

NEWCOMB ENTERPRISE Coloring Book

Selections from the
NAM Collection



NEWCOMB

ART MUSEUM *of Tulane*

THE NEWCOMB ENTERPRISE

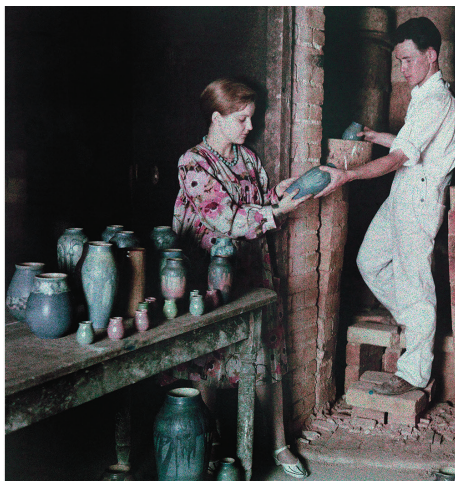
1895 – 1940

The year 1895 marked the birth of two important American art forms in the city of New Orleans: jazz and Newcomb pottery.¹ While lesser known than their musical counterpart, the wares created at Newcomb represent some of the country's finest expressions of art pottery. The works were sold commercially across the U.S. and exhibited internationally, winning prestigious awards at fairs and expositions the world over.

Like jazz, Newcomb pottery emerged from the distinctive cultural milieu of late nineteenth century New Orleans. But while the musical genre was taking root in the city's "Back o' Town" neighborhoods, the ceramic wares were literally taking shape in the classrooms of Newcomb College, then located on Washington Avenue in the Garden District.

The school had been founded only nine years prior through an endowment established by Josephine Louise Newcomb in memory of her daughter Sophie. As the first degree-granting coordinate college for women in America, the H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College offered an education both "practical and literary."

The art curriculum, in particular, was unique among art potteries for its underlying



Edwin L. Wisherd, Autochrome photo, c.1930 for National Geographic, photo i.d. 831103

utilitarian philosophy: works were to be both beautiful and useful. Design motifs reflected the floral and fauna of the Gulf South, but no two pieces were alike.

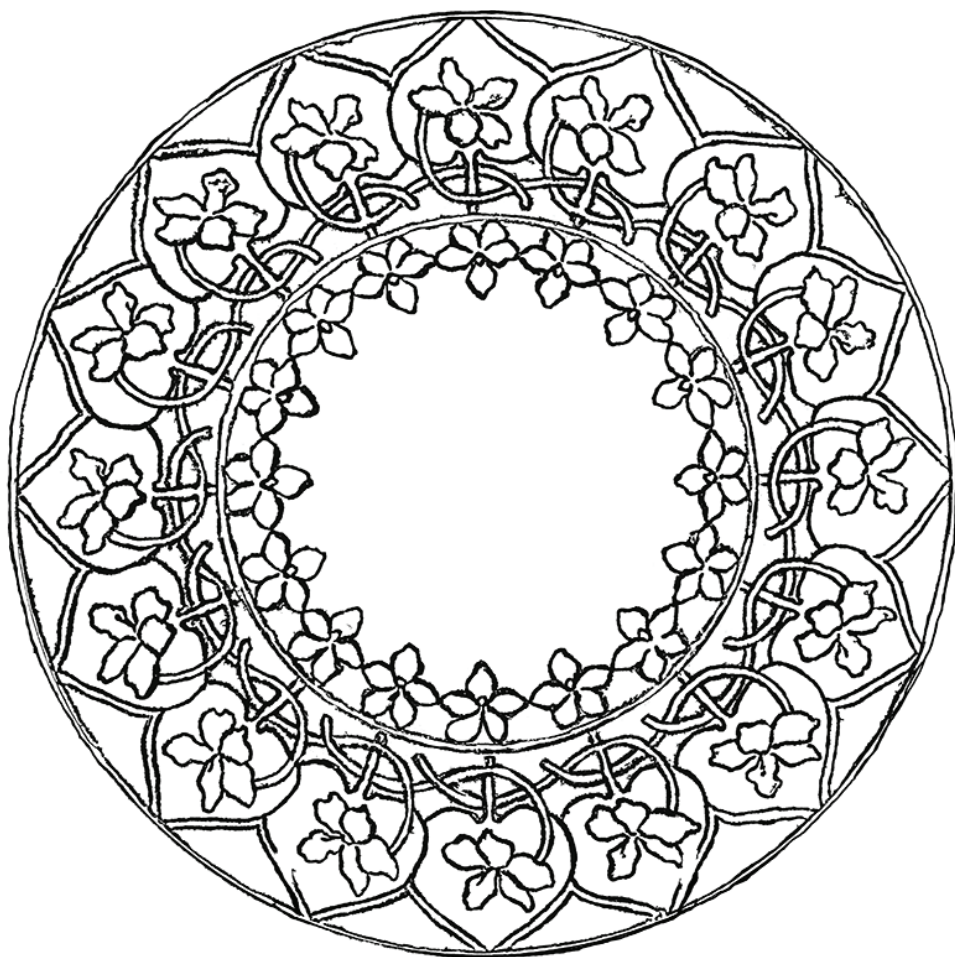
The Newcomb Enterprise eventually came to include metalwork, bookbinding, textiles, and embroidery. In all media, women had the opportunity to produce handmade items that gave them professional training and income toward financial self-sufficiency.

