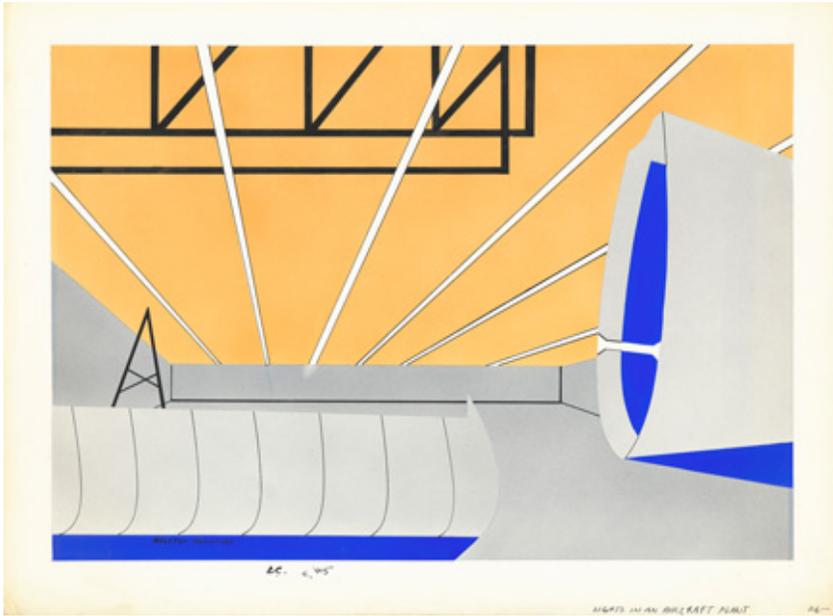


SEPTEMBER 04, 2020

# Acquisition: Ralston Crawford



Ralston Crawford

*Lights in an Aircraft Plant*, c. 1945

gouache

image: 29.85 x 40.01 cm (11 3/4 x 15 3/4 in.)

framed: 52.71 x 62.23 cm (20 3/4 x 24 1/2 in.)

Promised Gift of Linda Lichtenberg Kaplan

The Gallery is pleased to announce that the superb drawing *Lights in an Aircraft Plant* (c. 1945) by American artist Ralston Crawford (1906–1978) has been promised to the museum by Linda Lichtenberg Kaplan, a noted Washington, DC, curator, art historian, writer, philanthropist, and collector. Kaplan has donated several works of art to the Gallery over the years, including *Modern Sculpture with Aperture* (1967) by Roy Lichtenstein in 2004; *Foliage* (late 19th century) by William Trost Richards in 2015, through the Corcoran Collection acquisition; *Aeroplane* (1925–1927) by Louis Lozowick in 2018 (promised gift); *Fascism* (1934) by Francis Criss also in 2018 (partial and promised gift); and *Sullivan Street Abstraction, No. 2* (1947) by George Ault in 2018 (promised gift).

In the 1930s, Crawford played a key role in the development of precisionism, an artistic movement

that focused on urban and industrial subjects rendered in crisp, simplified geometric shapes. The abstract elements, fractured forms, and broad areas of opaque watercolor in *Lights in an Aircraft Plant* (c. 1945) exemplify this stylistic approach.

The subject matter and reductive figures derive from Crawford's experience during World War II, when he employed symbolic shapes to indicate rain, snow, clouds, and other meteorological conditions for efficient communication of weather information to military personnel. The receding white lines that stand out against a dull yellow background in the drawing suggest overhead lighting in a vast warehouse. A brilliant blue describes shadows and the dark interior of a large tubular form inside a gray-walled space. This drawing offers a striking comparison with the Gallery's painting *Lights in an Aircraft Plant* (1945) that was created around the same time.

The drawing joins the Gallery's collection of 60 works by Crawford: 24 small pen and ink sketches, one early opaque watercolor study, one collage, 13 photographs, 20 prints, and one oil painting.

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