), the prolific American art collector Thomas B. Clarke commissioned *Professionals at Rehearsal*. One art historian has observed that the painting suggests a "quiet personal world to which Eakins's friends have given themselves and into which they draw their audience," while another states that the canvas epitomizes the very skills needed for effective performance: "the coordination of brain, eye, and hand."

Philadelphia Museum of Art,
The John D. McIlhenny Collection, 1943,
1943-40-39

The Zither Player, 1876, Thomas Eakins, watercolor on cream wove paper. The Art Institute of Chicago

Carroll Cloar
American, 1913–1993

Study for **Folk Singer,** 1971

Pencil and brown wash on tracing paper

The Arkansas-born artist Carroll Cloar depicted guitar subjects in some of his best-known works. In *Folk Singer*, the musician's seriousness of purpose is indicated by her engrossed, intense gaze and careful picking, which also add a psychological charge to the already expressive landscape. With its violin-like *f*-holes instead of the usual round, centrally placed sound hole, the guitar she plays looks like a Gibson L-5 but is more likely a Harmony guitar—one of many models to appropriate aspects of the L-5.

Carroll Cloar
American, 1913–1993
Folk Singer, 1971
Acrylic on Masonite

Collection of Bobby and Diane Tucker, Courtesy of David Lusk Gallery, Nashville and Memphis

Joseph Rodefer DeCamp
American, 1858–1923

The Guitar Player, 1908

Oil on canvas

This painting enlists the guitar as a gender-specific attribute for reverie and mental absorption. Pairing the instrument with the rolled Japanese scroll at right, the painting also illuminates the guitar's use as a recurring prop in Gilded Age American art. DeCamp's frequent model, Agnes Woodbury, appears to be playing—or about to play—a D-seventh suspended-fourth or perhaps D-ninth chord. The D-seventh suspended-fourth chord sounds a tone of anticipation typically resolved with a D, G, or E-minor chord. It is tempting to make a connection between this sound of expectation and the psychologically charged, Vermeer-influenced composition and carefully gradated lighting of *The Guitar Player*.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The Hayden Collection—Charles Henry Hayden Fund, 08.204

Louis H. Draper
American, 1935–2002

Miles Davis, 1966

Gelatin silver print

In this photograph, Louis Draper shows iconic trumpet player Miles Davis encapsulating and meshing with a guitar by forming a C shape around the instrument with his body. Draper's use of a vertical format, dramatic lighting, and cropping the top of Davis's head all contribute to the intimacy of what appears to be an otherwise hushed atmosphere, further emphasizing the charge of the musician's body forming a bracket around the guitar.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Margaret R. and Robert M. Freeman Library, Archives; Louis H. Draper, Archives (VA-04), Acquired from the Louis H. Draper Preservation Trust with the Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Endowment Fund, VA04.03.1.055.P1

Charles White
American, 1918–1979

Guitarist, ca. 1959

Charcoal and gouache on illustration board

Charles White is best known for his lifelong commitment to representing the human figure, especially in rich charcoal drawings. With a focus on African American subjects, he evokes universal human conditions of joy, suffering, and dignity. His beautifully rendered guitarist— at once powerful and tender— gives evidence of the artist's own belief in the transcendent power of music. With the depicted individual apparently not needing to even look at the instrument as he strums a G-major chord, White suggests that the guitar marks a meeting of the figure's manual and mental facilities.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of the Fabergé Society of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts Fund for American Art, 2001.10

Lonnie Holley
American, born 1950

The Music Lives after the Instruments Is Destroyed, 1984

Burned musical instruments, artificial flowers, wire

Lonnie Holley's early wall sculpture *The Music Lives after the Instruments Is Destroyed* is an uncommonly literal visualization of the promise of performance and the guitar's role within it. The burned Gibson SG guitar evokes the ubiquitous iconoclasm of selected 1960s rock and roll music (including the ruined guitars of Jimi Hendrix and Pete Townshend. The plastic flowers and fencelike wire, however, suggest the intervention of nature in all its tangled glory and the potential for growth—even if the flowers are artificial. The objects here evoke the "living on" suggested by the title: the guitar and saxophone may be unplayable, but their physical presence is a useful prompt for present and future individuals seeking to understand and engage their own time and place with renewed insight.

Souls Grown Deep Foundation, Atlanta

John D'Angelico
American, 1905–1964

Archtop Guitar, 1932

Introduced in 1923, the Gibson L-5 found rapid popularity among musicians, especially those in big bands. As seen elsewhere in this exhibition (and in the reproduction below), the Cremona brown sunburst, violin-like *f*-holes, and arched spruce top made the model a classic among players and makers. So popular was the L-5 that, in 1932, the luthier and craftsman John D'Angelico produced a nearly identical archtop guitar model. The serial number on the instrument here documents that it was the second guitar to come out of D'Angelico's New York shop. Benny Mortel played this guitar with the Buddy Rogers Orchestra.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of John and Christina Monteleone, 2012

L-5, Gibson Mandolin-Guitar Manufacturing Co., 1929. George Gruhn, Gruhn Guitars, Nashville

Jimmie Lee Sudduth
American, 1910–2007

Me Playing a Harp and a Lectric Guitar, 1988

Mud, graphite, and latex paint on wood

Self-taught artist and musician Jimmie Lee Sudduth's *Me Playing a Harp and a Lectric Guitar* matches the many Black blues musicians who have historically joined guitar and harmonica (harp) in their performances. It also under-scores the role of guitar in blues music to communicate with directness. The ability to bend notes gives both instruments a particularly expressive sensibility, not unlike human voice. One commentator chalks up Sudduth's guitar and harmonica playing to being "survival methods," evoking the generations of Black musicians for whom musical performance has been an important coping strategy.

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Museum purchase funded by the Caroline Wiess Law Accessions Endowment Fund, 2003.691

Fred Comegys
American, born 1941

Rock Star Prince, Purple Rain Tour at the Spectrum, Philadelphia, 1984

Chromogenic print

This photograph depicts Prince playing in one of his concerts held at the Spectrum from November 22 to 24, 1984. Wilmington *News Journal* photographer Fred Comegys shows him performing the song "Take Me with U." Prince's guitar resembles almost exactly a natural-finish Fender Telecaster, an instrument popularized in part by African American blues guitarists, such as Muddy Waters and Albert Collins. This guitar is actually the musician's prized Harley Benton TE-80, made by the German musical instrument manufacturer Hohner. Prince began purchasing used Hohner Telecaster copies in Minneapolis in the 1970s, when they were much less expensive than Fenders. To this guitar he added Fender Stratocaster pickups and Schaller tuners.

