

Joan Snyder

Born 1940, Highland Park, New Jersey, currently resides in New York Things Have Tears and We Know Suffering

1983-1984

Woodcut with oil paint on paper

Gift of Polly and Mark Addison to the Polly and Mark Addison

Collection, 91.04.75

In her woodcuts, Snyder layers complex surfaces, symbols, and text to express emotion. In the bottom right corner, a figure suckles an elongated breast dotted with patches of grey and purple flesh. Just above, Snyder chiseled a stick figure an icon she used to symbolize the suffering of children. Marring the surface of the wood block, gouged lines create the sensation of the print itself shedding tears. Carved between the linework is a phrase from Ancient Roman poet Virgil's Aeneid that roughly translates to the title of this image: "things have tears and we know suffering." Through these layers, Snyder creates a narrative of childhood pain. She suggests the passing of wounds from parents to children, communicating a story of generational trauma, memory, and loss.