

Art Adventure

American Art Sampler



Grace Hartigan, *Billboard*, 1957

● **Become a member of the museum today!**

Thank you for participating in the Minneapolis Institute of Art's popular Art Adventure Program! By volunteering as a Picture Person, you build an important link between the museum and our region's schoolchildren.

By becoming a member of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, you can reach even further, bringing the experience of world-class art to thousands of museum visitors a year – some visiting for the first time ever, and many of them schoolchildren. Members help support the museum's free general admission every day. Members also help support the exhibitions, lectures, events, and classes offered for children, families, students, and adults.

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● **What are you doing next Family Day?**

Family Days at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts are free monthly events that highlight the museum's collection and special exhibitions for art lovers of all ages. The second Sunday each month, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., the museum is filled with hands-on art activities, live music, dance performances, artist demonstrations, family tours, and more. All activities are free and appropriate for children of all ages. Visit our website, www.artsmia.org, for specific Family Day dates, themes, and descriptions.

About the Art Adventure Program

What's the Art Adventure Program?

The Art Adventure Program at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts is a way of bringing works of art that can't leave the museum into elementary school classrooms. Each of the ten Art Adventure reproduction sets features eight works of art chosen around a theme of particular interest to children. Students and teachers are encouraged to follow up classroom presentations with a class visit to the museum to see the actual artworks. They can take a tour with an Art Adventure Guide or with their teacher using a self-guide brochure available from the museum.

What's a Picture Person?

Picture People are the volunteers from the school community who present the reproductions in the classrooms. They are the vital link between the original work of art in the museum and children in the schools. Before they visit any classrooms, Picture People come to the museum for a training session on the reproduction set their school will be using that year. At training they receive printed background material, learn presentation techniques, and—most importantly—experience the enjoyment of interacting with the original objects they will soon be introducing to students.

What does a Picture Person Presentation consist of?

Each participating school structures its Picture Person presentations differently. A Picture Person may present pairs of images in a series of short visits; all the images at once in a single, longer visit; or some other schedule arranged by the school's Art Adventure Coordinator. The presentation may consist only of a discussion or it may involve hands-on activities. In addition, Picture People bring their own individual creativity to their presentations.

Whatever the format, however, one essential characteristic is constant: the Picture Person encourages the children first and foremost to **look** at the reproduction and **talk** about what they see. Although the Picture Person is knowledgeable about the works of art, she or he facilitates the discussion with thoughtful open-ended questions and related props rather than delivering "lecture"-style information.

What does the Art Adventure Program do for kids?

Picture Person presentations provide students with a rare opportunity to spend time looking at art and express what they see in words. Students gain confidence in their ability to find meaning in artifacts from a wide range of world cultures. They practice seeing things from another person's point of view, whether it's their classmate's or the artist's. They feel the thrill of meeting an old friend when they later come upon familiar objects at the museum. And, not least, they enjoy meaningful contact with a visiting member of the school community.

Preparing for a Picture Person Presentation

Relax!

The information provided in this manual is intended as background material to help you feel comfortable when you present the images to children. You are not expected to convey all the details. On the contrary; choose two or three key ideas you think will be compelling for the age group to which you are presenting. Kids love stories—what might you “spin” into a tale? What parallels can you draw with their lives?

Be sure everyone is able to see the reproduction.

Talk with the classroom teacher to find out what routines the class follows when gathering for a visitor. Young groups will often sit on the floor; older students may remain at their desks. Try for a setup that will get the students as close to the reproduction as possible. Keep the students’ eyes on you, too, by making regular eye contact throughout the group.

Establish a climate where students can listen to what each child has to say.

It is very difficult to listen to more than one person at the same time. Let the kids know at the outset that you expect them to take turns speaking. (If you don’t know the children’s names already, arrange with the teacher to have them wear nametags so you can call on them by name.) Paraphrasing what is said emphasizes that you are really listening and encourages them to listen to one another. Your rephrasing may also help expand their vocabulary. Take care to remember, however, that aesthetic judgments are personal and inexact—set your own preferences aside to allow students to form their own opinions.

Begin your presentation of each image with a long moment of silent looking.

Introduce the lesson by explaining who you are and that you have brought reproductions of real works of art from the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Review with the class what a museum is and what you’ll be doing with them. Then make a show out of getting the class to understand that their first job is to look quietly. You might build the suspense by keeping each image hidden while you explain that you do not want them even to raise their hands until you ask them to. Model your expectations by spending the time looking too.

Give children time to talk about what they have discovered by looking.

Good questions to use are "What's going on here?" and "What do you see that makes you say that?" Be sure to use your finger to point to the part of the picture the child is talking about. Paraphrase his or her words to clarify the observation for others. You'll be surprised how quickly students learn to justify their comments with evidence they can see in the picture, with a little prompting. "What else can you find?" can help generate further comments. See the "Tips for Talking about Art" following this section for more ideas.

Connect your key ideas to the students' observations.

When the student's observations begin to slow down, use what you have learned about their interests to steer the discussion towards the key ideas you have chosen to focus on. Try to ask questions that will draw connections between what they have said and what you would like them to consider. If they pose questions you can't answer, admit it! Brainstorm together ways to find an explanation.

Keep the age of your audience in mind.

A child's interests and understandings evolve through generally predictable stages of development. Plan your presentations accordingly. Don't expect young children to be able to focus for more than twenty minutes. Consider your class's ability to understand time—will students understand a date or phrase such as "colonial times" (fifth graders might) or should you stick with "a long time ago" or "about 100 years ago"? At the same time, try not to talk down to older students.

You can expect developmental differences in children's aesthetic approaches to art, as well. Younger children will accept abstraction, while older children tend to demand a high degree of realism. Remember, too, that it's hard for young viewers to look "through" subject matter to notice compositional devices until preadolescence. And it's surprising to us as adults that children generally do not notice the emotional overtones of a work until the middle years of childhood. (Find out more about the stages of aesthetic development in *Invented Worlds*, by Ellen Winner, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.)

Talk to other Picture People and use your own imagination!

Veteran Picture People have great ideas about how to capture the imagination of a class. Don't hesitate to borrow and adapt their suggestions. In addition, several Art Adventure sets come with "prop kits," an assortment of supplementary materials for you to use in your presentation. Talk to your school's Art Adventure Coordinator to see if the set you are using comes with props.

Tips for Talking about Art

Remember, a key goal of the Art Adventure program is to help beginning viewers create personal meaning in a work of art. While your impulse may be immediately to begin "teaching," more is gained in the long run if you take the time to help the children establish an emotional connection with the art. The questions below help kids find their own relevance in works of art, and thereby learn to value art as having something to do with their own lives.

**What's going on in this picture?
What do you see that makes you say that?**

These simple questions work particularly well with artworks that have a narrative thread. You'll notice this question is different than, "What do you see?" Instead of eliciting a list of things in the picture, "What's going on?" invites a consideration of relationships and interactions and taps into children's natural interest in stories. The question, "What do you see that makes you say that?" focuses comments on the evidence at hand and helps kids explain their assumptions.

How would you feel if you were "in" this work of art?

What would you hear? How would something feel to touch? What path would you take through the picture? What do you see that makes you say that? Imagining the picture as an environment engages all the senses. The expressive qualities of a work become more concrete, easier to relate to.

How is this object like something you encounter in *your* life?

What would you use this for? What do you see that makes you say that? Do you have anything like it? Why do you like to have pictures of yourself? Why do you buy postcards on vacation? Drawing parallels with children's experiences gives them a hook on which to hang new information. Identifying similarities helps illuminate differences as well.

What person or object in this picture do you think was most important to the artist?

What are people in the picture looking at? What has a lot of details? Where are there bright colors? What is biggest? Talking about what makes things seem important in a work of art can allow even a novice to address basic compositional principles.

How would the artwork seem different if you could make a change?

What would happen if you changed a color? Made something bigger or smaller? Moved an object or person? Left something out? Added more details? Changed the quality of a line? Imagining changes helps identify visual elements and their contribution to the overall effect of the image.

How is this work of art like or different from another one you've seen in this set?

"Compare and contrast" is a staple of art historical thinking, but it can be done by anybody, at any level of thinking. Get together with your fellow volunteers to coordinate some provocative pairs.

How does this work of art relate to the theme of the set?

Let the students pull it all together! What connections do they see between the theme and what they've noticed and learned about the work of art?

Want to take it further?

Have a look at *The Intelligent Eye: Learning to Think by Looking at Art*, by David N. Perkins (Santa Monica, Calif.: The J. Paul Getty Trust, 1994), a very readable guide on how and why to look carefully at art.

Another good book is *Take a Look: An Introduction to the Experience of Art*, by Rosemary Davidson (New York: Viking, 1994). Written for young readers, it provides a nice example of how to talk with children about art.

Tips for Using Props

Why props?

Students normally first encounter the Art Adventure works of art in their classrooms as 20 x 22-inch reproductions. In the reproductions, all the works of art appear to be two-dimensional and similar in size. Props accompany many of the reproductions to help overcome this limitation. Touching a material similar to the work of art, seeing the technique used to create it, or looking at a photograph in which the object is being used adds another dimension to the reproduction of the work of art. The use of props also helps engage learners who prefer hands-on learning styles, and reinforces the understandings of all learners.

What are the challenges of props?

Be aware that props will do little but distract your group without careful planning. Consideration of the following points can prevent group management challenges from undermining the benefits of props:

- What understanding about the work of art does the prop best illustrate? Present the prop in conjunction with information about a work of art or to help answer a question about the work of art.
- How will you structure the group's interaction with the prop?
There are a number of ways to use the prop. Among the variations:
 - Pass the prop around to each student. If you do it this way, give the students a question to consider while they are waiting for the prop and one to consider after they have held the prop. Encourage the students to be ready for discussion when the prop finishes circulating.
 - Ask a single student to come forward and describe how it feels to the whole group.
 - Hold the prop yourself and walk it around the group for the students to touch or look at closely. What should the students be doing while you're doing that?
 - Hold the prop yourself to illustrate relevant parts of the discussion. Then give everyone a chance to examine it more closely at the end of your presentation.
- How will you explain to the group what you expect them to do with the prop? Clear communication of your expectations is essential to getting the students to stay focused on the activity. Will they all get to touch the prop? How should they take turns? What should they do when it's not their turn? How should they treat the prop?
- How will you link the experience with the prop to the rest of the discussion? After the students have explored the prop in some fashion, refer to the experience as you continue the discussion.
- How will you get the prop back? Don't forget to plan how you'll get the props back! Schools are charged significant fees for missing or badly damaged props.

American Art Sampler

**Art Adventure Program
An Educational Program of the
Minneapolis Institute of Arts
Revised 2014**

American Art Sampler

Prop Kit Contents

| <u>Work of Art</u> | <u>Prop</u> | <u>Replacement Cost</u> |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| United States, <i>The Connecticut Room</i> | •Photograph of another view of room | \$10 |
| Thomas Sully, <i>Portrait of George Washington</i> | •Reproduction of Gilbert Stuart's portrait of George Washington | \$10 |
| Cadzi Cody, <i>Scenes of Plains Indian Life</i> | •Samples of elk hide with and without fur •Photograph of women tanning an elk hide, and (flip side) photograph of elk | \$20 \$10 |
| Alexis Jean Fournier, <i>Mill Pond at Minneapolis</i> | •Photograph of mill pond, and (flip side) photograph of Fournier | \$10 |
| John Frederick Peto, <i>Reminiscences of 1865</i> | •No prop | |
| Maria Martinez, <i>Vessel</i> | •Photograph of pottery process •Photograph of Southwest landscape •Photograph of Avanyu bowl with poem, and (flip side) photo of Maria and Julian | \$10 \$10 \$10 |
| Grace Hartigan, <i>Billboard</i> | •Sample of painted canvas | \$30 |
| Elizabeth Catlett, <i>Sharecropper</i> | •Sample of linocut •Photograph of Catlett sharecroppers | \$30 \$10 |

Please make sure that you have enclosed all of the items on this list when you return the prop kit. You will be responsible for the cost of replacing any missing items. Thank you!

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Introduction

What is American art? Although this question has no single answer, we can examine many of the threads that contribute to the rich tapestry of American art. Diversity is certainly a characteristic of this tapestry. Throughout the land that now constitutes the United States, native peoples lived for millennia before the arrival of Europeans. Over the last three centuries, immigrants have come from many nations. Each of these groups has contributed its own unique artistic heritage to American Art.

The art objects chosen for this Art Adventure set, *American Art Sampler*, span three centuries. They extend from a colonial period room to two 20th-century works, *Billboard*, a painting by Grace Hartigan, and *Sharecropper*, a print by Elizabeth Catlett. All these works reveal the important role that artists have played in recording America's artistic and historical development. Native American traditions are represented in Cadzi Cody's painted elk hide, which shows various aspects of a Shoshone bison hunt and the Sun Dance. Maria Martinez's bowl combines the traditions of the Pueblo people with modern innovations in pottery. Fournier's 1888 view of Minneapolis reveals the urban development that transformed the American landscape and offers a glimpse into local history. Two tributes to American presidents speak not only of these individuals but also of the political climate in which they lived. Elizabeth Catlett's striking linocut print reveals the inner struggle and fortitude of an African American sharecropper. By studying this sampling of art made in America, we can learn something about the history, traditions, and experiences of this diverse nation.

Questions: Suggested Approaches

Suggested Questions

The suggested questions are offered as guidelines and starting points only, and you may prefer to disregard them altogether. Use your own creativity and expertise to devise additional or alternative questions.

General Thematic Questions & Discussion Points

- Discuss what is “American” about these works of art: Artist? Subject matter? Artistic training? Historical events? Which parts of the country do the art objects represent?
- For each reproduction, you might ask: What aspect of American life can we learn about from this work of art? (Consider history, architecture, country life, city life, Americans heroes, ordinary people, cultural diversity). What are some of the changes that have occurred over time in America? (Consider clothing, lifestyles, architecture, industry, technology, etc...)

General Brainteasers

- How is each work of art a record of a time or place in America?
- Which two works do you feel are most different from each other in artistic style, in feeling, in visual impact? Which two do you feel are most similar? Explain your answers.
- Have you learned anything about American history that you didn't know by looking at these works of art?



Near New Haven, Connecticut (North America, United States)

The Connecticut Room, c. 1740

Pine, paint

H.8 feet x W.15 feet (fireplace wall)

Gift of Mrs. C. C. Bovey in memory of her mother, Josephine Koon, 28.59

Theme

The Connecticut Room, one of six American period rooms in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, takes us back to rural New England during the colonial period of America's history.

