

(From left)

Scavenger

c. 1935

Terracotta

Collection of Rebecca B. Sawyer

Printemps (Springtime)

1927

Brass

Collection of Adaline J. Hilgard

Lamb

c. 1927

Bronze and marble

Study for Grasshopper

1929

Granite

Collection of Lucinda Kent Maushardt

Young Woman

1927

Bronze

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art,
Albert M. Bender Collection, gift of Albert
M. Bender

(From left)

Young Dancer

1931

Bronze

Collection of Julia Hilgard Ritter

Caryatid

c. 1927

Bronze

Personage

c. 1935

Terracotta

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

Untitled (Mother and Child)

c. 1935

Terracotta

Collection of Galen Rohrs Roll

Noah Praying for Rain

c. 1928

Bronze

Collection of Galen Rohrs Roll

Phoenix

c. 1927

Poured concrete

The Anne (Nancy) Kent Danielson
Estate – Kent Erskine

Nude
1931

Ebony

Collection of Perrin and Rita French

Nude (Standing Girl with Drape)

1934

Terracotta

Mills College Art Museum, Museum Purchase,
Susan L. Mills Fund

Chord

1946

Hydrocal

Collection of Linda and David Keaton

First Flute

1946

Aluminum

Collection of Alice Benét and Jon Kersey

Untitled (Small Clay Model)

1948

Terracotta

Collection of Galen Rohrs Roll

Voyage

1948

Tempera on incised Hydrocal

Collection of Sherman and Laura Kent

Dialogue (Hydrocal form #49)

1949

Hydrocal

The Buck Collection at UCI Institute and
Museum of California Art

Knot

c. 1950

Hydrocal

Collection of Serafina K. Bathrick
and Sherman T. Kent

Untitled

1950

Magnesite with inclusions

Collection of Julia Hilgard Ritter

Model for Monument I

1951

Terracotta

Night Flyer

1951

Magnesite

Collection of Sherman and Laura Kent

Luna

1952

Cement with pebbles and
shells inclusions

(From left)

Offering

1952

Hydrocal with shells

Meteor

1949

Hydrocal

University of California, Berkeley Art
Museum and Pacific Film Archive

Echo

1954

Terracotta

Private Collection

Rendezvous

1954

Terracotta

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

Castle (Retreat)

1955

Terracotta

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

Confidante

1955

Terracotta

Private collection

Lamp Model

1955

Terracotta (two pieces)

Six at the Gate

1955

Terracotta

Vestal

1955

Terracotta

Collection of Galen Rohrs Roll

Blue Mountain

c. 1955

Terracotta with blue pigment

Collection of Adaline J. Hilgard

Flower

1956

Terracotta and pigment

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

Lighthouse for Birds

1956

Terracotta (two pieces)

Collection of Adaline J. Hilgard

Presentation

1956

Terracotta with pigment (two pieces)

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco
gift of Walter and Josephine Landor

Trumpet

1956

Terracotta

The John and Susan Horseman Collection
courtesy of the Horseman Foundation

Winter Palace (Votive)

1956

Terracotta (two pieces)

Maquettes and Test Pieces

c. 1957

Terracotta

Bud (Tulip)

1957

Terracotta

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

Lamp

1957

Terracotta (two pieces)

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

Lamp Model

1957

Terracotta (two pieces)

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

Last Piece

1957

Terracotta

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

Magnet
1957

Terracotta

Queen Mother

1957

Terracotta (two pieces)

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

Sage
1957

Terracotta (two pieces)

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

Star (Tribute)

1957

Terracotta (two pieces)

Collection of Galen Rohrs Roll

Wood Witch

1957

Terracotta

Untitled (Ash Tray)

Date unknown

White cement with black pebble
inclusions

Collection of Galen Rohrs Roll

Far and Away

1946

Tempera on incised Hydrocal

Collection of Adaline J. Hilgard

Journey

1946

Tempera on incised Hydrocal

Collection of Sherman and Laura Kent

Lost Things

1946

Tempera on incised Hydrocal

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

Days of Our Youth

1947

Tempera on incised Hydrocal

Collection of Galen Rohrs Roll

The Islands

1947

Tempera on incised Hydrocal

Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive

The Navigators

1949

Tempera on incised Hydrocal

Untitled (Tumblers with Kites)

Untitled (Tumblers)

c.1940

Ink, pastel, and watercolor on paper

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

(from left)

Cable Car Hill

1944

Charcoal and gouache on newspaper

Untitled

1944

Ink and colored graphite on paper

Collection of Sherman and Laura Kent

(Clockwise from top left)

Untitled (Small Cascade)

c. 1944

Graphite, pastel, and colored pencil on paper

Sapphire Lake

1939

Pastel on paper

Study for High Sierra

1944

Gouache, India Ink, graphite, and watercolor on paper

Divide

1944

Ink, pastel, and crayon on paper

**River Over the Rocks from the
Mountain Series**

1944

Ink and crayon on paper

**River Over the Rocks from the
Mountain Series**

1944

Ink and crayon on paper

Mountain Meadow

c. 1944

Ink, graphite, and gouache on paper

Untitled (Mountain Meadow)

c. 1944

Ink and crayon on paper

(Clockwise from top left)

Mountain Meadow, Winter

Untitled (Winter Landscape)

Untitled (Winter Landscape)

