

Jensen Yow

Artist Biography

Alexander Jensen Yow (b. 1925) left his home in North Carolina to study art at Cooper Union and the Art Students League in New York in 1946. At the Art Students League, he met the painter Paul Cadmus, who introduced him to his sister, Fidelma, and her husband, Lincoln Kirstein, the co-founder of the School of American Ballet (later renamed the New York City Ballet) with choreographer George Balanchine. Eventually Kirstein and Yow became lovers, with Yow moving into the home Kirstein shared with his wife. Kirstein integrated Yow into his extensive creative social network and helped him get a job at Phippen Press, a fine silk-screening press he had founded that made prints for artists such as Ben Shahn, Pablo Picasso, and Cadmus. As Yow continued to work on his artmaking—he prided himself the most on his portraiture—he found additional income working as a studio assistant to the portrait and fashion photographer George Platt Lynes, building sets and painting backdrops for his fashion shoots. Yow regularly served as a model for those in his artistic and social orbit. Lynes photographed Yow in various stages of undress as part of his ongoing investigation of the male nude, while those in the photography collective PaJaMa (consisting of Paul Cadmus, Jared French, and Margaret Hoening French) captured him artistically posing on the beach for their camera. Paul Cadmus used Yow and the actor Jack Fontan as models for his painting *The Bath* (1951). In 1958, Yow moved out of Kirstein's home, but the two remained committed friends until the latter's death, in 1996. In the 1950s, Yow began working as a conservator at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, a position he held through the 1970s.