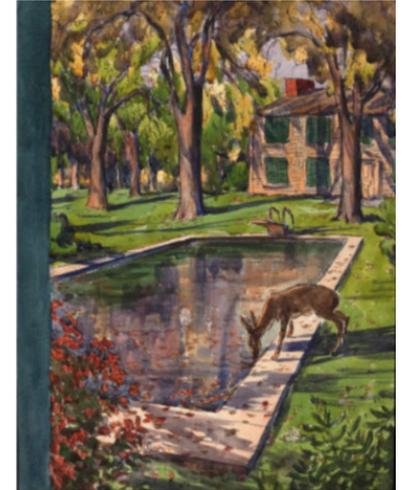
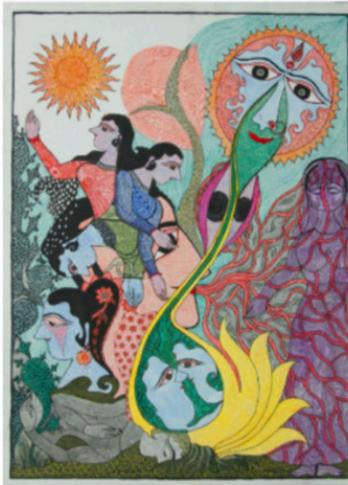
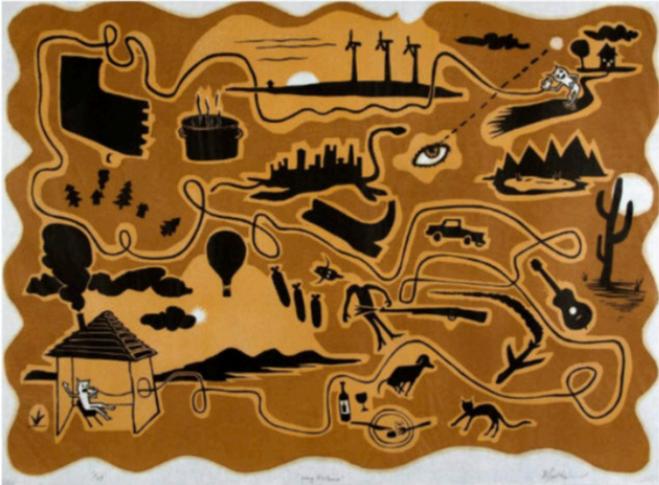


E-Museum Teaching Guide  
Entanglement



Mike Goode, Kate Holohan  
Jeffrey Adams, Jeanelle Cho, Abigail Greenfield

# Introduction

Entanglement refers to the complex enmeshment or interweaving of the different components of an ecosystem—or of the planet—at all scales. Recognizing or experiencing entanglement often comes from noticing physical adjacencies, pursuing sensory vectors, considering causal connections, or following flows of energy and resources that weave one thing—say, a swimming pool or a tulip or a racoon—into other things (and into other things, and into other things, and so on). Entanglements can be networks of dependency, exchange, support, sustenance, flourishing, predation, exploitation, exhaustion, or harm, depending on which parts of the network or ecosystem you consider. To recognize how human and nonhuman, living and nonliving, organic and inorganic things interconnect, depend on one another, and compete with one another for resources is to take a key step towards thinking ecologically rather than environmentally. It is to push aside the outdated idea that “nature” lies outside of “culture.”

Every artwork is entangled with the world simply by virtue of being a thing made of other things, and most representational images depict entanglements of some kind or another. Yet, as a concept and experience, entanglement can be difficult to convey in a frame, snapshot, or sculptural form. Each work selected from the Syracuse University Art Museum’s collection for this e-museum is one that we think rewards extended reflection on complex entanglements between different organic and elemental components of a place, habitat, or ecosystem. Some of the works we have chosen capture large-scale entanglements, such as Brandon Stahlman’s [Long Distance](#), Karl Schrag’s [The Spell of Distance](#), and Irene Rice Pereira’s [Circuit of Space](#). Others represent the complexities of microhabitats in [villages](#) or [shorelines](#) or [roadsides](#) or [stands of trees](#), or they capture specific cohabitations and dependencies between human and nonhuman creatures, such as [a deer drinking out of a suburban swimming pool](#) or [soldiers using a birch forest to cover their advance in WWII](#). Still others call attention to structures, experiences, or sights that can be so familiar that their elemental components and

entanglements often go unnoticed or unremarked, such as an image of a man [preparing to write](#), or of [the land beneath a skyscraper](#), or of [summertime wasps](#). We invite you and your students to reflect critically on the kinds of ecological entanglements the different artworks in this e-museum capture and how, why, and with what effect they capture them.