Untitled (Winter Landscape)

c. 1944

Ink, charcoal, and colored pencil
on paper

Rocks

1944

Ink and crayon on paper

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

Rocks

c. 1944

Colored graphite and ink on paper

Collection of Sherman and Laura Kent

Glade

c.1944

Ink, charcoal, and colored pencil on paper

Untitled (Glade)

c. 1944

Ink, charcoal, and colored pencil

Untitled (Snow Clad-Trees)

c. 1944

Ink, charcoal, and colored pencil
on paper

Untitled

c. 1945

Gouache on paper

You Wish

c. 1945

Ink and gouache on paper

No. 3

1953

Ink and gouache on paper

(Recto)

To GKH

(Verso)

This too for GKH

1953

Gouache and ink on paper

Collection of Adaline J. Hilgard

Untitled

1953

Ink and gouache on paper

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; gift of Phoebe Brown, Adaline Kent, and James Lee, dedicated in memory of Robert C. McLane

Untitled (Orange Landscape)

1953

Ink and wash on paper

Collection of Adaline J. Hilgard

IV

1953

Ink and gouache on paper

African Sun

1955

Ink and wash on paper

Collection of Julia Hilgard Ritter

Another Spring

1955

Ink and wash on paper

Collection of Julia Hilgard Ritter

Hourglass

1955

Ink on paper

Private collection

Termés (Termites) sketch

Date Unknown

Graphite on paper

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

Untitled

Date unknown

Ink and gouache on paper

Untitled

Date Unknown

Ink and gouache

Untitled (Camp Scene)

Date unknown

Ink on paper

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

**A Certain City (Design for
Scarf)**
1948-1949

Ink and gouache on paper

Tower for a Lady

1954

Terracotta

Private Collection, San Francisco, CA

Catacomb

1955

Terracotta with pigment

Collection of Christopher and Fred Schardt

Jane Berlandina, 1932

Terracotta

Collection of the Mandell Family

Jane Berlandina (1898–1970) was one of Kent's closest friends, in addition to being her sister-in-law. She was also an accomplished artist whose work was included in several exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in the early 1930s. Born in Nice, France, Berlandina studied in Paris with Henri Matisse and Raoul Dufy. She moved to the United States in 1928 and shortly thereafter met her husband-to-be, Henry Temple Howard, the older brother of Kent's husband, Robert B. Howard. The couple moved to San Francisco in 1931, where Berlandina, also an art historian, taught at the California School of Fine Arts from 1936 to 1940. She was the only female artist commissioned to make a mural in San Francisco's Coit Tower as part of the Public Works of Art Project, under the auspices of the New Deal. In the mural, *Home Life*, completed in 1934, she used egg tempera to paint, which rendered a more dreamlike image than those of the other muralists. Kent helped Berlandina with her composition and around the same time made this small terracotta bust of her.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2107#

Daughters, c. 1939

Terracotta

This sculpture was included in Kent's first solo exhibition at the Courvoisier Gallery in San Francisco in 1941. It was noted as one of her earliest experiments in abstraction, as evidenced in the loosening of detail and heightened sense of linear movement. Thematically it is also an homage to her two daughters, Ellen and Galen, who were born in 1931 and 1933, respectively.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2108#

Tumblers

1940

Terracotta

Collection of Sadie W. Super

In this sculpture and the related adjacent drawings, Kent took up the subjects of gymnastics, balance, and childhood play. The two-piece sculpture shows two acrobats in counterpoise, one balancing above the other. Kent's emphasis on the linearity of the figures demonstrates her attention to action and the forms of the acrobats rather than naturalistic detail. The work indicates her increasing interest in abstraction, which began around this time. For Kent, movement was not only an essential aspect of sculpture, but it was also an important dimension of her life and artistic practice. Kent, herself, was an amateur gymnast, and kept gymnastic rings hanging in her studio on which she practiced (they are on view in a vitrine elsewhere in the exhibition.)

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2109#

Self-Portrait, 1943

Terracotta and fishnet

This sculpture is the only known self-portrait Kent made. That she chose to render her likeness in terracotta (a natural material that is molded instead of cast) is significant. She considered herself primarily a sculptor, although she also made works on paper and other diverse media.

The features she gave herself are simplified and somewhat archaic looking, resembling a prehistoric statue or mask, an homage to an ancient art form she revered. She coarsely treated the surface of the terracotta to make it look as if it were aged stone. Greatly inspired by art from diverse ancient cultures, such as Mayan, Egyptian, Asian, and Greek, Kent sought to inject an aspect of the present into aesthetic qualities she considered to be timeless. She wrote:

In the most reposed Buddha there is a sense of infinity, *all* of Time. This is true in lesser degree for all good sculpture whether it presents the movement of a dance, the study of a particular person (portrait, that is), or some essence of nature carried out in abstraction. The Time element is inherent.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2110#

Universal Compass

1946

Hydrocal and egg tempera

Private collection

Kent invoked several poetic meanings in this abstract sculpture, alluding to both the drafting device she likely used as an artist and the navigational tool she employed when hiking in the High Sierra. She cast the unique form in her preferred type of plaster (Hydrocal) and painted over it once it had dried. The legs reach outward like a homing device. In this sense the work is an abstract representation of what Kent sought out in the mountains.