During its nearly fifty years of operation, the Newcomb Enterprise provided employment to roughly ninety Newcomb graduates, and produced some 70,000 distinct pieces of work.

¹ While jazz recordings did not begin until 1917, many cite the formation of cornetist Buddy Bolden's band in 1895 as the "invention" of jazz.

Plate with Southern Coastal Violet Design, c. 1896

This early plate depicts the Southern Coastal Violet or *Viola septemloba* which grows in the pine woods and swamps of the Deep South. It takes its scientific name from the Latin word *septum*, meaning seven, and the Greek word *lobos*, meaning lobe. Despite its name, it does not always show seven lobes as indicated by the design.



MHS

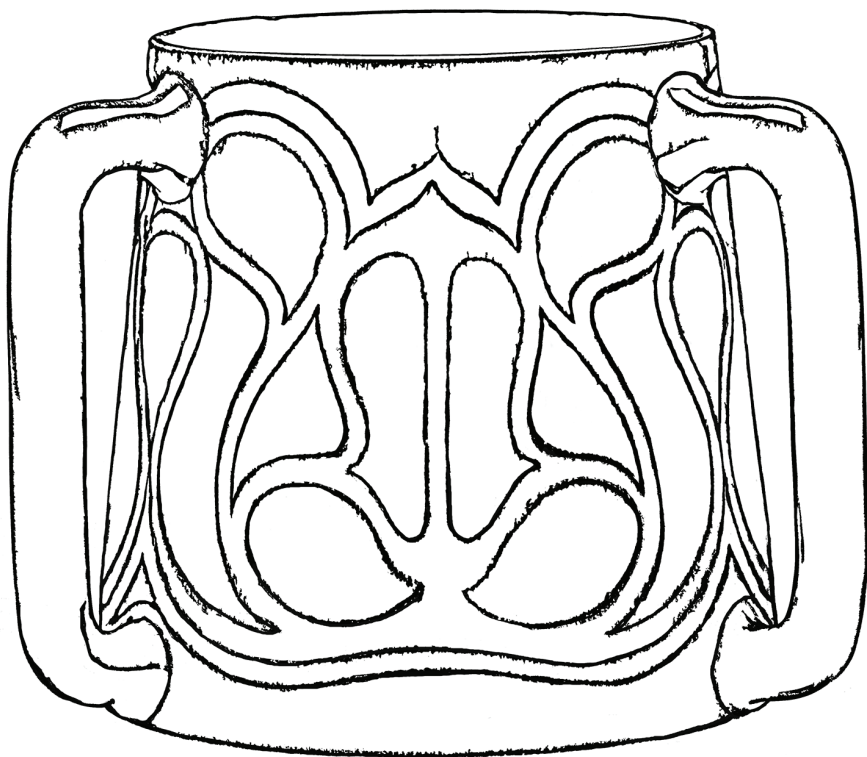
Margaret H. Shelby, Artist; Jules Gabry, Potter

Underglaze painting with glossy glaze on white clay body, 8 ⁵/₈" diameter

Collection of the Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University, 1973.164-C

Tyg with Stylized Cross-Section of Floral Design, 1900

Trained to abstract natural forms, Newcomb artists studied every part of the plant, even cutting them into parts. The work below presents such a cross section. Popular vessels during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, tygs featured three or more handles, allowing beverages to be passed easily among several drinkers.