Keywords: *entanglement, enmeshment, complexity, dynamics, network, ecosystem, global, planetary, habitat, cohabitation, elemental, pets, hyperobjects, ecological being, ecological care, object-oriented ontology*



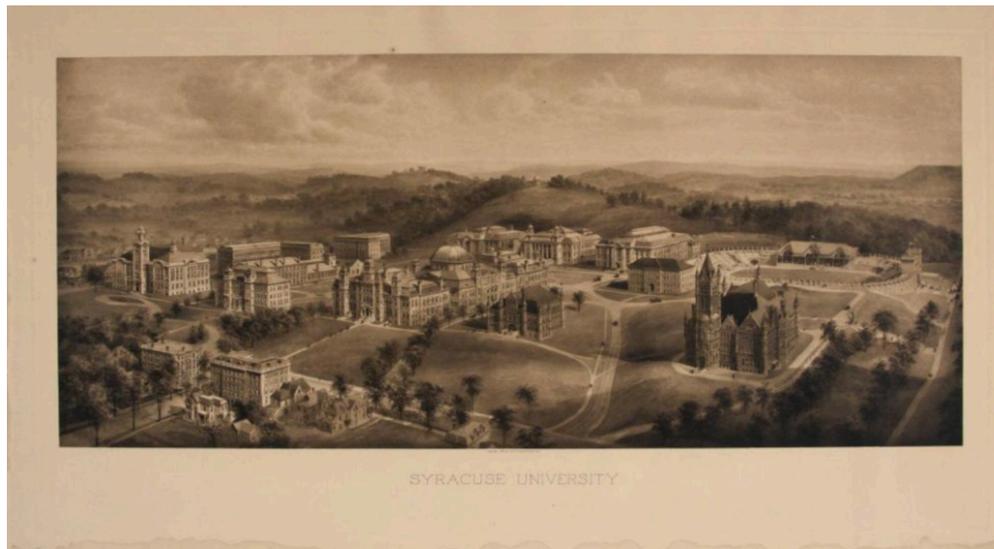
*Village Life*, Vinita Jha [Object 2017.0719]

# Teaching Strategies: General Questions

Individually and collectively, the works in the gallery can help students think critically about how different artworks:

- Represent or give form to entanglements of different kinds and on different spatial and temporal scales; is a “tangle” even what comes to mind when viewing a given artwork, or does it seem to conceptualize what we’re calling entanglement through some other complex form or concept?
- Shape ideas about, affective responses to, or political attitudes towards specific entanglements
- Call attention to inorganic elements of an environment, situation, or landscape
- Call attention to how organisms present in an environment, scene, or landscape interact with each other and with other organic and inorganic elements
- Call attention to the nonhuman components of an environment, situation, or landscape
- Take certain kinds of entanglements they depict for granted (by, for example, locating them in the background or relegating them to the staffage)
- Disturb or, alternatively, reinforce the idea of a “nature” that lies outside “culture”
- Try to capture or prompt reflection on nonhuman experience or being
- Participate in or challenge anthropocentric thinking in relation to entanglements
- Encourage thinking in terms of systems, dynamics, and system state

Each of these bulleted points can easily be converted into a general discussion prompt for a specific artwork by prefacing it with the phrase “Does this artwork...?” or “How does this artwork...?”



