

4 Seated Figures



4 Seated Figures, 2002

That's a Wrap

Magdalena Abakanowicz (1930–2017) is best known for figures like these. She modeled them using burlap mixed with resin and glue, which she applied to a mold made from an actual human form.

Take a closer look

Though created using the same mold, the figures each have unique qualities. For many viewers, their texture evokes tree bark, mummy wrappings, exposed musculature, or insect exoskeletons.

Something to talk about

The artist deliberately chose to present these figures as headless, armless, and backless. How might we experience the work differently if they were complete?

Who knew?

Born in Poland, Abakanowicz saw firsthand many of the horrors of World War II and its aftermath. Her works speak to her own history and that of her country, but also to our experience as human beings.

Magdalena Abakanowicz, *4 Seated Figures*, 2002; Burlap, resin, and iron rods, 53½ x 24¼ x 99¼ inches (overall); National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the artist



Berenice Abbott

Edna St. Vincent Millay



Eva Le Gallienne



Edna St. Vincent Millay, ca. 1927

Eva Le Gallienne, ca. 1927

Ready for a Close-Up

In much of her work, **Berenice Abbott (1898–1991)** depicts progressive residents of burgeoning cities. Her portraits feature asymmetrical compositions, dramatic lighting, and unusual poses. They defy conventions and celebrate new ideas about society, art, and identity.

Take a closer look

An adopter of straight photography, Abbott rarely manipulated her negatives. She provided an honest representation of each sitter instead of an idealized image.

In her own words

"The world doesn't like independent women, why, I don't know, but I don't care."

Who knew?

The artist pictured influential, creative women of her day. These portraits honor Edna St. Vincent Millay, Pulitzer Prize-winning writer and feminist activist, and Eva Le Gallienne, lesbian actress and advocate of noncommercial theater.

Berenice Abbott, *Edna St. Vincent Millay*, ca. 1927; Vintage silver print, 11½ x 9¾ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay

Berenice Abbott, *Eva Le Gallienne*, ca. 1927; Vintage silver print, 4½ x 6¾ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © Berenice Abbott





Swiss Miss

A radical painter, engraver, and mixed-media artist, Swiss-born Alice Bailly explored various approaches to abstraction in France prior to World War I.



Self-Portrait, 1917

Take a closer look

Alice Bailly (1872–1938) was more interested in stylistic experimentation than in capturing her exact likeness in this self-portrait. She indicates her round glasses and bobbed hair, but transforms her torso and hands into elongated, faceted forms and dark outlines.

Something to talk about

Compare Bailly's self-portrait to *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Leon Trotsky* (1937) by Frida Kahlo (1907–1954), also in the museum's collection. What does each work tell us about its subject's physical appearance and personality? How are the artists' approaches similar or different?

Who knew?

In her early 20s, Bailly accepted a position as an art teacher. On her first day she suffered a panic attack and quit instantly.

Alice Bailly, *Self-Portrait*, 1917; Oil on canvas, 32 x 23½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth





Material World

Lynda Benglis has created art from wax, liquid latex, neon lights, ceramics, polyurethane foam, and metal. She chooses her materials based on their physical properties and cultural references to evoke many different associations and emotions in viewers.



Eridanus, 1984

Take a closer look

Lynda Benglis (b. 1941) often has one material masquerade as another. In *Eridanus* she transformed wire, bronze, zinc, copper, and aluminum into a form resembling knotted cloth. Benglis titled the work after a constellation, but intends for viewers to interpret it for themselves.

In her own words

"I was attracted to [metals] because of the notions of energy that the metals have, and [like a] muskrat, you are attracted by something that shines."

Who knew?

Star maps often portray Eridanus as a river flowing from the constellation Aquarius. Ancient Greeks associated Eridanus's haphazard path with the veering flight of Phaëton, son of Apollo, when he unsuccessfully sought to steer the sun chariot.

Lynda Benglis, *Eridanus*, 1984; Bronze, zinc, copper, aluminum, and wire, 58 x 48 x 37 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of AT&T, Inc.; Art © Lynda Benglis/
Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY





If the Shoe Fits

There is no need to have Cinderella's tiny feet to fit into this elegant slipper. A size 10, it represents Mirella Bentivoglio's own shoe size—of which she is proud.



Mirella Cinderella, 1997

Take a closer look

Book objects like this one challenge conventional definitions of "book" and "sculpture." Here, **Mirella Bentivoglio (b. 1922)** presents us with two books: one with tactile-looking pages that cannot be turned; another with real pages, but no content.

In her own words

"I work like a poet and an alchemist because I mix ingredients that already exist, such as words, and I use objects as 'signs.' I assemble and sometimes modify these ingredients, and give them a poetic meaning."

Who knew?

Bentivoglio created her first book objects after helping save ancient texts damaged by the 1966 flood in Florence, Italy. The fragility of those books influenced her decision to use materials that could not be easily destroyed.

Mirella Bentivoglio, *Mirella Cinderella*, 1997; Marble, china, and paper, 5¼ x 9¾ x 8 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the artist; © Mirella Bentivoglio



Après la tempête (After the Storm)



Drama Queen

Though known as an actress, Sarah Bernhardt sculpted more than 50 works. Always dramatic, Bernhardt posed for photographs wearing her “sculptor’s outfit,” which included a long lace-trimmed jacket, trousers, and low-heeled pumps.



Après la tempête (After the Storm), ca. 1876

Take a closer look

Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923) transformed cold marble into smooth and wrinkled skin, frothy sea foam, and a coarse fishing net. Complex both in technique and narrative, this sculpture is considered by critics to be Bernhardt's most ambitious work.

Something to talk about

In *Après la tempête*, a woman from the north coast of France cradles her grandson after a storm at sea has passed. Look carefully at Bernhardt's handling of the figures. What evidence suggests this story might have a happy ending? A tragic one?

Who knew?

Ever the eccentric, Bernhardt kept a menagerie of animals in the walled garden of her London home. In fact, she sold this work to purchase a cheetah, a wolf, and six chameleons—one of which rode on her shoulder.

Sarah Bernhardt, *Après la tempête (After the Storm)*, ca. 1876; White marble, 29½ x 24 x 23 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



The Highland Raid



The Highland Raid, 1860

Grazed and Confused

Acclaimed for her sympathetic renderings of fauna, French painter **Rosa Bonheur (1822–1899)** led an unconventional life. The bold Bonheur smoked, rode astride, and collected an animal menagerie. She even obtained legal permission to wear trousers, allowing her easier access to her subjects.

Take a closer look

Bonheur's attention to details reinforces the overall mood of this painting. Glazed eyes, gaping mouths, and striding legs imply distress and haste. Ominous gray clouds compete with the sun while oblique rain showers, blowing grass, and windswept spittle underscore blustery conditions.

In her own words

"I care nothing for the fashionable. A portrait painter has need of these things, but not I, who find all that is wanted in my dogs, my horses, my hinds, and my stags of the forest."

Who knew?

The artist sketched her subjects from life before composing paintings in the studio. Her subject matter was an unusual choice since 19th-century female painters typically rendered portraits and domestic subjects.

Rosa Bonheur, *The Highland Raid*, 1860; Oil on canvas, 51 x 84 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photograph by Lee Stalworth





Acid Rain, 2001

All Tired Out

Chakaia Booker (b. 1953) recycles tires into visually fascinating artworks. She twists, cuts, weaves, and rivets them into spiraling tendrils and prickled forms. For her, tires mirror our lifecycle from birth to death—their deep treads wear smooth over time.

Take a closer look

Booker wants us to have many associations with her sculptures. You may be reminded of natural forms, industrial production, African textile patterns and skin markings, environmental concerns, or something entirely different.

In her own words

“Art is storytelling, but the story is open, fluid, mysterious.”

Who knew?

Acid Rain comprises 12 sections that are installed together to create the work. Each of these sections weighs about 200 pounds. Adding up to more than a ton in total, it is among the heaviest, and largest, works in the museum's collection.

Chakaia Booker, *Acid Rain*, 2001; Rubber tires and wood, 120 x 240 x 36 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Museum purchase: Members' Acquisition Fund; © Chakaia Booker; Photograph by Lee Stalworth



Spider III



Spider III, 1995

Spider Woman

Late in her career, **Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010)** revisited themes from her past. She drew her first spider in 1947. When Bourgeois returned to the motif in the mid-1990s, she depicted these eight-legged creatures in two and three dimensions, at large and small scales.

Take a closer look

Take a moment to view *Spider III* from various angles. Consider how these changes in perspective affect the details you notice and your response to the work.

Something to talk about

While spiders can be a source of fear or anxiety for many, Bourgeois recognized her mother's characteristics in these protective, resourceful creatures. What do they evoke for you? Which animal would you choose to represent you? Why?

In her own words

"'The female spider' has a bad reputation—a stinger, a killer. I rehabilitate her. If I have to rehabilitate her it is because I feel criticized."

Who knew?

Before her own work graced galleries and museums, Bourgeois introduced visitors to her artistic predecessors as a docent at the Louvre Museum in Paris.

Louise Bourgeois, *Spider III*, 1995; Bronze, 19 x 33 x 33 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wilhelmina Cole Holladay; Art © The Easton Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth





Merchant of Venice

Venetian-born Rosalba Carriera popularized pastel as a medium for serious portraiture rather than for mere preparatory sketches. She spent most of her long life fulfilling commissions for distinguished patrons from courts across Europe.



America, ca. 1730

Take a closer look

Pastel—pure, powdered pigment bound into sticks—lends itself to soft-edged forms with remarkably clear detail.

Rosalba Carriera (1675–1757) skillfully used the medium to achieve the figure's naturalistic flesh tones and glinting jeweled headband.

Something to talk about

Eighteenth-century artists often personified the continents by using female figures in characteristic clothing and accessories. Based on details like the feather hair ornament, how do you think Carriera and her European contemporaries stereotyped America and its inhabitants?

Who knew?