L.A.G.

Lillian Alvina Guedry, Artist; Joseph Meyer, Potter

Underglaze painting with glossy finish on white clay body, 6 ¹/₂" x 7 ⁷/₈" x 6 ³/₄"

Collection of the Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University, 1973.23

Lamp with Cat's Claw Design, 1901

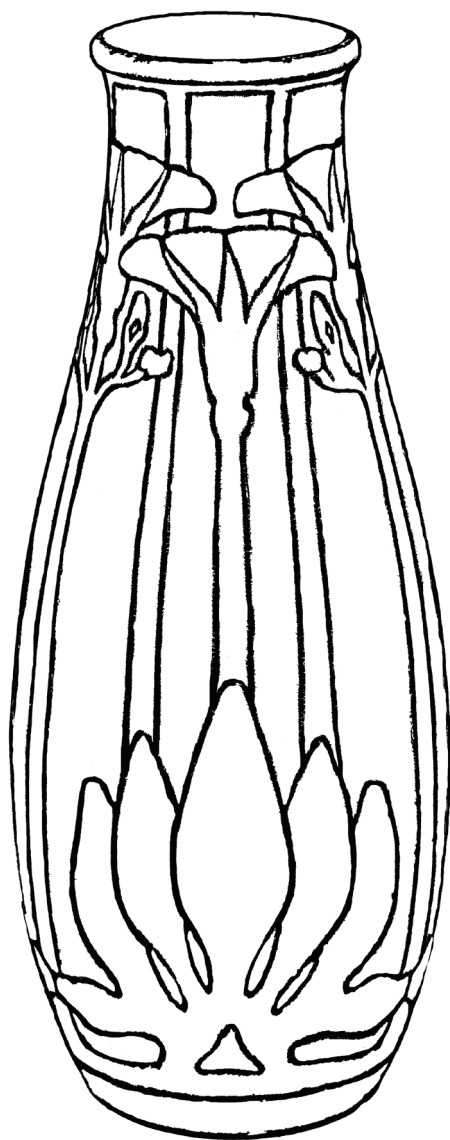
Newcomb artists made lampshades out of perforated brass (like below), leaded glass, and glass beads. Cat's Claw, named for its tendrils' claw-like hooks, is native to Central and South America but was brought to Louisiana as an ornamental plant. Today the invasive vine may be seen climbing over fences, houses, and bridges alike.



Esther Huger Elliot, Artist; Joseph Meyer, Potter
Base, underglaze painting with glossy finish on buff clay body, 7 ³/₄" x 9 ⁵/₈"; Burner, copper, 9 ¹/₂" x 6 ⁷/₈"
Collection of the Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University, 1973.125A-C-C

Vase with Portulaca or Rock Purslane Design, 1902

Portulaca takes its name from the Latin *porto* and *laca* meaning “milk carrier” in reference to its milky sap. The edible plant was historically referred to as *l'herbe poupie* by Louisiana Creoles who used it in traditional dishes such as green gumbo (*gumbo z'herbes*).



MHL

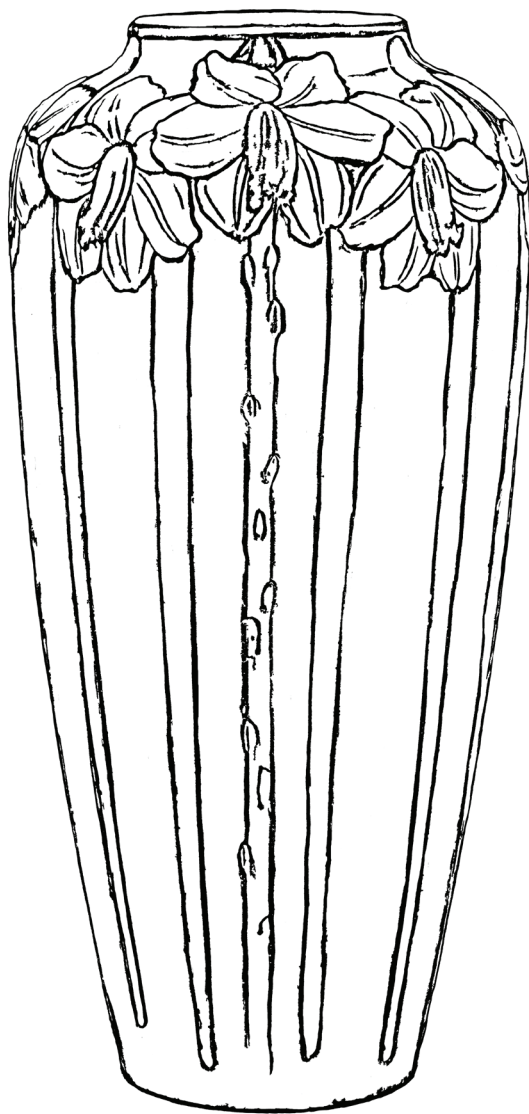
Marie de Hoa LeBlanc, Artist; Joseph Meyer, Potter

