

## Artist Resources – Bob Dylan (American, b. 1941)

[The Bob Dylan Archive, University of Tulsa](#)

The [first gallery exhibition](#) of Dylan’s visual artwork debuted in London in 2010. [The Drawn Blank Series](#) presented new paintings re-worked from drawings and sketches made by Dylan in the 1980s and ‘90s.

In 2012, President Obama honored Dylan with the country’s highest civilian honor, [the Presidential Medal of Freedom](#).

In addition to works on paper and canvas, Dylan is a formidable sculptor. He unveiled his large-scale iron work in the 2013 exhibition, [Mood Swings](#), which he followed up with his [first public sculpture](#) in 2016 – a 26-by-15-foot gate titled *Portal* at Maryland’s MGM National Harbor Casino in 2016. About his sculpture, Dylan reflected: “I’ve been around iron all my life ever since I was a kid. I was born and raised in iron ore country – where you could breathe it and smell it every day. And I’ve always worked with it in one form or another...Gates appeal to me because of the negative space they allow. They can be closed but at the same time they allow the seasons and breezes to enter and flow. They can shut you out or shut you in. And in some ways there is no difference.”



Dylan, 1963 Photograph: CBS Photo Archive

Dylan [received the Nobel Prize in Literature](#) in 2016 for his iconic and revolutionary lyricism. In [his acceptance lecture](#), Dylan waxed poetic about his musical and literary inspirations, including Buddy Holly and Charlie Poole, *Moby Dick*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and *The Odyssey*.

London’s Halcyon Gallery hosted the 2016 exhibition, [Off the Beaten Path](#), celebrating the expressive landscapes and sketches of highways, backroads, architecture, and roadside attractions known so well by Dylan from his concert bus tours across the United States. Dylan reflected on the series in an essay for [Vanity Fair](#), explaining his goal to capture America: “how you see it while crisscrossing the land and seeing it for what it’s worth. Staying out of the mainstream and traveling the back roads, free-born style...My idea was to keep things simple, only deal with what is externally visible. These paintings are up to the moment realism—archaic, most static, but quivering in appearance. They contradict the modern world. However, that’s my doing.

The Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma, [welcomed the Bob Dylan Archive](#) into its permanent collection in 2016. Their [first exhibition](#) to feature the archive included twelve pastel portraits “done on the run,” handwritten lyrics, film excerpts, and other archival material.

In fall 2020, Dylan plans to open [Heaven’s Door Distillery and Center for the Art](#), a new home for his line of [signature whiskeys](#) and artwork. In addition to the restaurant and performance venue, the space is intended to be a permanent home for his paintings and [sculptures](#).



Dylan, 2019  
Photograph: Dylan J. Hogan/Getty Images

Bob Dylan (American, b. 1941)

**Man in a Bar**, ca. 2016

Acrylic on canvas

Private Collection; L2020:81.1

"I believe that the key to the future is in the remnants of the past...These paintings are up to the moment realism - archaic, mostly static, but quivering in appearance. They contradict the modern world," Bob Dylan explained about his recent series of American landscapes. **Man in Bar** occupies an alternative space amongst the vibrant views, wide-open spaces, and nostalgic roadside haunts that populate the series, which was inspired by travels on the road during Dylan's sixty years performing across the United States. The sense of a fleeting moment from the past captured by Dylan in this canvas echoes Édouard Manet's bar scenes and absinthe drinkers, and the psychological anxiety of late-nineteenth century Paris. The solitary figures and enigmatic settings of American painter Edward Hopper's early twentieth century canvases are also suggested. The expansive space quivers, and a delicate glimmer of light reflects off the polished bar and empty stools. Thick brushstrokes bring the liquor stock and outside world to the edge of definition as a lone patron rests in weary contemplation.

*On view September 16 – December 27, 2020*





Bob Dylan (American, b. 1941)

**Golden Gate Bridge North Shore**, 2019

Acrylic on canvas

Private Collection; L2020:81.2

Born Robert Allan Zimmerman, Bob Dylan is recognized as one of the twentieth century's most influential and prolific singer-songwriters. Dylan rose to fame in the mid-1960s for his original music that pulled inspiration from American oral histories, the Blues, folk music, Woodie Guthrie, Little Richard, and youth-led social movements against racial injustice and militarism. While he was recognized for his contributions to songwriting with the 2016 Nobel Prize in Literature, his versatility in the visual arts is less widely known. Dylan began experimenting with pencil and charcoal in the late 1980s as a way to relax and refocus while touring across America by bus. These drawings were not originally intended for canvas, and only recently has Dylan begun translating them into paintings alongside new original works. **Golden Gate Bridge North Shore** embodies the personal balance of idealism and reality that Dylan seeks to communicate in each piece. As he explains, his goal is to "be real and draw only if it is in front of [me] and if it's not there, put it there and by making the lines connect, we can vaguely get at something other than the world we know."

*On view August 19 – November 22, 2020*



Bob Dylan (American, b. 1941)  
**Nowhere and Anywhere**, 2018  
 Acrylic on canvas

Private Collection; L2020:22.1

Legendary singer-songwriter Bob Dylan is best known for his anthemic folk songs of the mid-1960s, which made him an icon of the civil rights and anti-war movements. The Nobel laureate’s creative versatility transcends the medium of music and has increasingly encompassed the visual arts, emerging in sketches and paintings inspired by the landscapes he encounters on concert tours across the United States by bus. Expressive vignettes such as **Nowhere and Anywhere** bring to life snapshots of the iconic landscapes, nostalgic attractions, and abandoned outposts of North American highways and backroads. Characteristic of Dylan’s recent paintings, the familiar neon sanctuary of a roadside burger joint pulses with dynamic brushwork and vibrant colors. Dylan builds his compositions carefully, echoing the view through a camera lens and approaching each subject with affection and lack of judgement as he strives for a balance of the familiar and unexpected. Ultimately, he intends his visual artwork to be straightforward and devoid of allegory: “the idea was to create pictures that would not be misinterpreted or misunderstood by me or anybody else.”

*On view June 10 – September 13, 2020*