Carriera enjoyed such extensive fame that for subsequent women artists to be called a “modern Rosalba” was high praise. Renowned French portraitist Élisabeth Louise Vigée-LeBrun (1755–1842), also in the museum's collection, earned the moniker long after Carriera's death.

Rosalba Carriera, *America*, ca. 1730; Pastel on paper mounted on canvas, 16½ x 13 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Purchased with funds donated by Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Samhain Skin



Under My Skin

English-born Leonora Carrington absorbed Irish legends and stories she heard as a child. This work's title references the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced SAH-win), celebrating summer's end.



Samhain Skin, 1975

Take a closer look

Leonora Carrington (1917–2011) never revealed the meaning of this work. She populated it with creatures representing Sidhe, a magical race from whom her grandmother claimed to be descended. The nonsensical text is primarily mirror writing referencing Gaelic history.

Something to talk about

Akin to the work of like-minded Surrealists, *Samhain Skin* invites and eludes interpretation. What is recognizable in this piece? What confuses you? Try crafting a story that this work might illustrate.

In her own words

“The stories my grandmother told me were fixed in my mind and they gave me mental pictures that I would later sketch on paper.”

Who knew?

Carrington befriended Remedios Varo (1908–1963), also in the museum's collection. They originally met in Paris in the 1930s, but did not become close until both moved to Mexico during World War II.

Leonora Carrington, *Samhain Skin*, 1975; Gouache on vellum, 47¼ x 32¾ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © 2015 Estate of Leonora Carrington/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



The Bath



Mother Louise Nursing Her Child



The Bath, 1891

Mother Louise Nursing Her Child, 1899

Baby Boom

Mary Cassatt (1844–1926) explored the nuanced relationships between mothers and children. While she objected to being stereotyped as a “lady” painter, Cassatt created an expansive body of work that illustrates her commitment to representing experiences of modern women.

Take a closer look

A prolific printmaker, Cassatt expertly evoked affectionate moments. Her prints are distinguished by their radical economy of line. Note the simple shapes and limited detail. Through these minimal means, the artist maximized the visual and emotional impact of such scenes.

Who knew?

Though associated with domesticity and maternity, Cassatt never married or had children. She believed that single life proved more conducive to a successful artistic career. Cassatt prioritized her independence but remained close to family, frequently using them as subjects.

Mary Cassatt, *The Bath*, 1891; Soft-ground etching with aquatint and drypoint on paper, 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

Mary Cassatt, *Mother Louise Nursing Her Child*, 1899; Etching with drypoint on paper, 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 9 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches (overall); National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Two Generations



Two Generations, 1979

Artful Activism

The granddaughter of former slaves, **Elizabeth Catlett (1915–2012)** was born and raised in Washington, D.C. At Howard University, she studied design with Lois Mailou Jones (1905–1998). Later, she turned to sculpture and printmaking through which she advocated for social change.

Take a closer look

Two Generations illustrates Catlett's skill as a printmaker. The dramatic play of light and shadow reveals her subjects' physical features and psychological complexity. Here, the artist invites us to consider the relationship and life experiences of these individuals.

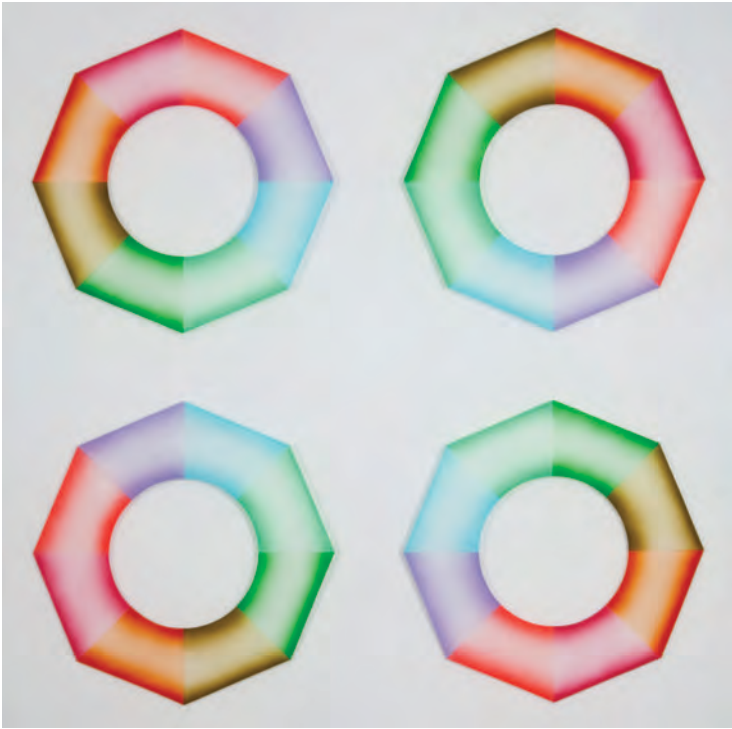
In her own words

"I learned that art is not something that people learn to do individually, that who does it is not important, but its use and its effects on people are what is most important."

Elizabeth Catlett, *Two Generations*, 1979; Lithograph on paper, 17 x 20¼ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Dorothy Stauffer Lyddon; Art © Elizabeth Catlett/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY



Pasadena Lifesavers Red #4



Test Plate for Virginia Woolf
from The Dinner Party



Pasadena Lifesavers Red #4, 1969–70

Test Plate for Virginia Woolf from The Dinner Party, 1978

Core Values

In her early work, feminist artist **Judy Chicago (b. 1939)** sought to express the experiences of women through abstract forms that refer to an anatomical center. These pieces illustrate such “central-core imagery.”

Take a closer look

Circular, ovular, floral, and butterfly shapes recur throughout Chicago’s work. While her techniques have changed over time, those foundational forms remain. Compare the crisp, colorful contours of *Pasadena Lifesavers Red #4* with the curvilinear layers of *Test Plate for Virginia Woolf*.

In her own words

“I am trying to make art that relates to the deepest and most mythic concerns of humankind, and I believe that, at this moment of history, feminism is humanism.”

Judy Chicago, *Pasadena Lifesavers Red #4*, 1969–70; Sprayed acrylic lacquer on acrylic, 60 x 60 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of MaryRoss Taylor in memory of Carlota S. Smith; © Judy Chicago; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

Judy Chicago, *Test Plate for Virginia Woolf* from *The Dinner Party*, 1978; Glazed porcelain, 10 x 14 x 14 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Elizabeth A. Sackler in honor of Wilhelmina Cole Holladay and the twentieth anniversary of the National Museum of Women in the Arts; © 1978 Judy Chicago; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Afro Abe II



Cotton to Hair



Afro Abe II, 2012

Cotton to Hair, 2012

Hair Raising

Broken combs, dog-eared currency, Confederate flags, and even human hair find renewed purpose in the hands of **Sonya Clark (b. 1967)**. She challenges us to reconsider our assumptions by borrowing and transforming meanings people assign to things.

Take a closer look

Observe how the twisted and knotted threads in Lincoln's "Black is Beautiful" Afro resemble the engraved curvilinear details embellishing the bill. Notice the similarities in shape, size, and texture between the cotton and the hair emerging from burst bolls.

Something to talk about

Clark uses hair—real and reinterpreted—to explore issues of race and commodification in the United States. In what ways might these works suggest that harvesting valuable crops comes at a human cost?

In her own words

"Hair is a primordial fiber. It's the first thread we handle."

Sonya Clark, *Afro Abe II*, 2012; Five-dollar bill and hand-embroidered thread, 4 x 6 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection, © Sonya Y.S. Clark; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

Sonya Clark, *Cotton to Hair*, 2012; Bronze, human hair, and cotton, 14½ x 12½ x 5 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Tony Podesta Collection, Washington D.C.; © Sonya Clark; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Young Girl with a Sheaf



Amazing Grace

In *Young Girl with a Sheaf*, Camille Claudel depicted a female figure leaning against a bundle of wheat. Claudel was able to study from nude models, rare for a 19th-century woman. As a result, she rendered the human form with intimacy and grace.



Young Girl with a Sheaf, ca. 1890

Take a closer look

Camille Claudel (1864–1943) originally modeled this piece in clay and then cast it in bronze. Looking closely, we can see where she manipulated the clay to achieve different textures.

Something to talk about

Claudel and Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923), also in the museum's collection, were contemporaries. Their works highlight two distinct styles yet share some similarities. Find Bernhardt's *Après la tempête (After the Storm)* (ca. 1876). What do they have in common? How are they different?

Who knew?

Claudel studied and collaborated with noted French sculptor Auguste Rodin. Scholars believe she contributed to some of his works, including *The Gates of Hell* (1880–1917) and *The Burghers of Calais* (1884–95).

Camille Claudel, *Young Girl with a Sheaf*, ca. 1890; Bronze, 14½ x 7 x 7½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Single Rose



Early American, Tea Cakes and Sherry



Single Rose, 1997

Early American, Tea Cakes and Sherry,
2007

Faux Real

Before picking up her camera, **Sharon Core (b. 1965)** creates meticulous tableaus that bring paintings of the past to life. Her appropriations revere and reinvent traditional genres.

Take a closer look

The artist plays with concepts of authenticity, artifice, and originality, confounding viewers' perceptions. Bewilderingly beautiful rose petals are purportedly made of pigs' ears. A delectable still life is an uncanny photographic imitation of Raphaelle Peale's 1818 painting *Still Life with Cake*.

Something to talk about

Core's working method includes purchasing period tableware; cultivating heirloom plants and vegetables; and baking and decorating confections. How does knowing more about her extensive process change your impressions of her works?

In her own words

"The paintings on which they are modeled were painstakingly painted to appear as real as possible, so I go to great pains to come at the image from another direction—to mirror it."