Underglaze painting with glossy finish on white clay body, 15 ⁷/₈" x 6 ¹/₄"

Collection of the Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University, purchase through the Mignon Faget Acquisition Fund, 2009.2

Vase with Stylized Jonquil Design, 1903

The decorative use of narcissi—the perennial spring flower’s general botanical name—dates back thousands of years, appearing in the ancient Egyptian tombs and frescoes at Pompeii. The narcissus also figures prominently in Greco-Roman myths and the writings of the English Romantic poets.



H

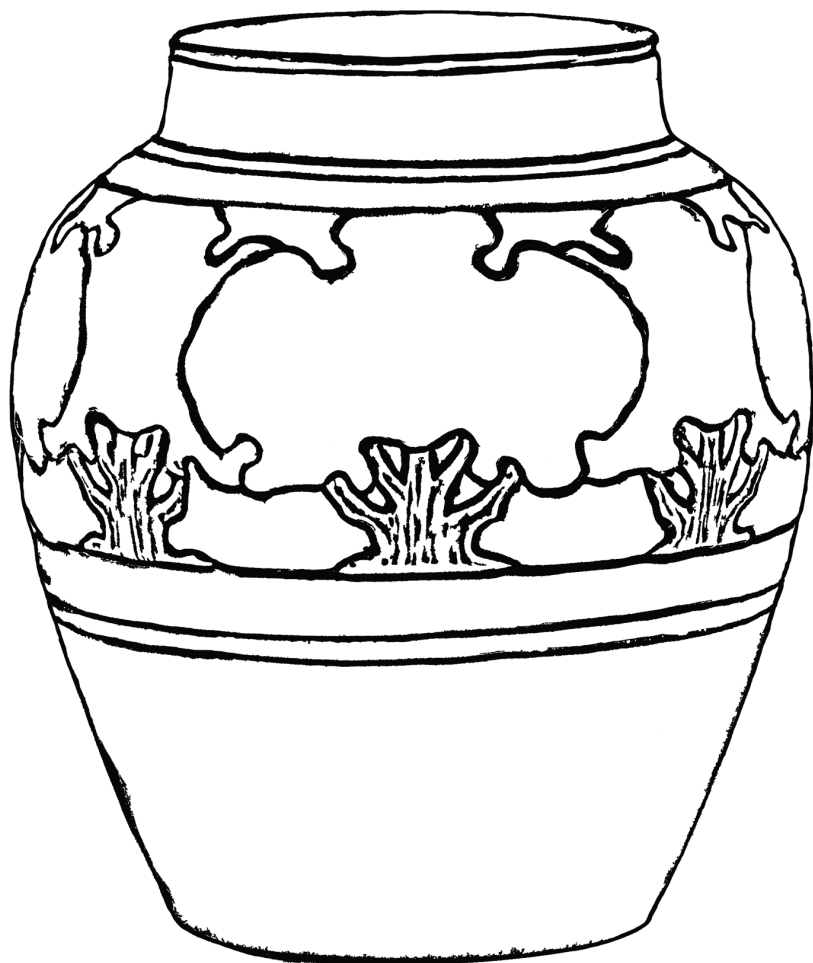
Harriet Coulter Joor, Artist; Joseph Meyer, Potter