Background

Present-day Connecticut was originally inhabited by the Algonquin Indians. It was colonized in the 1630s by English Puritans from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, many of who originally came from remote provinces of England and had agricultural backgrounds. Consequently, this colony developed into a prosperous farming community and remained so until the beginning of the 19th century.

The Connecticut colonists were basically transplanted Europeans who clung to the traditions of England, their mother country. London was the trendsetter during the 18th century in matters of dress, literature, art, architecture, and home furnishings. City dwellers in New England imported many English products and used them along with domestic wares. Rural communities were usually more conservative in their tastes and styles.

The Connecticut Room

The Connecticut Room and its furnishings give us a glimpse of everyday life in rural colonial New England. The wood-paneled wall, the only original part of the room, came from a rural farmhouse near New Haven, Connecticut that was built in the mid-18th century. The family that resided here were most likely third-generation descendants of the original English settlers who either built this house or inherited it from an earlier generation. They were probably farmers, and religion would have been an important part of their lives.

The house would have been like many small New England farmhouses of the period. Typically, such a house had two rooms to each of its two floors and was built with a heavy wooden framework sheathed in clapboarding, a massive central chimney, and small windows. The two rooms on the ground floor were the kitchen and parlor. The parlor served as the main reception room or place for important family gatherings and also as the master bedroom. The museum's Connecticut Room was the parlor or "best room" of the farmhouse. The two rooms on the second floor functioned either as second bedrooms for the family's children or as storage areas. Children often slept in the parlor downstairs, especially in the winter. Providing heat and light, the fireplace was the functional and decorative focal point of a colonial room. In the Connecticut Room, the wall surrounding the fireplace is covered with the original wood

paneling. The green paint has darkened with age and was once much brighter. The other walls of the room are simply stuccoed and whitewashed.

The fireplace is flanked by two fluted pilasters (flattened columns). The pilasters are topped with carved rosettes. The pilasters owe their origin to the English neoclassical style, which sought to capture the elegance and refinement of the ancient Greeks and Romans by imitating their architectural forms. The rosettes were a local motif frequently seen in Connecticut valley homes.

Although the room is small, it has a simple dignity and a feeling of warmth. The low ceilings and small windows, which conserved heat, are a reminder of the severity of New England winters. The small size of the windows is also due to the high cost of glass, which was expensive to produce and usually imported. The original glass was probably greener and less clear than the modern replacement we see here. Lighting in the room was supplied by natural daylight from the windows, light reflected from the fire, and candles.

Furnishings

The furniture displayed in the room was not original to the house, but, rather, selected from the museum's collection to show the type of furniture that would have been used in this time and place. Furniture in the American colonies was typically produced locally but was modeled after English prototypes. Simple and functional, the furniture in this room reflects the style of fashionable furniture of an earlier period (late 17th or early 18th century), which was typical of a middle-class home in a rural area where styles changed more slowly.

The bed and its hangings were among the family's most valuable possessions. The heavy dark green wool hangings were pulled shut at night to keep out the cold drafts and ensure a comfortable rest. The parents usually occupied the family bed, but on cold winter nights the children would sleep downstairs with them.

Various types of chairs grace the room. In front of the windows are two banister-back chairs, which derive their name from the split banisters used for the wood backs. The child's chair is a miniature version of the larger banister armchair, except that it has an open back with three horizontal slats. A splat-back chair (a chair that has a vertical wooden member centered in the back and extending from the top rail to the seat rail) flanks the fireplace. The decorative legs of all the chairs were formed by turning on a machine called a lathe and by carving. Chairs were often painted black, red, or dark green to disguise the fact that they were generally made of several different woods. The chairs in the room look rather stiff and uncomfortable, softened only by the addition of woolen pillows placed on the rush seats. Space was at a premium in small colonial houses. When the chairs, as well as the other pieces of furniture, were not in use, they were placed against the walls.

The small tea table was made in Connecticut of local cherrywood. (*See supplemental photograph on page 4.*) This graceful Queen Anne-style table reflects the influence of contemporary English fashion on America. The tea table caters to a new social custom of drinking tea, an exotic beverage imported by way of England from Asia. Above the table is a mirror made in New England using the technique of "japanning," or covering a wooden frame with paint and varnish to imitate the more expensive Asian lacquerware. During the 18th century, there was a vogue in both Europe and America for Asian objects such as lacquerware. Those who could not afford genuine articles purchased cheaper imitations such as this mirror.

Placed against the wall opposite the fireplace is a wooden chest, called a Connecticut chest because it is typical of those made in the Connecticut Valley. The chest is simply constructed of oak and pine, and reflects the influence of English styles in its decoration of three carved arched panels and applied spindles and bosses (round knobs), which have been painted black to resemble ebony.

Sitting on the chest is a small wooden box with a keyhole and carved geometric designs that appear to be inscribed with a compass. The initials "F.R." appear on the surface, probably those of the original owner. Locked boxes like these are usually called "Bible boxes" because the cherished family Bible would have been stored in them along with important papers and other small valuables.

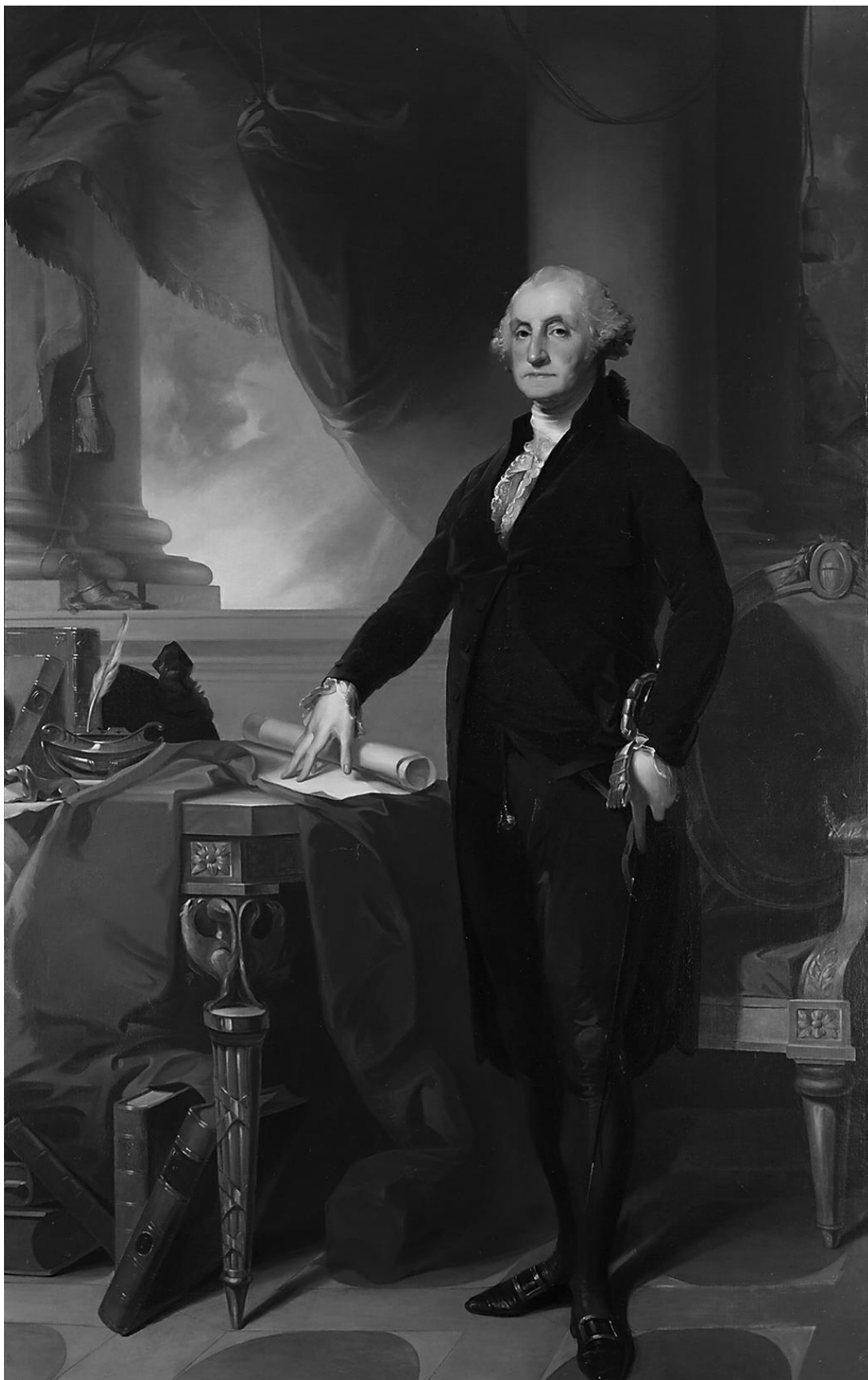
Next to the chest stands a double wrought-iron candlestick with brass candleholders, used to supplement the lighting provided by the windows and fireplace. The crossbar on the candlestick could be moved up and down to adjust the height of the light source. The presence of brass elements suggests commercial contact with England, for most brass items were imported rather than manufactured domestically.

The two portraits hanging on the wall are typical of the popular portraits painted by itinerant artists. They are straightforward, unidealized portrayals of a woman named Mary Crosswell and her daughter, Abigail Gowen. The portraits are stiffly drawn with no sense of movement and little personal warmth. Itinerant portrait painters traveled around the colonial countryside painting likenesses of the more prosperous residents of villages and farms. These portraitists, who were usually self-taught, were also craftsmen who practiced such trades as sign painting and printing. Joseph Badger, who painted Mary Crosswell and Abigail Gowen, was also a house painter and glazier (glass setter) by trade.



Suggested Questions

1. This room was part of a house built a long, long time ago. Are there any rooms in your house that look like this room? If so, in what ways are they similar? How is this room different from the rooms in your house?
2. What do you think this room was used for? What makes you say that? This room was considered the “best room” of the house. Does it look like it would be the best room? Why or why not?
3. Do you think that there were children in the family that lived in this house? How can you tell?
4. Pretend that you live in this house. What activities would you do in this room? What would you play with? Where would you sit? What sounds might you hear if you lived in this house? What would the floor sound like if you walked on it? What would you smell in the room?
5. What can you tell about the people who lived in rural Connecticut, in the 1700s by looking at this room? How was their lifestyle different from ours today? Could you do the same things in this home as you do in your home? What do you think they did in their free time? Do you think they had as much free time as we do today? Why or why not? If you could make a choice, would you prefer to live now or in the 18th century? Why?
6. There was no electricity in this home. How do you think the room was lighted in the daytime? How do you think the room was lighted at night?
7. By looking at this room, what do you think the winter weather is like in Connecticut? How can you tell? Do you think this room was very warm? Why or why not? How was the room heated? What other objects in the room might have provided protection from the cold?
8. What function do you think the paneling on the wall served? One type of chair found in this room is called a banister-back chair. Which one do you think has this name? What makes you say that?
9. What material is used most abundantly for construction and furniture? Why do you think this is so? (*There are many forests in New England.*) What other materials have been used? Are there more natural or manufactured materials in this room? Think about your own house. Are there more natural or manufactured materials in your house? What kind of materials are available today that did not exist in the 18th century?
10. Electricity was not yet discovered in the 18th century. Nor were the automobile, the computer, or the airplane invented yet. How have those inventions affected people’s lives? How does life differ in the 20th century because of electricity? How has the car changed people’s lives? What kinds of activities do you think people might have done in the 18th century that we no longer do today?



Thomas Sully, American, 1783–1872

Portrait of George Washington (1732—1799), c. 1820

Oil on canvas

H.94 x W.60 inches (canvas)

The William Hood Dunwoody Fund, 32.12

Theme

This heroic image of George Washington shows the first president as a statesman and a military leader. Reflecting a period when America was seeking national heroes and national identity, the portrait offers an interesting contrast to John Peto's homage to another president, Abraham Lincoln, which was painted at the end of the 19th century.

Background

Following the American Revolution against Great Britain (1775–83), political leaders of the new nation framed a plan for self-governance. They established a republic to replace the former monarchical government. A system of federalism was instituted with self-governing individual states under a central government. The cornerstone of this democracy was representative government, or rule by the people. These revolutionary ideas represented a startling departure from 18th-century European political practices. Because there were no existing models of democracy in Europe at this time, the new nation was eager to associate itself with the virtues and values of ancient Greece and Rome.

This revival of ancient classical cultures, called neoclassicism, was expressed in 19th-century painting, sculpture, and architecture. It was particularly evident in the new government buildings that were rising in cities across the country. These public edifices not only satisfied the practical need for government offices but also served as symbols recalling the classical past. By emulating classical cultures, the new republic hoped to associate itself with those great civilizations.¹

In the years following the Revolution, America was also in need of American heroes. George Washington, the most revered of revolutionary leaders and the first U. S. president, was an ideal role model. After his death in 1799, he became the symbol of the new republic. Washington's image proliferated across America, meeting the great demand for presidential portraits to decorate the many new government buildings. The painter Gilbert Stuart painted numerous portraits of Washington, three of which became prototypes for countless reproductions, copies and imitations. While today uniqueness and originality are highly valued in a work of art, during the 19th century, the subject's identity and importance gave meaning and value to the work. The many 19th-century artists who painted images of George

¹ Despite the stature and prestige attained by this association, the new American government had very little in common with the governments of ancient Greece and Rome. In reality, the writers of the Constitution derived more ideas from the Iroquois Confederacy of Nations, a democratic form of government based on elected representatives. Sully's portrait of Washington, however, includes no reference to the Iroquois Confederacy's contribution, which the U.S. Congress did not formally acknowledge until 1987.

Washington after his death were happy to copy works by artists like Stuart, who had painted the president from life.

Portrait of George Washington

This painting by Thomas Sully is a copy of one of Gilbert Stuart's best-known portraits of George Washington, the one often referred to as the Munro-Lenox Portrait. Finished in 1800 the Munro-Lenox Portrait, named for its two 19th century owners, was the first of four identical full-length paintings by Stuart. The Munro-Lenox Portrait used to hang in the New York Public Library. Sully made numerous copies of Stuart's portraits for various government buildings and historical societies because Stuart could not meet the overwhelming demand for pictures of the first American president.