Sharon Core, *Single Rose*, 1997; Chromogenic color print, 14 x 13 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Sharon Core, courtesy of the artist and Yancey Richardson Gallery; Photograph by Lee Stalworth

Sharon Core, *Early American, Tea Cakes and Sherry*, 2007; Chromogenic color print, 13¾ x 17½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Sharon Core, courtesy of the artist and Yancey Richardson Gallery; Photograph by Lee Stalworth





Light My Candle

Wax intrigued Petah Coyne as she watched it melt, drip, congeal, and harden throughout churches in Europe during a trip in the early 1990s. A gift of candles blessed by the Pope inspired the artist's first wax sculpture and ignited her interest in the medium.



Untitled #781, 1994

Take a closer look

Untitled #781, like many sculptures by **Petah Coyne (b. 1953)**, hangs from the ceiling by shrouded chains, an unconventional approach that captures viewers' attention. Suspending the work ensures that the encrusted metal armature won't crush the delicate wax accretions.

Something to talk about

Coyne experiments with a range of mediums besides wax—sand, taxidermied animals, and dead fish, for example. What do you imagine might be the benefits of using non-traditional materials for sculpture? Challenges?

In her own words

"They look fragile, but they're not. Like women, they're really tough inside."

Who knew?

Coyne originally struggled to work with wax due to its fragility and low melting point. To stabilize future sculptures, she worked with a chemist who developed a formula for a wax that can survive temperatures from 40 to 180 degrees.

Petah Coyne, *Untitled #781*, 1994; Specially formulated wax, pigment, candles, silk/rayon ribbon, steel, chicken-wire fencing, cable, cable nuts, quick-link shackles, jaw-to-jaw swivel, chain, silk Duchesse satin, Velcro, thread, paper towels, and plastic, 62 x 35 x 44 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Steven Scott, Baltimore, in honor of the artist; © Petah Coyne, courtesy Galerie Lelong, New York; Photograph by Lee Stalworth



George III child's rattle



Shake, Rattle, and Roll

This toy—a “coral-and-bells”—includes a whistle, rattle, and coral teething surface. Silversmiths often incorporated coral into rattles as it was believed to promote health and good fortune. At a time of high infant mortality, these objects served as amulets and amusements.



George III child's rattle, London, 1808

Take a closer look

This rattle engages our eyes and a child's developing senses. Smooth coral adds a pop of color and soothes teething gums. A whistle and jingling bells entertain. Engraved decorations add texture. Light plays across the reflective silver, delighting young and old.

Something to talk about

Rattles are among the oldest recorded playthings still in use today. Early versions were made of materials less durable than silver, like clay or dried fruits containing seeds. Discuss the toys that delighted and distracted you as a child. What were they made of?

Who knew?

More than 300 women silversmiths worked in England between the late-17th and mid-19th centuries. These expert artisans acted as teachers, instructing apprentices in their craft. Records indicate that **Mary Ann Crosswell (ca. 1775–?)** taught the trade to her son Henry in 1819.

Mary Ann Crosswell (attributed), *George III child's rattle*, London, 1808; Silver with coral, 5½ inches long; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Silver collection assembled by Nancy Valentine, purchased with funds donated by Mr. and Mrs. Oliver R. Grace and family; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Bacchus #3

Elaine de Kooning



NATIONAL MUSEUM
OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS

Bacchus #3, 1978

Raucous Bacchus

Elaine de Kooning (1918–1989) often worked in series, single-mindedly attending to one theme. *Bacchus #3* references the Roman god of wine and agriculture. It is one of more than 60 canvases she created in response to a 19th-century sculpture in Paris's Luxembourg Gardens.

Take a closer look

This piece appears abstract, but upon closer inspection the energetic black lines reveal figures. De Kooning frames a recumbent, inebriated deity with vibrant greens and blues. Find his limp limbs and bloated belly at the top of the composition.

Something to talk about

The artist often combined abstraction and figuration. What do her stylistic choices add to your interpretation of the work?

In her own words

“My whole approach to painting, whether it's abstract painting or portraits, is that I place a value on ideas that are difficult to put into words.”

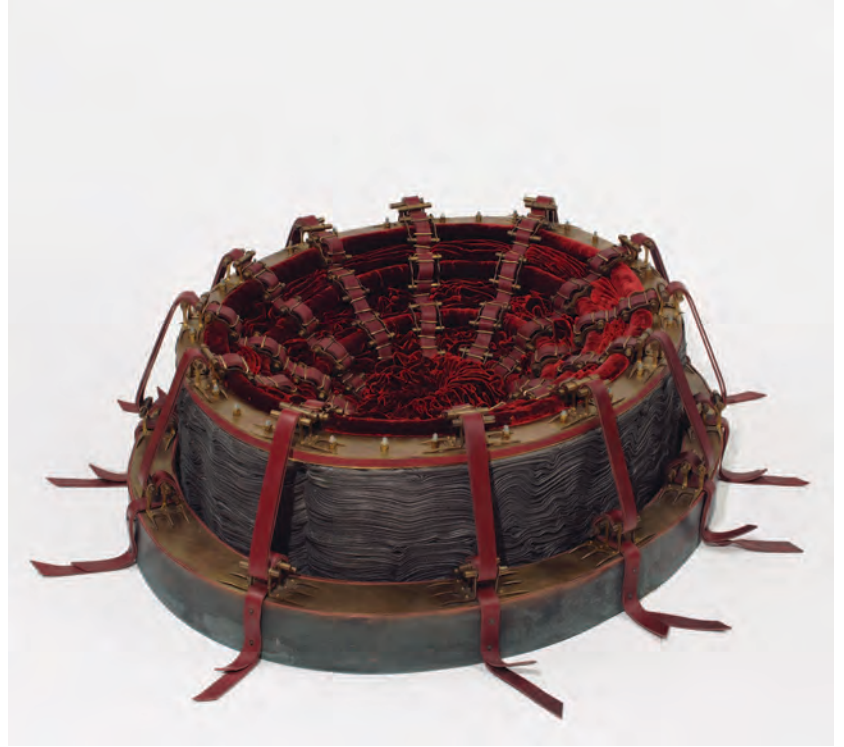
Elaine de Kooning, *Bacchus #3*, 1978; Acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 78 x 50 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © Elaine de Kooning; Photograph by Lee Stalworth



Don't Touch My Waist



Red



Don't Touch My Waist, 1998

Red, 1999

Restraining Order

Sculptor **Cathy de Monchaux (b. 1960)** crafts uncanny objects that both entice and threaten. She intends their ornamental extravagance to invite myriad associations, real and imagined.

Take a closer look

De Monchaux's incongruous sculptures appear hard and soft; mechanical and organic; strange and familiar. The tempting tactility of lush velvet, supple leather, and gleaming metal beckons us closer. With proximity, what seemed inviting and luxurious may appear repellent and dangerous.

Something to talk about

The artist's works have drawn comparisons with medieval torture devices, human anatomy, Gothic architecture, and Victorian brothels. What do these pieces evoke for you?

In her own words

"Maybe it's more like when you are walking down the street and something catches your eye and you try to make sense of it. That's the way I want the objects to work in the context of the gallery situation."

Cathy de Monchaux, *Don't Touch My Waist*, 1998; Brass, leather, artificial fur, recycled real fur, scrim, lead, chalk, and thread, 46½ x 41¾ x 3¾ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Cathy de Monchaux; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

Cathy de Monchaux, *Red*, 1999; Brass, copper, velvet, leather, canvas, steel, graphite, and thread, 14 x 46 x 34 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Cathy de Monchaux; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Dorothy Dehner

Looking North F



NATIONAL MUSEUM
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Looking North F, 1964

New York State of Mind

An animal? A country landscape? Visitors have interpreted this work in many ways. **Dorothy Dehner (1901–1994)** was actually inspired by the view from her studio at 41 Union Square in New York City.

Take a closer look

Dehner created this sculpture using wax and then had it cast in bronze. This process makes the sculptor's touch visible, giving texture to the work. Look closely to find each smear, scratch, smudge, and splatter.

In her own words

"I wanted to work in wax because I liked the idea of it; it's so malleable and yet it isn't messy like clay.... It was a great revelation."

Who knew?

Dehner was a dancer, actress, and painter before she began sculpting at 54. However, the artist's work in this new medium came naturally, and she continued to hone her craft for the remaining decades of her life.

Dorothy Dehner, *Looking North F*, 1964; Bronze, 21¼ x 64 x 7¼ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the artist; © Dorothy Dehner Foundation For The Visual Arts; Photograph by Lee Stalworth



De Panne, Belgium



Tiergarten, Berlin, Germany,
July 4, 1999



De Panne, Belgium, 1992–08–07

Tiergarten, Berlin, Germany, July 4, 1999,
1999

Girl Interrupted

Rineke Dijkstra (b. 1959) selects a site to photograph before choosing her sitter. She visits public places, such as beaches or parks, and gauges their spirit and energy. She then invites passersby to serve as her models amid the local surroundings.

Take a closer look

Dijkstra often chooses subjects facing life's transitions, such as teenagers, pregnant women, new mothers, and recently enlisted soldiers. Rather than directing her subjects, she lets them find a natural pose. The models' awareness of their bodies and direct gazes create intimate and intense images.

In her own words

"I try and look for an uninhibited moment, where people forget about trying to control the image of themselves."

Who knew?

The artist often visits the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam for inspiration. She is particularly drawn to Old Masters, like Johannes Vermeer and Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, because of their use of light and psychological exploration of the figure.

Rineke Dijkstra, *De Panne, Belgium, 1992–08–07*; Chromogenic color print, 15½ x 12½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection

Rineke Dijkstra, *Tiergarten, Berlin, Germany, July 4, 1999, 1999*; Chromogenic color print, 19½ x 17 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection



Bullets Revisited #3



Bullets Revisited #3, 2012

Beauty and the East

Moroccan-born **Lalla Essaydi (b. 1956)** questions stereotypes imposed on her by West and East. Her depictions challenge voyeuristic male fantasies of seductive nudes prominent in 19th-century Western painting. Equally, they address gender issues in Islamic culture.