Incised, with underglaze painting and glossy glaze on buff clay body, 18 ¹/₄"

Collection of the Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University, purchase through the generosity of Mrs. Arthur (Harriet) Jung, the Ernestine Bass Hopkins Endowed Fund, and the Evelyn Chumo Newcomb Pottery Fund, 2011.35

Vase with Oak Tree Design, 1904-1905

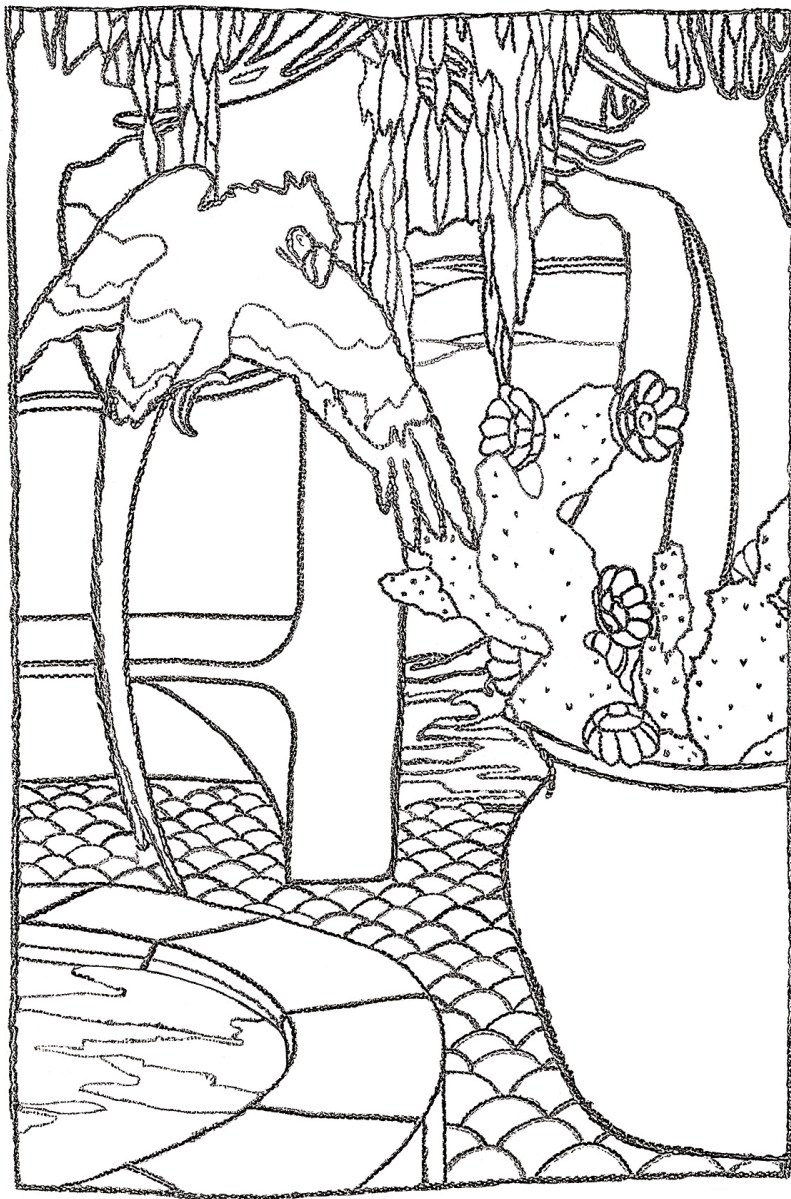
The Live Oak—so named for its ability to remain green and “live” during winter when other oak species stay dormant—has long been associated with Newcomb College, even appearing on the school seal. Today more than two hundred Live Oaks grace the entire Newcomb/Tulane campus. Those along today’s Newcomb Quad were planted from acorns taken from the original Newcomb campus a century ago.



Leona Fischer Nicholson, Artist; Joseph Meyer, Potter
Incised and sculpted with underglaze, glossy finish on buff clay body, 8 ¹/₄" x 7 ⁵/₁₆"
Collection of Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University, 1973.57-C

Wall Hanging with Macaw Design, 1905-1910

Newcomb textile artists used specific stitches that gave their designs a painterly quality. While Newcomb wares typically represented local flora and fauna, this work shows a bird whose only North American home is in Mexico. The flowering cactus also suggest a non-Louisiana setting.



