

# George Widener

By **Brainard Carey** May 17, 2023



[George Widener's artwork](#) is as intellectually challenging as it is aesthetically compelling. A high-functioning savant who has channeled his extraordinary gifts of numerical computation into artmaking, Widener struggled for years before his talent was recognized. Born in Kentucky in 1962, Widener's was not diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome until he was an adult, making an already difficult childhood even more so. Following a stint of service in the US Air Force, Widener was diagnosed with

depression, and committed to several psychiatric hospitals. He eventually attended the University of Tennessee. He currently lives and works in Waynesville, NC, near Asheville.

Widener's brain has been proven to function as a super-calculator, a gift that allows him to process mathematical information in a radically different way than most people do. By directing his impulse to calculate complex sequences of numbers through stunning, often large-scale drawings, Widener makes visible not only his savant skillset, but also his unique creative talent for reimagining it aesthetically. Far from mere illustrations of mathematical process, his drawings stage through form and content simultaneously, often playing out elaborate numerical puzzles and games, complex puns, palindromes, and informed prophecies. The artist's love for punning is evidenced by drawings of magic squares: squares that contain 9 rows of numbers, in each row of numbers adds up to the same value.

The artist's work can be found in many notable public and private collections, including, among others, the American Folk Art Museum (New York), the Smithsonian American Art Museum (Washington, D.C.), the Collection de l'Art Brut (Lausanne, Switzerland), the Centre Pompidou (Paris), the abcd/art brut Collection Bruno Decharme (Paris), the Museum of Everything (London), museum gugging (Klosterneuburg, Austria), the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art (Chicago), the High Museum of Art (Atlanta), and the Asheville Art Museum (Asheville, NC).



George Widener, *Blue Monday*, c. 2002 Mixed media on paper 15.6 x 29.4 inches