Take a closer look

Consider the artwork from afar. Move closer. The shimmering, mosaic-like backdrop resolves into its component parts—polished bullet casings. For Essaydi, these evoke violence and reference her fears about growing restrictions on women in the Arab world.

In her own words

“Beauty is quite dangerous, as it lures the viewer into accepting the fantasy.”

Who knew?

Essaydi uses henna to write stream-of-consciousness Arabic calligraphy on her models. Henna painting—applying patterns on women’s skin for major life events—is a female tradition. Calligraphy, on the other hand, is a male practice. The artist subverts gender norms by merging art forms.

Lalla Essaydi, *Bullets Revisited #3*, 2012; Three chromogenic prints mounted to aluminum, 66 x 150 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Purchased with funds provided by Jacqueline Badger Mars, Sunny Scully Alsup and William Alsup, Mr. Sharad Tak and Mrs. Mahinder Tak, Marcia and Frank Carlucci, and Nancy Nelson Stevenson; © Lalla Essaydi



Lavinia Fontana

Portrait of a Noblewoman



Dear Dowry

The sumptuous garments and jewels adorning this woman in her wedding portrait are part of her dowry—the wealth she brings to her marriage. Unlike this sitter and other women of the day, Lavinia Fontana did not have to meet this requirement because of her earning potential as an artist.



Portrait of a Noblewoman, ca. 1580

Take a closer look

The nobility of Bologna sought **Lavinia Fontana (1552–1614)** for portrait commissions. Her ability to portray fabric textures and intricate jewelry—seen clearly in this work—appealed to her status-conscious patrons.

Something to talk about

During the Renaissance, portraits were never simply created to represent the likeness of the sitter. Consider Fontana's handling of costume, expression, and pose. What do such details communicate about this young woman's character, mood, and social standing?

Who knew?

Incorporated symbols suggest this sitter embodied qualities of an ideal 16th-century bride. The marten pelt suspended from her waist signifies fertility—this animal reproduces prolifically. The cross pendant, high collar, and affectionate dog represent piety, modesty, and loyalty.

Lavinia Fontana, *Portrait of a Noblewoman*, ca. 1580; Oil on canvas, 45¼ x 35¼ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photograph by Lee Stalworth



Elizabeth A. A. Forbes

Will-o'-the-Wisp



Will-o'-the-Wisp, ca. 1900

Into the Woods

While lauded for co-founding Newlyn Art School, **Elizabeth Adela Armstrong Forbes (1859–1912)** met resistance from a society that believed women shouldn't pursue careers. Forbes's life wasn't a fairy tale, but she depicted a few, as in this work and her children's book *King Arthur's Wood* (1904).

Take a closer look

Will-o'-the-Wisp is a triptych—a work comprising three sections—with an elaborate frame. Follow elements like the intertwining trees, scampering mice, and lyrical language across the surfaces to piece together the story inspired by William Allingham's poem "The Fairies" (1850).

Something to talk about

The artist's color choices affect the mood of her painting. How does this painting make you feel? Do you think this fable will have a happy ending?

Who knew?

This painting is named after a natural phenomenon of phosphorescent light seen hovering over marshy land. It also refers to an elusive person or thing.

Elizabeth Adela Armstrong Forbes, *Will-o'-the-Wisp*, ca. 1900; Oil on canvas, 27 x 44 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photo by Lee Stalsworth



Shedding Eden



Rain Forest



Shedding Eden, 1994

Rain Forest, 1996

Glass Menagerie

Maggie Foskett (1919–2014) described herself as a “rag picker of small cosmologies in nature.” She transformed fragments of insect wings, snake skins, and assorted flora into images that reveal intricacies that are normally overlooked or invisible to the naked eye.

Take a closer look

Foskett used *cliché-verre* (French for “glass negative”), a precursor to photography. Arranging specimens between glass squares, often postage-stamp sized, she exposed them on light-sensitive paper in an enlarger. Magnifying such minutiae underscores nature's beauty and fragility.

In her own words

The artist credits her childhood in Brazil with her attention to the natural world: “It was second nature to be wary, to shake out our shoes in the morning and to look closely at what lay underfoot.”

Maggie Foskett, *Shedding Eden*, 1994; Cliché-verre, 20 x 16 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the artist; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

Maggie Foskett, *Rain Forest*, 1996; Cliché-verre, 20 x 15¼ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the artist; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Tupperware—Transforming a Chaotic Kitchen



Tupperware—Transforming a Chaotic Kitchen, 2008

Tupperware Party

Australian sculptor **Honor Freeman (b. 1978)** creates porcelain replicas of everyday objects by pouring liquid clay into molds. Her whimsical works transform ubiquitous mass-produced household items into handmade art.

Take a closer look

The realism of Freeman's sculptures invite close inspection and evoke memories. The pastel palette recalls Tupperware's earliest products. Familiar pieces encourage interaction. Curled lid tabs draw attention to containers that need "burping." Another top teeters precariously on a pink vessel.

In her own words

"The porcelain casts echo the original objects; the liquid slip becomes solid and forms a precise memory of a past form—a ghost."

Who knew?

In the 1950s, female executive Brownie Wise invented the "party plan" to distribute Tupperware. This marketing model sealed the company's success and transformed some housewives into businesswomen, affording them welcome educational, social, and financial opportunities.

Honor Freeman, *Tupperware—Transforming a Chaotic Kitchen*, 2008; Slip-cast porcelain, dimensions variable; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Honor Freeman; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



untitled #27 (override)



untitled #104 (A Short Story of Happenstance)



untitled #27 (override), 1997

untitled #104 (A Short Story of Happenstance), 2003

Topsy-Turvy Tales

Anna Gaskell (b. 1969) is inspired by narratives ranging from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) to the imperfect recollections of children and adolescents. She uses photography and film to reduce stories to their essence and reimagine them.

Take a closer look

Severe camera angles, varying print sizes, and dramatic lighting infuse Gaskell's ambiguous images with flickers of fantasy and touches of tension. As you explore the effects of these elements, see what stories unfold.

Something to talk about

Gaskell describes her works as “elliptical narratives”—stories without a single interpretation or a clearly defined beginning or end. How does she keep us guessing? What do you think is going on in these pictures?

In her own words

“Trying to combine fiction, fact, and my own personal mishmash of life into something new is how I make my work.... I try to insert a degree of mystery that ensures that the dots may not connect in the same way every time.”

Anna Gaskell, *untitled #27 (override)*, 1997; Chromogenic print mounted on Plexiglas, 50 x 60 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Anna Gaskell; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

Anna Gaskell, *untitled #104 (A Short Story of Happenstance)*, 2003; Chromogenic print, 71½ x 88 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Anna Gaskell; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Litchi chinensis



Citrus aurantifolia



Litchi chinensis, 2007

Citrus aurantifolia, 2008

Artistic (By) Nature

Monika E. de Vries Gohlke (b. 1940) grew up within walking distance of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, which she and her family often visited. Gohlke credits the site's natural beauty with inspiring her art (and her mother's embroidery).

Take a closer look

Gohlke incorporates earth tones into her ink to achieve subtle gradations. She hand-colors select details and experiments with varied papers for contrast.

Something to talk about

Historically, botanical illustrators depicted specimens in the center of a white page, demonstrating a certain control over nature. In what ways do Gohlke's works depart from this tradition? What might that suggest about contemporary views of the natural world?

Who knew?

Gohlke has created designs for fabrics, rugs, wallpaper, and dinnerware for Polo/Ralph Lauren, Spode, and Williams-Sonoma.

Monika E. de Vries Gohlke, *Litchi chinensis*, 2007; Etching and aquatint with hand coloring in acrylic paint on paper; 12 x 8¹⁵/₁₆ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Monika E. de Vries Gohlke; © Monika E. de Vries Gohlke; Photograph by Lee Stalworth

Monika E. de Vries Gohlke, *Citrus aurantifolia*, 2008; Etching and aquatint with hand coloring in acrylic paint on paper; 10⁷/₈ x 9 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Monika E. de Vries Gohlke; © Monika E. de Vries Gohlke; Photograph by Lee Stalworth



SUNDAY, APRIL 22, 2007

THE WASHINGTON POST



NOT OK WEEKLY
The Guerrilla Girls' Scandal Rag



The National Gallery:
BOY CRAZY?
only 3 one-person exhibitions of women in the last 10 years; 68 by guys.

...OR JUST CRAZY?
Only one work by an African American artist on display at National Gallery right now.

HORROR ON THE NATIONAL MALL!

Thousands of women locked in basements of D.C. museums!
Why does macho art world keep female artists out of sight?



CELEBS SAY MUSEUMS MUST **STOP** **BUY POLICE!**



How to fix Smithsonian:
take away execs' high salaries and secret expense accounts and use \$\$\$ to buy and exhibit more art by women and artists of color!

MORE DIRT ON MUSEUMS:

OUR NATIONAL MUSEUMS HAVE PALTRY COLLECTIONS OF ART BY WOMEN, AND ALMOST ALL OF IT IS KEPT IN STORAGE, NOT DISPLAY.

WHICH MUSEUM HAS THE LEAST ART BY WOMEN AND ARTISTS OF COLOR ON VIEW?

National Gallery of Art	98% male	99.9% white
National Portrait Gallery	93% male	99% white
Herbison Museum women's collection art	95% male	94% white
American Art Museum & Renwick Gallery	88% male	91% white

EVER WONDER WHY BILLIE HOLLADAY STARTED THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS? NOW YOU KNOW!

IF YOU'RE SHOCKED BY THESE STATS, JOIN US!

DEMAND THAT MUSEUMS USE OUR TAX DOLLARS TO TELL THE WHOLE STORY OF OUR CULTURE.

Statistics are based on information supplied by the museums or based on their websites.

WHO ARE THE GUERRILLA GIRLS AND WHY ARE THEY SAYING THESE THINGS?