About her experience in the upper elevations, Kent wrote:

Time to search out direction—feel for currents—not length of time but quality—you find it, like shells or minerals—unheralded. The past changes with its offshoots to the present—color and direction change relating to color and direction of *now*—old episodes take new accent as the strain emerges again in present context—as new understanding of motives (or lack of motives) comes to surface—a slow unmasking of Truth in time.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2111#

Never Fear, 1948

Incised Hydrocal with pigment

Private collection

As in *Tumblers* (1940), on view in the first gallery, Kent addressed the theme of gymnastics and balance in this sculpture. Here, however, she augmented the abstraction so that the position the gymnasts assume is less legible, and emphasized the interplay of negative and positive space and, above all, action. Additionally, she established a heightened sense of equilibrium, not only between the two figures but also with the black and white horizontal and vertical stripes that help to unify the structure. The incisions in the Hydrocal further activate the form's surface.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2113#

Truth to Tell, 1948

Papier-mâché and string mounted
on base

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco,
gift of Walter and Josephine Landor

This work was made for a show that curator Jermayne MacAgy organized at the Legion of Honor museum in San Francisco during the fall of 1948, titled *Mobiles and Articulated Sculpture*. Kent wrote to her daughter Ellen about the opening: “Gerry MacA [Jermayne MacAgy] organized a show of mobiles and . . .

I have that black papier mache roly thing, Clay Spohn has two crazy twisted things hanging in the air, three Calder, . . . and about ten other strange and lovely things lit up with spotlights, casting shadows.” MacAgy was particularly pleased with Kent’s work, describing how the “witty . . . sculpture . . . moves by a punch from the hand and goes into the same kind of action as a toy which, no matter how hard rocked, defies any attempt to knock it over.” In a 1948 article, the *New York Times* specifically mentioned how Kent and her husband were “conducting successful experiments in abstract form, tensions and balances.”

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2114#

Link, 1949

Terracotta with pigment

Collection of Julia Hilgard Ritter

Like in *Dark Mountain* (1945), on view nearby, Kent realized an infinity symbol in three-dimensional form in this tiny terracotta sculpture. Here, however, she separated the symbol from the shape of the mountain, rendering the lemniscate (figure-eight shaped curve) an innovative form.

The infinity symbol was a defining motif in Kent's work, a marker of her authentic style and approach. It served as a representational embodiment—an amalgamation—of nature, abstraction, and time (and its many forms) in her art. This is perhaps most evident in this sculpture, where the symbol is expanded into three dimensions, so that it is visible on each of the faces of the structure.

Merging her interest in the mountains and infinity, Kent wrote:

There is nothing new in finding strength and spirit in the mountains. Literature is full of tributes to their power—but the impact on me comes as a fresh miracle in each season. There is Clean Space with an infinity of direction.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2116#

Journey by Moon

1951

Lead

Collection of the Lucid Art Foundation

The moon was a recurring theme in Kent's work, well before the Soviet Union's Luna 2 spacecraft struck the lunar surface in 1959 and NASA's Apollo 11 mission landed the first astronauts on the moon in 1969. In this lead-cast sculpture, a human figure appears atop peaks, similar to the mountaintops represented in other works in this gallery. The figure stretches its arms outward as if reveling in the threshold between mountain and sky, while seemingly straddling two vertical forms that cascade down to the base, with horizontal struts marking the passage.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2117#

Figment, 1953

Bronze

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of Robert B. Howard in honor of Grace McCann Morley, Director (1935–58)

Kent originally made this sculpture in magnesite, a cement-like medium that could be modeled before it dried. Later, several bronze casts of that sculpture were made. The original magnesite sculpture would have been quite fragile, and casting it in bronze produced sturdier versions of the distinctive abstract shape.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2118#

Finder, 1953

Magnesite (two pieces)

Los Angeles County Museum of Art,
gift of Galen Kent Howard Hilgard in
memory of her sister Ellen Kent Howard

Kent's infinity symbol is a representational embodiment—a fusion between nature, abstraction, and time (and its many forms) in her art. The most abstract manifestation of the symbol occurs in this work, the largest sculpture Kent made from two separate pieces of magnesite. The top piece, an outstretched horizontal with repeating ovular shapes, echoes the curves of the lemniscate (figure-eight shaped curve). It seemingly balances above another supporting structure with two ridges that descend in angular verticals and converge in the midsection, ultimately widening at the base. As in her Hydrocal picture *Song* (on view in a previous gallery), here it seems as if the infinity symbol balances above two mountain peaks.

Infinity was not only a symbol for Kent but also an experience she felt in time and space, resting above the peaks of the High Sierra. The sculpture also vaguely resembles an antenna, which aptly conjures her search for inspiration on mountaintops from “an infinity of direction.”

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque
775.546.1464 y presione 2119#

Ear of Dionysius (Cave), 1954

Terracotta with pigment

Collection of Christopher and Fred Schardt

This sculpture refers to a cave in Syracuse, Italy, on the island of Sicily. Kent, her husband, and daughter Ellen visited it on February 15, 1954, as noted in Kent's travel diary. Its distinguishing feature is a tall, narrow opening of a tunnel that leads into a cavern known for its rich sonic properties. In her journal Kent described it as a "magnificent grotto huge and high and winding with phenomenal acoustics and echoes."

The cave was purportedly named by the Italian Baroque painter Caravaggio after the Greek tyrant Dionysius I (who ruled Syracuse from 432 to 367 B.C.E.), because he thought the opening resembled the shape of a human ear and because of the echoes that can be heard inside. According to legend, Dionysius imprisoned dissidents in the cave and listened in on their plans.