The Delaware Art Museum, Gift of the News Journal Company, Wilmington, DE, 1986, 1986-1

Ralph Gibson
American, born 1939

Nels Cline, from the series **Guitar Players,** 2006

Gelatin silver print

A lifelong guitarist himself, photographer Ralph Gibson included this picture of Nels Cline, rock and jazz musician and Wilco's lead guitarist, in his 2008 book *State of the Axe*. Replete with the cropped Fender Jazzmaster guitar, Cline and Gibson together suggest a world of sound and activity far removed from the picture plane. We only see a bit of Cline's Fender Jazzmaster guitar, but it is enough to show that he is playing a C# seventh (add ninth) on the sixteenth fret, a chord that harkens to this musician's hybrid, experimental jazz origins. The part (a portion of the instrument), we might say, stands for the whole (sound and performance).

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Museum purchase funded by Chris and Don A. Sanders, 2007.160

Thomas Hart Benton
American, 1889–1975

Jessie with Guitar, 1957

Oil on canvas

On July 10, 1957, the American painter, muralist, and printmaker Thomas Hart Benton asked his daughter Jessie to sit for this portrait. The occasion was her eighteenth birthday, and the annual portrait was a father-daughter tradition. She was an aspiring musician who had started playing folk music gigs that summer. The guitar is a Harwood model (similar to the instrument reproduced here), given to her from her mother. The instrument was purchased from J. W. Jenkins Sons' Music Company, in Kansas City, which had been manufacturing and selling Harwood guitars since the late 19th century.

Jessie Benton Collection

Harwood Model B-1002 Flat-Top Acoustic Guitar, ca. 1918. Private collection, Courtesy of Retrofret, Brooklyn

SECTION 12

The Blues

Carl Van Vechten
American, 1880–1964

Josh White, 1946

Gelatin silver print

The novelist turned photographer Carl Van Vechten took about fifty pictures in August 1946 of the blues-guitar pioneer Joshua Daniel White, who was not only was one of the most famous guitarists of the day but an increasingly political presence as well. Articles of the period lauded the guitarist for eschewing Tin Pan Alley schlock in favor of political songs condemning Jim Crow–style racism and the attack on Pearl Harbor (White also played at the 1941 and 1945 presidential inaugurations of Franklin D. Roosevelt).

White's musicianship was grounded in the blues, yet he migrated easily from religious gospel and spirituals to versions of folk, from overtly political narrations to popular music with an affinity for Broadway showtunes. The variety of Van Vechten's fabric and paper backdrops matches that of White's styles. The Martin 00-21 guitar is the constant in these images, but the musician appears in a series of guises that rivals his musical flexibility and performative range.

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of John Mark Lutz, 1965, 1965-86-9154

Carl Van Vechten
American, 1880–1964

Josh White, 1946
Gelatin silver print

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of John Mark Lutz, 1965, 1965-86-9152

Carl Van Vechten
American, 1880–1964

Joshua Daniel White, 1946

Duplicate of Kodachrome slide

Of the approximately fifty photographs shot by Carl Van Vechten in his studio in 1946, some of the most curious are of White seated, playing guitar against a textile or wallpaper backdrop reminiscent of the stylized landscapes in 1930s works by the painter and printmaker Grant Wood. The Regionalist vista printed on the material is yet more apparent in the 35mm slide versions of these photographs. It is interesting to consider what aspect of White's musical range the backdrop is enlisted to evoke.

Beinecke Library, Yale University

Louise E. Jefferson
American, 1908–2002

Blues Singer, 1938

Lithograph on cream wove paper

However spirited blues guitar playing can sound, it is also known for its "blue notes," which often produce a somber, despondent sensibility. In this blue note sense, the guitarist in Louise E. Jefferson's *Blues Singer* might be seen as bluesy. His face reveals a solemn expression formed of a downcast head with closed eyes and tightly pursed lips. This print was one of three lithographs Jefferson produced in the late 1930s when she was an instructor at the Harlem Community Art Center, a branch of the WPA's Fine Arts Project.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Aldine S. Hartman Endowment Fund, 2018.335

SECTION 13

Cold Hard Cash

William Alexander Griffith
American, 1866–1940

The Music Lesson, 1892

Oil on canvas

The Music Lesson depicts a man and woman playing mandolin and guitar, respectively. The coupling of the instruments relates to the Banjo, Mandolin, and Guitar movement (ca. 1880–1920), in which publishers, music teachers, and guitar companies pooled efforts in concentrated promotion of these three plucked string instruments. The movement sought to advance guitar, mandolin, and banjo playing as popular leisure activities. The performers here appear to have put down their lawn tennis racket and balls in order to play music.

Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Bequest of Lucinda Griffith Burrows, 1995.0039

Unidentified photographer

Man seated at table, guitar propped nearby, ca. 1858

Ambrotype

With his pen-holding right hand atop a ledger (which, in turn, is adjacent to the leaning guitar), the figure here may well be a serious guitarist who, in using the services of a professional photographer, made sure that the instrument figured prominently among other signs of business in this carefully posed image. Whether or not the guitar is included as a sign of the sitter's occupation, the instrument balances the arrangement of items pictured and facilitates the desired tone of relaxation and approachability.

George Eastman Museum, Rochester, 1972.0185.0001

Unidentified artist

The Music Master (The Music Master of Philadelphia), ca. 1835

Oil on canvas

This painting depicts a man holding up a piece of sheet music, likely so the girl with a guitar in her hands might read or learn it. An early exhibition label on the back of the painting bears the title *The Music Master of Philadelphia*, which suggests that the painting may have been commissioned by a well-known music teacher to show him at his trade. By the mid-19th century, Philadelphia maintained large communities of guitar, piano, harp, and voice teachers.

The gentleman seen here (if he is the patron of the picture) may have displayed the painting in his studio as a sign of his professional standing. The long fingernails on his right hand would have been useful for plucking individual notes in classical and baroque repertoire.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art, 2022.6

Unidentified photographer

Civil War Veteran Eppenetus Washington McIntosh, ca. 1890–1910

Albumen print

During the Civil War, Eppenetus Washington McIntosh served at Vicksburg and fought in Grant's Central Mississippi Campaign. This experience informed the stories he narrated, guitar in hand, in his later role as a self-styled troubadour-raconteur; myriad veterans in fact performed on this circuit in the decades after the war. In this card, likely distributed at his performances, the bugle on the chest suggests his continued musicality, but it is the guitar hanging from a strap on his shoulder that most boldly announces this aspect of his traveling performances.