Sully's picture is painted in the European tradition of aristocratic portraiture. A formal full-length portrait, it is a heroic image of George Washington, presented with symbols and theatrical effects. A noble figure, Washington appears dignified and proud in his stiff three-quarters pose, which displays his fine clothing and accessories. He is depicted from a low point of view, adding to his aura of grandeur and aloofness. He wears a dark vest and jacket set off by a white ruffled jabot (lace or cloth attached to the front of a neckband) and cuffs, black knee-length pants, and black shoes with silver buckles—footwear commonly associated with Washington. The president stands in a dramatic pose, as if he is about to give a speech. His austere face reveals little of his true personality.

Washington's stature is enhanced by the grand setting and the symbolic objects that surround him. His right hand rests on a copy of the Constitution, emphasizing his role as a statesman. In his left hand he holds a sword, a reference to his military achievements. Behind him, a wind-blown curtain lets in the light of dawn and reveals a rainbow. The rainbow is a common symbol of hope or beginning, and the dawn may symbolize the dawn of a new era under Washington's leadership. The inkwell and quill on the table refer to lawmaking, and the many books suggest Washington's authority based on the written law. The gold gilded furniture, rich red upholstery, and decorative red table covering reinforce the president's importance. The paperweight shaped like a dog may refer to his love of the outdoors.

The classical columns in the background and some of the motifs on the furniture allude to the grandeur and the ideals of the ancient Roman republic, with which the new United States government hoped to associate itself. On top of the table leg are two eagles, birds that were victory symbols in ancient Rome. Associated with the god Jupiter, eagles were represented on the standards of the Roman legions and stood for power and victory. The wrapped bundle of rods that form the leg itself once signified the authority of Roman leaders and the ideal of justice. The laurel design on the arm and crest of the chair symbolically refers to a Roman crown of victory.

Sully uses dramatic contrast in the painting to enhance Washington's heroism. The president's striking figure in black and white stands out against the warm palette of red and yellow tones of the surroundings. Various tones of red, seen on the tablecloth, curtain, chair, ribbon around the sword, sky, and even on Washington's cheeks, dominate and enliven the painting. The composition reinforces a sense of solidity and stability by incorporating vertical and horizontal lines and geometric shapes in the architecture and furnishings. For example, the oval back of the chair is repeated in the circles of the floor design. The stable vertical columns are echoed by the erect figure of Washington standing before them. Against these structural elements, the

irregular shapes of the billowing drapery and tablecloth give drama and richness to the composition.

Sully closely copied Stuart's original, but his own style is still evident. The color is brighter, surfaces are more opaque (solid) and glossy, forms are cast in sharper shadows, and the head is more clearly formed and heroic than in the original portrait.²

Technique

When he painted a subject from life, Sully proceeded to execute a series of drawings on paper and canvas before arriving at his completed portrait. In his book, *Hints to Young Painters*, written in 1851, he explained his technique, stating that he expected his subjects to have six sittings of two hours each.³ Although he used Stuart's painting as the basis for this portrait rather than painting from life, he most likely made some preliminary drawings as part of his working process. His deliberate approach and careful delineation of detail is very different from the loose, gestural, and spontaneous brushstrokes in Grace Hartigan's *Billboard*. Sully is known for his fluid brushwork, which achieves a rich, lustrous effect. The use of oil paint offered the artist great versatility in painting brilliant colors and convincing textures since the medium of oil lends itself both to minute detail and to the subtle blending of tones. By applying layers of transparent paint over opaque ones, Sully created the illusion of actual skin and fabric and achieved a subtle play of light off the rich reds, yellows, and blacks.

Artist

Thomas Sully was born in England to parents who were actors. The family emigrated to the United States when Thomas was nine, and settled in Charleston, South Carolina. Sully began his career as a painter of miniatures but turned to easel painting in 1805, when he lived in New York City. Some of his earliest patrons were people in the theater. After serving as an apprentice to John Wesley Jarvis, he met Gilbert Stuart in Boston and studied briefly with him. The professional encouragement he received from the elder portrait painter confirmed Sully's ambition to become a leading American portraitist. He eventually settled in Philadelphia. In 1809, Sully traveled to England, where he, like many other American artists, went to see Benjamin West. Because Sully was only interested in portraiture, West sent him to Thomas Lawrence, who was at the time the leading English portraitist. Sully returned to America, where he became one of the nation's outstanding portrait painters during the 1830s and 1840s. In his 70-year professional career, he painted over 2,000 portraits. Sully was also a teacher, guiding the careers of many students including his own family. All six of his surviving children became professional or amateur painters.

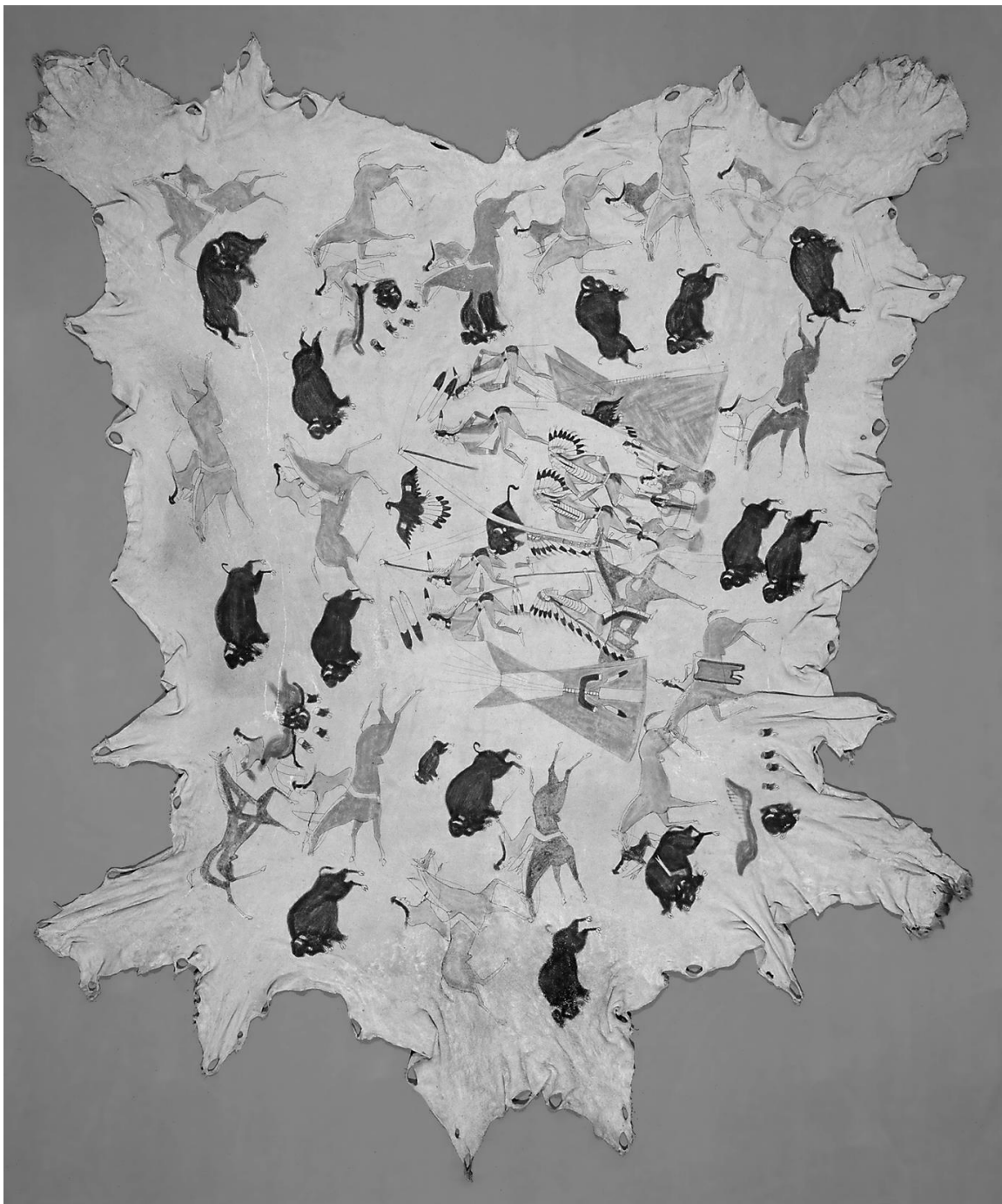
² *Made in America: Ten Centuries of American Art*, The Saint Louis Art Museum (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1995), 39.

³ Monroe H. Fabian, *Mr. Sully, Portrait Painter, The Works of Thomas Sully (1783-1872)* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983), 19.

Suggested Questions

1. Who is this person? How do you know? How can you tell that this man is important?
2. Where is Washington standing? How can you tell? Is this place inside or outside? How do you know?
3. What time of day do you think it is? How can you tell? What is the weather like? Do you think it is warm or cool? What makes you say that? From where is the sun coming? What do you see in the sky?
4. What colors is Washington wearing? What kind of collar is on his shirt? Where else do you see this same fabric? What is he wearing over his shirt? Why do you think his pants are so short? What is he wearing below his pants? What kinds of accessories does he have?
5. What does he have on his desk? How does the furniture emphasize his importance? What is his hand resting on? Do you think this is an important paper or an ordinary one? What paper might it be? What do you think Washington used the feather for?
6. Stand in Washington's pose. How does it make you feel to stand in this position? Do you feel important? Why? Try sitting down and slouching. How does this position make you feel? Would Washington look as important if he were sitting down and slouching? Why do you say that?
7. In this painting, George Washington looks as though he is about to speak. What do you think he would say if he spoke? Would you like to talk to him? Why or why not? What would you say to him?
8. From what point of view is Washington shown in this painting? Why do you think the artist painted him from this low point of view? How does the point of view make him seem more important?
9. What color dominates this painting? Where do you see red? Why do you think there is so much red in this painting? How has the artist made Washington stand out from the background?
10. Parts of this painting were included to help identify Washington's abilities, talents, and personal characteristics. What clues in the painting point to Washington's lawmaking abilities? What objects tell you that George Washington was a military man? A lawmaker and leader? A lover of the outdoors? Wealthy?
11. Is this a heroic image of George Washington? Why or why not?
12. Classical is a word used to describe the art of ancient Greece and Rome. Where do you see things that look classical in this painting? Why would these things be included in the painting? Do you see any classical references in your classroom? What are they?

13. The Iroquois Confederacy of Nations had more influence on the U.S. Constitution than classical Greece and Rome. In 1987 the U.S. Congress formally acknowledged this. Why might Sully have neglected to include any references to the Iroquois in this painting?
14. The curtain in the painting is pulled aside to let in the light of dawn and to reveal a rainbow. Why else might this curtain be included? What might this symbolize? (*Washington's law and presidency shed light on a world that was once darkened by ignorance; the beginning, or dawning, of a new era under Washington's leadership; as rainbows follow storms, law and order follow a war.*) In what way is this painting like a performance in a theater?
15. Sully copied much of this portrait from a famous painting by another artist, Gilbert Stuart. Why might he have done this? (*Because Washington was long dead, Sully had to rely on previous representations to capture the president's likeness; Stuart's painting was very popular.*) Sully made his copy with Stuart's permission. Why might Stuart have allowed another artist to copy his painting? (*Perhaps he needed help to meet requests for this popular image.*) Do you think a copy of a portrait can be just as truthful as a portrait made from life? Why or why not?
16. In what way are both Sully's portrait of George Washington and Peto's *Reminiscences of 1865* tributes to an American leader? How does the mood of Sully's portrait of George Washington compare to that of Peto's *Reminiscences of 1865*? Each painting contains a likeness of an American president. Which painting do you think presents a more realistic portrayal of the president? Why? Looking at both of these artworks, how do you think each artist has represented the condition of American society? Which artist has portrayed a more heroic America? More hopeful? More idealistic? Support your answers with clues from each painting.



Cadzi Cody, Wind River Shoshone, 1866-1912

Scenes of Plains Indian Life, c. 1880

Elk hide, pigments

H.68 x W.79 inches

Gift of funds from Bruce Dayton, 85.92

Theme

Cadzi Cody (KAD-zee KO-dee) painted this elk hide at approximately the same time as Fournier's painting of Minneapolis but it represents a different attitude towards nature—one that reflects the ancient traditions of the Shoshone (sho-SHO-nee) people. The elk hide also speaks of the conflict between two cultures when Native Americans and Euro-Americans came into contact.

Background

When the first European explorers arrived on the shores of North America 500 years ago, the continent was populated by several million culturally diverse people speaking hundreds of languages. Archaeologists believe that native people migrated approximately 20,000 years ago across the Bering Strait from Asia into present-day Alaska and Canada. When Christopher Columbus arrived in 1492, he mistakenly believed that he had landed in the East Indies, and he called the people he encountered "Indians." This misnomer has prevailed into the 20th century, although many native people of America today prefer to be called Native Americans or American Indians.

After their original migration, native people gradually populated the entire continent, evolving lifestyles in accord with the climate of the areas in which they lived. The Shoshone people once inhabited the Great Basin region (Nevada, Utah, and portions of surrounding states) of North America. They were a migratory people who lived off the natural resources of the land. They fished, gathered wild plants and berries, and hunted with bow and arrows. Some Shoshone people moved into the Central Plains to hunt bison. In general, the Shoshone shared many of the cultural characteristics of the Plains tribes, for example, great respect for the bison, the tradition of painting on hides, and the practice of the Sun Dance.

The bison was central to the existence of the Plains people. They hunted only as many animals as they required for food, respectfully offering prayers of thanks and utilizing every part of the animal for multiple purposes.⁴ The introduction of the horse into America by the Spanish in the 1500s probably changed the lives of the Plains bison hunters to a greater extent than the invention of the automobile changed the lives of people in the 20th century. So amazed were the Plains tribes by this strong, swift animal that they called it the Sacred Dog and believed it to have been a gift of the Great Spirit. Prior to having the horse, the Plains people hauled their

⁴ For example: hides were used to make moccasins, saddles, clothing, and containers; ribs were used to make sled runners; bison chips served as fuel; tails made good fly swatters; gallstones taken from a bison's gall bladder were used to create a yellow pigment that was used for painting; and hooves were boiled to make a glue-like substance.

belongings on travois pulled by dogs and hunted bison on foot. Horses greatly improved their ability to hunt and allowed them to become increasingly nomadic. Regarded with great esteem, the horse became the most valued possession of the Plains people, and its image appears on many of their art objects, including this elk hide.