Here, as in several other of the terracotta works, Kent placed a small candle inside the hollow form, which created a mysterious glow from within.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2121#

To an Ancient God, 1954

Terracotta

Collection of Julia Hilgard Ritter

The angled shape of this sculpture resembles the distinctive features of representations of several Egyptian gods. Anubis, for example, was commonly depicted as a man with the head of a canine, marked by a snout and long upright ears. Seth also had the head of an animal with vertical ears, yet his snout curved downward slightly like an anteater's. Similarly, the goddess Selket's defining attribute is a scorpion resting on her head that is angled upward like a boomerang. Kent would have seen images of many Egyptian deities on her visit to Egypt in 1954, especially at the tomb of Tutankhamun. This abstracted sculpture evokes, perhaps, more the dynamic shape present in the depictions of various gods she encountered than one in particular, and thus becomes a poetic reinterpretation in a modern, abstract style, or what she likened to the "language of the Wide Present."

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2122#

Untitled, c. 1954

Granite and clay (two pieces)

Henry Temple Howard built his sister, Jeannette Howard, a house on what they used to affectionally refer to as “the farm” in Scotts Valley, California, which Kent and her husband, Robert B. Howard, frequently visited. He even built most of the trails on the farm. Kent made this work somewhat spontaneously there during one visit, after finding the spherical granite rock by a creek. She then dug up some clay on the site to make a base for the rock.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2123#

Argosy, 1956

Terracotta

University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive; gift of Jeffrey and Meri Lane

The title of this work refers to a type of ancient merchant ship that would sail from Venice across the Adriatic Sea, which Shakespeare mentions in several of his plays, including *The Merchant of Venice*. The form of this terracotta sculpture further recalls the shape of the sailing vessel, mimicking the curvature of the hull and the strong upright mast. Inspired by the original form, Kent abstracted it in this piece so that it became a distant echo of the related object.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2124#

Bristle, 1956

Terracotta

The Estate of Jeanne Reynal; courtesy Eric Firestone Gallery

This diminutive work likely refers to the bristlecone pine trees that Kent would have encountered on her adventures into the mountains. The bristlecone pine is an ancient tree, with a life span that can extend to five thousand years. Kent would have, undoubtedly, been drawn to this venerable life form. She and her husband were often inspired by trees and other natural phenomena they encountered in the High Sierra and would later incorporate the shape, form, or texture of these “beings” into their artwork.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2125#

Song, 1945

Tempera on incised Hydrocal

Collection of Adaline J. Hilgard

In this picture incised in plaster, the infinity symbol rests above two distinct peaks as stars twinkle above. Beneath the symbol, a fountain flows with many swirling waves cascading down the center of the composition, as if frozen in time. Crescent moons descend on each side of the water. As Professor Alexander Nemerov notes in his essay (named after this work) for the exhibition catalog, the waves also resemble plumes of smoke rising into the air.

The title of this piece may refer to “Song” (also known as “Song: Go and Catch a Falling Star”) by the English writer John Donne (1572–1631). Kent devoted a monumental work on paper, *Go and Catch a Falling Star* (c. 1953; on view in the last gallery), to this poem. Formally and conceptually, *Song* also relates to her sculpture *Finder* (1953), on view in the same gallery.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2126#

Sugar Bowl, 1945

Tempera on incised Hydrocal

Private collection

Throughout the late 1930s, Kent and her husband, Robert B. Howard, traveled to the High Sierra in both summer and winter. By 1939, they had become particularly taken with wintertime visits to Donner Pass with ski legend Hannes Schroll, the founder of the Sugar Bowl Ski Resort. Kent and Howard became stockholders (along with Walt Disney) in the new winter retreat.

At Sugar Bowl, Kent's brother-in-law Henry Temple Howard designed the first chairlift built in California (and the second in the country), while architect friend William Wurster planned the lodge, with its signature sloping roof. At nearly the same time, artist and mosaicist Jeanne Reynal, who would become one of Kent's closest friends, set up her home and studio in the remote village of Soda Springs, just two miles from Sugar Bowl. This painting conjures Kent's experience skiing down the powdery mountain, with the black marks, implying ski tracks, sprinkled across the slope.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2127#

Wellspring, 1945

Tempera on incised Hydrocal

Museum of Art and Archaeology,
University of Missouri; gift of the
Betty Parsons Foundation

This picture, carved from Hydrocal, reads like an abstract mental map of an alpine lake, perhaps Sapphire Lake in the Trinity Alps Wilderness area, Dusy Basin, or Koip Peak and Alger Lakes, which Kent sketched in her notebooks during her mountaintop adventures. The eye roves around the incisions that encircle the composition to see the new discoveries along the path, such as crystalline rock formations, waterfalls, abstract renderings of trees, petroglyphs, and triangular hills. Kent would have needed to have a design already in mind in order to execute it before the plaster dried. Her Hydrocal paintings are among her most authentic and inventive works, in that they are singular in the history of modern art.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque
775.546.1464 y presione 2128#

Skylight, c. 1946

Pigment on incised Hydrocal

Collection of Perrin and Rita French

In this work, Kent produced a portrait of her atelier. In 1940 her brother-in-law Henry Temple Howard made adjoining studios for Kent and her husband, located at 521 and 523 Francisco Street in San Francisco. Each had skylights and a large fireplace that connected the two sides of the building. On the mantel above the fireplace, Kent displayed items that she collected and valued. One of them, visible in this painting, was an Indigenous artifact that her brother Roger Kent sent her while he was stationed in the Solomon Islands during World War II. In the center of the composition, light beams enter through the skylights, creating a large triangle. On the left, a sundial rests on a pedestal. Other objects, most likely her own sculptures, can be seen on a shelf above, as well as scattered around the room.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2129#

Writ, 1947

Tempera on incised Hydrocal

Collection of Julia Hilgard Ritter

The title of this picture, referring to a formal written document, was poetically applied by Kent—it's exact meaning remains elusive. An infinity symbol hovers in the sky beneath a star and circles that resemble the sun and moon or planets. An assembly of people, trees, and objects appears in a mountainous landscape below. On the left side, an Ionic column, associated with classical Greek architecture, stands upright like a beacon of some kind.

