

**Meridel Rubenstein (b. 1948)**

***Forest, From Trees at Sea (Monks and Nuns)***

America, 2000–2001

Sculpture, dye transfer on glass, found dug-out canoe

Gift of Cherye and James F. Pierce, 2014

(2014-57-01ab)

This sculptural work by Meridel Rubenstein consists of a small found wood dugout canoe holding a group portrait of Zen Buddhist monks from Vietnam. Sandra Matthews has written eloquently about it: “[This work] pictures the abbot, abbess, novice and nuns of Từ Hiếu [monastery] and Diệu Nghiêm [nunnery] in Vietnam, representing them as firmly rooted individuals together constituting a human forest. Yet this translucent group portrait is laminated between two pieces of glass, and the glass then stands upright in a small wooden dugout canoe—a boat made from the trunk of a tree (‘a tree at sea’). So the forest is both rooted and mobile, potentially or actually journeying. And in fact these monks are part of the monastery from which the influential monk, Thích Nhất Hạnh, journeyed out to plant the seeds of Buddhist thought abroad. Sandblasted onto the fragile but luminous glass is a delicate additional image of the veins of the leaves of a Bodhi tree, the kind of tree under which the Buddha was sitting when he first attained enlightenment.”