*Syracuse University. View of Campus. Richard Rummell [Object 2005.0127]*

# Ecological and Cultural History

**Introducing more specific cultural and historical context for the ecological entanglement that an individual artwork references can transform how students experience the work and provoke thoughtful discussion of how its significance might have changed over time. Two examples:**

The late twentieth-century Japanese printmaker Tomikichirō Tokuriki's 1960s [woodcut of cormorant fishing, or ukai, on Japan's Nagara River](#) [Object 2015.0605], depicts a traditional summertime Japanese fishing practice that dates back 1600 years. Cormorant fishing entails boating on a river at night and suspending a fire above the water to attract fish. Trained cormorants, secured to the boat by leashes, then dive into the water and catch the fish. The birds' leashes are secured tightly enough that they can only swallow a fish entirely if it is small, meaning that any larger fish a cormorant catches sits in its gullet and can be retrieved by pulling the cormorant into the boat by its leash and squeezing or hitting its neck to have it spit up the fish. Though *ukai* was once practiced for sustenance in Japan, it exists there now as a cultural relic, performed primarily as an entertaining spectacle for tourists. This was already true by the 1960s when Tokuriki's print was created. Over the course of the twentieth century, modern commercial fishing methods overfished most of the rivers where *ukai* traditionally was practiced, including the Nagara River. Though identified primarily with China and Japan for the past century, cormorant fishing was practiced for novelty or sport in parts of Central and Western Europe from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, and it experienced a brief revival in England in the 1890s. It continues to be practiced for sustenance in Peru.

Cormorants trained for cormorant fishing are caught from the wild, though not on a scale that has a discernible effect on cormorant populations. Global cormorant populations were massive in the early nineteenth century, but, in the early twentieth century, their numbers plummeted throughout much of the developed world as an unintended consequence of pesticide use. Late twentieth-century efforts to revive cormorant populations were successful, especially in North America and in Japan. Some ecologists designate wild cormorants as a “keystone”

species on account of their ability to modify and help sustain wetland and marine habitats in ways that allow many other species of plants and animals to survive. Others, including the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Japanese Ministry of the Environment, actively cull cormorant populations on the grounds that they both adversely affect certain fish and bird populations and take a bite out of commercial fishing and fish farms.

Have your students identify and describe what aspects of cormorant fishing, and of the broader entanglements of which it is a part, are and aren't represented in Tokuriki's print. Based on what is represented and what remains unrepresented (or invisible), what commentaries do you see the print making and/or what attitudes do you see it encouraging towards the specific human-bird-fish entanglement that it depicts? The provenance of the Syracuse University Art Museum's copy of this image suggests that it was likely purchased as a tourist souvenir. How does this affect your answer to the previous question?



[Cormorant fishing at night, Nagara River], Tomikichirō Tokuriki [Object 2015.0605]

# Ecological and Cultural History cont.



OKRIKA, NIGERIA | 2004, Ed Kashi [Object 2022.0018]

Photographer and filmmaker Ed Kashi's 2004 [photograph of a young woman carrying a colorful umbrella as she walks across rows of large pipes](#) [Object 2022.0018] captures a scene of daily life in early twenty-first-century Okrika, a peninsula suburb of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, in the Niger River delta. The more you look at the photograph, the more the complexities of Okrika as a place and of the young woman's relationship to it are revealed. You might have students discuss what kinds of entanglements they see in the photograph before supplying the following cultural and ecological context for the image; then, have them discuss to what extent this context alters or reframes what entanglements they see in the image or what entanglements they think Kashi was striving to capture in it.

The pipes that the woman walks across are actually *pipelines*, and her colorful umbrella is swag from the Royal Dutch Shell Oil Company, one of several multinational oil companies that run oil extraction and production operations in Port Harcourt. Since crude oil was first discovered in the Niger delta in 1956, the oil industry has become Nigeria's largest revenue generator, extracting over \$700 billion worth of oil to date from the ground below the delta. When Kashi took this photo in 2004, Nigeria was the eighth largest oil supplier to the United States (since 2011, oil imports from Nigeria to the US have dropped

as the US has begun importing tar sands oil from Canada). Though the oil industry has enhanced economic growth in Nigeria and created employment opportunities, Nigeria remains one of the poorest nations in the world, with 70% of its population living below the poverty line.