The scene has a mystical or cosmic tone, as if it were a spiritual rite or vision. On infinity and her experience in the mountains, Kent wrote:

Floating in space time. Passing on our way we encounter stars made up of intersections of lines of experience that have touched us: ideas, knowledge, memory, premonition, personality. They may come in from any infinity of directions.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2130#

Ephemera from Adaline Kent's Archive and Sketch for design in *Sawdust and Spangles*, 1942 SFMA Exhibition

Douglas MacAgy, an innovative curator at the San Francisco Museum of Art (now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) in the 1940s, was a supporter of Kent and her husband's work. MacAgy organized a popular circus-themed exhibition, *Sawdust and Spangles*, in 1942, which was intended to offer audiences some levity during World War II. With sections on clowns, acrobats, and the ring, the show featured many of the Bay Area's leading modernists, including Kent, Madge Knight, Charles and Robert B. Howard, David Park, and Clay Spohn. It included Robert B. Howard's sculpture *Mobiles of Acrobats* under the big top pitched in the museum's rotunda. Kent had two works in the exhibition: *Juggler* and *Tightrope Walker* (both now lost). In addition, she created a set design that was a part of the show, illustrated here in the sketch located in the upper left corner of this vitrine. Also shown are exhibition announcements and various other ephemera, including her French driver's license from 1926 and a work of art sent to her by the mail artist Ray Johnson.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2131#

Twentieth Century

1953

Ink and gouache on paper

Collection of Leah W. Middlebrook

According to Grace McCann Morley, the first director of the San Francisco Museum of Art (now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art), “Adaline Kent was very much of her time in every way and in none more than the advantage she took of the twentieth-century artist’s freedom to find the substance and the reason for creative expression everywhere.”

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2132#

V

1953

Ink and gouache on paper

In her abstract works on paper, Kent took inspiration from “intruders and accidents” that would manifest when letting her subconscious guide her compositions, an application known as “automatism,” developed by the Surrealists. Somewhat resembling the work of Surrealist artists André Masson or Roberto Matta, Kent’s abstractions are riotous expressions of linear energy delineating complex fields of space, and yet they are still controlled compositions. She tempers the unconscious with formal considerations. In this sense, she uniquely establishes an equilibrium between order and chaos in these expressionistic works.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2150#

III, 1953

Ink and gouache on paper

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

If turned to the right, and Kent believed her pictures could be rotated when displayed, the resulting horizontal composition resembles a vast mountainous landscape with definitive ridges at the base. Yet, seen vertically, those same forms assume totemic qualities, as if the angled black lines are expressions of supernatural beings. The brown and black palette, furthermore, suggests an earthier brand of Abstract Expressionism.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2133#

To the Mocatam Hills, 1954

Ink, charcoal, and wash on paper

Collection of Galen Rohrs Roll

The title of this work refers to a range of hills located in a southeastern suburb of Cairo, Egypt. Kent visited this highest point in the landscape surrounding Cairo, what Egyptians refer to as Mokattam Mountain, when she and her husband and their daughter Ellen traveled to the city in 1954. The Arabic name Mokattam means “cut off” or “broken off” and refers to how the range of hills is divided into three sections. The shapes in the drawing echo some of Kent’s terracotta sculptures on view in this gallery.

Español: Para escuchar el texto en español, por favor marque 775.546.1464 y presione 2135#

Haiti, 1956

Ink on paper

Collection of Dan and Claire Carlevaro

Kent had several unique connections to Haiti, and in 1956 she and her husband visited it and Martinique. Upon her return, she made this abstract work on paper that perhaps pictures some of the natural formations she encountered on the trip.

Kent was friends with the Haitian foreign minister Gérard E. Lescot, son of Élie Lescot, president from 1941 to 1946. Gérard, chairman of the Haitian delegation during the United Nations Conference in San Francisco in 1945, signed the Charter of the United Nations on behalf of his country. During his stay in San Francisco, Kent hosted a party in his honor at her studio, inviting local luminaries such as Grace McCann Morley, the first director of the San Francisco Museum of Art (now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art).

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River over the Rocks (Design for Scarf), 1944

Ink and gouache on paper

Kent made this design for a silk scarf, which was unrealized during her lifetime. The motif was inspired by a river flowing over mountain peaks and relates to drawings she made the same year of water flowing down alpine crests into lower valleys. In conjunction with the exhibition, the museum has produced this scarf design, as well as the one adjacent to it, as Kent intended, and it is available in the Shop.