FOR THIS SPECIAL SECTION ON FEMINISM AND ART, THE WASHINGTON POST ASKED THE ART WORLD'S MASKED AVENGERS (AND CREATIVE COMPLAINERS) TO PUT TOGETHER A PAGE ABOUT THE STATE OF ART IN D.C. THE GO-GO ARE AN ANONYMOUS GROUP OF ARTISTS WHO USE FACTS, HUMOR AND OUTRAGEOUS VISUALS TO EXPOSE DISCRIMINATION IN POLITICS, ART, FILM AND POP CULTURE. THEY WEAR GORILLA MASKS IN PUBLIC AND TAKE THE NAMES OF DEAD WOMEN ARTISTS AS PSEUDONYMS. THEY HAVE PRODUCED MORE THAN 100 POSTERS, STICKERS, BILLBOARDS AND BOOKS, AS WELL AS LARGE-SCALE INSTALLATIONS FOR THE VENICE BIENNALE, MEXICO CITY, LONDON, BUENOS AIRES AND ISTANBUL. THEIR WORK HAS BEEN PASSED AROUND THE WORLD BY THEIR TIRELESS SUPPORTERS. THEY COULD BE ANYONE. THEY ARE EVERYWHERE.
www.guerrillagirls.com



Horror on the National Mall!, 2007

Masked Avengers

The **Guerrilla Girls (established 1985)** use advertising and street art techniques to emphasize gender and racial inequities in art institutions around the world. This all-female activist collective challenges museums and galleries to feature more works by women and people of color.

Take a closer look

This piece parodies tabloid magazine covers and exposes the underrepresentation of women artists in Washington, D.C., museums. Calling out offending organizations, it declares, "Ever wonder why Billie Holladay started the National Museum of Women in the Arts? Now you know!"

In their own words

"How can you really tell the story of a culture when you don't include all the voices within the culture?"

Who knew?

The Guerrilla Girls don gorilla masks and adopt the names of historical women artists. The woman behind this idea adopted the pseudonym Rosalba Carriera (1675–1757). Work by Carriera, an Italian artist renowned for portraits and allegorical subjects, is in the museum's collection.

Guerrilla Girls, *Horror on the National Mall!*, 2007; Color photolithograph on paper; 23 x 13 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Susan Fisher Sterling in honor of Steven Scott; © Guerrilla Girls, Courtesy www.guerrillagirls.com; Photo by Lee Stalsworth



Book in a Cage



Libro-Seme (Seed-Book)



Book in a Cage, 1981

Libro-Seme (Seed-Book), 1983

Visual Literacy

Whether reinterpreting a favorite work of art or reimagining the traditional book structure, Italian multimedia artist **Elisabetta Gut (b. 1934)** creates unique objects that require close looking, rather than reading, to construct meaning.

Take a closer look

The artist challenges our assumptions about language and accessibility. Peer through the open door or into the seed and consider what you are able to glean.

Something to talk about

Gut's pieces are categorized as artists' books, yet we do not interact with them as we would with conventional texts. How do they compare to more traditional formats? How does that influence your ideas about books in general?

In her own words

"During World War II my parents sent me to Switzerland... when I returned to my family in Rome, I was confused and had difficulty communicating with people. All I wanted to do was...escape into the realm of imagination."

Elisabetta Gut, *Book in a Cage*, 1981; Wood, wire, and French-Italian pocket dictionary, 7½ x 4¾ x 4¾ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the artist; © Elisabetta Gut; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

Elisabetta Gut, *Libro-Seme (Seed-Book)*, 1983; Tropical fruit and pages of musical notes on Japanese paper, 3¼ x 3½ x 3 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the artist; © Elisabetta Gut; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Charlotte Gyllenhammar

Fall



Fall III



Fall, 1999

Fall III, 1999

Head Over Heels

Fall, a 13-minute video installation, and *Fall III*, a photograph, incorporate a female figure suspended upside down, expressing both beauty and disquiet. This concept stemmed from another revealing work by **Charlotte Gyllenhammar (b. 1963)**—a 120-year-old oak tree hanging from its roots.

Take a closer look

Video artworks demand viewers' time and attention in ways static art cannot. Spend one minute silently taking in *Fall*, moving around the gallery as you do. Compare the facial expressions, movements, and sounds of the individuals. Ponder their proximity and relationships to one another.

Something to talk about

Themes of vulnerability, captivity, and femininity reoccur in Gyllenhammar's art. In what ways has she explored these concepts in *Fall* and *Fall III*?

Who knew?

Gyllenhammar uses movie magic—a film studio, green screen, flying harness, blowing fan, elaborate costume, and a bit of stage direction—to evoke dreamlike states in her work.

Charlotte Gyllenhammar, *Fall*, 1999; Video installation, dimensions variable; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Charlotte Gyllenhammar; Installation photos by Stefan Bohlin

Charlotte Gyllenhammar, *Fall III*, 1999; Chromogenic print mounted on aluminum, 38 x 39 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Charlotte Gyllenhammar





Making an Impression

Ellen Day Hale is known for her figure studies of aristocratic and working-class women. Seventeenth-century Dutch paintings of solitary women in domestic interiors inspired her. Hale's subjects often sit near a window or door and concentrate on activities like reading and sewing.



June, ca. 1893

Take a closer look

The brushy landscape in the background illustrates the influence of French Impressionism on **Ellen Day Hale (1855–1940)**. She rendered foreground details with more clarity, drawing our attention to the woman's sun-kissed hair, plaid dress, missing button, and sharp needle at work.

Something to talk about

The artist captures our attention by depicting sunlight shining through the window, illuminating the figure's head and hands. The subject's downward gaze suggests her uninterrupted concentration on the task at hand. How does Hale's approach affect the mood of the painting?

Who knew?

Hale's radical relatives included Harriet Beecher Stowe, abolitionist and author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852); suffragist Isabella Beecher Hooker; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, feminist social reformer and writer of "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892); and painter Lilian Westcott Hale (1880–1963).

Ellen Day Hale, *June*, ca. 1893; Oil on canvas, 24 x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photograph by Lee Stalworth





A Natural Beauty

Throughout her career, Barbara Hepworth stressed the influence of landscape on her art. From an early age, she often traveled in the countryside of Yorkshire, England, with her father, a county civil engineer and surveyor.



Merryn, 1962

Take a closer look

Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975) created *Merryn* by carving directly into alabaster, seeking to reveal and celebrate this stone's distinctive qualities. Notice the subtle shifts in opacity and variegation—from milky white to warm golden tones.

Something to talk about

Imagine that this sculpture was made out of a different material like shiny silver, textured tires, or pink plastic. Would you like it more or less than Hepworth's stone version? Why?

Who knew?

The title of the sculpture references St Merryn, a town on the northern coast of Cornwall, England. St Merryn is about 80 miles from St Ives, the location of Hepworth's home and studio from 1949 until her death, now known as the Barbara Hepworth Museum and Sculpture Garden.

Barbara Hepworth, *Merryn*, 1962; Alabaster, 14½ x 7¼ x 15½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © Barbara Hepworth; Photograph by Lee Stalworth





Why Knot?

Eva Hesse created sculptures using malleable mediums including latex, plastic, and rope. Unlike Minimalist artists, who produced hard-edged, geometric forms with a machine-made aesthetic, Hesse manipulated soft materials to cascade, spiral, and gently drape in response to gravity.



Study for Sculpture, 1967

Take a closer look

Eva Hesse (1936–1970) activated a rigid grid with a field of knotted cords. The work embraces a multitude of contradictions: hard/soft; light/shadow; precise/irregular; durable/fragile.

In her own words

“Don't ask what it means or what it refers to.... Don't ask what the work is. Rather, see what the work does.”

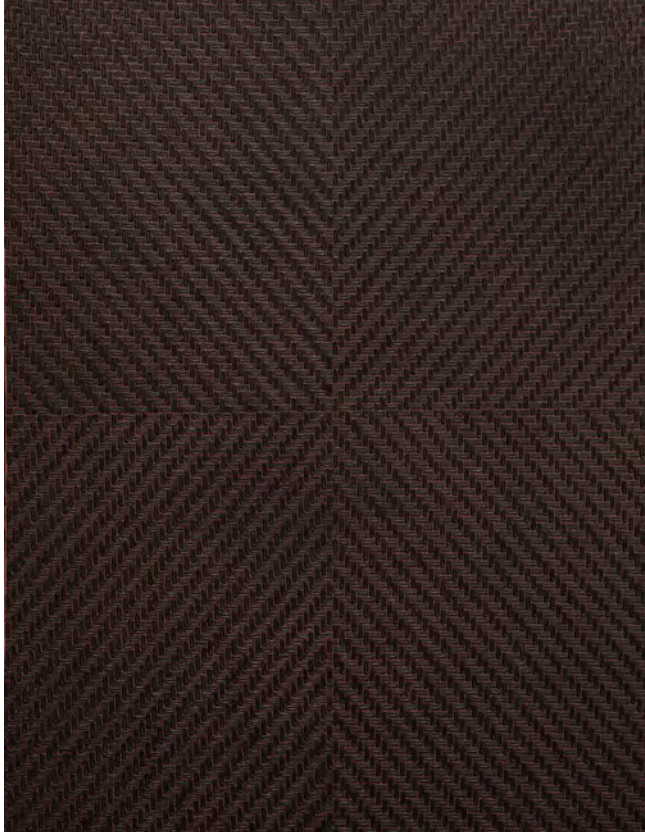
Who knew?

Hesse, a German-born Jew, escaped Nazi Germany at age two, when she and her older sister boarded one of the last Kindertransport trains bound for the Netherlands. The family reunited in England six months later and immigrated to the United States.