The Nigerian oil industry has also taken a tremendous environmental toll on the Niger delta and the people who live there. Massive oil spills, pipeline ruptures (some by vandals poaching oil), and seepages occur annually because of poor industry regulation, government corruption, and the existence of illegal, pop-up refineries that do not abide by any environmental regulations. Oil spills—an astonishing 800 per year on average—have decimated the delta's ecosystems, killing off Okrika's mangrove swamps and most aquatic life (shellfish and freshwater fish especially), thereby decimating its historic fishing industry and making subsistence fishing virtually impossible. Soil degradation from oil pipeline ruptures and seepage have also rendered much of the region's farmland unusable, thus making oil industry work necessary for most families. Air quality in the Niger River delta ranks among the worst in the world (visible in Kashi's photo), due to the Nigerian petroleum industry's heavy reliance on "gas flaring," or the practice of burning gas that cannot be easily refined or shipped. In addition to emitting toxic pollutants linked to various diseases, gas flaring releases massive quantities of greenhouse gasses. So saturated is the air with pollutants that rains in the region reportedly leave an oily residue on some occasions.

Knowing what your students now know about the entanglements of Okrika with an element—crude oil—and, through that element, with local and planetary economies and ecosystems, have them discuss the image again in terms of entanglements. What aspects of any of the complex networks and linked causes just described are and are not visible in the photo? How does the photo's central human figure affect students' sense of, or reaction to, the kind of statement they see the image making about the ecological complexity it depicts?

# Artist, Artistic Process, and Audience

**You can also ask your students more directed questions based on biographical information about the artist and where they live, information about the methods and techniques used in creating the artwork, or information about the audiences for which a given artwork was created. Two examples:**

Leon Kelly's 1943 oil painting [Insects Over Orange Mountain](#) [Object 1965.0148] identifies the scene it depicts as Orange Mountain, in northeastern New Jersey's Watchung Mountains. Born into a well-to-do family in Philadelphia in 1901, Kelly spent considerable time as a child and adolescent at his family's weekend farm retreat, a rural environment that he later credited with giving him an affinity for the nonhuman components of the world. After receiving art instruction and tutoring in Philadelphia, Kelly honed his art through multiple stints in Paris, before returning to Philadelphia during the Depression. Kelly changed artistic styles several times over the course of his career. *Insects Over Orange Mountain* belongs to his surrealist period, which began in 1942 when he moved to his second wife's summer home on the central New Jersey shore.

While living at the Jersey Shore, Kelly came to regard the world's different plant, mineral, and animal elements as spiritually animated. Though a reclusive person (something that eventually led to his second divorce), he experienced temporary encounters with human and nonhuman creatures as strong connections. In his art, he became especially fascinated with trying to express diurnal, nocturnal, tidal, and seasonal dynamics, and this drove his interest in migratory animals like birds, in seasonal animal populations like mosquitoes, and in celestial cycles. His dreamlike painted scenes and landscapes from the 1940s are often filled with oversized birds and insects. At times, Kelly would conceive of what this guide calls "entanglement" quite literally in terms of tangled threads of connection: threads of memory that persist in a person through encounters with other people and other things, lines that exist in memory through a bird or flying insect's passage through space, and so forth.

How does this biographical information shape your experience of *Insects Over Orange Mountain* as an ecological work? What kinds of entanglements do you see at work in it? What experiences with insects do you think it may be expressing or depicting? How might it matter that the artist links its dreamlike scene to a specific location, Orange Mountain, a glacial ridge that sits alongside a massive swampland wilderness area and also affords clear views of the New York City skyline? An additional line of inquiry might be informed by Kelly's first gig as a professional artist: making drawings for military camouflage during World War I. Have your students discuss camouflage as a form of entanglement and consider camouflage's stylistic relationship to the painting.



[Insects Over Orange Mountain](#), Leon Kelly [Object 1965.0148]

## Artist, Artistic Process, and Audience cont.

Stacey Pearsall's black-and-white portrait photograph [Lyndon Villene and Ice](#) [Object 2016.0234] presents an American military veteran and his service animal. In addition to being an award-winning photographer, Pearsall is a decorated veteran who served in the Air Force for eleven years, including as an aerial combat photographer. Within the culture of the American military at the time, aerial combat assignments were rarely given to female service members. Pearsall became only the second woman ever recognized as the National Press Photographers Association's Military Photographer of the Year, a distinction she earned twice (2003, 2007). After receiving the award the first time, Pearsall enrolled in the Pentagon-sponsored Military Photojournalism program at Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Public Communications. In 2007, after sustaining a traumatic brain injury and incurring spine and nerve damage while on active duty in Iraq, Pearsall underwent extensive medical rehabilitation, ultimately retiring from active service in 2008.