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Sage, 1957

Terracotta (two pieces)

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

Four sculptures from this period originally contained lighting elements and were created as part of a commission for the Ahwahnee Hotel, Yosemite National Park's iconic lodge. The commission likely came through Frann Spencer Reynolds, a friend of Kent's who made an abstract mural that hung above the fireplace in the great hall. Reynolds was the daughter of Jeannette Dyer Spencer, the designer of the hotel's stained glass windows. Other members of Kent's family, including Henry Temple Howard and her husband Robert B. Howard, had designed elements for the Hotel when it opened in 1927. All the works that were commissioned were intended to pay homage to the park's majestic landscape and Indigenous history. A picture of the interior of the hotel and Kent's lamps can be found in vitrines in an adjacent gallery. The whereabouts of the other three lamps, shown in the picture, are now unknown; this is the only remaining work from that group.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

c. 1945

Wallpaper

Kent made this abstract wallpaper pattern for the exhibition *Wallpaper Designed by Pacific Coast Artists* at the San Francisco Museum of Art (now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) in 1947. The only document of its existence is a photograph taken of the installation; this example was re-created from that image. The all-over abstract pattern shares qualities with the work of early Abstract Expressionists such as Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Mark Tobey. Like the latter, Kent was inspired by calligraphy. She even took a class with the Zen Buddhist calligrapher Hodo Tobase in 1955. Kent's friends, fellow artists Ruth Asawa and Gordon Onslow Ford, were also enrolled in the class.

Untitled (Fabric Design), c. 1945

Printed fabric, produced by Dorothy Liebes

Kent collaborated with Dorothy Liebes (1897–1972) on this unique textile design in the mid-1940s. Kent created the bold, abstract pattern, and Liebes then produced it in her San Francisco studio. This is the only known piece of the fabric that survives, which the artist often used as a tablecloth.

Liebes was an American textile designer and weaver renowned for the vivid, custom-made modern fabrics she crafted for interior decorators and architects, such as Frank Lloyd Wright (whom she had met in 1935). Known as “the mother of modern weaving,” Liebes traveled to France, Italy, Mexico, and Guatemala to study diverse weaving techniques and designs. She opened her first studio in San Francisco in 1930 and later established Dorothy Liebes Design, Inc., in 1937, which became a successful textile studio. She eventually opened an additional atelier in New York, ultimately moving there in 1948. Another notable client of Liebes’s was the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite, which also commissioned Kent to make terracotta lamps in the early 1950s.

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Island

Created by landscape architect Thomas D. Church (1902–1979), the garden of the Sonoma County, California, ranch of Dewey and Jean Donnell is a masterpiece of modern landscape design. It famously featured one of the first kidney-shaped pools. Art historian Elizabeth Kassler has written, “Its fluid shaping was inspired by the winding creeks of salt marshes seen through the frame of live oaks.”

In 1948 Church commissioned Kent to make a sculpture for the pool. The resulting work, *Island*, establishes a biomorphic (or organic looking) centerpiece that seemingly floats above the water. Yet, adventurous swimmers could move through it underwater. Kent created several versions of the structure before settling on the final form. Its undulating curves complement the pool’s distinctive shape and surrounding pathways. It was featured on the cover of the April 1951 issue of *House Beautiful*, a copy of which is also shown here, along with production photos that were taken after it was completed. Both the pool and sculpture still exist in the Donnell garden.

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Materials and Photos from Adaline Kent’s Studios

Adaline Kent had several studios in San Francisco from 1929 to 1957. Her first studio (1929–1932) was located in the artistic hub known as the Monkey Block, located at 802 Montgomery Street. The image of her working on a sculpture with hammer and chisel, wearing goggles and a scarf adorned with infinity rings, was taken there. This is the first depiction of an infinity symbol found in relation to the artist. Kent’s last studio (constructed in 1940) was located at 521–523 Francisco Street and was built for her and Robert B. Howard by her architect brother-in-law, Henry Temple Howard. The spacious adjoining studios had similar distinguishing architectural attributes of skylights and adjoining fireplaces. The gymnastic rings that Kent hung in this studio, along with other photos, are showcased in this vitrine. Kent would use the rings regularly while working in the studio, both for exercise and artistic inspiration. They, too, form the shape of an infinity symbol when touching.

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Sketchbooks and Natural Elements from the High Sierra and Other Locations

In the summer and winter Adaline Kent and her husband, Robert B. Howard, frequently visited the higher elevations of the Sierra Nevada mountain range and other lofty summits throughout California and Nevada. Displayed in this vitrine are some of the sketchbooks and drawings Kent made during these adventures. Also shown here, are items she collected and displayed in her studio, later using as sources of inspiration for her sculptures, paintings, and works on paper. Several photographs they took of each other and wondrous natural formations of trees are on view as well.

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Site Specific Comissions and Jewelry

In the summer of 1945 Kent enrolled in Franz Bergmann's jewelry class at the California School of Fine Art (CSFA; now the San Francisco Art Institute). She made several pieces of jewelry that were likely an outcome of this class, namely a set of three silver brooches. Former San Francisco Museum of Art (now San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) curator Douglas MacAgy had just taken over the job as director at the school, with a faculty in the late 1940s that included David Park, Robert B. Howard, Charles Howard, Clay Spohn, Jean Varda, Walter Landor, Richard Diebenkorn, Ansel Adams, Claire Falkenstein, and Dorr Bothwell. The CSFA was a hub of artistic activity for Kent,

with her husband teaching there beginning in 1945, her home across the street, and her studio just three blocks away. The necklace made of separately strung terracotta forms was made over a decade later, after she had returned from a trip to the Mediterranean that inspired a series of abstract sculptures in terracotta.