Because the Plains tribes had a nomadic lifestyle, their art developed in a wholly different manner from that of Euro-Americans or of the more sedentary Native Americans living in other areas of the country (for example, the Pueblo). Whatever they made had to be relatively portable. The everyday objects of their lives were richly decorated with pigments, quills, beads, and other ornamentation. Every object was both useful and a work of art.

The use and decoration of bison, elk, and deer hides have a long history with Plains tribes. For a people who did not weave cloth, the hides provided a useful material for the construction of clothing, tipis, moccasins, and many types of containers. Painting on hides was one more way of honoring the animal for giving up its life. It was also a way of recording history for a people who depended mainly on oral tradition for record keeping. Hides were used in making “winter counts.” Each winter, designated members of a tribe painted a pictorial symbol documenting the most important event of that year on a hide. Additionally, the men displayed pictorial records of their personal achievements—their *coups* (acts of bravery), accounts of battle exploits, and numbers of horses they owned—on their hide robes and tipis.

Contact with Europeans brought changes in the tradition of hide painting, as it did to most other aspects of Native American culture. The conflict that developed between native people and Euro-Americans was largely due to two entirely different philosophies of life. Native Americans had lived in harmony with the land for thousands of years, believing that the Great Spirit had provided abundance for all. Europeans arrived in America with concepts of land ownership and usage that were unthinkable to native people. Prompted by a belief in “manifest destiny,” Euro-Americans felt it was their God-given right to tame and populate the “wilderness.” But Native Americans did not view the land they had lived on for millennia as wilderness. They feared, and rightly so, that they were being forced from their homeland.

More than a century of conflict ensued, and by the late 19th century most Native Americans had been forcibly confined by the U.S. government to reservations. The Shoshone people were placed on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming in 1868. Later, the Arapaho, their age-old enemies, were also confined there. During the reservation period, Shoshone men, deprived of their traditional way of life, continued to paint battle scenes and past glories upon their tipis and robes. They also painted on muslin sheeting issued by the government and on ledger paper obtained from army posts. The Shoshone were attempting to maintain their cultural values at a time when a foreign culture was being imposed upon them.⁵ They carefully and accurately painted the details of their weapons, clothing and sacred objects, leaving a remarkable record of their way of life.

Before native people were confined to reservations, hide painting was a way to recount personal exploits and record historical events. As Native American art became increasingly popular with non-Indian collectors, however, this tradition was transformed to produce paintings for sale as a means of economic survival. Along with others, Cadzi Cody was actively involved

⁵ The government attempted to assimilate Native Americans by teaching them skills like farming which had not been a part of their culture. Children were taken from their parents to be educated in “white” ways in boarding schools. In general, Native Americans were discouraged from practicing their own traditions.

in supplying hides for this market. As a result of the trade with non-Indians, many hides such as this one have entered the collections of museums.

Scenes of Plains Indian Life

This elk hide painted by Cadzi Cody, who was a member of the Wind River Shoshone in Wyoming, depicts a bison hunt and aspects of the most sacred of Plains Indians ceremonies, the Sun Dance.

The Sun Dance is a ceremony in which the dancers offer thanksgiving and petition the Creator for their needs in the coming year.⁶ It is still practiced by modern Plains tribes. In traditional times, the first step in preparation for a Sun Dance was to kill the biggest bull bison of the herd. Cadzi Cody's elk hide painting shows this step. Around the periphery of the hide are hunters on horseback moving in a circular pattern as they pursue the bison. The artist also shows us the ritual butchering of the animal. The head of the bison was prepared for the Sun Dance by severing it behind the ears but leaving it attached to the tail by a strip of hide down the back. The head was then mounted on the sacred center pole, a cottonwood found growing by a stream and cut by the young men of the tribe. We can see this pole in the painting, and above it an eagle, which represented an intermediary between earth and the spirit world.

Cadzi Cody has not included the next step of preparation for the Sun Dance—the creation of a lodge with poles extended from the center pole, covered with brush.⁷ Within the lodge, men would dance facing toward the sacred pole, continuing for four days without food or water. The Shoshone called this type of dancing “dry-standing-dance.” The resulting dehydration and physical exertion often produced an altered state of consciousness, which invited visions. Around the pole, Cadzi Cody has depicted several dancers. The traditional adornments for participants in the Sun Dance are body paint, aprons, and eagle-bone whistles. Here, the artist has depicted the dancers in feather bustles, with bells attached to their legs. In Shoshone tradition, this type of dress would be appropriate for a nonreligious dance called the Wolf or Grass Dance. The reason for this variation is not known.

The drum was considered to be the heartbeat of the Plains people, as it still is today. Singing and drumming accompany the Sun Dance. In the painting, several men are shown drumming in the lower right area. Near them is a woman who has a baby in a cradleboard on her back. To the left, a man on horseback with a long feather bonnet is an esteemed war leader. Each feather was earned by an act of bravery. To each side of the center scene are tipis. Constructed of a framework of wood poles covered with hide, tipis provided portable shelter for Plains peoples during nomadic times. The designs painted on each tipi would have had symbolic meaning specific to its occupants.

⁶ The form of the Sun Dance described here is specific to the Shoshone people. The Sun Dance is practiced by many Plains tribes, and there are many variations in its format.

⁷ In Shoshone belief, the Sun Dance had its origins in the visions of two different men. In the first vision, a bison appeared and instructed the Shoshone to kill the biggest bull of the herd. The second vision involved an eagle, who instructed them to put up a cottonwood pole, affixing the bison head to it and making a nest for the eagle at the top.

The motif of the circle recurs several places on the elk hide: in the bison hunt, in the formation of the Sun Dance, and in the shape of the tipis. The circle has sacred significance to Native Americans. It is without beginning or end, symbolizing the cycle of life and the concept of the universe. Some native people believe that the Great Spirit made everything round—the sun, sky, earth, moon. For these and many other reasons, Native Americans made their tipis circular, arranged their camps in circular patterns, and sat in a circle in ceremonies.

Cadzi Cody painted this scene from memory and imagination. Despite that, he has given us many specific details of the Sun Dance and the bison hunt. Notice the variety of horses that appear in the painting. They probably represent the range of sorrels, roans, duns, and other types of horses owned by Native Americans. In the upper left corner and in the center are spotted horses, known as pintos.

By the time Cadzi Cody painted this elk hide, the bison were nearly extinct. The Sun Dance itself had been outlawed by the U.S. government in 1881. Traditional religious practices were discouraged by the government in its attempt to assimilate the American Indian people into white culture. The Sun Dance was later made legal and now takes place in many parts of the Plains region during the summer months.

Technique

In traditional times, hide preparation was done by women. The hide was staked to the ground (see the holes around the edges), scraped to remove the hair, and bleached in the sun. At this stage, it was rawhide, stiff and ready to form into saddles or containers. To be suitable for painting or clothing, the hide had to be tanned or softened by rubbing and soaking with various substances. Then it was sun-dried, rolled for sizing, and stretched back to its original size and shape. We can see in the shape of this elk hide the four legs, the neck, and the tail of the elk.

In traditional hide painting, natural pigments were used.⁸ By the 1800s, commercial pigments were available through trade with Euro-Americans, and Cadzi Cody used them in this painting. Because some images in his paintings are so similar, scholars suspect that he may have also used stencils. For example, notice the striking similarities in the bison. The elegant and graceful horses are more individualized due to the range of colors and greater variety of stances. The rather realistic depiction of the horses indicates that the artist must have closely observed the animals.

By the time this painting was done, Native American artists had assimilated some of the conventions of Euro-American painting. They did not simply mimic them, but rather selectively used what was of advantage to them, often adapting new materials to their traditional style. Here, Cadzi Cody has used the new commercial pigments, but in the tradition and style of Plains painting. Some Euro-American influence may be indicated by the overlapping of forms to indicate depth and by the “humpbacks” of some of the hunters, perhaps an attempt to show foreshortening.

While Native American art was widely and avidly collected by Euro-Americans during this early period, it exerted little noticeable influence upon the style of Euro-American art. That changed in

⁸ Natural pigments were derived from the following: red from hematite (iron ore), green from lake algae; blue from blue clay; yellow from bison gallstones.

the 20th century. One of the most important figures in modern American art, Jackson Pollock, was inspired by Southwestern sand painting, and the Surrealists in the 1940s were influenced greatly by Native American art and cultural practices. Native American art is one of the many threads of artistic heritage that contribute to the rich tapestry of American art.

Artist

Because the hide painting is unsigned, it is difficult to make a positive identification of the artist. The style of this painting is similar to other existing hide paintings thought to have been painted by a Shoshone traditionally known as Katsikodi. That name, however, cannot be found in any official records. It is believed that Katsikodi was actually a Wind River Shoshone man named Codsioigo (co-SEE-ko), who was given the “white” name *Cadzi Cody* in 1900. The name *Codsioigo* means “mountain flower” in Shoshone. Codsioigo died on October 22, 1912, at the age of 46.

Suggested Questions

1. What material is this picture painted on? Judging from the size, what animal do you think this might be from? What different parts of its body can you see?
2. What animals do you see in the painting? How many human figures do you see? How many of these are women? How can you recognize the woman?
3. Why do you think the artist used hide to paint on instead of paper or canvas? Where do you think he got the hide? What in this painting gives you a clue to that question? (*Bow and arrow hunters and a slit in the hide where an arrow might have penetrated—in the green horse.*) **Discuss the tradition of painting on hides.**
4. What is happening around the outer section of the painting? What weapons do the bison hunters use? Imagine that you are on horseback beside a huge bison. How do you feel? Do you think the hunters were in danger? Find one in particular that may be in danger.
5. How many bison were killed in this hunt? **Explain that Native Americans only killed as many animals as they could use.** Why was the bison so important to Native American people? How would they use bison parts in addition to food?
6. How many colors of horses do you see? They represent different kinds of horses. (*Blue roans, red sorrels, yellow buckskins.*) Why might he have painted some of the horses pink and blue even though horses are not these colors? (*These were the colors he had available; they add visual interest to the picture.*) Why do you think he did not paint any of the horses black? (*He had to make them different from the bison.*) Plains people also had spotted horses called pintos. Find two pintos in the painting. How does the artist show us that they are pintos? Why do you think horses were so important to the bison hunters?
7. On this hide, Cadzi Cody painted aspects of an important Shoshone ceremony of thanksgiving. By looking at what he painted on this hide, what might be some of the

- things the Shoshone were thankful for? What might they ask for? What are you thankful for in your own life?
8. Where do you see a woman in the painting? Are there men other than the hunters? What are they doing? **Explain that only men danced the Shoshone Sun Dance, and that women participated by singing and in other ways.** Why do you think the man in the center mounted on a horse wears a long feather bonnet? What might that tell you about him?
 9. The Shoshone had portable houses called tipis, which they used while traveling in search of bison. What is a tipi made of? Where do you see tipis in the painting? Why would it be an advantage to have a house that was easy to move? Why did the Shoshone move around so much? Do you think they carried a lot with them when they moved? How do you think the Plains lifestyle affected the type of art that they made? In what ways might their art have been different from that of other Native Americans, such as the Pueblo, whose lives were less mobile? (*Art had to be portable, easy to move around; art had to be durable to withstand being moved around.*)
 10. Is this painting active or still? How does Cadzi Cody give the figures and animals on the hide movement and energy? (*All of the figures circle around the central scene; the gestures, poses, and movements of the hunters and animals suggest action; figures move in different directions; the black bison and colorful horses keep one's eyes moving across the hide surface.*)
 11. Look carefully at the human figures painted on the hide. Did Cadzi Cody paint them as they might have really looked? What parts of the human figures did he show? What parts did he leave out? Does each person look different or do they all look the same? Look at the horses painted on the hide. Does each horse look different, or do they all look the same?
 12. Do you think Cadzi Cody was more interested in showing how things looked or in telling a story? What makes you think so?
 13. When Cadzi Cody painted this hide, the bison were nearly extinct, the government had outlawed the Sun Dance, the Shoshone Indians were confined to a reservation, and their traditional way of life had all but vanished. Why do you think he continued to paint traditional aspects of Indian life? (*It was his artistic tradition; it helped the people to remember their past; the paintings were admired by non-Indian tourists and could be sold for much-needed income.*)
 14. How did the environment shape the lifestyle of the Shoshone people? (*The existence of abundant bison herds provided a means of survival, the Plains Indians became nomadic because they followed the bison, tipis were developed to meet the needs of these nomadic people.*) How does your environment shape your life? How would your life be different if you lived in Alaska or Mexico or California?



ALEX. FOURGIER, B. 60.

Alexis Jean Fournier, American, 1865–1948

Mill Pond at Minneapolis, 1888

Oil on canvas

H.17 x W.26 inches (outer frame)

The John R. Van Derlip Fund, 46.8

Theme

In this painting, Fournier (FORN-yay) depicts the city of Minneapolis in the late 19th century, showing how industrial development dominates the urban landscape. The painting also reflects the late 19th-century belief in “progress” and humankind’s ability to control nature.

Background

St. Anthony Falls and the Mississippi River played a pivotal role in the exploration and settlement of the Minnesota territory and in the development of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The falls and surrounding area, including both sides of the river, were part of a large tract of land that were acquired by the U.S. government from the Dakota Indians at the beginning of the 19th century. The Dakota people had called the falls “Minirara,” meaning “curling water.” In 1680, Father Louis Hennepin, the first white person to see the falls, named them for his patron saint.

The federal government was the first to recognize the falls’ potential to supply power, and constructed Fort Snelling in the 1820s. Later, enterprising settlers harnessed the water’s power to run sawmills, flour mills, foundries, factories, and a host of other industries. Minnesota attained statehood in 1858, and by 1888 (the time of this painting) it was one of several young states experiencing the first flush of economic growth and industrial expansion. The city of Minneapolis, already known as the world’s leading lumber market, was now becoming the foremost flour-milling center in America.

Much of this technological development took place along the river, the city’s primary source of power and transportation. Such development brought drastic change to the environment, and, gradually, the natural beauty of St. Anthony Falls was diminished. Today we are more aware of the impact of industrialization on nature and its adverse effects on humanity. In the 19th century, however, many people considered the earth and its resources limitless and available for any enterprising person to use and exploit.