By Pearsall's own account, the incident that did physical damage to her body also left her emotionally scarred. While rehabilitating, Pearsall felt indebted to the many veterans she met in VA hospitals, and she began photographing American veterans of all ages, ranks, and backgrounds. These photos grew into the photo series she called the Veterans Portrait Project (VPP), which ran from 2008-2019. Pearsall's photograph of Lyndon Villene, a Marine Corps veteran deployed to Iraq as an amphibious assault vehicle operator from 2005-2009, was taken as part of this project. Its style is indicative of Pearsall's aesthetic signature for the VPP: set off against a plain background, the subject wears a self-chosen outfit (often a military uniform, sometimes not) and, if the subject chooses, carries or stands alongside a meaningful possession—in Villene's case, the husky Ice, his service animal.

Four years after photographing Lyndon, Pearsall received her own service animal, Charlie, to help with her own disabilities. Because these



[Lyndon Villene and Ice](#), Stacey Pearsall [Object 2016.0234]

## Artist, Artistic Process, and Audience cont.

disabilities are neural and brain-related, they are typically invisible to others until they make themselves physically manifest through events like grand mal seizures. Pearsall has been outspoken in interviews about the challenges of being a woman military veteran who carries invisible injuries. In veteran care situations, she was often assumed to be the dependent rather than the patient. In her daily life, she routinely encounters the cultural assumption that a woman cannot possibly be a veteran of military combat. Like many who suffer from invisible disabilities, Pearsall also contends with having her disabilities unacknowledged, overlooked, or dismissed by others.

Although Pearsall's photograph of Villene and Ice depicts a very specific entanglement, how does this biographical information about Pearsall, and the information about her artistic process for the VPP, broaden or complicate your sense of the entanglements being captured through the photograph? How important is it to know that the photographer is a veteran? A woman? Someone who suffers from disabilities? How might the photo be interpreted as being about visibility and invisibility, including about visible and invisible entanglements? Does knowing more of Pearsall's story alter your affective responses to the photograph? How so? What about knowing the photographer's connection to Syracuse University?

[Note: Another of Pearsall's photographs from the VPP, of the veteran Joseph Daniel Worley, and his service animal Benjamin, has been reproduced at the right. The university's art collection includes several of Pearsall's VPP photographs.]

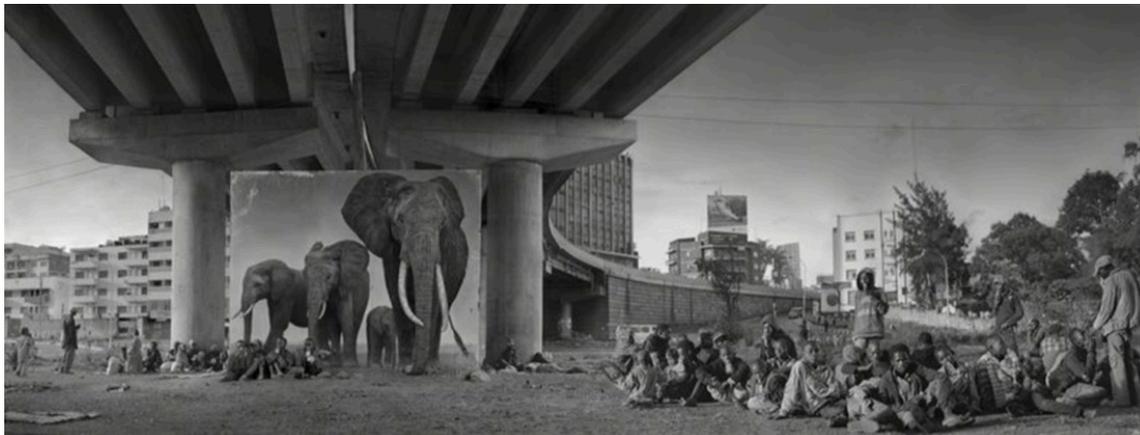


[Joseph Daniel Worley, Service Dog: Benjamin](#), Stacey Pearsall [Object 2016.0245]