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Robert B. Howard and Adaline Kent

Wedding and Honeymoon, 1930

16 mm film transferred to video, black-and-white, silent; 14:36 min.

Six épigraphes antiques I–VI (Six ancient epigraphs), 13:35 min.

Music by Claude Debussy; performed by Arthur Gold, Robert Fizdale

En habit de cheval: III. Autre choral (In horse dress: III. Another choral), 0:52 min.

Music by Erik Satie; performed by Arthur Gold, Robert Fizdale

Camp (McGee Creek Pack Station), 1954

16 mm film transferred to video, color, silent; 15 min.

L'Horloge de flore (The flower clock), 16 min.

Music by Jean Françaix; performed by London Symphony Orchestra, John de Lancie, André Previn

Dusy Basin (Kings Canyon National Park), 1953

16 mm film transferred to video, color, silent; 10:05 min.

Concertino d'automne, Op. 309 (Autumn concert,
Op. 309), 10:30 min.

Music by Darius Milhaud; performed by Arthur Gold, Robert Fizdale

Fifth Lake (Inyo National Forest) and Beaches, 1951–52

16 mm film transferred to video, color, silent; 12:30 min.

Suite française d'après Claude Gervaise (French suite after Claude Gervaise), 12:53 min.

Music written and performed by Francis Poulenc

Untitled (Abstract Bird Pin)

c. 1945

Silver

Untitled (Crown Pin), c. 1945

Silver

Untitled (Star Pin), c. 1945

Silver

Untitled (Necklace), c. 1956

Ceramic pendants and leather strip

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

Dark Mountain, 1945

Hydrocal with incised lines, egg tempera

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art,
purchase

By 1945, Kent was working almost entirely in an abstract style. In this sculpture, one detects the underlying shape of a mountain or peak, yet the holes she punctured into the Hydrocal medium alluded to her interest in the infinity symbol and the experience of timelessness she identified with being in the High Sierra. Kent preferred to work with Hydrocal, what she referred to as “delicious stuff,” because it was less fragile than softer mediums, such as plaster of Paris. She used it to cast her sculptures and also as a ground to carve into for her unique sculptural paintings, shown in this gallery, which she referred to as “pictures.”

The two apertures at the top of *Dark Mountain* slope downward to the right in gentle curves, forming a figure eight. The undulations connect the upper section to the lower area, where a third aperture rests at the base, perhaps demonstrating deep time, or infinity embedded in the mountain itself. The emphasis in linearity appears again in the colorful incisions that elegantly wrap around the structure, echoing the flow of water. Kent painted over the plaster base in black, making the medium look more like granite formations of the High Sierra. This sculpture won an honorable mention at the *65th Annual of the San Francisco Art Association*, shown at the San Francisco Museum of Art (now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art).

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775.546.1464 y presione 2142#

Citadel, 1955

Terracotta

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York,
purchase

In a journal entry from her visit to Cairo, Egypt, dated Saturday, January 23, 1954, Kent recounts her experience visiting the Citadel:

A taxi up to the Citadel by roundabout route to miss the Parade streets. A lovely hazy day and Cairo mysterious in the pale sunlight. [Giorgio de Chirico] arches and shadows, spacious perspective, the minarets delicately pointed and domes rounded. Tessellations same shape as arches below (positive and negative) . . . Mosque EL RAFAI where Farouk went, with tombs built by his grandfather and uncle—rich and gaudy. The best sight was the sea of lamps hanging 20 feet up in the high-ceilinged mosque in the Citadel
MOHAM.ALI

This experience later informed this work and the related terracotta sculptures on view here, which she made upon her return to San Francisco.

The Mosque of Mohammed Ali, notably made of alabaster, is situated on the summit of the Citadel, which is an Islamic, medieval fortification located on a promontory of the Mokattam Hills overlooking the city. While this sculpture itself does not resemble either structure, it conjures the impressions they made, rich in light effects and shadow play. In 1956 Kent won the Crocker First National Bank Prize for this sculpture when it was exhibited at the *75th Annual Painting and Sculpture Exhibition* of the San Francisco Art Association at the San Francisco Museum of Art (now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art). This work was also shown in the *Annual Exhibition of Contemporary Sculpture, Watercolors and Drawings* at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art in 1956, which now owns the work.

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Untitled, 1954

Ink and wash on paper

Kent was close friends with the former Surrealist artists Lee Mullican, Gordon Onslow-Ford, and Wolfgang Paalen (and their wives), who would form the Dynaton group, showcased in a 1951 exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Art (now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art). Deriving from the Greek word meaning “the possible,” Dynaton art related to work that brought about what Paalen described as “an awareness of universal concerns.” It was meant to be transformative, a joining of interests in pre-Columbian and Native American cultures, shamanism, non-Western philosophies such as Zen Buddhism, Einsteinian physics, and especially nature. Other friends of the Dynaton artists were Richard Bowman, Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Kenneth Rexroth, Philip Lamantia, Harry Partch, Alan Watts, Charles and Robert B. Howard, and Stanley William Hayter.

Although Kent didn't consider herself a Dynaton artist, there are certainly affinities and common aesthetic sensibilities between the two. Paalen, in particular, invented a type of automatic drawing referred to as fumage (“passing candle-smoke swiftly over a freshly painted surface and then interpreting through new brushwork the design suggested by it”). While still resembling a kind of totemic landscape, this smoky, atmospheric composition looks as if it could have been executed through fumage.