Mill Pond at Minneapolis

This painting is an accurate record of Minneapolis in 1888, showing many landmarks of the time. The urban landscape documents the rows of mills and industrial buildings that had developed along the banks of the Mississippi, some of which can be identified. Directly to the left of the arched bridge is Farnham’s Mill, one of the last active sawmills at the falls; on the far left edge of the painting is the Pillsbury “A” mill, which was built by the artist’s father. When completed in 1883, it was the largest flour mill in the world. Both mills derived their power from the mill pond, a reservoir constructed to channel the flow of the river. The mill pond is seen in

the painting's middle distance, a band of water that appears calm next to the rushing water behind it from the falls. To the right of Farnham's Mill is the Stone Arch Bridge of the St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba Railroad, completed in 1883. The bridge was a national symbol of the city's prosperity and progress. It was the first and only curved masonry bridge in the world and also the first masonry bridge to span the Mississippi. The Stone Arch Bridge provided railroad access to the heart of the city's business district for the first time, connecting Minneapolis to both the eastern and western parts of the nation.

Beyond the arched bridge is the steel truss that formerly carried Tenth Avenue traffic across the river. Above the bridge to the left, just breaking the horizon line, are the first buildings of the fledgling University of Minnesota. They are dominated by the tower of the University's landmark, Old Main. On the hill to the right are the polygonal storage tanks of the Minneapolis Gas Company. In the foreground railroad tracks and cars can be seen.

Fournier painted the scene from the west bank of the river. (The same view can be seen today from the Third Avenue bridge.) The artist included in his panoramic view all of the signs of human progress that would have appealed to his business patrons. He presented them in such a manner that industrialization seems surprisingly compatible with nature. Blending with the marks of human development, the rolling wooded hills rise in the background to meet a partly cloudy blue sky. In the foreground the tracks of the railroad are juxtaposed with the soft grasses and foliage of the land around them. To Fournier and his patrons, these elements were apparently not in conflict.

Fournier's use of line, shape and color contributes to the harmonious effect. The composition is organized into distinct areas of foreground, middle ground (or middle distance), and background. The horizontal lines of the horizon, the band of clouds, the riverbank, and the water's current, gently sweep across the painting and contribute to a restful, tranquil mood. This is reinforced by the use of soft, cool colors—blues and greens and whites. At the same time, the diagonal lines of the bridges, the rushing waters by the pond, and the train create movement and give the scene a dynamic quality that suggests notions of progress and moving ahead.

Technique

Fournier worked directly from nature, painting out of doors and perhaps putting on the finishing touches in his studio. His use of oil paint enabled him to render his subject naturalistically, with attention to accurate details and local setting. While he shows us the actual shapes and colors of objects, his technique is not as meticulously detailed as that of John Frederick Peto or Thomas Sully. Fournier has a looser, more spontaneous style that captures the effects of light and movement, as seen in the flowing water, the floating clouds, and the windblown hillside. His fluid brushstrokes are visible, unlike those of Peto whose finely detailed painting shows no evidence of brushwork.

Artist

Alexis Jean Fournier, the son of a millwright, was born in St. Paul in 1865. He spent his early youth in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, but returned to Minnesota in 1883, where he supported himself as a sign and scenery painter. While residing in Minneapolis, he acquired patrons who sponsored his enrollment in the newly established Minneapolis School of Art (now the Minneapolis College of Art and Design). He studied briefly with the school's new director,

Douglas Volk, an artist from Boston. Under Volk's tutelage, Fournier developed a palette of subtle colors that helped him capture the changing light he observed in nature.

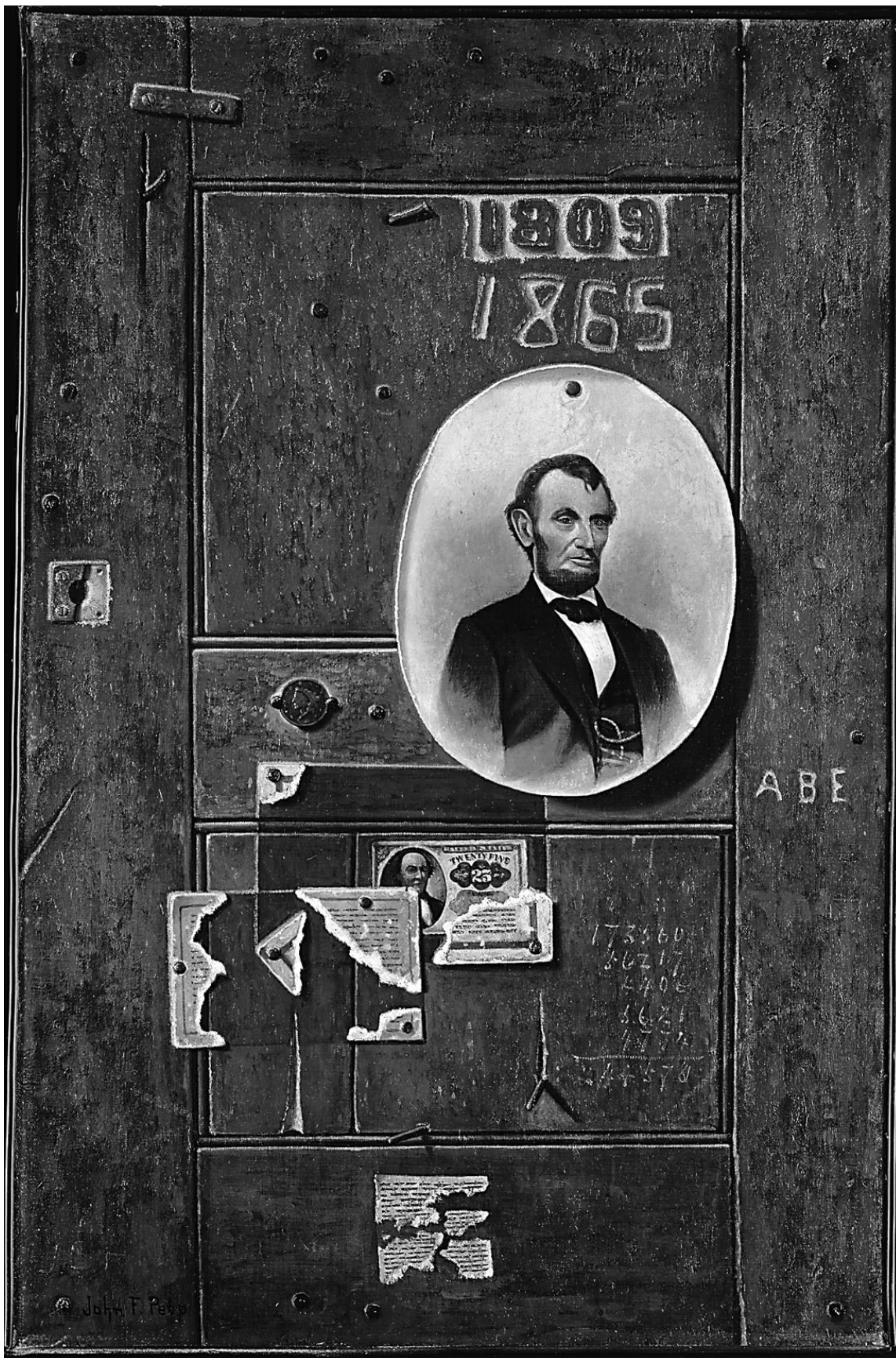
In 1887 Fournier established his own studio above a tailor shop at 412 Nicollet Avenue. He specialized in landscape paintings working in oil and watercolor, and attracted many local patrons. One patron was James J. Hill, St. Paul's railroad and lumber magnate, who purchased a number of paintings by Fournier to hang in his Summit Avenue mansion in St. Paul.

In 1893 several patrons, including Hill, paid for the artist to study in France. He attended the Académie Julian in Paris and was greatly influenced by the landscapes of the Barbizon School of painters. This group of artists was interested in landscape painting and advocated painting directly from nature. Fournier returned to Minneapolis, where he continued to live for many years while traveling widely. In 1908 he went to the village of Barbizon in France where he completed a major project consisting of 20 canvases entitled *Haunts and Homes of the Barbizon Masters*. These works were critically acclaimed when exhibited in New York, Boston, and Minneapolis in 1915 and 16. He spent his later years in East Aurora, New York, and continued to produce carefully executed, realistic landscapes until his death in 1948.

Suggested Questions

1. This is a painting of a section of Minneapolis and the Mississippi River. Can you guess where it might be? Does anyone know the name of these falls? (*St. Anthony Falls*.)
2. Do you think this painting was painted recently? Why or why not? What changes have taken place since 1888? What landmarks still exist today? Do you prefer this place the way it was then, or as it is now? Why?
3. Considering that this is Minnesota, what season do you think it is? What do you think the temperature is? The chance of rain? What time of day is it? What clues did you find in the painting?
4. What kind of sounds would you hear if you were at this place? What kind of sound might the boxcars make when they move? What kind of sound would the water make? Would some parts of the water be noisier than others? Why?
5. How would you feel if you could walk in this landscape? Relaxed? Excited? Bored? What about the painting makes you say that? What would you do there?
6. **Have each child name one object they see and write it on the board.** Can everyone find this object in the painting? Where is it? Which objects are closest to you? Which are farthest away? How do you know?
7. Where do you think the artist might have been standing when he painted this scene? Imagine yourself in the painting. Where would you stand to get a good view of the scene?

8. Which objects are in the foreground of this painting? Which are in the middle ground? In the background? How do the details of the painting or the colors differ in these three areas?
9. Compare this painting to Peto's *Reminiscences of 1865* and Grace Hartigan's *Billboard*. In which painting can you see the brushstrokes the most? In which painting are the brushstrokes the least obvious?
10. Look at the water. Is it all the same color? Why didn't Fournier make all the water the same color? Can you tell anything about the movement of the water from its color? How else did he indicate movement? What things do you see reflected in the water?
11. Do you think Fournier was more concerned with showing us precisely how each object looked or in giving us an overall impression of the scene? Why? How has the artist indicated that there are wild flowers growing in the grass?
12. What signs of technology or industry do you see in this painting? How do you think the artist feels about technology? Did he think it was helpful or harmful to the city? How can you tell that by looking at this painting?
13. Why do you think Fournier chose to paint this particular scene? What can we learn from this picture about Minnesota? About industry in Minnesota? Towns in Minnesota? Transportation in Minnesota?
14. The Stone Arch Bridge was the first masonry bridge to span the Mississippi, connecting the east and west banks of the river. Why was this so important to the city of Minneapolis? How might it have affected business and industry in Minneapolis?
15. How do you think the building of flour and lumber mills affected the landscape? How did it affect the river? What do you think was gained by industrialization? What was lost? Do you think that it is right to sacrifice natural beauty for industry and urban growth? Why or why not?



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John Frederick Peto, American, 1854–1907

Reminiscences of 1865, after 1900

Oil on canvas

H.30 x W.20 inches (canvas)

The Julia B. Bigelow Fund by John Bigelow, 44.25

Theme

John Frederick Peto reminisces in this painting about the events of 1865, paying tribute to President Abraham Lincoln while reflecting the somber mood of the country at the beginning of the 20th century.

Background

John Frederick Peto came to maturity in the years following the Civil War, when America was engaged in the painful and turbulent period of Reconstruction. Despite the divisiveness brought on by the war, the 1870s and 1880s were decades in which a sense of optimism ran high in America. In 1868, only four years after the war ended, the first intercontinental railroad connected the east and west coasts. During the years that followed, fortunes were amassed by people such as John D. Rockefeller, who began the Standard Oil Company in 1870. The telephone and the electric light bulb were invented. The Brooklyn Bridge was completed in 1883. The architect Louis Sullivan built the first skyscraper in Chicago in 1890. During this period, the west held the promise of great fortune for prosperous entrepreneurs as well as those who only dreamed of success. Optimism ran high because it seemed to many that progress was limitless and that the problems of poverty and disease would be solved.

There was, however, a good deal of tension beneath the surface, and by the 1890s, it was obvious that progress had a darker side as well. Various events and disturbances contributed to the nation's mood of increasing disillusionment. Major labor strikes occurred in 1877 and again in 1892. In 1890, the final armed conflict between the U.S. Army and the American Indians took place when over 300 Native Americans were killed at Wounded Knee in South Dakota. Huge numbers of immigrants were coming into the country, and Ellis Island was opened in 1892 to cope with them. The Panic of 1893 and the resulting collapse of banks were followed by a prolonged economic depression. In 1898, America declared war on Spain. The 1865 assassination of Lincoln was followed by the assassinations of President Garfield, in 1881 and President McKinley, in 1901. By the turn of the century, the events of these years introduced skepticism into the American consciousness that ran counter to the former assumptions about progress.

Reminiscences of 1865

As the title implies, Peto was looking back several decades when he painted this picture reflecting the events of 1865. That year was marked forever by the end of the Civil War and the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. It was the death of Peto's own father in 1895, however, that prompted him to begin a series of paintings, including this one, which alluded to Lincoln, to death, and to the war. Considering that Peto was only a child in 1865, it is possible that the painting may be as much an expression of his personal feelings about the death of his father as it is a recollection of the historic events of that year.

The painting is called a still life because it depicts a group of inanimate objects that were arranged by the artist. What we actually see is paint on a flat canvas. Through his meticulous painting of details, however, Peto creates the illusion of actual objects attached to a worn wooden door. The focal point of the painting is the black and white image of Lincoln reproduced from an engraving of a photograph. It gives the appearance of being an actual photograph stuck to the door with a brass tack, but it is in fact a painted image. In making the painting, Peto repeatedly pressed into the outlines of the engraving with his pencil in order to trace the image accurately onto the canvas. Adjacent to the photograph, Peto painted Lincoln's nickname "ABE" so that it appears to be carved into the door, as does the year of his death. He painted Lincoln's birth date, 1809, to simulate relief carving, making the numbers look as if they are standing out from the door.

Currency was a favorite subject of still-life painters in this age obsessed with money. (This was a time when fortunes could be made, despite the poverty of many.) Peto included the image of a 25-cent shinplaster, a worthless piece of paper money, which is just below a tarnished "Liberty Head" gold coin. The image of the man on the shinplaster is Robert J. Walker, who was Secretary of the Treasury under James Polk.

Everything in the painting subtly shows the passage of time. The photograph curls around the edges. The painted door is weathered, the lock is rusted, and the nails are bent. Fragments of tattered pieces of paper are attached to the door, the rest being torn away or worn off. In the lower right corner, faded columns of numbers apparently written in chalk are barely visible.