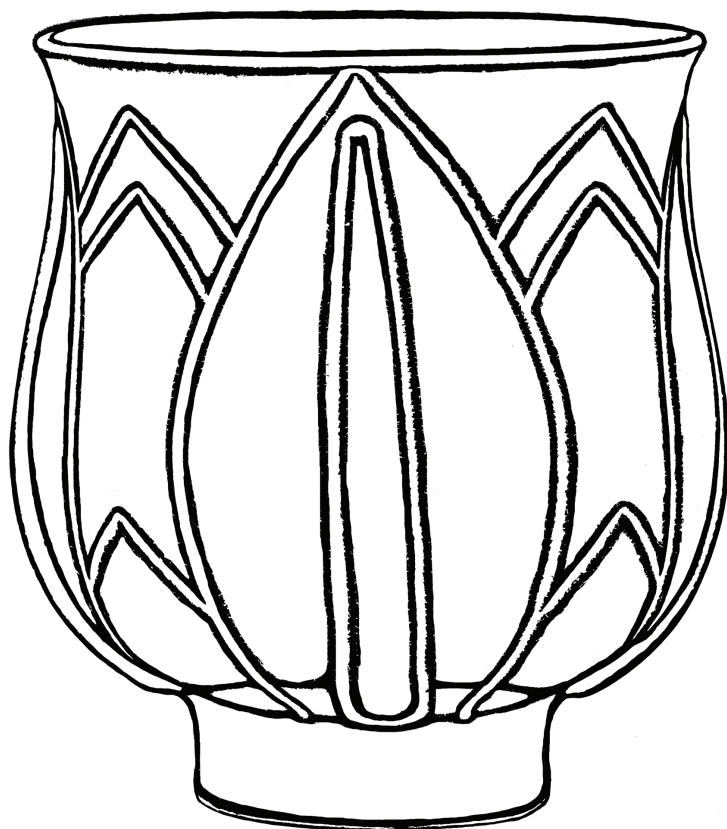
Helen DeGrange, Artist

Silk thread on woven linen in running, darning, and outline stitches, 56 1/2" x 38"

Collection of Foundation for the Crafts of the Newcomb Style

Cachepot with Stylized Leaf Design, c. 1931

A cachepot (from the French *cache*, meaning to hide, plus *pot*) is a decorative container for holding and concealing a flowerpot. Unlike earlier pieces made at Newcomb that incorporated naturalistic renderings of plants and trees, this work displays the artist's interest in abstract designs popular during the 1930s.