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Victor Arnautoff (1896–1979; Ukrainian)

Untitled (Drawing of Adaline Kent), no date

Graphite on paper

In 1925 and 1927 Kent took classes with Ralph Stackpole at the California School of Fine Arts (CSFA; now the San Francisco Art Institute), along with Victor Arnautoff, who would become her lifelong friend. Born in Mariupol, Ukraine, during the Russian Empire, Arnautoff had been an officer in World War I, then traveled across Siberia to China on the heels of the Russian Civil War. He later moved to San Francisco for art school, to Mexico to work with Diego Rivera, back to California—where he taught at the CSFA and Stanford—and then to Soviet Ukraine in 1963.

In 1930 Kent visited Rivera in Mexico while Arnautoff was his assistant. When Arnautoff returned to San Francisco in 1931, he rented a large studio near Kent's, where he painted a mural that included twenty-four prominent local artists. He reported that he “wanted to paint a fresco to decorate my studio, and I wanted to see the faces of my friends around me.” The scene included Kent, Arnautoff, and many of their mutual acquaintances from student days at the CSFA. The work initiated his career in mural commissions, the first of which was received from Kent for her Montgomery Street studio (*Adam and Eve*; no longer extant). Kent also purchased a painting by Arnautoff and facilitated the sale of his art to others, including her sister-in-law Alice. This is the only known work of his from Kent's collection.

Arnautoff also supervised the artists working in Coit Tower under the auspices of the New Deal and made his own fresco there, *City Life* (1934), which depicts the corner of Washington and Montgomery Streets, the location of the Monkey Block artist studios.

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775.546.1464 y presione 2145#

(Clockwise from top left)

River Over the Rocks from the Mountain Series
1944

Ink and crayon on paper

River Over the Rocks from the Mountain Series
1944

Ink and crayon on paper

Cascade, from the Mountain Series, 1944

Ink and crayon on paper

Cascade, from the Mountain Series, 1944

Ink, graphite, and crayon on paper

Kent created a series of drawings referred to as the *Mountain Series* in 1944 that focused on the synthesis of time, waterfalls, and mountaintops. In these works she developed her signature motif of an infinity symbol resting above two summits. She extended the form downward in a line that flowed to the base of the peaks, like water streaming from frozen elevations into lush valleys. In some we see the transition from waterfall to alpine lake to river. She would continue to develop this motif further in her pictures incised into Hydrocal as well as in sculptures such as *Finder* (1953), on view in the final gallery of the exhibition.

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Moon Dial, 1953

Magnesite with inclusions

In this sculpture, Kent formed a heavy, orblike base from magnesite that bends down at an angle from the top, creating a sharp strut to support its weight.

By the mid-1940s, Kent was exploring the plastic possibilities of magnesite and Hydrocal—synthetic compounds used in the construction trade—which gave her the ability to build and carve, then add to the structure and rework it. She wrote that the process of using magnesite unfolded in several stages:

The first [step] is constructing a strong armature in metal, approximating a sketch but with leeway in all directions if possible. Then covering it with magnesite fortified with hemp or excelsior—then carving. Next chopping, and finally rasping the shapes (as they set harder and harder during a few days). By soaking the object with water and magnesium chloride, new magnesite can be added, and the sequence of tooling repeated. It is an adjustable medium and yet resistant.

Found shells are included in the depressed central area of the sculpture, which seems to radiate outward in semicircular striations. On view nearby, Kent's *Luna*, a sculpture of a crescent moon, also has collected items fixed into its surface, almost like a mosaic.

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Presence, 1947

Magnesite

Collection of San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; gift of the Women's Board and the Membership Activities Board

Kent sought to infuse her work with a distinct notion of presence that was informed by time. In her notes she wrote, "These [works] were not made in the spirit of emptiness because when that comes uppermost I still have no way to express it. Rather they were doing their best to be presences, negative and positive forces that recall, probe, unwrap things to the core."

Kent made this work from magnesite, a mineral compound, it is also a powdery cement-like mixture to which liquid magnesium oxychloride is added to produce a malleable material that hardens slowly and can be supplemented later. Like clay, it is primarily shaped and modeled. The biomorphic nature of the sculpture bears a resemblance to the work of the sculptor and designer Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988), with whom she visited when she traveled to New York and maintained a correspondence. Noguchi also used magnesite, beginning in 1938, when he made a fountain for the Ford Motor Company at the 1939–40 New York World's Fair. He also utilized the material to invent his *Lunars*, which included self-illuminating light.

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Go and Catch a Falling Star

c. 1953

Gouache on paper

Collection of Galen Howard Hilgard

Kent made this monumental work on paper after a composition by the English author John Donne (1572–1631), now considered the father of metaphysical poetry. His texts became popular again in the 1920s and 1930s when modern poets such as T. S. Eliot and William Butler Yeats rediscovered his writings, admiring his unique ability to fuse feeling and intellect. Eliot, in particular, considered Donne to be among the most authentic of poets due to the obscure, challenging nature of his verse.

Kent must have been inspired by Donne's descriptions of the infinite and super-infinite, referring to an unimaginable space that we can capture and carry with us. One of his most popular poems, "Song" (also known as "Song: Go and Catch a Falling Star"), entreats the reader to do the impossible, and along the way take inspiration from ancient, mythical subjects that inform the present day, as well as "advance an honest mind." This would have spoken to Kent as an artist and adventurer of the High Sierra, and it clearly inspired her to transform the poem into a grand-scale painting.

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