Each of these elements has been carefully arranged within the rectilinear design of the door to create a sense of order. Peto's color scheme is restrained, with shades of muted green, gray, and tan that reinforce the worn, weathered appearance of the door and the objects on it. The meticulous details are displayed on the surface of the canvas, inviting the viewer to contemplate the perplexing subject matter and to study the various objects and their carefully painted textures.

The painting conveys a pervasive sense of nostalgia and sadness. Only the image of Lincoln remains relatively intact compared with everything around it. Perhaps a message of the painting is that Lincoln's impact on America persisted after his death. In the turbulent turn-of-the-century years, Peto shared the country's nostalgia for Lincoln's heroic leadership. The artist suffered from a kidney disease in his later years, as well as mourning the loss of his father, and he was preoccupied with themes of death.

Technique

John Peto specialized in still life painting, working in a style popularized by the Dutch in the 17th century called *trompe l'oeil* {tromp-LOY}, or “fool-the-eye” painting. In this style, artists painted naturalistic images in order to trick viewers into believing they were looking at arrangements of real objects. *Trompe l'oeil* pictures became popular among an American public that admired the skill required to create them.

The medium used in Peto’s painting is oil paint. As we saw in Thomas Sully’s *Portrait of George Washington*, oils enabled an artist to paint very fine details and achieve convincing textures. Peto’s technique is so convincing that the objects look real and three-dimensional. We can almost feel the slickness of the photograph, the roughness of the faded door, the softness of the frayed paper and the hardness of the bent nails. Unlike Grace Hartigan in *Billboard*, Peto does not reveal evidence of his brushwork in his attempt to render his subject naturalistically.

Artist

Peto was born in Philadelphia in 1854, the son of a gilder and dealer in picture frames. His first introduction to fine art was in his father’s shop, and he was soon sketching and drawing. It was not until 1877, two years after he first advertised his skills as a painter that he received formal training at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, where he studied periodically over the next six years. It was through the Academy that Peto met William Harnett, a still life painter whose style and choice of subject matter strongly influenced the younger artist.

Peto married in 1887, and in 1889 moved to Island Heights, New Jersey, a resort community. He continued to paint still lifes, though he was not very successful at selling his work. His somber, melancholy paintings did not particularly appeal to a public interested in pretty decorative works. He lived his final years in obscurity, suffering from Bright’s Disease, a kidney ailment from which he died in 1907 at the age of 53. Though not appreciated during his lifetime, Peto is today considered an important American still-life painter. He was rediscovered in the late 1940s by a scholar researching the work of William Harnett. The researcher found that many of Peto’s paintings were unsigned or that they bore Harnett’s signatures, which were forged at a later time after the death of both artists. Consequently, *Reminiscences of 1865*, which is actually signed by Peto, has proved to be crucial to art historians in understanding his work.

Suggested Questions

1. What are some of the objects you see in this painting? To what are the objects attached? Where do you see numbers? What other objects do you see on the door?
2. Do the objects in this painting look old or new? How can you tell?
3. Who is the man in the picture? What are some of the things we can learn about Lincoln from looking at the painting? Where do you usually see birth and death dates listed together? How old was Lincoln when he died? How old does he appear to be in his picture?

4. When you first looked at this work of art, what did you think it was? What makes it look like a real door? Why might the artist want to paint something that looked so much like a real door?
5. Pretend you are touching this painting. Which areas are smoothest? Which are roughest? Is there anything sharp? Is there anything broken? What areas of this painting look as if they might give you a splinter if you touched them?
6. How does the artist make this image appear three-dimensional? The term “raised relief” refers to an image carved to stand out from its background. Where do you see the illusion of raised relief? (*The date 1809.*) The term “sunken relief” refers to an image carved into its background. Where do you see the illusion of sunken relief? (*The letters ABE, the date 1865.*)
7. Do you think Peto wanted us to believe that the picture of Lincoln is a painting or a photograph? The French called this type of painting *trompe l’oeil* (tromp-LOY), which means “fool the eye.” Do you think that is an appropriate name for this kind of painting? How are our eyes fooled? What makes the painting of Lincoln look like a photograph? Lincoln was one of the first presidents ever to have his photograph taken. Why do you think that was so? (*Cameras had just come into use.*)
8. This painting is called *Reminiscences of 1865*. What does *reminiscence* mean? In this painting Peto is remembering many things about 1865. What can you tell about the year 1865 by looking at this painting? Do you think Peto felt that it was a happy time? Why or why not? Why do you think the artist would want to remember Lincoln? What do you know about Lincoln?
9. In 1865 the Civil War ended, and Lincoln was assassinated. During Lincoln’s presidency, there was fear that the Union would be permanently divided due to the differences between the northern and southern states. It was a time of great turbulence and stress. How does the painting express this feeling? (*Worn paint, gouges, sharp nails, broken lock, rusted brackets.*) Why do you think Peto has included so many torn items on this door? (*To represent the families, neighbors, states that were torn apart during the Civil War; to show the passage of time.*)
10. Symbolism is defined as the use of familiar objects to refer to something else or to suggest deeper meanings. How has Peto used symbolism in *Reminiscences of 1865*?
11. Do you think Peto’s image of Abraham Lincoln is heroic? Why or why not? What aspect of Lincoln has he emphasized? How is this similar to Sully’s portrayal of George Washington? In what ways do the two portrayals of American presidents differ? Has the time period in which each image was painted affected the way in which the president is portrayed by the artist? How?
12. Peto’s painting is an homage to Abraham Lincoln. If you were going to make an homage to someone you admire, who would you choose? What colors would you use? What objects would you include? What setting would you choose? Why would you do all these things?



Maria Martinez, San Ildefonso Pueblo, 1886-1980

Julian Martinez, San Ildefonso Pueblo, 1879-1943

Vessel, 20th century

Ceramic

H.6 ¼ x W.8 x D.8 inches

Gift of Barbara L. Strom, 86.94.

Theme

Shaped by the celebrated potter Maria Martinez, this bowl exemplifies an art form that is integral to the lives and traditions of the Pueblo people.

Background

The landscape in this part of the Southwest is quiet: blue-purple hills, pink sand, gray-green sage, and mesquite as far as you can see... White cloud billows in the cerulean sky and mesas of lavender give background to the solitary river path and the stony arroyos where water only sometimes flows. The shimmery green-white of cottonwood leaves and the occasional deep green of piñon pine punctuate the landscape.... Some distance behind the [San Ildefonso] pueblo looms the landmark of this area, Black Mesa, called Tunyo by the Indians. It rises like an ominous green-black table, mysterious above the low hills, visible for miles.⁹

The traditions of the native peoples of the Southwest are deeply rooted in the land where their ancestors have lived for tens of thousands of years. The vast region stretching from southern Utah and Colorado, throughout New Mexico and Arizona, and south into Mexico is the oldest known area of human habitation on the North American continent. In the Southwest, pottery has been made for well over 2,000 years, providing vessels for carrying water and for the preparation and storage of food. For centuries the people have decorated these vessels with images from their surroundings, including the sun that caused their crops to grow and the clouds that were the source of life-giving rain.

The Southwest is home to many different groups of native peoples. Some groups are known as Pueblo (PWEB-loh), from the Spanish word meaning "town." In the 17th century, the Spanish applied this term to the native people as well as to their multi-unit adobe (uh-DOH-bee) dwellings. Today, many Pueblo people live much as their ancestors did along the Rio Grande in New Mexico.

⁹ Susan Peterson, *The Living Tradition of Maria Martinez* (New York: Kodansha International, 1978), 71-72.

The Spanish were the first Europeans to occupy the Southwest in the 16th century, imposing their cultural practices on the native people and encroaching on their lands. The Pueblo revolted against the invaders and drove them out briefly, but the Spanish regained control in 1694. From that time on, the Southwest was under the control of first Spain, then Mexico, and eventually the United States. Although their culture was vastly disrupted by the arrival of the Europeans, Southwest peoples have retained many of their artistic traditions, such as those seen in Pueblo pottery.

San Ildefonso Pueblo lies about 20 miles northwest of Santa Fe in New Mexico's Rio Grande valley. It is situated on the eastern bank of the Rio Grande between the Jemez mountain range on the west and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains on the east. During the 19th and early 20th century, the manufacture of traditional Pueblo pottery at San Ildefonso was in serious decline. It was the work of Maria Martinez (who is best known by her first name, Maria) and her husband, Julian, that initiated a revival of pottery making at San Ildefonso. During an excavation of a prehistoric pottery site in 1907, the couple saw pieces of ancient pottery. This discovery stimulated Maria to begin making pots in the tradition of their ancestors and Julian to compile a notebook of prehistoric designs. In the traditional Pueblo manner, Maria formed the pots, while Julian painted them. Together they developed a variety of innovative pottery.¹⁰ Maria and Julian's influence reached beyond San Ildefonso to neighboring pueblos, where others began to revive their own pottery traditions. Over time, the economic importance of pottery making became increasingly significant to the pueblos and their livelihood.

Vessel (Bowl)

This bowl is an example of the black-on-black ware for which Maria and her husband, Julian, are famous. The black-on-black style consists of a contrasting surface design of matte or dull black on polished, glossy black. Since the matte and glossy areas are close in color, the textural contrast reveals the painted designs with subtlety and elegance. Known for her high-gloss surfaces, Maria has painstakingly polished this bowl to a deep, rich luster. Also characteristic of her work is the bowl's refined appearance, with its graceful shape of perfect symmetry and fine proportions. The artist achieved all of this without the use of a potter's wheel!

Painted around the neck of the bowl is a horned water serpent known as Avanyu (ah-VON-yu). This figure is related to an ancient Mesoamerican deity who was thought to have brought the knowledge of art, science, and agriculture to humans. The zigzag shape that protrudes from the serpent's mouth represents lightning. Julian adapted this design from ancient pottery shards and interpreted it as a symbol of thanksgiving for water and rain. Variations on this design have been incorporated into the pottery of many surrounding pueblos.

The painted design works in harmony with the bowl's shape. The serpent, whose contours are delineated in matte color, is stylized with simple lines that describe its eye, teeth, lightning tongue and horns or plumes. The undulating form of the serpent's body suggests the waves of water with which it is identified. The snake's dynamic force and movement are suggested by the repetition of its rhythmic curves, which wind around the bowl, as well as by the pairs of fin-like appendages underneath its body, the sharp angles of the lightning bolt, and the fork-like horns

¹⁰ Although traditionally Pueblo women did the potting and men often painted the decoration on the pots, in modern times, pottery making is no longer restricted to women.

that extend from its head. The glossy horizontal band around the bowl's center echoes the format of the serpent and adds balance and gracefulness to the overall design.

Technique

Like other Pueblo artists, Maria thought of clay as a living substance and a gift of Mother Earth. She began her pottery making process with prayers and offerings of cornmeal, which she spread over the ground before gathering the clay. After she mixed the clay with sand and water—taking great care to find just the right consistency—Maria was ready to shape the clay.

Maria built this bowl using the traditional Pueblo method of coiling and smoothing ropes of clay. In this method, the bottom of the pot is formed and placed on a base (puki), which is often the bottom of an older, broken pot. Coils of clay are then built up in succession to form the sides. The coils are pinched together and smoothed with a tool such as a piece of gourd or a potsherd. Slip (clay thinned with water) is painted on the surface of the newly formed, dried pot. It is then polished smooth with a special polishing stone in preparation for the painting of the design.

The distinctive black-on-black designs of the Martinezes were achieved by creating contrasting areas of matte and gloss. This was done by painting a red clay slip (clay thinned with water) on portions of a polished pot, usually with a brush made from a dried yucca (YOO-ka) leaf that was chewed to shape the fibers extending from the tip. The matte designs were painted on the polished surface before firing.

The firing was done in an open fire outdoors, with the clay pots placed on metal grates. Dried manure was stacked around them and ignited to create the high temperatures required. During the firing process, the clay pot turned black due to a reduction in the oxygen supply, which brought carbon to the surface. When the firing was finished, the polished areas of the pot were a glossy black, but the area painted with slip (around the figure) was dull.

Artist

Born around 1886 (the exact date is unknown), Maria was a Tewa Indian from San Ildefonso Pueblo. As a child, she was taught how to make polychrome (several colors) pottery by her aunt. Maria first demonstrated her pottery making in public at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. In 1907 archaeologists under the direction of Edgar Hewett were excavating ruins at Bandelier National Monument, near San Ildefonso. They asked Maria, who was known as the most skilled potter of her pueblo, to reproduce vessels styled after broken pots they had found. The scientists' encouragement led to Maria and Julian's rapid development in ceramic arts. In 1919, they developed the black-on-black style that would bring them international fame, and by 1921 they had perfected the process. Maria began to share their working methods with other potters, and, while Maria and Julian remained the masters, by 1925 most San Ildefonso potters emulated their work. In the 1930s, Maria taught pottery making at the Indian School in Santa Fe.

In 1934, Maria and Julian were invited to exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair, where they received several bronze medals, one awarded by the Indian Fire Council, the only national recognition given to Indians at that time. Maria continued making pottery with Julian until his death in 1943. Then she worked with her daughter-in-law, Santana, and later with her son

Popovi Da, who, like his parents, was known for his striking innovations. Mother and son worked together until Popovi Da's death in 1971. In her later years, Maria continued to be a role model and matriarch to her large family consisting of five generations of potters.

Traditionally, pottery making was a communal or family enterprise among the Pueblo, and the individuality of the artist was a foreign concept. Maria thought of her work as a family collaboration and considered herself simply one of many San Ildefonso potters. Because of the great demand for her work by collectors, tourists and museums, however, Maria was encouraged to sign her pots to identify them. She began doing so in 1923, and was the first Pueblo Indian potter to use her signature as a regular practice. In the course of her 70-year career, Maria used seven different signatures on her pottery, reflecting the various people with whom she worked.¹¹

During her long life, Maria was the recipient of numerous honors and awards, including the Craftsmanship Medal from the American Institute of Architects in 1954, the American Ceramic Society's Presidential Citation, an honorary doctorate from New Mexico State University, and New Mexico's First Annual Governor's Award for bringing "artistic distinction and great economic benefits to her pueblo."¹² Maria Martinez is considered one of the world's great potters, and her work is represented in museums nationally and internationally. As with Elizabeth Catlett, Maria's artistic profession helped to preserve the cultural heritage of her people and advance their cause within American society.