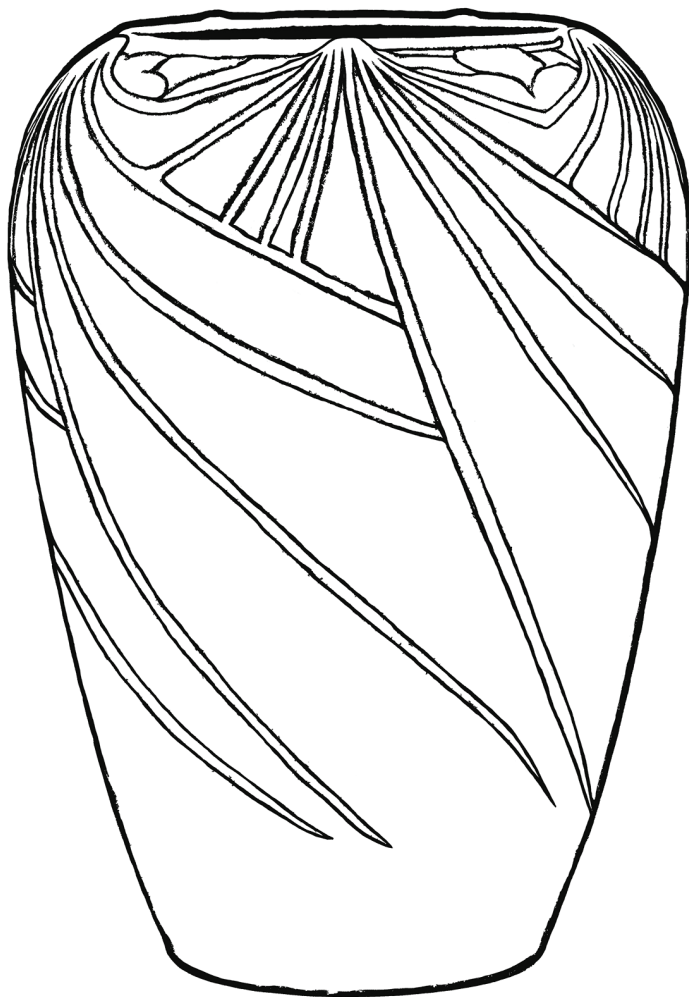


AA

Aurelia Coralie Arbo, Artist; Jonathan Browne Hunt, Potter
Low relief carving with applied ornament and glossy green glaze on orange clay body, 6 ³/₈" x 5 ⁵/₈"
Collection of Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University, 1973.140-C

Vase with Grand Isle Design, c. 1933

Named for the barrier island located fifty miles south of New Orleans, this vase bears abstract patterns suggesting shells and windswept sandy beaches. Grand Isle has been a popular summer getaway for Gulf Coast residents since the late 1800s; Kate Chopin made it the setting for much of her famous novel *The Awakening* (1899).



Sarah Agnes Estelle "Sadie" Irvine, Artist; Francis A. Ford, Potter
Underglaze with matte glaze overlay on white clay body, 11 5/8" x 8 3/8"
Collection of Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University, 1973.67-C

Silver Necklace with Moonstone and Pendant, c. 1929

Known for their silvery-blue pearlescence, moonstones were often the gem of choice for Art Nouveau designers such as Louis Comfort Tiffany and Arts & Crafts artisans such as the women of Newcomb. The moonstone, said to give good luck and even predict the future, has long had mystical associations.



M.W.B

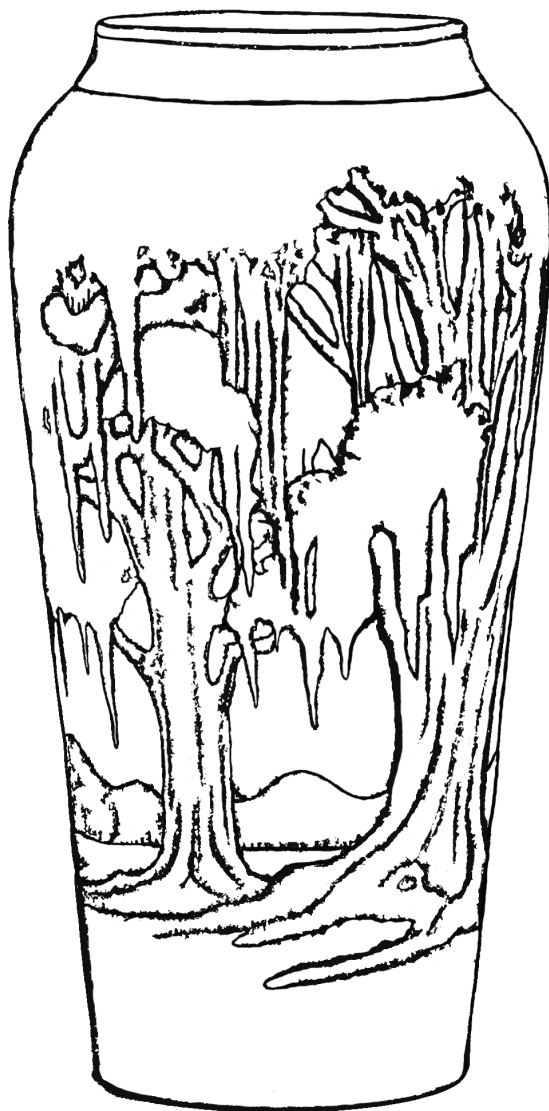
Mary Williams Butler

Hand-wrought silver chain with cut-out "NBM" (Nellie Mae Bartlett) monogram and moonstone inset.

Collection of Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University, Gift of Mrs. Harry B. "Jack" Kelleher, 1985.10.3-D+MA

Vase with Moss and Oak Landscape, c. 1929

The “moon and moss” treescape—of which this work is a version—is the most readily identifiable Newcomb motif. Reflecting early nineteenth-century tastes for romanticized depictions of the South, the design appears on numerous wares; however, true to the enterprise’s ideals, no two are exactly alike.