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC

Jacob Lawrence
American, 1917–2000

Other Rooms, 1975

Gouache on paper

Other Rooms depicts a man holding a guitar by its neck as he lifts his right foot in mid-dance or -shuffle. The work is also called *People in Other Rooms*, and figures are visible through both the back window and the portal at left. The Harlem School of the Arts commissioned the work from Jacob Lawrence as the basis for a silkscreen print. The cropped man in a hat at lower left appears to stop momentarily to notice the guitar-wielding man, while the one at lower right smiles as he looks back toward the guitarist.

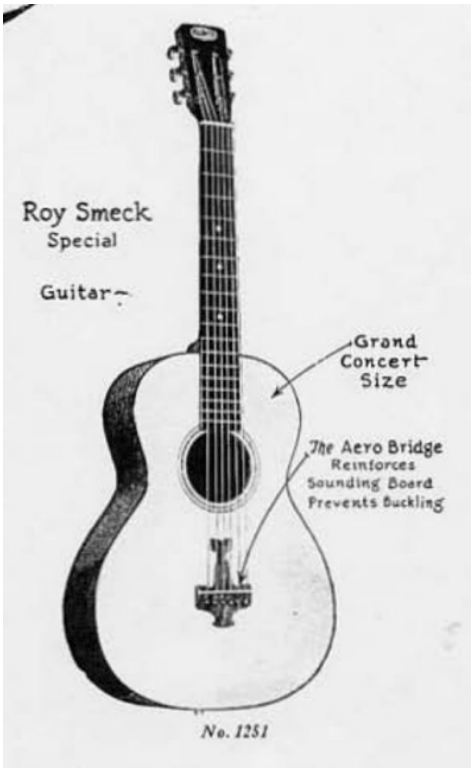
Collection of David and Susan Goode

Harmony Company

Charles Lindbergh Lyre Guitar, ca. 1928–32

Mahogany, rosewood, pearl, celluloid

Even the design of a guitar bridge could acknowledge trends in popular culture and, therefore, from the manufacturer's perspective, offer a selling point. This lyre guitar was one of a handful of instruments that featured a bridge in the shape of an airplane. The development of the Aero bridge can be linked to the popular interest in flight that began not long after the Wright Brothers' experiments at Kitty Hawk and was further stimulated by Charles Lindbergh's trans-atlantic flight in 1927—which, in turn, inspired a craze that extended from a vogue for model airplanes to a mass-reproduced Norman Rockwell painting of the aviator.



Vintage Blues Guitars

Roy Smeck Special Guitar, Tonk Bros. Co., *Catalog Number 47,* 1930

Oscar Schmidt
American, born Germany, 1857–1929
“Stella” Gambler DeLuxe, ca. 1930

In their efforts to market their instruments, guitar manufacturers (especially in the years between the world wars) incorporated ornamental flourishes to link guitar playing with cultural fads and popular entertainment and hobbies. Around 1930, Oscar Schmidt offered six- and twelve-string Stella guitars with decals that depicted overlapping playing cards, which, in offering a whimsical nod to card games and perhaps gambling, foregrounded guitar playing as a leisure activity to be enjoyed on a par with other pastimes.

Vintage Blues Guitars

Fender Musical Instruments Corporation

Stratocaster (played by Eldon Shamblin), 1954

Private Texas collection

Fender Musical Instruments Corporation

Bandmaster Amplifier (used by Eldon Shamblin), 1954

In 1954, while on tour in California, the swing band Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys stopped at the Fender factory in Fullerton. Company founder and owner Leo Fender gave the band's guitarist, Eldon Shamblin, the first painted Stratocaster—seen here (the Stratocaster model had debuted earlier that year with a natural finish).

The color gold appears to have carried connotations of quality and elegance for Leo Fender, much as it did for the Gibson company—which premiered its Les Paul, with a gold paint finish, in 1952. The color has long signified taste and elegance, and it surely evoked refinement for Bob Wills. By the early 1930s, members of the Playboys were performing in dark-blue pullover sweaters emblazoned with gold musical emblems.

Private Texas collection

Walker Evans
American, 1903–1975

Blind Man with Guitar, ca. 1941

Gelatin silver print

This photograph by Walker Evans depicts a man and woman traversing the crowded area around Halsted Street in Chicago. With a coin cup suspended from his guitar's slotted headstock, the blind performer joins a singer on a street populated by pedestrians who, though sighted, seem neither to see them nor hear their music. The image speaks to the guitar's ubiquity in urban settings, but also to the ease with which individuals might ignore its sounds and the musicians making those sounds. This print is part of a series supported by a Guggenheim fellowship, the funding from which enabled Evans to photograph "contemporary human subjects."

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harry H. Lunn, Jr. in honor of Jacob Kainen and in honor of the 50th Anniversary of the National Gallery of Art, 1989.89.11

Robert Henri
American, 1865–1929

Blind Singers, 1912

Oil on canvas

In the summer of 1912, during his fifth trip to Madrid, Robert Henri produced two paintings of women playing guitars. Historically, blind persons in Spain were relegated to work as street musicians, reciters of prayers (both in musical performance and oral recitation), and vendors of "loose sheets" or chapbooks.

There are few paintings in the history of American art that make the pairing of blindness and guitars so palpable as it is in *Blind Singers*. And even fewer suggest in such straightforward fashion the sitter's dependence on the guitar (or other musical instrument) as a tool for making money when few other options were available to those who were blind, part of a last-ditch endeavour to earn as a living nonsighted person.

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Gift of the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Foundation, 1966, 66.2434

Lisette Model
American, born Austria, 1901–1983

Blind Man with Guitar, ca. 1933–38

Gelatin silver print

Not unlike earlier 20th-century Ashcan painters, the photographer Lisette Model ennobled, even validated, many common, often destitute individuals. In her *Blind Man with Guitar*, the proximity of the coin box to the guitar under-scores the extent to which the man's economic welfare hinges upon his musical performance. As an artist particularly interested in blind individuals, and as a former musician (and former student of composer Arnold Schoenberg), Model seems to have had a special understanding of this guitar-wielding man she photographed in France in the 1930s.

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Gift of the Estate of Lisette Model, 1990, by direction of Joseph G. Blum, New York, through the American Friends of Canada

William Eggleston
American, born 1939
Untitled (Gates), from **William Eggleston's Graceland** portfolio, 1984
Dye transfer print on paper

This photograph gives a back view of the Melody Gates at Graceland, Elvis Presley's home in Memphis from 1957 until his death in 1977. The iron gates feature mirrored doubles of a metallic Elvis, his summarily depicted dreadnaught guitar, and musical notes riding the staff created by the elongated faux lintels. The shop most visible through the gate has signage spelling out *Souvenirs*, underscoring that Elvis and his guitar are spectacles for sale in a landscape of yet more spectacles for sale.

Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Association Purchase, 1991.15.3

Elvis Presley at the Melody Gates at Graceland, Memphis, n.d.

Howard Cook
American, 1901–1980
Fiddler's Contest, 1935
Lithograph on paper

Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, Imprinting the South Collection, Gift of Lynn Barstis Williams, 2009.17

William H. Bradley
American, 1868–1962

The Inland Printer, St. Valentine Number, 1895

Commercial lithograph on wove paper

William H. Bradley's guitar-strumming woman appeared on an art deco/arts and crafts–style poster advertising the February 1895 issue, or "St. Valentine Number," of *The Inland Printer*, which was something of an encomium to Art Nouveau illustrator Bradley himself. To be sure, the artist and publisher were selling magazines, but, at the height of the Banjo Mandolin Guitar movement, they were keen to include the guitar as among those things "now ready for sale," as the display type puts it.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, The Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Fund and The Sydney and Frances Endowment Fund, 90.41

Joseph Bini, designer
American, ca. 1810–1877

Guitar, 1870

This handmade guitar was designed by Joseph Bini and made by J. Howard Foote, a musical instrument dealer. Bini was one of several Italian luthiers to emigrate to the United States in the mid-19th century. A stamp within the body reads, "Bini's/ Improvement/Patented/ Dec. 24 1867," denoting his advancements in the bracing of the guitar top—also found in Martin guitars of this period. Bini surely had financial gain in mind when wrote that he was "the sole *owner* of the patent right for making these *Celebrated Guitars*."

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, The Jonathan and Faye Kellerman Foundation Gift, 2010

John C. Haynes and Company

Guitar (Tilton Model), 1880s

This Tilton/Haynes guitar demonstrates the tendency to envision the guitar as a rarefied emblem of extravagance and financial wherewithal. It is a presentation-grade instrument—meaning that a patron custom ordered it, paid for flourishes (notably the effusive abalone and mother-of-pearl inlay) that were not included on other guitars offered by the company, and likely presented it as a gift on a special occasion. The guitar was meant to be seen, not heard, and to take up a prominent place in one's home. It likely cost at least twice as much as the best factory-made Tilton/Haynes guitar.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Museum purchase with funds donated anonymously, 2007.596

Septimus Winner
American, 1827–1905
Winner's New School for the Guitar, cover, 1870
Engraving

By the 1870s, famous composers, such as the Philadelphian Septimus Winner, published guitar instruction books called tutors—allowing ambitious devotees to learn the instrument in their home at their own pace. Winner was also an instrument and sheet music dealer.

Oberlin College, The Frederick R. Selch Collection of American Music History, Oberlin Conservatory Library, S-416

SECTION 14

Cowboy Corner

Thomas Hart Benton
American, 1889–1975
Study #8 for the mural **The Sources of Country Music,** 1974–75

Pencil, crayon, acrylic, and red felt pen on paper

Courtesy of the Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum

Thomas Hart Benton
American, 1889–1975
The Cowboy and His Guitar, study for the mural **The Sources of Country Music,** 1974–75
Pencil on paper

Commissioned in 1973 by the Country Music Foundation, Thomas Hart Benton's mural-size painting *The Sources of Country Music* (below) depicts a banjo, dulcimer, fiddles, and, bracketing the busy composition at right, a Martin Dreadnought guitar in the hands of a figure based on Tex Ritter, the singer and retired star of film Westerns. An active member of the CMF, Ritter was also responsible for Benton's commission for the work. When Ritter passed away in 1974, Benton and the foundation's Bill Ivey opted to memorialize "the patron saint of Country Music" with the painting.

These two studies for the painting demonstrate the artist's attention to the frontal view of the instrument. Strumming a chord and opening his mouth to sing, the Ritter figure contains more detail than the others, and the guitar is the only instrument in the study in which one can see strings.

Courtesy of the Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum

The Sources of Country Music, 1975, Thomas Hart Benton, acrylic on canvas. Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum

Harmony/Supertone (sold through Sears)

Gene Autry Melody Ranch Guitar, ca. 1941–55

Named for Gene Autry's 1940 movie Melody Ranch and the song of the same name, Sears's Gene Autry Melody Ranch guitar features on its body, mostly around the bridge, a lasso-whirling, horse-mounted cowboy at right and a barren tree at left, which bracket a scene of a valley populated by livestock and surmounted by snow-capped mountains. Autry's signature appears below, a sort of reminder of the instrument's role in a mass-media machine that hawked guitars and the stars who played them as signs of authenticity and independence. Of course, Autry's filmic Westerns were themselves morality tales fabricated for mass consumption.

Carter Vintage Guitars, Nashville, TN

Harmony/Supertone (sold through Sears)

Singing Cowboys Guitar, ca. 1938–50

Materials unconfirmed

Sears, Roebuck and Co. sold its ever-popular Singing Cowboys guitar under its in-house Supertone label. The stenciled rendition of five cowboys (two of whom play guitar) around a campfire firmly grounds the object within the commodity culture spawned in large part by Sears and many Western movies and shows. The title text "Singing Cowboys" matches the red of the fire and the placement dots on the instrument's fingerboard.

Carter Vintage Guitars, Nashville

Harmony

Pioneer Days Guitar, ca. 1949–53

Birch, mixed media

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Harmony Company, selling through Montgomery Ward, produced a Pioneer Days guitar depicting on its face a Conestoga wagon, apparently the last in a wagon train that recedes into the background from left to right in a dramatically forced perspective. Birch was typically the wood of choice for Singing Cowboys guitars, and here it suits well the evocation of earthen prairie crowned by background mesas and a cloud-crossed moon at left.

Carter Vintage Guitars, Nashville

SECTION 15

Political Guitars

Al Aumuller
American, active 1930s–early 1950s
Woody Guthrie, half-length portrait, seated front, 1943
Gelatin silver print

Al Aumuller's now-famous group of photographs from 1943 shows Woody Guthrie in cap and tartan shirt holding a guitar with a sticker that reads, "this machine kills fascists." Guthrie acquired this decal from a World War II–era defense manufacturing plant, where it had been distributed to workers. Other versions of the sticker appear on instruments played by both Guthrie and fellow folk musician Pete Seeger. This image is important in music and cultural history because it is probably the first visual pronouncement of the guitar as a tool for waging dissent—much as it was in the Guthrie-influenced folk music revival circa 1945 to 1965, and as it remains, to some extent, in the present day.