# Visual Analysis

Any of the above approaches can be combined with more targeted questions about elements of form, composition, color, or style, based on student contributions to discussion. For example:

- How does the artist's chosen medium (painting, print, photograph, drawing, sculpture, etc) and material (paint, wood, metal, ceramic, etc.) shape your experience of the artwork and the ideas it communicates? Why might the artist have chosen this particular medium or materials?
- How do the style and colors of this work factor into the way that you're experiencing it as an image that codes what it is depicting positively (or negatively)? How might a different style or a different color scheme for the exact same composition have contributed to a different affective experience than the one you're articulating? To what extent would you characterize its colors as "natural" or "unnatural" in context, and how does that matter to your response?"
- What decisions do you see this artist making about what to include and not to include in the artwork? What about the angle or perspective they adopt in the image? How do these compositional choices contribute to the ecological statement you see the artwork making (or failing to make) about the entanglement it depicts? Specific to photographs, what things in the artwork seem beyond the artist's control and how do they matter? How is the subject of the photograph also one of its authors?
- What formal elements in this work (if any) conduce to an idea of networks or relations? What words would you use to describe the forms these visual connections take (strings, threads, vectors, webs, mixtures, meshes, tangles, and so forth)? Why? What impact do these specific visual forms have on the way you are interpreting this work's relationship to the entanglements it depicts or evokes?
- How do the figures matter to how you are interpreting this artwork's ecological project or significance? What about the background? The relation between the two? In the case of works that have multiple figures, what different functions do these figures serve? Or what different relational vectors to other figures, or to their surroundings, do they establish?
- Are there any visual elements of this artwork that seem to function symbolically?



*Underpass with Elephants & Glue-sniffing Children, Nick Brandt [Object 2022.0092]*

# Pairings and Groupings

While the artworks in the “Entanglement” e-museum will come up in random order when you visit it at the Syracuse University Art Museum website, many of the works in it make for critically provocative pairings or groups. Some of our suggested groupings for discussion include:

- **Visualizing distant entanglements:** Brandon Stahlman’s woodcut [Long Distance](#) [Object 2008.0008.23]; Karl Schrag’s print [The Spell of Distance](#) [Object 1989.028]; Irene Rice Pereira’s oil painting [Circuit of Space](#) [Object 1960.031]; and Salvador Dali’s lithograph [\[Melting telephone in desert\]](#)[Object 2003.0142]
- **Global cityscapes:** Johan Barthold Jongkind’s oil painting [\[A Dutch harbor scene\]](#) [Object 0040.033]; a photograph [of the “Foreign Settlement” in Kobe, Japan](#) [Object 1993.304]; Ed Kashi’s photograph of [a young woman walking across oil pipelines in Okrika, Nigeria](#) [Object 2022.0018]; and Nick Brandt’s photograph [Underpass with Elephants & Glue-Sniffing Children](#) [Object 2022.0092]
- **Domestic and residential entanglements:** Newton Alonzo Wells’s painting [The Housewife](#) [Object 1980.11]; Mary Petty’s cartoon of [“modern” ranch house living](#) [Object 1979.2346]; Alan Dunn’s New Yorker cover illustration of [a deer drinking out of a suburban swimming pool](#) [Object 1979.2152]; Paul Almasys’s photograph of [a village in Peru](#) [2021.0307]; Peter Reed’s photograph of [a fishing cottage on Cape Porpoise](#) [Object 2007.0016.19]; Vinita Jha’s painting [Village Life](#) [Object 2017.0719]; and Art Werger’s print [I Dreamed I Could Fly](#) [Object 2016.0007]
- **Multi-species aquatic entanglements:** Karl Schrag’s print [World of a Fish](#) [Object 1970.668]; Urmilla Devi’s painting [Fish Pond, Tree of Life, with Sun and Peacocks](#) [Object 2020.0009]; Alan Dunn’s New Yorker cover illustration of [a deer drinking out of a suburban swimming pool](#) [Object 1979.2152]; Minna Wright Citron’s etching [Barrier Reef](#) [Object 2015.0450]; Harold Newton’s oil painting of [a swampy, forested Florida landscape](#) [2013.0010]; Gaston Sebire’s oil painting [Maree Basse a Villerville](#) [Object 1978.125]; and Berenice Abbott’s photograph [When the tide goes out the seagulls clean the shore](#) [Object 1981.2478]
- **Trained and domesticated animals:** James W. Glass’s painting [The Falconer](#) [Object 1966.0289]; Tomikichi rō Tokuriki’s woodcut [\[Cormorant fishing at night, Nagara River\]](#) [Object 2015.0605]; Berenice Abbott’s photograph [Minetta Street, home of cats](#) [Object 1981.2232]; Phillippe Halsman’s photograph [Audrey Hepburn](#) [Object 1981.0588]; and Stacey Pearsall’s photograph [Lyndon Villene and Ice](#) [Object 2016.0234]
- **Flying insects:** William Home Lizars’ engraving [Honey Bee, 1. Male; 2. Queen; 3. Workers](#) [Object 2011.0031]; Leon Kelly’s oil painting [Insects Over Orange Mountain](#) [Object 1965.0148]; Beth Van Hoesen’s print [Basket of Camellias \(Camelias with Bee\)](#) [Object 2009.0046]; and Lori Nix’s photograph [Wasps](#) [Object 2018.0287]



