

Exhibition Resources for Middle and High School Teachers

About the Exhibition

Ann Farnsley consciously chose to make her career as an artist in an unlikely place, a small river town called Vevay, Indiana, tucked away along the Ohio River halfway between Cincinnati, Ohio, and Louisville, Kentucky. Despite being from a prominent Louisville family with deep connections to Louisville and its history, she chose to move there in 1970 and continued living and working there until her death in 2021, making hers the story of an independent spirit.

This choice characterizes the self-reliance of body, mind and spirit that makes her career unique, free from the usual careerist concerns of the professional artist in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Her art is similarly free, moving between media, styles and subjects, guided primarily by the keen sense of identity she purposefully cultivated. Important to her and her art-making were community, both past and present, a sense of love and a joy deeply connected to the natural world and her immediate environment.

She also possessed a spiritual concern that allied her with earlier artists of the 20th century but was not predominant in the art world of her time. To fully appreciate her work, it is helpful to understand how these things played out in the oeuvre she created.

For Ann, art was an open window into a world of imagination and fantasy, but it was also a way to claim her identity and reveal her inner self. While trained in the university academic tradition, she soon took her own path, just as she did by choosing to live in Vevay.

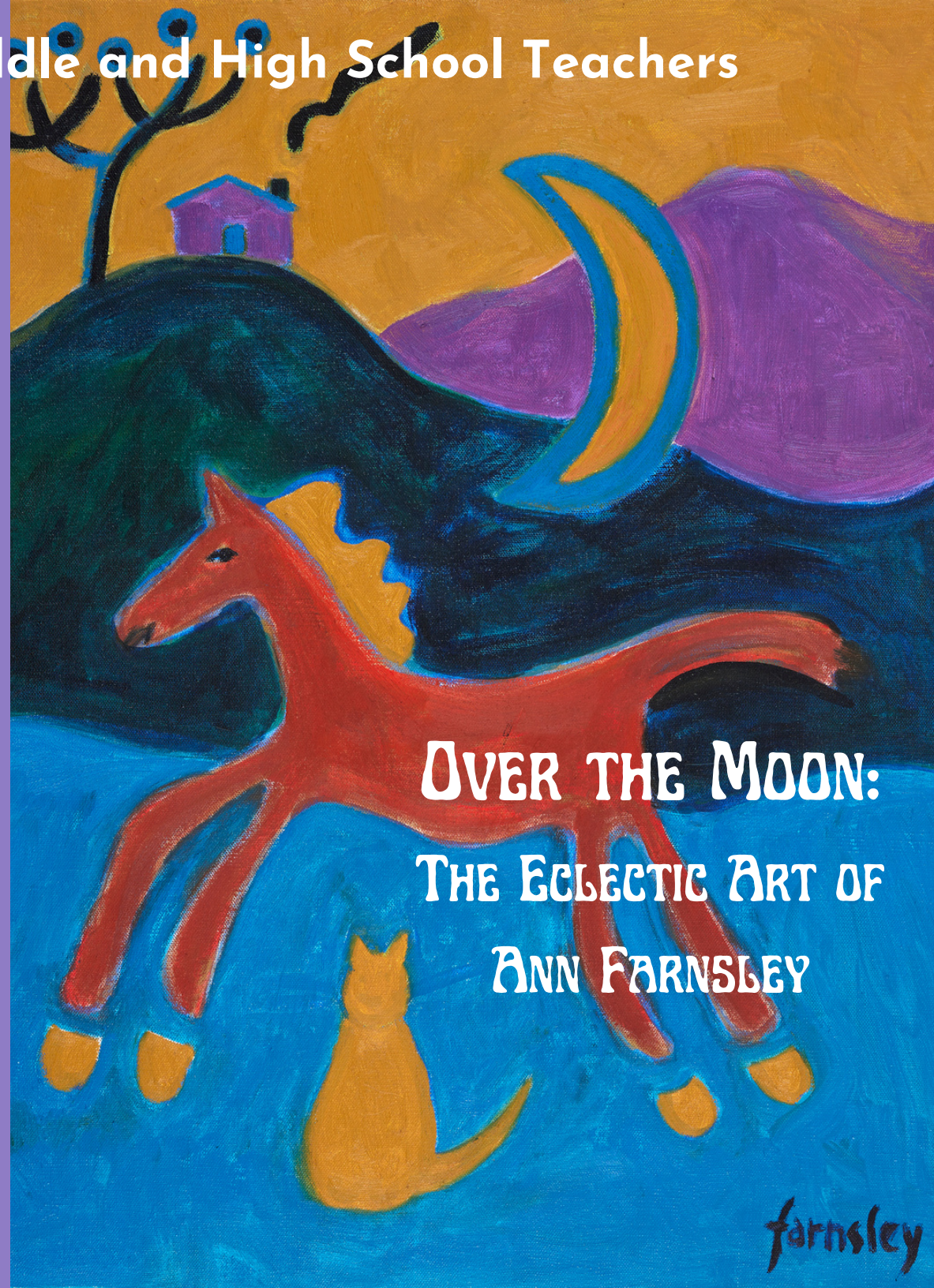
Ann's career as an artist in Vevay was not just as a painter, which was her college training, but as an entrepreneur and business owner, a historian and preservationist, a town advocate and tourism promoter, an arts activist and performer, and an art therapist and non-profit organizer.

