

MODERN ART COLLECTION

Suzy Frelinghuysen

Cubist Still Life

ca. 1943

Oil and collage on board

9 × 13 in. (22.9 × 33 cm)

Museum purchase, funds provided by the Caroline Julier and James G. Richardson Acquisition Fund, with additional funds provided by exchange, gift of Helen Sawyer

Farnsworth

2007.10

Estelle Condit Frelinghuysen, known in the art world and to friends as Suzy, was the granddaughter of Frederick T. Frelinghuysen, who served as U.S. secretary of state under President Chester A. Arthur. Raised in Elberton, New Jersey, and Princeton, she moved to New York around 1930. Along with her closest associates, artists Albert Gallatin, Charles Shaw, and George Morris, she was instrumental in introducing cubism to the American public.

As a child, Frelinghuysen developed an interest in the arts, especially opera and painting. She had no formal art training, although she took private lessons in her youth. In 1935 she married the artist George L. K. Morris, who encouraged her interest in painting. Soon afterward she began producing cubist collages, often incorporating fragments of newspapers or opera librettos. Her playful appropriations of elements from works by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque reveal a sophisticated knowledge of abstract art. In *Cubist Still Life*, Frelinghuysen layered collage elements with paint to represent a still life including a wine glass, bottle, and other objects set against a bright blue background.

Frelinghuysen joined the American Abstract Artists group soon after its founding in 1936 and participated in its annual exhibitions. Her artistic production slowed after 1947 when she began a second career as a dramatic soprano at the New York City Opera. She became an instant success, singing the lead roles in *Tosca* and *Ariadne auf Naxos* under the name Suzy Morris. Frelinghuysen's opera career was cut short in 1951 following a bout of bronchitis, and she returned once again to painting full-time.