Suggested Questions

1. What do you see painted on this container? What kind of animal is this? What is coming out of its mouth? Why do you think the animal is pictured with lightning coming from its mouth? Does this look like a real animal? Why or why not?
2. If the serpent pictured on this pot could move, what kind of movements do you think it would make? How do the lines on the bowl help create this feeling? Why do you say that?
3. The designs on this container are not symmetrical yet they appear balanced. How have the shapes and lines been used to make the design appear balanced?
4. What do you think this pot would feel like if you could touch it? Would it be rough or smooth? What makes you say that? From what kind of material do you think it is made? How can you tell?
5. This whole pot has been painted black, yet the decorations painted on it are easy to see. How has the artist achieved this effect? In what way do the textures on the pot help define the design of the serpent?

¹¹ Richard L. Spivey, *Maria* (Flagstaff: Northland Publishing, 1989), 63-64.

¹² Spivey, 73.

6. This pot is made from clay. Do you think it looks like a clay pot? Why or why not? This pot was made from long coils of clay rather than on a potter's wheel. How do you think Maria made it look so smooth? What tools might she have used?
7. In order to make her pots, Maria collected the clay from the earth, then mixed it with sand and water. Why do you think Maria added sand and water to the clay she found? Why do you think she preferred to find her own clay instead of buying it from a store?
8. Maria polished parts of this bowl with a special polishing stone. Which areas look as if they have been polished?
9. The design on this container was inspired by ancient pottery designs and was meant as a symbol of thanksgiving for water. What about this bowl reminds you of water? Why do you think Maria and her husband would want to create the feeling of water on their pottery?
10. It is common in the Southwest for potters to refer to the various sections of bowls as parts of the human body. Where do you think the mouth is on this container? The lips? The neck? The stomach? The foot?
11. In what ways does this pot reflect the natural surroundings of the Pueblo people? What does the decoration on the pot tell you about the importance of rain and water? In what ways does this pot reflect harmony with the natural world?
12. Maria and her husband, Julian, were asked by a group of archaeologists to re-create the pottery and images of the ancient Pueblos. Why do you think this ancient pottery was important to the archaeologists? Why do you think it was important to Maria and Julian?
13. Traditionally Pueblo pottery was something families or communities made together. Maria thought of herself as simply one of many San Ildefonso potters, but she was encouraged to sign her work by collectors, tourists, and museums. Why do you think they wanted her to sign her work? Why do you think she signed it?
14. Compare this pot to the Cadzi Cody elk hide. In what way does each work reflect the environment of the people who made it? What do the materials and decoration tell you about the culture from which the work came? How does each work help preserve ancient traditions?
15. In what ways have both Elizabeth Catlett and Maria Martinez represented part of American history in their artwork? In what way has each artist represented and preserved her own cultural heritage? How have both artists worked to advance their causes within American society?



Grace Hartigan, American, 1922--2008

Billboard, 1957

Oil on canvas

H.78½ x W.87 inches

The Julia B. Bigelow Fund by John Bigelow, 57.35

Theme

Drawing on her experiences in New York during the 1950s, Grace Hartigan incorporated familiar elements of urban America into her work. In this celebration of personal expression, fragments of figures and abstract forms recall billboard images seen fleetingly from a highway.

Background

After World War II, America emerged as a great world leader. The arts flourished, and New York City replaced Paris as the art center of the Western world. One group of New York artists called Abstract Expressionists captured the speed, energy, and power of American life with a new way of painting. They were inspired by European artists who had immigrated to New York during the war and who encouraged the exploration of new styles and ideas. Drawing on the emotive power of European Expressionism and the poetic, psychological, and spontaneous aspects of Surrealism, American artists developed the revolutionary art style of abstract expressionism.

Less a unified style than an idea, the essence of Abstract Expressionism was the spontaneous assertion of the individual. The artists of this movement placed a high value on personal expression, rejecting realistic subject matter and attempting to infuse human emotion into abstract form. Their spontaneous gestural style, known as action painting, often revealed the raw physical vigor of the act of painting. The artists relied heavily on improvisation and chance effects and placed great emphasis on the process of painting. Accidental shapes, dribbles, splashes and strokes of paint became their subjects and revealed the creative process.

Abstract Expressionism became an international phenomenon during the late 1940s and continued into the 1950s. Soon younger artists flocked to New York to become part of the group known as the New York School. They adopted the energetic gestural style of the older Abstract Expressionists, but turned from purely abstract art to recognizable subjects—landscapes, still lifes, and figures. Grace Hartigan belongs to this “second generation” of Abstract Expressionists.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Pop Art movement also flourished in New York City. It was inspired by the consumer culture and commercialism that had become such an important part of American life. Several factors had led to a boom in product advertising and consumerism in the United States following World War II. After years of scarcity during the war, the American public was eager to buy new products, particularly cars. With increased production and ownership of automobiles, America became a car culture during the post-war years. As car owners became more mobile, suburbs grew up around many U.S. cities, and new homes filled with material possessions became a common measure of success. Commerce spread out from the inner city to the highway, and billboard advertisements reached the newly

mobilized audience. The introduction of television also brought commercial advertising into many American homes.

The Pop Artists of the 1950s and 1960s represented and often satirized images from American popular culture, drawing from sources such as television, comic strips, billboards, advertising, and the commerce of contemporary life. Some artists also used the techniques as well as the imagery of commercial art. Though Hartigan does not consider herself a Pop Artist, her early paintings can be seen as a bridge between Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art.

Billboard

In *Billboard* Grace Hartigan uses images from everyday life, drawing upon her experiences in New York City during the 1950s. The fragments of figures and forms in the painting recall billboard images seen fleetingly from the highway. Combining abstract and representational forms, Hartigan considers her art as “real” but not “realistic.”

Hartigan is fascinated by the accessible imagery and boldly simplified style of American advertising. In this painting, she draws upon advertisements she saw in *Life* magazine. The artist shows us a variety of fragmentary images such as a smiling face above a tube of Ipana toothpaste, the neck of a wine bottle poised over a glass, molded lime Jell-O surrounded by fruit, and the keys of a piano. These seemingly chaotic images are arranged into an ordered composition unified by Hartigan’s bold, expressive brushwork and balanced by her placement of colors on the canvas. As one critic wrote, she organizes the painting into “an irregular grid of color patches enclosing figures, faces, fruit and hints of objects alive somewhere in the depths of paint.”¹³ *Billboard* reflects Hartigan’s belief that “the rawness must be resolved into form and unity; without the ‘rage for order’ how can there be art?”¹⁴

The bold, gestural brushstrokes in *Billboard* clearly demonstrate Hartigan’s relationship to the Abstract Expressionist style. The spectator is invited to feel the “presence” of the artist and to experience the very process of painting through her large gestures and thickly applied paint. Hartigan has said that *Billboard* took her about one month to complete, but that she wanted it to look as if it had taken about an hour, because above all she wanted its spontaneity to shine through.

Color is the primary visual element in *Billboard*. In fact, Hartigan conceived of the work as a formal exercise in color manipulation. Using vivid colors and bold, dynamic brushstrokes, she infused the forms with energy and life, arranging them by size and intensity of color to balance the composition. No part of this painting seems to hold the viewer’s attention longer than another. Our eye wanders from one bright color and interesting shape to the next. Hartigan achieved this effect mainly through the careful use of complementary colors—red and green, blue and orange, yellow and purple. For example, the large rectangle of purple on the right is balanced by a smaller square of yellow (purple’s complement) on the left. The red of the circular apple is intensified by the surrounding green (red’s complement). The same green is repeated in the lower right corner, where it takes on a different appearance next to the analogous colors of blue and darker green. The careful balance of color in this work

¹³ Vicki Goldberg, “Grace Hartigan Still Hates Pop” *New York Times* August 15, 1993.

¹⁴ Statement in *Twelve Americans* exhibition catalogue, edited by Dorothy C. Miller (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1956), 53.

demonstrates Hartigan's belief that "you should be able to enter a painting like a promenade—that you should be able to walk in anywhere and walk out anywhere."¹⁵

Following as it did the total abstraction of the Abstract Expressionists, Hartigan's painting signaled a reintroduction of recognizable subject matter in art. This work predated the Pop movement of the 1960s and its satirical use of commercial, mechanical, and urban imagery. The artist has said, however, that she intended no social commentary with her painting. Instead, *Billboard* celebrates the exuberance of her bustling New York environment. She considers this a joyous painting filled with light and energy. She says that the viewer should observe all her paintings with the innocence of a child, without being too analytical. Using bright, vivid colors and the slapdash brushstrokes of action painting, she presents a jazzy, dynamic image of American life.

Technique

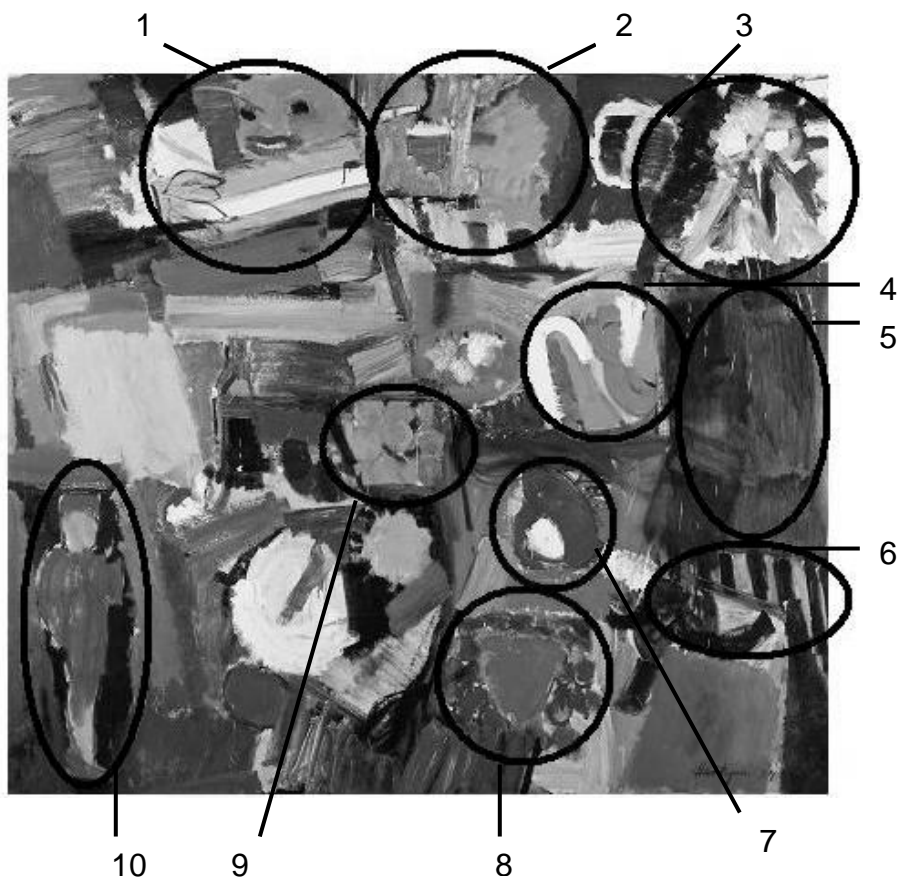
During a 1983 lecture at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Hartigan described the process by which *Billboard* was created. Inspired by American advertising, she began this work by selecting images from *Life* magazine that appealed to her because of their colors. (See diagram on page 42.) She preferred to use objects that she felt had "no energy or life of their own" so that she could infuse them with her own energy and joy of living. Next she cut the images out and pinned them up on a wall in the form of a collage on a background of purple paper. Using this collage as a model, she began to paint on the canvas, rearranging elements and adjusting the color as the work progressed.

As Hartigan painted these images, she continued to invent, improvise, and expand upon her initial idea, not knowing what the final product would be. This approach is the opposite of that used by Thomas Sully, who made careful drawings in his studio for his precisely composed painting.

¹⁵ Allen Barber, "Making Some Marks," *Arts* 48 (June, 1974), 49–51.

Images in *Billboard*

1. Ipana toothpaste smile and tube of toothpaste
2. Wine bottle and glass (only the neck of the bottle is visible)
3. Dole pineapple
4. Peaches and whipped cream from a food ad
5. Area of violet color: Windsor violet was the color of the background on which Hartigan arranged her collage. It seemed to fit into the plan, so she kept it.
6. Piano keys
7. Apple with a bite taken out
8. Lime Jell-O and fruit
9. Oranges
10. Figure from a Campbell soup ad



Artist

Grace Hartigan was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1922. She attended night school at the Newark College of Engineering, where she studied mechanical drafting. During World War II, she worked in an airplane factory, painting watercolor still lifes in her spare time. During this period she was also raising a son while her husband was in the army, as well as taking painting classes at night.

In 1945 Hartigan moved to New York to be in the center of the art world. Greatly influenced by the Abstract Expressionists, she quickly absorbed their spontaneous, abstract style, but she also became interested in the works of old European masters such as Raphael, Rubens, and Caravaggio. She became active in the milieu of the New York School, and lived in New York's colorful Lower East Side, which provided subject matter for many of her paintings.

Hartigan's first break occurred in 1950 when her work was exhibited in a New Talent exhibition juried by the critic Clement Greenberg and the art historian Meyer Shapiro. In 1951 she had her first one-woman show. In 1959 the Museum of Modern Art in New York sent an exhibition called "The New American Painting" to eight European countries. Grace Hartigan was the only woman included in this famous exhibition.

In 1960, after 3 failed marriages, Hartigan married a Johns Hopkins University research professor and moved with him to Baltimore, where she continued to paint until her death in 2008. Her work is represented in museums worldwide, and she is recognized as a major Abstract Expressionist artist.