Library of Congress, Washington DC, Prints and Photographs Division

Danny Lyon
American, born 1942

Bob Dylan Plays behind the SNCC Office, Greenwood, Mississippi, 1963, printed 2015

Gelatin silver print

The star of Greenwich Village's folk revival scene, Bob Dylan, headed to Greenwood, Mississippi, in the boiling-point atmosphere of summer 1963. Home to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Greenwood was a base for the movement's voter registration–drive activities. Danny Lyon, a University of Chicago graduate from New York, was SNCC's first official photographer. He snapped this image of Dylan after the group of musicians hosted a benefit concert for locals in a nearby cotton field. Dylan strums his J-50, locking eyes with composer and activist Berenice Reagon (at right) of the Freedom Singers.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Endowment, 2017.404.41

Salvation Army Worker Playing Guitar and Singing to Mrs. Oscar Mortonson in Swede Hollow, St. Paul, ca. 1915

Photographic print

Emerging as a late 19th-century Progressive-era American reform movement, the Salvation Army featured music in sing-alongs and at Protestant evangelical services, frequently repurposing popular songs as hymns. “Salvationists,” notes one historian, “believed that music captured the ear and conquered the soul.” Some of the most famous women in the Salvation Army—including Evangeline Cora Booth, a daughter of founder William Booth—played guitar. This photograph depicts at right a young woman playing guitar to an older one, suggesting that music can bridge the generations as it tends to a listener’s spiritual well-being.

Minnesota Historical Society

Marion Post Wolcott
American, 1910–1990

Farmer and Children Playing Guitar on Porch, Natchitoches, Louisiana, 1940

Silver gelatin print

Guitar subject matter recurs in the images produced by photographers hired by the federal government's Resettlement Administration (RA) and then the Farm Security Administration, when it subsumed the RA in 1937. The photographers' job was to document the extent of economic hardship, especially in rural settings, during the Great Depression, including failed banks, the ravages of low wages, the nation-debilitating Dust Bowl, and over 25 percent unemployment rate in many areas. In Marion Post Wolcott's photograph, the guitar plays a part in the sitters' self-fashioning, indicative of their pride and wherewithal despite Depression-era exigencies.

Center for Creative Photography, The University of Arizona
Gift of Robin Moore, 2000.100.2

Ben Shahn
American, 1898–1969
Untitled (Maynardville, Tennessee),
October 1935
Gelatin silver print

Ben Shahn's photograph depicts either unemployed subsistence farmers or nomads passing through the region. The two guitar players at right play G-major chords on parlor-sized guitars. At precisely the moment when radio began transforming country music into a profitable enterprise, often romanticizing rural and agricultural cultures, Shahn's street musicians and those depicted in other photographs reminded government personnel (to whom the images were provided) of the harsh realities and human presence populating the guitar-strewn musical landscape.

Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of Bernarda Bryson Shahn, P1970.3188

Ben Shahn
American, 1898–1969
Untitled (Westmoreland Homesteads, Norvelt, Pennsylvania), 1937
Gelatin silver print

Within the roster of Resettlement Administration (RA) and Farm Security Administration photographers, Ben Shahn included guitars especially frequently. He seemed to understand that often through music and sound in general, stories are told and experiences shared, and his Untitled (*Westmoreland Homesteads, Norvelt, Pennsylvania*) depicts a moment of free time enjoyed by one of the many miners who had been displaced due to the slump in the coal and coke industry in Westmoreland County. This photograph is likely related to the RA's music education programs at the Homesteads.

Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Gift of Bernarda Bryson Shahn, P1970.3140

David Douglas Duncan
American, 1916–2018

On Duty atop the Command Bunker, Pfc. Joseph Marshall, 18 of Alexandria, LA (Khe Sanh, Vietnam, Feb.), 1968 (printed later)

Gelatin silver print

This photograph is one of several works by Duncan, who, on assignment for *Life* magazine, photographed daily life at the US Marine bases near the Demilitarized Zone in Vietnam. Reclining on a makeshift fortress of sandbags, Pfc. Joseph Marshall rests his gun against his left knee, but he directs his hands and gaze toward his guitar.

With the subject engrossed in his playing, this photograph continues a long visual tradition of picturing the guitar's self-soothing potential. Offsetting the uniform and gun, the guitar suggests a human, compassionate sensibility in Duncan's photograph of eighteen-year-old Marshall.

Currier Museum of Art, Gift of Robert Flynn Johnson in Memory of Robert Andrew Johnson and Minna Flynn Johnson, 2013.65

Annie Leibovitz
American, born 1949

Bruce Springsteen, New York, 1984, printed 2021

Archival pigment print

This image comes from the photoshoot for Bruce Springsteeen's 1984 album *Born in the U.S.A.*, and it would appear on the cover of the November 1990 issue of *Rolling Stone*. The work shows Springsteen wearing ripped jeans and a white t-shirt, with a faded red baseball cap tucked into his hip pocket—a uniform that echoes and authenticates the everyman, working-class sentiments he expressed in his music. Springsteen's Fender guitar is a 1950s Telecaster body with an Esquire neck. He called the guitar a "mutt" and played it on albums and tours for over forty years. Like his clothes, Springsteen's favorite guitar correlates with his commitment to singing stories and articulating values that might be generalized as "blue-collar."

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of John Stewart Bryan, by exchange, 2022.12

SECTION 16

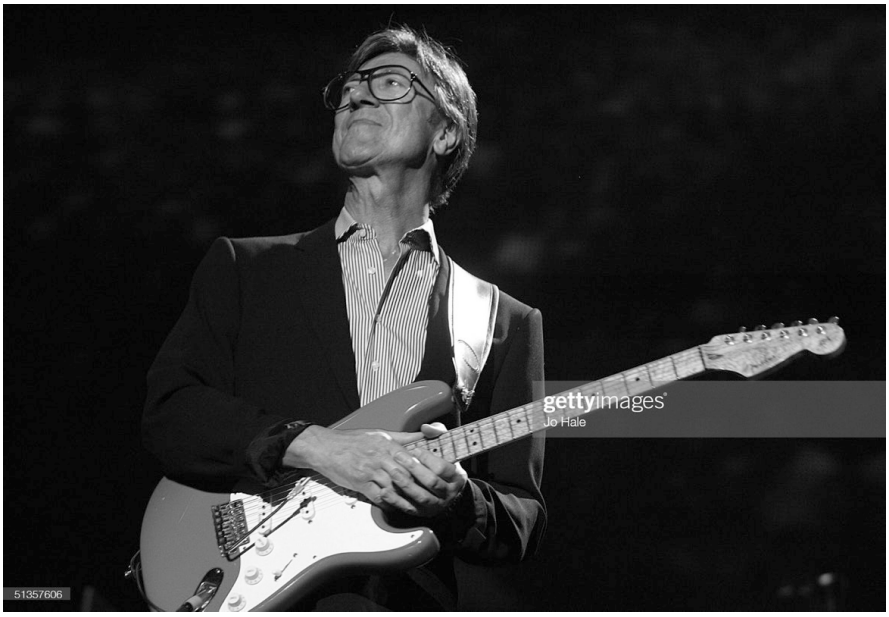
Guitars and the Visual Culture of Early Rock & Roll

