

VERMONT



HISTORY

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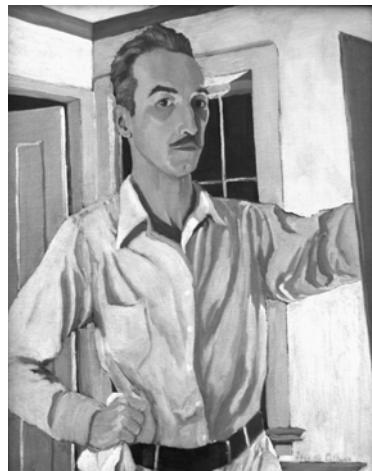
About the Cover Illustration

Francis Colburn Paintings at the Vermont Historical Society

Francis Colburn (1909–1984) taught art at the University of Vermont. He was a beloved teacher and famous storyteller; his distinctive artwork is prized by its owners. In the past two years the VHS has acquired four Colburn paintings through the generosity of Mrs. Ruth Bogorad and VHS Board Member, J. Brooks Buxton.

Colburn was born in Fairfax, Vermont. After graduating from the University of Vermont in 1934 he studied art with Stefan Hirsh at Bennington College. Hirsh encouraged Colburn to apply for a scholarship at the Art Student's League in New York City, where he received a one-year scholarship and studied with Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Henry Sternberg during 1936. In 1939 Colburn received recognition for his work when one of his paintings was chosen to represent Vermont at the World's Fair. He returned to Vermont in 1939, working as art supervisor of the Barton and Orleans schools. His career at UVM began in 1942 when he was appointed resident artist. When he retired twenty-two years later he was a full professor and chair of the Art Department. UVM awarded him an honorary degree and in 1977 named the Francis Colburn Gallery in the Art Department's Williams Hall. During his career his artwork was shown at the Whitney Museum, Art Institute of Chicago, Corcoran Gallery, and Boston Institute of Contemporary Art. Shows exclusively of his work were presented at Dartmouth, Smith, and Williams Colleges, and at the University of Vermont.

The four paintings in the VHS collections represent three different types of Colburn's work: a portrait, imaginary landscapes, and still life. *Self Portrait*, painted in the early 1940s, shows Colburn as a vigorous



Francis Colburn, *Self Portrait* (early 1940s)

and dominant figure with a bright color palette and realistic style. *Social Security* (1947) combines portrait and landscape in what would become Colburn's personal variations and combinations of the Realistic, Surreal, and Cubist art styles. *Ephemera* (1957) is a still life of found and collected object: driftwood, seashells, and milkweed. This publication's cover shows *Variations on a Theme* (1958), one of many paintings that Colburn referred to as his "nostalgia" or "memory" paintings. In UVM's 1984 retrospective exhibit *Francis Colburn: This I Remember*, his wife, poet Gladys LaFlamme, wrote:

In an imaginary landscape Francis depicts the isolation of the individual. Though the figures appear to be all together, the pervading silence in the painting suggests that each is alone. In the left foreground sits David McArthur. In the center is his mother, Jerry McArthur. On the right are David Colburn and Kathi Finnerly. Standing on the rise of land is Betsy Evans.

Social Security is on exhibit at the VHS Museum in Montpelier. *Self Portrait* and *Variations on a Theme* can be seen in the library at the Vermont History Center in Barre. The VHS hopes to acquire more Colburn paintings, as well as others by Vermont artists of the twentieth century.



— JACQUELINE CALDER
Curator

Francis Colburn, *Social Security* (1947)