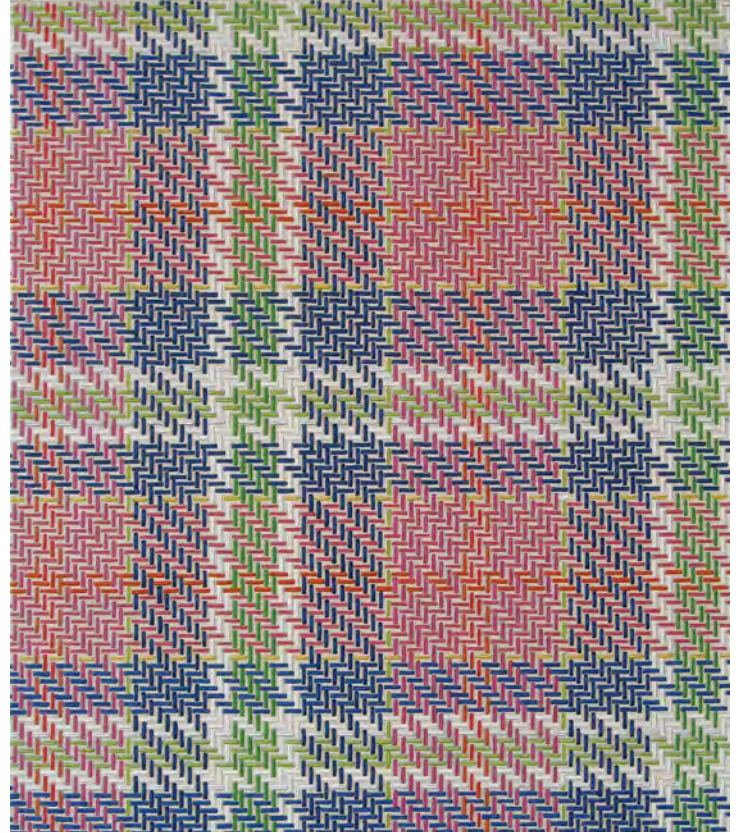
Eva Hesse, *Study for Sculpture*, 1967; Varnish, liquitex, Sculp-metal, cord, and Masonite, 10 x 10 x 1 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © Eva Hesse



Hillary



Swatch (Continental)



Hillary, 2002

Swatch (Continental), 2005

Nice Threads

Andrea Higgins (b. 1970) developed an interest in textiles while shopping for cloth with her grandmother. For Higgins, fabric patterns evoke more memories of people than photographs do. This realization inspired her to portray individuals through painted representations of textiles.

Take a closer look

At a distance, we recognize overall patterns reminiscent of the textiles. Upon closer inspection, we notice that the artist's painstaking, uniform brush strokes replicate the distinctive warp and weft—vertical and horizontal threads—of each fabric reference.

In her own words

"Fabrics are a fundamental aspect of the aesthetics of all societies.... My paintings are optical, abstract compositions and at the same time refer to the associations the individual viewer has to the particular fabric."

Andrea Higgins, *Hillary*, 2002; Oil on canvas, 52 x 40 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Andrea Higgins; Photograph by Lee Stalworth

Andrea Higgins, *Swatch (Continental)*, 2005; Oil on canvas, 24½ x 21¼ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Andrea Higgins; Photograph courtesy of the artist and Hosfelt Gallery



Claude Raguet Hirst

A Gentleman's Table



A Gentleman's Table, after 1890

A Man's World

Claude Raguet Hirst (1855–1942) began her career painting floral still lifes, but creating “bachelor” scenes proved more lucrative. Scholars suggest this work is Hirst's subversive, critical commentary on contemporary male vices. Ironically, a Chicago men's club displayed it.

Take a closer look

The artist litters her canvas with the detritus of debauchery. Paraphernalia of smoking, drinking, and gambling—ashen pipe chamber, empty bottles, abandoned absinthe glass, and upturned playing cards—suggest an unseen narrative.

Something to talk about

Hirst is considered the only American female artist of her time to employ a hyper-realistic style known as *trompe l'oeil* (French for “fools the eye”). Which elements function this way? Which aspects remind you that this work is two-dimensional?

Who knew?

Born Claudine, Hirst began signing her works with the masculine variant “Claude” in the 1870s. Lee Krasner (1908–1984), also in the museum's collection, and writers Louisa May Alcott, Charlotte Brontë, and Harper Lee, likewise disguised their gender for professional gain.

Claude Raguet Hirst, *A Gentleman's Table*, after 1890; Oil on canvas, 18 x 32 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photograph by Lee Stalworth



Haus der Natur Salzburg I 1996



The Palazzo Zenobio Venezia III 2003



Haus der Natur Salzburg I 1996, 1996

The Palazzo Zenobio Venezia III 2003,
2003

Empty Spaces?

Candida Höfer (b. 1944) photographs the architectural interiors of public buildings, including museums, libraries, and historic sites. Her straightforward approach to these subjects results in photographs that appear spontaneous. Yet, Höfer carefully stages them.

Take a closer look

The artist emphasizes the dynamic qualities of a location. She uses diagonal lines, saturated colors, and repetition of forms to fill the interiors with energy.

Something to talk about

Höfer typically does not include figures in her photographs, but maintains traces of a human presence. In your opinion, what mood or ideas do these spaces evoke?

In her own words

"I believe in a sort of separation of labor (or even power) in art. I just do the images. Others do the interpretations."

Candida Höfer, *Haus der Natur Salzburg I 1996*, 1996; Chromogenic color print, 15¼ x 19½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Candida Höfer/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

Candida Höfer, *The Palazzo Zenobio Venezia III 2003*, 2003; Chromogenic color print, 60% x 60% inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © 2003 Candida Höfer/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Mujer Ángel, Desierto de Sonora
(Angel Woman, Sonoran Desert)



Cuatro Pescaditos
(Four Little Fish),
Juchitán, Oaxaca



Mujer Ángel, Desierto de Sonora
(Angel Woman, Sonoran Desert), 1979

Cuatro Pescaditos (Four Little Fish),
Juchitán, Oaxaca, 1986

Pride of Place

Photographs by **Graciela Iturbide (b. 1942)** provide an intimate look at the daily lives, special occasions, and surroundings of those she portrays, including the Seri people of Mexico's Sonoran Desert and the matriarchal society of Juchitán, a center of indigenous Zapotec culture.

Take a closer look

Iturbide's works often feature sharp angles, low perspectives, tight framing, and tonal nuances. These formal and compositional choices aggrandize her subjects—figures appear larger-than-life and fleeting moments seem timeless.

Something to talk about

The artist celebrates the strength and independence of women. How does she represent these ideals in her images?

In her own words

"Photography for me is a ritual. To go out with the camera, to observe, to photograph the most mythological aspects of people, then to go into the darkness, to develop, to select the most symbolic images."

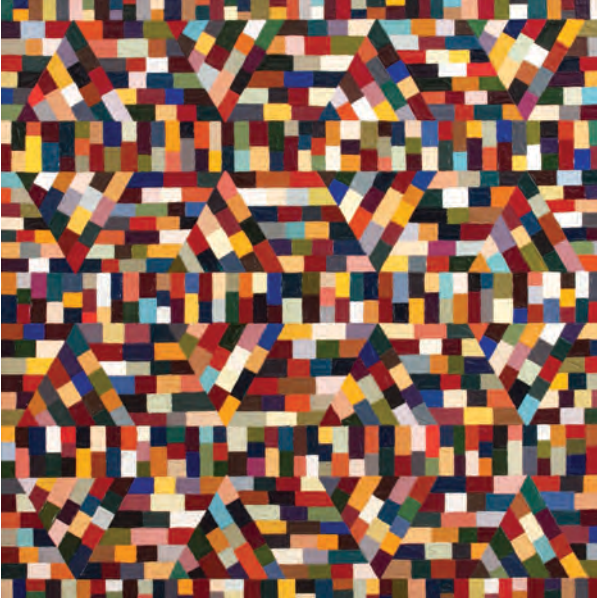
Graciela Iturbide, *Mujer Ángel, Desierto de Sonora (Angel Woman, Sonoran Desert)*, 1979 (printed 2014); Gelatin silver print, 16 x 20 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Cindy Jones; © Graciela Iturbide, Image courtesy of Throckmorton Fine Art, NYC

Graciela Iturbide, *Cuatro Pescaditos (Four Little Fish), Juchitán, Oaxaca*, 1986 (Later print not dated); Gelatin silver print, 18¼ x 15 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Charles and Teresa Friedlander, in honor of his mother, Jacqueline S. Friedlander; © Graciela Iturbide

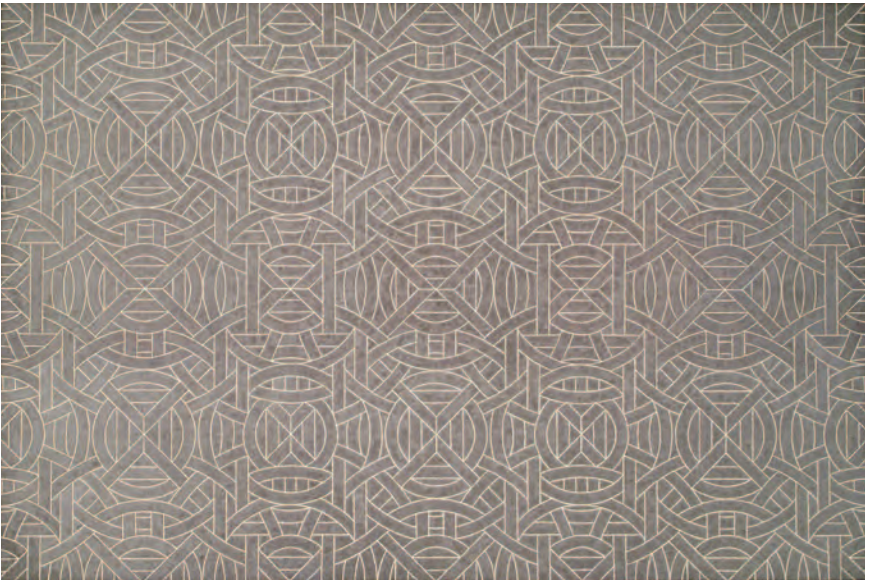


Valerie Jaudon

Bay St. Louis



Avalon



Bay St. Louis, 1973

Avalon, 1976

Inferior Decorating?