Fender Musical Instruments Corporation

Stratocaster, 1963

One could order a custom-color finish for a Fender guitar for a modest surcharge; by the late 1950s, for an additional 5 percent, customers could have Stratocasters painted. Producing the desired finish color could be a challenge, however, as was the case with the custom Fiesta Red model when the UK Fender importer Selmer Musical Instruments slightly missed the mark in the early 1960s. Seeking to capitalize on the massive popularity of Stratocaster player Hank Marvin, the company applied a somewhat salmon-colored finish to their Fiesta Red guitars, as seen on the instruments displayed here.

Collection of Paul Polycarpou



Hank Marvin performing at Wembley Arena on September 24, 2004, in London. Photo by Jo Hale/Getty Images

Gibson Guitar Corporation

Gibson Explorer (played by Eric Clapton), 1958

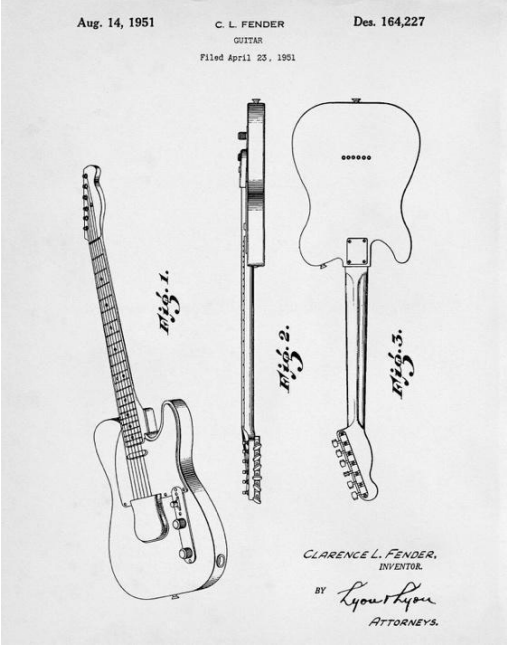
Unlike the situation with the acoustic guitar, the size, shape, and materials of electric models are virtually inconsequential to producing a desired sound. The late-1950s emergence of the Gibson Flying V and the Explorer made clear that the only requirement was supporting components with which to hold pickups and anchor strings. With those in place, the designer was free to experiment with color, shape, materials, and beyond. The acute angles of the Explorer (first called the Futura) parallel contemporary design and cultural history—in this case, the so-called Space Race and science fiction depictions of the future. Eric Clapton played this Explorer at an ARMS (Action into Research for Multiple Sclerosis) concert in London in 1983.

Private Texas collection

Fender Musical Instruments Corporation

Fender Telecaster, ca. 1956

In 1950, Fender debuted its first solid body electric guitar, which came to be called the Telecaster. Other companies had manufactured solid body electrics by this time, but none came close to the Telecaster's popularity. Part of what made the guitar special was the design—in fact, the original 1951 Telecaster patent was a design patent, with Leo Fender proposing "a new, original, and ornamental design for a guitar."



Color figured prominently in "Fender's understanding of design and ornament. To align itself with already popular commodities, the company's color chart was analogous to those of contemporary car manufacturers. The guitar on display here is finished in Sherwood green, which was particularly widespread in the automotive industry from 1951 through 1967.

Private Texas collection

Design patent application for guitar, Clarence L. Fender, 1951

Gibson Guitar Corporation

Les Paul ("Johnny"), 1959

Private Texas collection

Gibson Guitar Corporation

Les Paul Amplifier, ca. 1959

Between 1958 and 1960, Gibson made about 1,500 Les Paul Standard models with a sunburst finish, referring to the manner in which the yellow tones at the middle of the top, radiating from the pickups, gradate to light red or orange and then dark reds and yellows in the areas adjacent to the binding on the edge. Considered to be particularly fancy, especially by contemporary collectors, are Standards on which the "curl" of the maple, not unlike the back of a violin, produces subtle alternating orange and yellow-brown tones—usually called "tiger stripe" or "flame" models.

Introduced in 1952, the Les Paul was Gibson's first signature model and first solid-body electric (named after the famous guitarist and inventor). Gibson also developed a matching line of amplifiers—note the "LP," for Les Paul, on the front of the amplifier here.

Private Texas collection

Gretsch Manufacturing Corporation

6161 Amplifier (used by Brian Setzer), ca. 1957–59

As Gibson and Fender dominated the market share of electric guitars, other companies took notice. Gretsch Instruments—which had already countered Gibson's use of Les Paul by enlisting Chet Atkins as their celebrity endorser—produced its share of what might best be called glitzy guitars, including the Silver Jet model, the first in a long line of guitars with a sparkly, shimmering finish. Brian Setzer, longtime guitarist for the Stray Cats and the Brian Setzer Orchestra, played this Silver Jet and matching amplifier for about twenty years, beginning in 2000.

Collection Rumbleseat Music, Nashville

Gretsch Manufacturing Corporation

Silver Jet (played by Brian Setzer), 1956

Collection Rumbleseat Music, Nashville

John Baldessari
American, 1931–2020

Person with Guitar (Yellow), 2005

Color screenprint on Sintra board with hand painting

Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer, Courtesy Estate of John Baldessari

SECTION 17.3

Aestheicizing a Motif

John Baldessari
American, 1931–2020

Person with Guitar (Green), 2005

Color screenprint on Sintra board with hand painting

The printers of Baldessari's *Person with Guitar* series commented that "John never cared to focus on who the guitarists were; he found it far more interesting if the resulting image was visually important." The artist indeed cropped out the performers' heads in each of the prints. We do know, however, that for some of the works, he used mass-produced celebrity photographs for source material. The guitarist in this work, for example, is Dickie Betts, the longtime guitarist for the Allman Brothers Band, who here appears in a promotional photograph for his 1974 album, *Highway Call*.

Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer, Courtesy Estate of John Baldessari

John Baldessari
American, 1931–2020

Person with Guitar (Pink), 2005

Color screenprint on Sintra board with hand painting

The tartan plaid blazer, guitar strap, and instrument itself identify the musician seen here as Noddie Holder, the lead singer and rhythm guitarist of the British glam rock band, Slade.

Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer, Courtesy Estate of John Baldessari

Gibson Guitar Corporation

Les Paul custom recording model (played by Les Paul), 1975

The Gibson Les Paul is so familiar in music and popular culture that one can easily recognize the model in Baldesarri's *Person with Guitar (Red)*. The guitar on display here, played by Les Paul himself, reminds us not only that he was behind the most successful signature model in the history of musical instruments, but also of his ongoing innovative experimentation with the instrument's electronics and aesthetic dimensions.

Collection of The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame

Gibson Guitar Corporation

Gibson ES-335 6-string hollow-body electric guitar (played by Freddie King), 1963

Materials unconfirmed

No ES-335 guitars appear in Baldessari's series, but *Person with Guitar (Yellow)* maintains the basic shape and tuner types found on Gibson hollow-body electrics.

Freddie King played this sunburst-design ES-335. Recognized as a pioneer in the subgenres of Texas and Chicago blues, Freddie King has had a tremendous influence on modern players, with practitioners including Eric Clapton appropriating his style into modern rock music.

Collection of The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame

John Baldessari
American, 1931–2020

Person with Guitar (Red), 2005

Color screenprint on Sintra board with hand painting

Person with Guitar (Red) depicts Leon Russell playing a Gibson Les Paul guitar. Russell can be identified in this image by his guitar strap, long hair, and necklace. This concert photograph appears to date to early to mid-1970s, by which time which Russell was releasing solo albums and playing guitar, piano, and songwriting for other artists.

Leon Russell playing a Gibson Les Paul guitar, ca. 1970–75

John Baldessari
American, 1931–2020

Person with Guitar (Orange), 2005

Color screenprint on Sintra board with hand painting

In *Person with Guitar (Orange),* Baldessari repurposed a photograph depicting singer-songwriter Tim Buckley playing his Guild Custom F-512 guitar. The pose, clothing, background, and angle of the guitar are among the elements matching Baldessari's screenprint with the photograph. Buckley appeared in this coat and shirt in the 1971 film *The Christian Licorice Store*, titled after lyrics from Buckley's song "Pleasant Valley." Baldessari is known to have found inspiration in film, and his source photograph here may be an outtake or behind-the-scenes view from the 1971 movie.

Tim Buckley playing his Guild Custom F-512 guitar, ca. early 1970s

John Baldessari
American, 1931–2020

Person with Guitar (Blue), 2005

Color screenprint on Sintra board with hand painting

Collection of Jordan D. Schnitzer, Courtesy Estate of John Baldessari

SECTION 17.2

Aestheicizing a Motif

Amateur's First Book of the Guitar, 1862

Engraving

The Boston-based Oliver Ditson company, "the leading American music house" at mid-century, published an instructional manual entitled the *Amateur's First Book of the Guitar* in 1862. A fabric strap meanders from the endpin to the tuners, its sinuous length echoing the ribbonlike form beneath (and intersecting with) the strings on which the guitar-string notes and corresponding numbers are written. Similar informal stacks of overlapping instruments also appear earlier in 19th-century America, and Ditson would repurpose the same guitar-books-ribbon template as late as 1884. The suggestion of a still life here exemplifies the trend to make art of—to aestheticize—the guitar.

Oberlin Conservatory Library, Oberlin College, The Frederick R. Selch Collection of American Music History, S-416

Gibson Guitar Corporation

Super 400N, 1939

With the gracefully engraved tailpiece and the split-diamond and split-block inlays on the headstock and fretboard respectively, Super 400N models from the late 1930s evoke art deco impulses. Gibson may have introduced—and performers may have favored—blond models in order to stand out in a big-band or orchestra setting. A darker instrument might be difficult to discern on the lap of a seated musician wearing a tuxedo or other dark garb, but the natural finish assured that the guitar would be seen as well as heard at some distance from a bandstand.

Collection of Joe Glaser

Gibson Guitar Corporation

L-5, 1937

Introduced in the late 1930s, Gibson's blond (or natural finish) L-5 model announced a new direction in the visual and cultural history of the instrument in big-band music and well beyond. The elongated, stepped forms (resembling ornament on a modernist skyscraper) and zigzag motifs in the tailpiece match contemporary modernist and art deco aesthetics.

Collection of Joe Glaser

Ruth Reeves, designer
American, 1892–1966

Carpet for Radio City Music Hall, 1932

Wool and cotton

One of the best known and most enigmatic uses of the guitar as musical ornament is found in Ruth Reeves's carpet design for Radio City Music Hall in New York City. She designed the carpets for the imposing entrance hall and its grand stairway (of which this is a sample) along with the office of the director of publicity and, notably, the covering on the back wall in the auditorium itself.

The carpet's guitar and banjo motifs may function as shorthand for critical trends in music and cultural history, but one would probably not look to them for an understanding of jazz, radio, or theater. Reeve's guitar is less an emblem with which to tell history or inspire music and more a site-specific decorative device and, as seen in the photograph below of the Music Hall's foyer, a symbol on which, literally, to walk.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Geoffrey N. Bradfield, 1986, 1986.136

Radio City Music Hall, Grand Foyer,
New York, 1932. Courtesy historictheatrephotos.com

Young Woman Holding Guitar, n.d.

Daguerreotype

This figure does not play the guitar; she appears barely able to keep it from sliding off her lap. Given her awkward embrace of the instrument, this guitar was likely a mere prop offered in the photographer's studio. Even more than the young woman herself, the instrument is on display—an object to be held and presented, much like the daguerreotype itself. The young woman's face retains traces of hand painting, proof that all (her face, her dress, her guitar) are motifs aesthetically designed to enliven the composition.

Oberlin Conservatory Library, Oberlin College, The Frederick R. Selch Collection of American Music History, FRS-465

Young Woman Holding Guitar, n.d.

Ambrotype

In a widely read essay on early photography, daguerreotypist Albert Sands Southworth presented a sort of etiquette for the presentation of hair: “The hair in its arrangement should assist the proportions of the head.” In this daguerreotype, however, the hair does not conform to anatomy so much as it repeats the elongation of the guitar’s neck. The guitar joins the elegant clothing and long hair in achieving an artful composition that might parallel the overall appearance of taste and decorum that monied individuals would have in mind when commissioning a photography.

Greg French Early Photography, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

Spencer A. Moseley
American, 1925–1998

Gervais's Guitar, 1964

Acrylic on canvas

Spencer A. Moseley's painting *Gervais's Guitar* enlists the instrument for both compositional and sonic effects. The alternation of yellow, white, and blue stripes reveals a generalized guitar shape along with its echoes, like ripples in a pond. The repetition of carefully assigned passages of tone creates a vibrating sensation, not unlike a scientific diagram of the phase or amplitude of modulating frequencies. Although the guitar remains a formal motif with which to reach these ends, it does not exist here as a record of music or performance.

Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, Gift of the artist, FA 66.8

Louis Lozowick
American, born Ukraine, 1892–1973
Still Life #1 (Still Life with Guitar), 1929
Lithograph

Some of the most formalist compositions—those attending problems of composition, form, and process, as opposed to storyline—have enlisted the instrument in pictorial exercises. Some works concern aesthetics and, on occasion, generalized conceptions of sonic affect, but not specific music, genre, performance, or guitar players. In Lozowick's *Still Life #1*, for example, a guitar sound hole repeats the encircled voids of a telephone and an ashtray, and the instrument's sinuous bouts contrast with the shadowy grid.

Private Collection, Courtesy of Forum Gallery, New York

Sargent Johnson
American, 1888–1967

Dance Hall, study for San Francisco Housing Authority Mural, ca. 1935

Tempera, watercolor and graphite on illustration board

Around 1935, San Francisco–based Johnson produced a pair of preparatory drawings for a never-completed mural for that city's housing authority. At right in one of the drawings, the artist cropped the side of a guitar, showing only the instrument's sinuous contour and a portion of the sound hole. The curving bouts of the guitar rhyme with some passages with the abstracted dancing figures, but mostly the guitar functions as a pictorial scaffolding device. The guitar functions less as a musical instrument than as a frame or filter through which to see—and perhaps feel—the dancers' vitality and movement. The guitar-like form is even more subtle in the other study. At lower right, a stylized linear conception of a man leans over the top and sound hole of a guitar, from which a fretless neck emerges.

Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York

Sargent Johnson
American, 1888–1967

Dance Hal, study for San Francisco Housing Authority Mural, ca. 1935

Tempera, watercolor and graphite on illustration board

Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York

Arthur Wesley Dow
American 1857–1922

A. W. Dow and his Brother with a Guitar, from Album of Dow Photographs, ca. 1900

Cyanotype

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Philio Wigglesworth Cushing and Henry Coolidge Wigglesworth from the collection of their parents Frank and Anne Wigglesworth in memory of their love for Ipswich. M. and M. Karolik Fund and Charles H. Bayley Picture and Painting Fund, 2006.1277.239

Arthur Wesley Dow

American 1857–1922

"This is A. W. Dow" (with guitar), from Album of Dow Photographs, ca. 1900

Cyanotype

A small group of photographs by Arthur Wesley Dow illuminates the role of the guitar as a formal prop and theme in late 19th- and early 20th-century American artistic practice and social life. In his 1899 treatise, *Composition*, Dow wrote, "The masters of music have shown the infinite possibilities of variation—the theme appearing again and again with new beauty, different quality and complex arrangement. Even so can line, masses and colors be wrought into musical harmonies and endlessly varied." In his repetition of the emblem in different guises, Dow creates new aesthetic outcomes more than he actively engages with the sense of sound.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Philio Wigglesworth Cushing and Henry Coolidge Wigglesworth from the collection of their parents Frank and Anne Wigglesworth in memory of their love for Ipswich. M. and M. Karolik Fund and Charles H. Bayley Picture and Painting Fund, 2006.1277.251

Suzy Frelinghuysen
American, 1912–1988

The Ring, 1943

Oil and collage on Masonite

Frelinghuysen's *The Ring* takes its title and subject matter from Richard Wagner's four-opera cycle, *The Ring of the Nibelung*, which the artist saw performed in Germany. Split by a black wedge at top and a central blue passage suggesting half of a guitar, the text, "La Valkyrie," printed on sheet music, refers to the three-act drama that comprises the second part of the Ring Cycle. The work suggests that guitar shapes might have evoke sound in a pictorial homage to a musical piece that otherwise has nothing to do with this instrument.

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art, 2020.114

Thomas Eakins
American, 1844–1916

Home Ranch, 1892

Oil on canvas

Home Ranch depicts Eakins's student and assistant, Franklin Schenck, playing a guitar and wearing pistols, buckskins, and chaps—all of which the artist had bought on his 1887 trip to the Dakota Badlands. The costume and musical instrument transform the rough-hewn Schenck into the ubiquitous western type that would increasingly be found in the paintings and sculpture of Frederic Remington and Charles M. Russell as well as in the novels of Zane Grey and Owen Wister. Along with his clothes, the guitar is part of Schenck's western costume or other appurtenance, which he and Eakins engage like a prop on a stage set.

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Thomas Eakins and Miss Mary Adeline Williams, 1929, 1929-184-12

Roy Finster
American, 1941–2021

Elvis Presley Singing at 30 Years Old, 1994

Acrylic on wood

Harkening to several mid-1960s publicity photographs of Elvis in profile, Finster's cut-out portrait features an enlarged version of one of Presley's famed puka-shell necklaces. The image of Elvis holding a guitar, strapped from his neck, has long been a fixture in mass media. Here, however, he effectively wears the instrument, which appears as a motif emblazoned on an article of clothing. The initialed guitar with strap joins the crucifix, at the top of his shirt, as key emblems of his identity—one alluding to his faith and the other his musicality and profession.

Collection of Dr. William and Ann F. Oppenheimer

Ted Nugent

Scream Dream, 1980

Photographer: Lynn Goldsmith, Epic Records/CBS Inc.

Images of individuals hugging, grasping, embracing, and symbolically becoming one with their guitars is a staple of popular culture, seen particularly on record and CD covers. The cover of Ted Nugent's 1980 album *Scream Dream* depicts guitars coming out of his arms, however; his mouth and eyes are wide open, suggesting an alarming shriek, as if he is transforming into the Gibson Byrdlands that extend from his body. Nugent's guitarman hybrid is one of the more literal amalgamations of human and instrument.

Cheap Trick

Next Position Please, 1983

Photographer: David Kennedy, Epic Records/CBS Inc.

Rick Nielsen of Cheap Trick has for years played a double-neck Hamer dubbed Uncle Dick—obviously a play on the guitarist's name—with the necks substituting for his legs and the headstocks for his sneakers. Also featuring stylized versions of Nielsen's face and his trademark checkered sweater and upturned cap, the guitar appears on the cover of Next Position Please, and Nielsen continues to tour with the instrument.

Singer/guitarist Rick Nielsen of Cheap Trick performs onstage at the Virgin Festival by Virgin Mobile 2007 at Pimlico Race Course, August 4, 2007, Baltimore. Photo by Jason Kempin/FilmMagic Courtesy of Getty Images