Likewise, her creative media expanded from painting to include ceramics, printmaking, fiber arts, poetry, bookmaking and graphic design. In a town of 1,500 people, to be an artist meant to be creative, to multi-task and to connect. This she did with enthusiasm, guided by the spirit that she saw as central to living a life in art.

Over time Ann's work became more and more an exercise in self-discovery and she became more and more confident in her independent path. It frolics in color and fun and relishes its freedom and willingness to explore the spirit. She commits to evoking an alternative world. She truly moves to *Over the Moon*, a celestial plane of her own making.

This exhibition seeks to trace the multiple threads of Ann's career, her interest in abstraction, her willingness to use her art in multiple ways, her admiration of simplicity and direct childlike expression and her deep connection to the spiritual nature of art. Altogether they demonstrate how she followed a truly creative and autonomous path.

-John Begley, Curator



OVER THE MOON: THE ECLECTIC ART OF ANN FARNSELEY

farnsley

Activities

The Meaning of the Moon (Social Studies/Art-Making)

Ann Farnsley had a close connection of the moon and featured it in many of her works. Have students do research into the importance of the moon in different cultures, [beliefs about the moon](#), and/or [myths about the moon](#). Once completed, have them summarize and illustrate the information that they found so that they can present it to the rest of the class. Alternatively, this activity can be used as a [carousel reading](#) of different myths and beliefs that you find so that all students can read the stories and you have more control over the information that the students are working from.

The Funny Papers (Art-Making/English-Language Arts)

Ann Farnsley created a world of characters she called the *Munchies* which she eventually would use to illustrate a coloring book for children as well as a cookbook. However, these characters began their lives as cartoons for the newspaper in Vevay. Have students create a short cartoon or [comic strip](#) with their own whimsical characters like the *Munchies* to tell a short story or illustrate a scene of their choice.

Self-Identity Wheel (Social/Emotional Learning)

Much of Ann Farnsley's work is an expression of her self-identity. At this point your students may or may not have a clear self-identity. Use [this inclusive teaching activity](#) from the University of Michigan to help guide students into developing and understanding themselves and how they are perceived in the community and how they perceive others. There are multiple handouts and options for how this activity can be carried out in the classroom. For example, you can use the Wheel handout as a tool for a whole class discussion or as a personal reflection done by the students. This could be extended to include an art activity in which students create a scene that illustrates aspects of their self-identity.

Questions for Viewing and Discussion

The following questions can be used to guide viewing and discussion of any of the paintings or drawings in the exhibition.

- What feelings do these pieces of art bring out for you?
- What can you learn about the artist from viewing this exhibition?
- How does the imagery used in these works relate to the ideas of independence and self-discovery?
- What is your favorite work in the exhibition and why?
- What questions would you like to be able to ask the artist to know more about a specific piece of art or her body of work as a whole?



Over the Moon, watercolor, 2015

"A FULL MOON CREATES ALL KINDS OF ENERGY, PEOPLE COME OUT OF THE WOODWORK... TODAY WAS AWESOME. VERY WARM, IT'S A FULL MOON TONIGHT."
-ANN FARNSELEY, FROM A SAVED NOTE - APRIL 15, 2003



Munchies Coloring Book



Additional Resources

Over the Moon Webpage

<https://carnegiecenter.org/exhibitions/over-the-moon-the-eclectic-art-of-ann-farnsley>

Information from the Carnegie Center about Over the Moon as well as other events at the museum

Artist Instagram (@annfarnsleyart) and Facebook Pages

<https://www.instagram.com/annfarnsleyart>

<https://www.facebook.com/annfarnsleyart>

Images and information about Ann Farnsley's artwork and shows

Community Art Center of Switzerland County

<https://www.facebook.com/switzcoartcenter>

Facebook page of the art center in Vevay, IN where Ann Farnsley lived for many years and had work displayed



Untitled, oil on canvas

About Us

The Carnegie Center for Art & History is one of Southern Indiana's cultural cornerstones. Housed in New Albany's original library building, the Carnegie Center has ongoing exhibits about the history of the Underground Railroad in the region and the remarkable life story of celebrated Civil War nurse Lucy Higgs Nichols. The Carnegie also features rotating exhibitions of contemporary local, national, and international art in a wide range of visual mediums, as well as many opportunities for hands-on learning.

As a branch of the Floyd County Library, the Carnegie Center supports the growth and creativity of an engaged, informed, and connected community. Those tenets form the basis of the Carnegie Center's creation of quality programming for both youth and adults. Admission is always free as part of our dedication to community accessibility and inclusivity. Visit or schedule a tour on Mondays through Saturdays, and join us for special programs on Thursday evenings.

201 E. Spring Street, New Albany, IN 47150

812-944-7336 -- www.carnegiecenter.org

Monday-Saturday: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Thursday 10:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.



Cover Image: *Horse with Cat Companion*, Oil on Canvas