The 1970s art world deemed “decorative” works—associated with the feminine in Western cultures—superficial. Defying that notion, **Valerie Jaudon (b. 1945)** reinterpreted designs from undervalued handcrafts such as Islamic tile, Byzantine mosaics, and Turkish embroidery.

Take a closer look

Jaudon favors organized compositions and gestural brushstrokes. In *Bay St. Louis*, blocks of vibrant color hint at an underlying order. *Avalon*'s monochromatic palette and areas of bare canvas emphasize silver shapes. Her impasto, or thick application of paint, activates each work's surface.

Something to talk about

One art historian called Jaudon's art both uninhibited and disciplined. In what ways do you think her paintings address this duality? Do you think one quality dominates? Why or why not?

Who knew?

The artist's titles often reference towns in her home state of Mississippi.

Valerie Jaudon, *Bay St. Louis*, 1973; Acrylic on canvas; 72 x 72 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © Valerie Jaudon

Valerie Jaudon, *Avalon*, 1976; Oil and metallic paint on canvas; 72 x 108 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © Valerie Jaudon/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY



Rainy Night, Downtown



Bright Lights, Big City

Georgia Mills Jessup said *Rainy Night, Downtown* could represent a night scene in any U.S. city. Yet, the signs for the “Trans-Lux” Theatre and “St. H N.W.” identify the location as Washington, D.C., the artist’s hometown.



Rainy Night, Downtown, 1967

Take a closer look

Georgia Mills Jessup (1926–2016) used abstraction, vivid colors, and dramatic contrasts of light and shadow to create a particular mood and energy in this scene. Her approach encourages us to imagine the sights and sounds that would greet us if we stepped through the frame.

Something to talk about

The Trans-Lux Theatre, one of the landmarks featured in Jessup's painting, was located on the west side of 14th Street, NW, between New York Avenue and H Street, from 1937 to 1975. That means the scene depicted was about a block from where you are standing.

Who knew?

Jessup, who described herself as a "melting pot," was particularly proud of her American Indian heritage. As a descendent the Pamunkey tribe of Virginia the great Powhatan is her ancestral chief.

Georgia Mills Jessup, *Rainy Night, Downtown*, 1967; Oil on canvas, 44 x 48 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Savanna M. Clark; © Georgia Mills Jessup





Change of Scenery

Lois Mailou Jones experienced prejudice in the United States based on her race and gender. She traveled to France in 1937, discovering a country more racially tolerant than her own. The inclusivity and tranquility of the French landscape beckoned Jones back throughout her life.



Arreau, Hautes-Pyrénées, 1949

Take a closer look

Vibrant green mountains contrast vividly with bold orange buildings in the artist's depiction of the southwestern French village of Arreau. **Lois Mailou Jones (1905–1998)** applied broad, loose brushstrokes, adding visual energy to the peaceful setting.

Something to talk about

World travel informed the artist's technique, style, and subject matter. How have journeys—near or far, physical or emotional—impacted your perspective?

In her own words

"I can look back on my work and be inspired by France, Haiti, Africa, the Black experience, and Martha's Vineyard (where it all began) and admit: there is no end to creative expression."

Who knew?

Jones influenced notable women artists including Elizabeth Catlett (1915–2012) and Alma Woodsey Thomas (1891–1978), both in the museum's collection.

Lois Mailou Jones, *Arreau, Hautes-Pyrénées*, 1949; Oil on canvas, 19½ x 23¾ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Gladys P. Payne; © Lois Mailou Jones; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth





Sense of Place

Lois Mailou Jones created *Ode to Kinshasa* as a tribute to the capital city of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire). The orange shape at the center of the work evokes the form and patterns of shields from the region.



Ode to Kinshasa, 1972

Take a closer look

Lois Mailou Jones (1905–1998) incorporated different materials to create this piece, including paint, gold foil, and handmade paper. Many African sculptures display rich textures, which influenced Jones's use of mixed media.

Something to talk about

Abstract works like *Ode to Kinshasa* rely on the viewer's experience and associations to interpret the painting. How has the artist employed shape, color, and pattern to create a specific mood or sense of place?

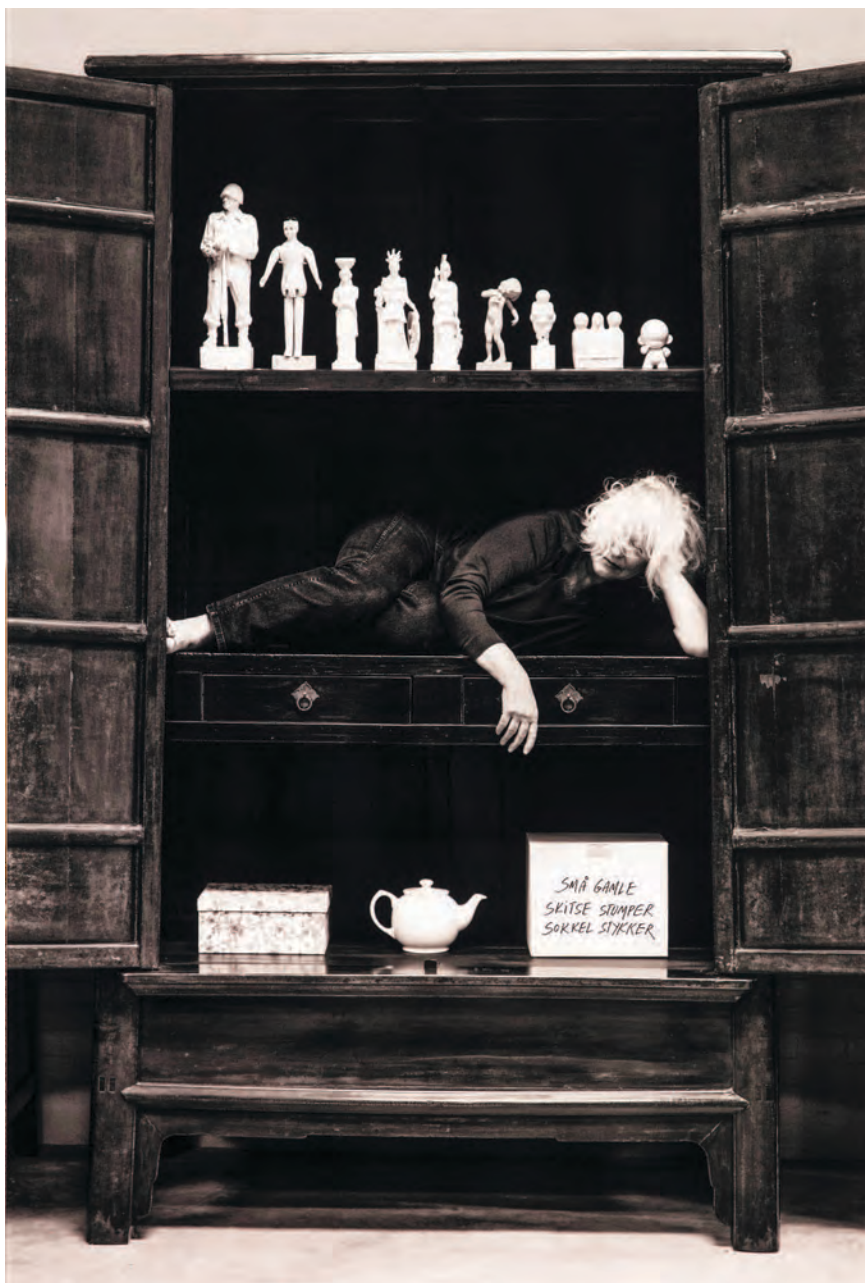
Who knew?

Jones received a grant from Howard University to document contemporary African art of West and Central Africa, Haiti, and the United States in its original context. In 1970, she traveled to 11 African countries for research. This period of travel strongly influenced her art.

Lois Mailou Jones, *Ode to Kinshasa*, 1972; Mixed media on canvas, 48 x 36 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the artist; © Lois M. Jones



Portræt i arkiv med samling (Portrait in Cabinet with Collection)



Portræt i arkiv med samling (Portrait in Cabinet with Collection), 2013

Long Shelf Life

A pioneering member of the Danish avant-garde in the 1960s, **Kirsten Justesen (b. 1943)** uses her body as material, tool, and subject in her art. She investigates its relationship to space and concepts of transformation.

Take a closer look

Justesen staged this photograph to celebrate her 70th birthday, reflecting on her long—and still productive—career. Contrast her easy repose with the rigid regimentation of her figurines. A box inscribed “Little old bits of drafts and pieces of pedestals” may imply inspirations for future projects.

Something to talk about

The artist was classically trained and identifies as a sculptor though much of her art exists as photographs, installations, performances, and videos. In what ways does this work reflect Justesen's interest in three-dimensional concepts like form, space, and mass?

In her own words

“I use my own body, it can be undressed, dressed, cast, photographed, drawn. It gets pregnant, older, thinner, and fatter. It is always at hand.”

Kirsten Justesen, *Portræt i arkiv med samling (Portrait in Cabinet with Collection)*, 2013; Chromogenic print mounted on Dibond with matte acrylic, 58¾ x 39½ x 1 inch; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Montana A/S; © Kirsten Justesen; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



The Manger



Portrait of Eulabee Dix



The Manger, ca. 1899

Portrait of Eulabee Dix, ca. 1910

Is It Art?

Gertrude Käsebier (1852–1934) was a founding member of the Photo-Secession movement. This group promoted the idea of photography as an art form, not simply a mechanical process or pastime for amateurs as some critics claimed.

Take a closer look

Käsebier is typically classified as a Pictorialist because she sought to make her photographs resemble paintings, drawings, and etchings. She used soft focus, backlighting, and direct manipulation of the negative to mimic brushwork in a painting.

Something to talk about

At the turn of the 20th century, people considered photography either an objective representation of reality or the photographer's subjective depiction of the world. By today's standards, how would you characterize this medium?

Who knew?