AS

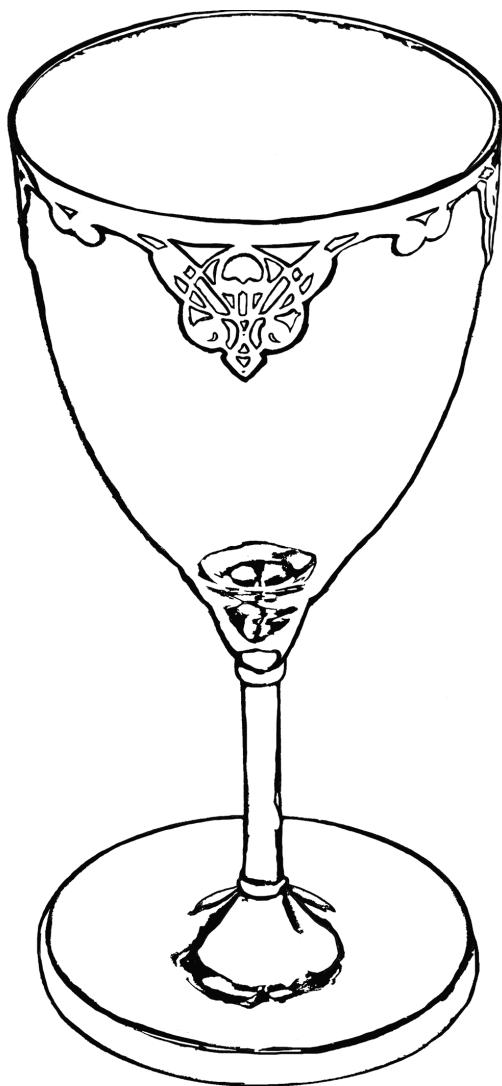
Anna Frances Simpson, Artist; Jonathan Browne Hunt, Potter

Low-relief carving, underglaze with matte glaze on orange clay body, 10 ³/₄" x 5 ¹/₂"

Collection of Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University, Gift of Polly Guthrie, 2000.5.1

Silver Chalice with Abstract Design, c. 1930-1933

A footed cup frequently used for ceremonial purposes, the chalice derives its name from the Greek word *kalyx*, meaning shell or husk. The vessel's flat ornamental rim, which is soldered in place, recalls the stylized designs found on Newcomb pottery.



Rosalie Mildred Roos Weiner, Artist

Hand-wrought and soldered silver with applied pattern, 7 ³/₈" x 3 ⁵/₈"

Collection of Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University, 2002.1.5



NEWCOMB ARTISTS Making Their Mark

Each piece of Newcomb pottery has a distinctive story, a narrative told in part through the signs and symbols imprinted on the work's underside. Once decoded, these otherwise cryptic markings offer a wealth of information to the curious viewer.

Each artist, for example, had their own signature glyph, typically a stylized version of their name or initials. To date, more than 70 unique ciphers have been identified, with many artists using two, or even three, designs. Other denotations, revealed the identity of the potter—most often Joseph Meyer who served as the enterprise's ceramist for thirty-two years.

Additional markings note the year the piece was fabricated as well as the type of material used. The letter "U," for instance, signaled a white clay (popular between 1895 and 1902) while "R" indicated a dark red clay (used between 1895 and 1910). In order to keep track of their yearly inventory, the artists also created a registration system of sequential numbers and alphabetically arranged letters, beginning in 1901 with A1 and ending with ZY100 in 1941.

Perhaps the most important mark, however, is the letter N encircled by the letter C. Without this imprimatur, a work was not considered an authentic product of the Newcomb College pottery enterprise. The Newcomb Art Museum's own logo, shown below, pays homage to this design, underscoring the mark's enduring significance.



*Text by Teresa Parker Farris, Deputy Director, Newcomb Art Museum
Illustrations by Christine Carlo, M. Arch, Tulane University, 2016*



NEWCOMB

ART MUSEUM *of Tulane*

Tulane University
6823 St. Charles Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70118

NewcombArtMuseum.Tulane.edu
504.865.5328

Free and open to public, the
museum is open Tuesday through
Friday, 10 to 5; Saturday and Sunday
11 to 4; and by appointment.