Suggested Questions

- What objects do you see in this painting? Try to find the following things:

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Ipana toothpaste smile | Apple with a bite taken out |
| A wine bottle and glass | Lime Jell-O mold with fruit |
| Oranges | Figure from a soup ad |
| Dole pineapples | Peaches and whipped cream |
| Piano keys | |
- Which was the easiest to find? Which was the most difficult? What else do you see in this painting?
- Grace Hartigan uses many kinds of lines in this painting. Find at least one of each of the following kinds of lines: straight, curved, vertical, horizontal, diagonal, thick, thin, jagged. Where do you see lines formed by the edges of two colors meeting?
- Where do you see primary colors in this painting? Where do you see their complementary colors? Where do you see secondary colors? How many different shades of blue do you see? How many different shades of green do you see? Where do you see them?
- Where do you think Grace Hartigan used a wide brush to make her brushstrokes? Where do you think she used a smaller brush? How can you tell? Where did Hartigan use long brushstrokes? Where did she use short strokes?
- Where in this painting does the paint look thin? Where does it look thick? Where does it look as if Hartigan painted over other paint? Where do you see dripped paint? Do you think Hartigan painted quickly or slowly? Why?
- Grace Hartigan believes that “you should be able to enter a painting like a promenade - that you should be able to walk in anywhere and walk out anywhere.” If you could walk around in this painting, where would you go? Why? Pretend that you could walk only on the blue sections. How does it feel there? Is it warm? Cool? Moist? Hard? Soft? Why do you say that? Which sections of the painting might feel warm if you walked on them? Why?
- Imagine that you could hear this painting. What sounds would it make? Would they be loud or soft? Would you hear a single sound or many all at once? What about the painting makes you say that? Can you think of a song or a singing commercial that might fit this painting?
- How does this painting make you feel? Happy? Excited? Confused? Anxious? Bold? Why does it make you feel that way?
- This painting is called *Billboard*. What is a billboard? Describe a billboard you’ve seen. Where did you see it? What was the purpose of the billboard: Was it intended to (a) sell you something (b) warn you about something (c) direct you to some special place? Why

do you think Grace Hartigan titled her painting *Billboard*? If this painting were a billboard, what do you think it would advertise? Why do you say that?

11. Grace Hartigan wanted to express the lifestyle and feeling of New York City in this painting. By looking at this painting, what do you think it is like in New York City? What qualities do New York City and this painting share? Why do you think Hartigan painted the city in this way? Why didn't she just paint it the way it really looks?
12. Grace Hartigan wanted her painting to be both abstract and realistic. What about this painting is realistic? What about it is abstract? Would you say this painting is more realistic or more abstract?
13. The style of this painting is sometimes called Abstract Expressionism. Why do you think it is called this? Do you think Abstract Expressionism is a good name for this type of painting? Why or why not? Some artists prefer to call this type of painting *action painting* or *gesture painting*. Why might they prefer these names? Based on Hartigan's *Billboard*, which name do you think is most appropriate? Why? What name would you give to this style? Why?
14. Hartigan began *Billboard* by making a collage of flat, overlapping images taken from *Life* magazine. How is the painting similar to a collage? How is it different?
15. Do you think Grace Hartigan was more interested in the subject she was painting or how she was painting it? Why? Which do you think is more important? Why?
16. Compare and contrast Hartigan's modern image of New York City with Peto's *Reminiscences of 1865*. How does each painting reflect the time in which it was made? How do you think the artists feel about the time periods in which they were painting? Which painting do you like best? Why?
17. Compare and contrast Hartigan's modern image of New York City with *Mill Pond at Minneapolis*. How does each painting reflect the time in which it was made? How do you think the artists feel about the places they have painted? Which painting do you think is a more accurate picture of the place? Which is more complete? Why?



Elizabeth Catlett, American, 1915--2012
Sharecropper, 1957–1968
Color linocut
H.22 x W.19 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches (sheet, irregular)
The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund, P.97.1

Theme

Elizabeth Catlett has portrayed an African American sharecropper whose inner struggle, fortitude, and life of hard work are conveyed in this linocut.

Background

Throughout American history, African American artists have struggled for artistic independence and recognition in a dominant white society. The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and early 1930s was an important period in African American culture. During these years the Harlem district of New York City became a mecca for African American celebrities and artists. This was a time when black artists were officially recognized as a vital part of American culture. Publishers and art establishments in New York City encouraged and supported the development of black music, art, and literature. Diverse black artists were united by a strong desire to express their experience as African Americans and to celebrate black history and culture.

Prior to the Harlem Renaissance, professions in the arts were not open to most African Americans. The majority of black people lived in the South, where they were disenfranchised citizens separated from white people in almost every aspect of public life. Then events surrounding World War I helped nurture the development of a new cultural identity. Many black Americans proudly served in the war and felt a new sense of participation in their country. The war also spurred the continued growth of an industrial economy and created work opportunities in northern factories. In search of employment, education, liberation from political constraints and opportunities for a better life, thousands of black people began a mass migration from the South to the cities of the North. This fundamental change generated a sense of black identity, of community, and of self-confidence and optimism that many black Americans had not previously known. Gradually the spirit of the Harlem Renaissance extended to the whole country as more black Americans became involved in literary, artistic, and political pursuits.

Another important period for African American artists was the Depression of the 1930s, during which President Franklin Roosevelt initiated the Federal Arts Project of the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.). This project employed more than 5,000 artists whose work was commissioned to adorn public buildings across the nation. For the first time, significant numbers of African American artists were able to work full-time in their profession. Such patronage supported their participation in cultural life, ending the isolation that many had previously experienced.

The post-World War II period of the 1940s and 1950s was one of heightened activity for African American artists, who were increasingly awarded fellowships and opportunities for exhibitions and travel abroad. From the 1960s on, the civil rights movement was another force that

contributed to a growing interest in African American art and to the burgeoning of such institutions as African American museums, galleries and cultural centers. During this period, Black Studies programs were established on college and university campuses across the United States. Black educational institutions such as Howard University, Fisk University, and Hampton University also built art collections and trained artists. Among the many black teacher-artists who influenced a generation of students was Elizabeth Catlett. Her ideas and vision of the role of the black artist have earned her a unique place in the history of American art.

Sharecropper

Committed to creating art that is socially conscious, Elizabeth Catlett addresses issues of race and gender, especially the struggles of African American and Native American women. Her primary subjects in her prints and sculptures are mothers, social activists and working-class women, such as the sharecropper portrayed in this color linocut. Catlett believes that art can help achieve social change by provoking thought and by planting the seeds of change. She believes that art “should be a voice for the people, especially for those whose voices are quelled by social and political injustices.”¹⁶

In *Sharecropper*, Catlett portrays an elderly black woman whose face reflects a life of struggle and survival within a brutal social system. Sharecropping was a system of tenant farming that flourished in the southern United States after the Civil War and the end slavery. A sharecropper was one who agreed to farm the land of a landowner for a share of the crop. The landlord supplied seeds, tools, food, and clothing on credit, which the sharecropper was obligated to pay back after the crop was sold and the profits were split. Costs were usually so high that most sharecroppers could never repay their mounting debts. Although living conditions for sharecroppers were somewhat better than those of slaves, black people were still tied to the land with no other options for their livelihood.

While we do not know the name of the woman portrayed in this print or the details of her life, Catlett conveys a sense of her subject’s strength and dignity in the face of hardship and racial injustice. With her large straw hat and strong angular features, the woman has a compelling physical presence. Her age is suggested by her white hair and deeply lined skin, but her face, with its bold features, reveals an inner strength and vitality.

Catlett creates a heroic image with her unique style, which combines abstraction with naturalism. She is known for her treatment of the face as an image of racial identity and a record of human experience. Here she clearly articulates the subject’s features with some degree of naturalism, as seen in the woman’s brown skin, long neck, sad gazing eyes, full lips, and white curly hair. The artist also delineates carefully chosen details such as the weave of the straw hat, the creases of the woman’s clothing, and the lines of her skin. At the same time, she uses distortion with her stylized treatment of line and form. Catlett, who is also a sculptor, seems to have chiseled the sharp angles of the subject’s face, creating a mask-like effect. The woman appears to be three-dimensional. She has a sense of mass and volume that seems related to the artist’s sculptural work and gives the woman a weighty presence that reinforces her strength. The repetition of heavy, forceful lines in the work forms patterns that cover the entire surface, producing an intense feeling of rhythm and energy. The movement of the lines in

¹⁶ Samella S. Lewis and Richard J. Powell, *Elizabeth Catlett, Works on Paper, 1944–1992* (Hampton, Virginia: Hampton University Museum, 1993), 7.

various directions contributes to the power and dynamism of the image and charges it with emotional and psychological tension.

Catlett's expressive approach adds to the symbolic, universal quality of the image. She portrays not so much a specific individual as a symbol of every sharecropper, or perhaps of any person who has endured adversity. The viewer's low vantage point causes the subject to loom above us, with her upper torso, head, and hat filling the frame. The importance of her hat is emphasized by its large size, emphatic detail, and careful placement in the composition. It is slightly cropped at the edges, enhancing its presence and reminding us of the woman's difficult work in the hot sun.

The artist's limited use of color—brown, yellow-green, black, and white—creates dramatic contrast and impact, focusing our attention on specific areas. Catlett emphasizes the sharecropper's brown skin, which contrasts with the print's overall black-and-white surface. Defining the woman's posture and demeanor, the bright yellow-green of her garment also shows off the black-and-white safety pin that clasps her jacket, a poignant sign of her poverty. Yet her pose, facial expression, and prominent placement within the composition evoke a spirit of determination, inner strength, and dignity.

Technique

Sharecropper is a linocut, or linoleum cut, a popular type of relief print made by a process similar to making a woodcut. The tactile quality of its heavily worked surface was achieved by a technique of cutting away linoleum with a carving tool. A linocut employs a block constructed of a layer of thick linoleum glued to a piece of wood. The soft linoleum surface is easily carved with tools similar to those used in woodcarving—chisels, gouges, and special knives. The parts that are to print white are cut away, leaving the black lines in relief. Separate blocks are made to create each color area. The block is inked with a brayer (hand roller) and printed either by hand or in a press.

In an interview, Catlett said:

I learned technique from traditional, establishment schools, and it took me a long time to realize that technique was the main thing to learn from them. But technique is so important! It's the difference between art and ineptitude... You can't make a statement if you can't speak the language; here it's the language of the people, the language of art.¹⁷

Artist

Born in Washington, D.C., in 1915, Elizabeth Catlett was the daughter of parents who were both trained as teachers. Her father, who taught math at Tuskegee Institute and in Washington schools, died of tuberculosis six months before her birth. To support her family, her mother worked as a truant officer in the Washington public schools. Catlett was a precocious child, showing early signs of drawing skills in elementary school. In high school she decided to become an artist.

¹⁷ Lewis, 148.

Catlett attended Howard University, where she studied painting with James Porter, who helped shape her views. He introduced her to the work of Mexican mural painters such as Diego Rivera, who were an important influence on her development. After graduating from Howard in 1937, Catlett became an art teacher in a high school in Durham, North Carolina, but she earned wages lower than those of the white teachers and soon decided to leave the position. During this period, she became increasingly concerned about the plight of the poor and the oppressed, deepening her social and political commitment.

In 1940, Catlett enrolled in the newly founded Master of Fine Arts program at the University of Iowa, which offered the opportunity to study with the preeminent artist Grant Wood, an important influence on her career. Wood encouraged her to paint what she knew best, which was life as an African American, and he also influenced her decision to change her emphasis from painting to sculpture. After earning her degree, she taught briefly at Dillard University in New Orleans. She then moved to Harlem in New York City, where she became associated with a group of black intellectuals, musicians, and artists that included the poet Langston Hughes, the writer Ralph Ellison, and the artists Aaron Douglas, Jacob Lawrence, and Romare Bearden. Catlett became involved in various black cultural, social, and political organizations in Harlem. She also studied with the French sculptor Ossip Zadkine, who encouraged her to experiment in figural abstraction.

In 1946 Catlett received a Rosenwald Fellowship and went to Mexico to study. She began work at the Taller de Grafica Popular (Workshop for Popular Graphic Art), a collective of artists, including some of Mexico's most distinguished printmakers, who collaborated to effect social change through their art. She soon married the artist Francisco Mora, and between 1947 and 1955 their three sons were born. During this period, Catlett focused on printmaking since she had neither the time nor the space required for making sculpture. She became a citizen of Mexico and for many years headed the Sculpture Department of the National University of Mexico. In 1976 she retired from teaching and moved with her husband to the city of Cuernavaca, where she increasingly produced monumental sculpture. Elizabeth Catlett made frequent visits to the United States, where she often participated in lectures, workshops, and exhibitions. Catlett died at her home in Mexico at the age of 96. Though she has been warmly accepted in her adopted country, her identity as an African American has continued to inspire her work. Receiving wide recognition, her art has been exhibited throughout the world.

Suggested Questions

1. What kinds of lines do you see in this print? Where do you see long lines? Where do you see short lines? Angular lines? What kinds of lines has Catlett used on the woman's face? What kind of lines has she used for the woman's hair? The background? Are all the lines moving in the same direction?
2. Point to at least three areas where you see repetition. What is being repeated?
3. What do you think this woman's hat would feel like if you could touch it? How can you tell?
4. Is this woman inside or outside? What do you think the weather is like? What makes you say that?

5. What has Catlett done to make the figure stand out from the background?
6. What does this woman's facial expression tell you about her? What do you think she is feeling? How can you tell? What can you tell about her by looking at her clothes?
7. How old do you think this woman is? How can you tell? Do you think she is rich or poor? What makes you say that? What signs of poverty has Catlett included in this portrait?
8. What might this woman do for a living? What makes you say that? Do you think she looks strong or weak? Why? Do you think this woman is physically strong or mentally strong? Which do you think is stronger—her muscles or her will? Why?
9. From what viewpoint has Catlett shown this woman? Why do you think she chose this viewpoint? Why do you think Catlett chose to portray only the head and shoulders of this sharecropper instead of the whole body? Why do you think Catlett showed us such a close view of the woman?
10. Is this a portrait of a particular woman or of sharecroppers in general?
11. Sharecroppers were people who farmed land owned by a landowner in exchange for a share of the crop. The landowner supplied seeds, tools, food, and clothing on credit until the crop was sold and the profits were made. Costs were so high, however, that many sharecroppers could not meet their debts and were tied to the land with no other options for their livelihood. Do you think the life of the sharecropper was an improvement over slavery? Why or why not?
12. Elizabeth Catlett believes that art "should be a voice for the people, especially for those voices quelled by social and political injustices." In what way is this print a "voice for the people"? Who does this print speak for? How can art help achieve social change?
13. Compare this portrait to Sully's portrait of George Washington. How are the two portraits similar? How is each person made to appear strong? In what way is each person portrayed as an American hero? Can a person be a hero even if he or she is not famous?
14. This is a relief print. It was made by carving into a soft block of linoleum, rolling ink onto the linoleum, and then pressing a piece of paper on to the inked linoleum. Why do you think this kind of process is called "printmaking?" How is this similar to a fingerprint or a footprint?
15. Many kitchen and bathroom floors are made out of linoleum. Do you have any linoleum in your house? What kind of tool do you think you would need to carve linoleum?