[Hawksbill Creek Swimming Hole, Luray, VA, O. Winston Link](#) [Object 2006.0049]



[Homage to Charleston, West Virginia, W. Lee Savage](#) [Object 1969.63]



[\[A Dutch harbor scene\], Johan Barthold Jongkind](#) [Object 0040.033]



[\[Melting telephone in desert\], Salvador Dali](#) [Object 2003.0142]

# Assignments and Further Resources

For general assignments related to this and other e-museums, consult “Art, Ecology, and Climate E-Museums: A Teaching Guide.” You can access the guide via the Project’s webpage (under the “Learn” pull-down menu on the Syracuse University Art Museum’s website).

Here is a list of individual artworks in the “Entanglement” e-museum for which there are Art, Ecology, and Climate Project-produced teaching guides:

- James Glass, [The Falconer](#) (oil painting; American; 1846)
- Karl Schrag, [The World of a Fish](#) (etching-engraving; American; 1953)

All of the other e-museums in this project contain depictions of entanglement. For a focus on how artworks are ecologically entangled because of the materials they use, check out the “Materials” e-museum and its accompanying instructor’s guide on the Project’s webpage.

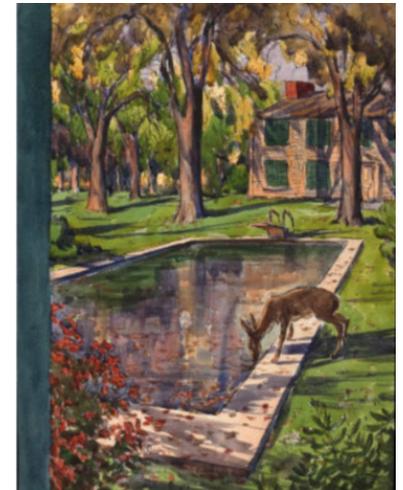
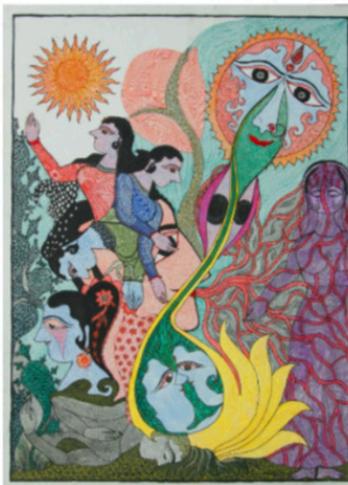


[The Falconer](#), James W. Glass [Object 1966.0289]

## Entanglement

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# Art, Ecology, & Climate Project

## Project Team and Sponsors

Professor Mike Goode

*Professor of English and William P. Tolley Distinguished Professor in the Humanities*

Kate Holohan

*Curator of Education and Academic Outreach, Syracuse University Art Museum*

Jeffrey Adams

*Ph.D Student in English*

Jeanelle Cho

*'24 (Architecture)*

Abigail Greenfield

*'25 (History and Political Philosophy)*

William P. Tolley  
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in the Humanities

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