A leading portrait photographer of her day, Käsebier earned praise for her images of luminaries like painter Eulabee Dix (1878–1961), also in the museum's collection. In addition, she achieved financial success: *The Manger* sold for \$100 in 1899—the highest price paid for a photograph to date.

Gertrude Käsebier, *The Manger*, ca. 1899; Platinum print, 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 6 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the Holladay Foundation; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

Gertrude Käsebier, *Portrait of Eulabee Dix*, ca. 1910; Gelatin silver print, 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 6 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Joan B. Gaines; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Cumaean Sibyl (after Domenichino)



The Family of the Earl Gower



Cumaean Sibyl (after Domenichino),
ca. 1763

The Family of the Earl Gower, 1772

She Worked Hard for the Money

Exceptionally famous during her lifetime, **Angelica Kauffman (1741–1804)** received commissions from throughout Europe and saw engraved prints of her art reproduced in abundance—causing one engraver to pronounce that London had gone “Angelicamad.”

Take a closer look

Painted nearly ten years apart, *Cumaean Sibyl* (after Domenichino) and *The Family of the Earl Gower* display Kauffman's lifelong interest in music. Find the sheet music, ornate scroll atop the neck of a stringed instrument, and U-shaped harp known as a lyre.

Something to talk about

Kauffman honed her craft by copying well-known works like *Cumaean Sibyl*, by 17th-century painter Domenichino. Art patrons often hired her to duplicate their collections. Why might someone pay for a replica of an original painting they already possess?

Who knew?

After marrying Antonio Pietro Zucchi, a London-based Italian painter, Kauffman retained her maiden name as well as complete control of her considerable earnings.

Angelica Kauffman, *Cumaean Sibyl* (after Domenichino), ca. 1763; Oil on canvas, 38½ x 29½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Bequest of Elizabeth A. Hull; Photo by Lee Stalsworth

Angelica Kauffman, *The Family of the Earl Gower*, 1772; Oil on canvas, 59¼ x 82 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photo by Lee Stalsworth





Collective Memory

For millennia, Australian Aboriginal people have expressed ancient stories, or Dreamings, through body painting, dance, and other ephemeral art forms. Emily Kame Kngwarreye (pronounced koom-WAH-ree) is among the first generation to render these tales in permanent materials.



Yam Story '96, 1996

Take a closer look

Emily Kame Kngwarreye (ca. 1910–1996) earned international acclaim for her bold compositions, handling of paint, and use of color. Here, intertwined lines set against a dark background suggest the aggressive, subterranean root system of the desert yam.

Something to talk about

In addition to providing practical information about the landscape, Dreamings offer lessons in moral behavior. Many cultures use historical, religious, and imagined tales similarly. What stories do you know that present such lessons?

Who knew?

Dreamings are passed down within families. The custodians who inherit a story are the only ones who can represent it. Viewers outside the clan may recognize the narrative, but will never know its full meaning. Kngwarreye was custodian of the Yam Dreaming.

Emily Kame Kngwarreye, *Yam Story '96*, 1996; Acrylic on canvas, 47 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 36 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the Collection of Margaret Levi and Robert Kaplan; © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VISCOPY, Australia



The Springs



The Springs, 1964

Different Strokes

Abstract Expressionism, considered America's first avant-garde movement, combined abstract form and subjective content. *The Springs* by **Lee Krasner (1908–1984)** illustrates the emotional handling of paint, line, and color that defined the style.

Take a closer look

Krasner built up the surface of *The Springs* through a combination of narrow and broad brushstrokes, daubs of paint squeezed directly from tubes, and wide swaths applied with a palette knife. Unpainted areas reveal bare canvas, creating a sense of layering and depth.

In her own words

“Traditionally women have not produced great art, but this is because of social views rather than any in-born ability. A woman must face prejudice in this field, and must be perhaps one and a half times as good as her male counterpart to gain recognition.”

Lee Krasner, *The Springs*, 1964; Oil on canvas, 43 x 66 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © 2015 The Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Vase of Flowers I



Purple Datura



Vase of Flowers I, 1999 (printed 2011)

Purple Datura, 2015

Garden Variety

Photographer **Amy Lamb (b. 1944)** produces exquisite, large-scale "portraits" of plants, often ones she has grown herself. Lamb's artwork marries her scientific eye and artistic passion to explore how form and function relate.

Take a closer look

Lamb's skillful handling of light and shadow draws our attention to the intricacies of nature—the variegated color of a leaf, the ruffled edges of a petal, and the reflective qualities of a dew drop.

Something to talk about

Before she turned to photography, Lamb was a cellular biologist. She extends a tradition of women artist-scientists, which includes Maria Sibylla Merian (1647–1717), also in the museum's collection. What qualities of a scientist might serve an artist well?

In her own words

"What is it that is unique about this tulip, this dahlia, this fern, or this rose? I often print my images very large to allow the viewer to delve into the visual 'soul' of the flower."

Amy Lamb, *Vase of Flowers I*, 1999 (printed 2011); Pigment print, 30 x 30 inches (image), 35 x 35 inches (paper); National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the artist and Steven Scott Gallery, Baltimore, MD, in honor of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the National Museum of Women in the Arts; © 1999 Amy Lamb, all rights reserved; Photo courtesy of the artist

Amy Lamb, *Purple Datura*, 2015; Digital pigment print of photograph, 42 x 41 inches (framed); National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the artist and Steven Scott Gallery, Baltimore, MD; © 2015 Amy Lamb, all rights reserved; Photo courtesy of the artist



Portrait of Princess Belozersky



Portrait of a Young Boy



Portrait of Princess Belozersky, 1798

Portrait of a Young Boy, 1817

The Eyes Have It

Known for her flattering portraits, **Élisabeth Louise Vigée-LeBrun (1755–1842)** earned commissions throughout Europe and Russia. Royalty, aristocrats, writers, and actors alike coveted her idealized renderings.

Take a closer look

The subjects' large, expressive eyes—a Vigée-LeBrun signature—invite our approach. Flawless skin and rosy complexions imply youth and health. Her illusionistic handling of texture distinguished glossy locks, a glinting gun barrel, diaphanous fabrics, and lustrous amber.

Something to talk about

Vigée-LeBrun satisfied her patrons' vanity by rendering them more attractive and approachable than they might truly have been. Today, what techniques do artists use to achieve similar results?

Who knew?

The artist experienced perks and peril as court painter to Marie Antoinette. With the onset of the French Revolution in 1789, this connection to the vilified queen forced Vigée-LeBrun to flee her homeland. In exile for 15 years, her fame ensured her welcome in cities and courts across the continent.

Élisabeth Louise Vigée-LeBrun, *Portrait of Princess Belozersky*, 1798; Oil on canvas, 31 x 26¼ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Rita M. Cushman in memory of George A. Rentschler; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

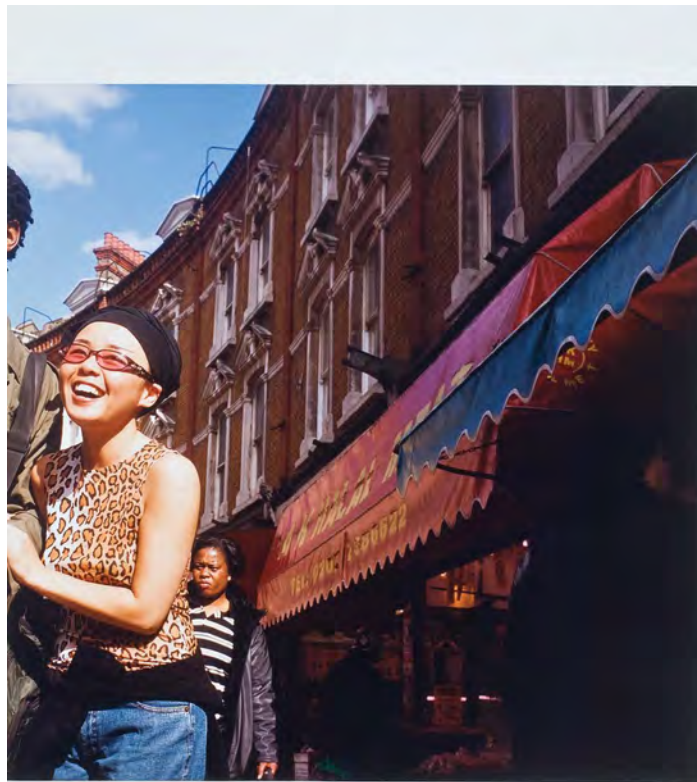
Élisabeth Louise Vigée-LeBrun, *Portrait of a Young Boy*, 1817; Oil on canvas, 21¼ x 18¼ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



The Ohio Project (8)



Part (12)



The Ohio Project (8), 1999

Part (12), 2003

Serial Artist

Nikki S. Lee (b. 1970) is often labeled a photographer, but she rarely takes her own pictures. She prefers to conceptualize works rather than remain behind the camera. Lee recruits amateur and professional photographers to capture the episodes she conceives.

Take a closer look

Lee created two series from 1997 to 2003. In “Projects,” she infiltrated subcultures—such as energetic swing dancers, elderly New Yorkers, and rural Ohioans—and posed as a member. In “Parts,” Lee staged scenes of herself and a male figure. She then cropped out all but a hint of her companion.

In her own words

“I’m more likely to be influenced by the little snapshots I see on a wall when I go to somebody’s house. I’m inspired by real life, by the ordinariness of people taking pictures of people.”

Nikki S. Lee, *The Ohio Project (8)*, 1999; Fujiflex print, 40 x 30 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Nikki S. Lee

Nikki S. Lee, *Part (12)*, 2003; Fujiflex print mounted on aluminum, 30 x 26¼ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © 2003 Nikki S. Lee





The Concert, ca. 1633

Pitch Perfect

Laughter and song fill the merry paintings of **Judith Leyster (1609–1660)**. The only female artist of her time to have a workshop in her native Haarlem in the Netherlands, Leyster created intimate interior scenes known as genre paintings.

Take a closer look

Though the smiling group looks casual and relaxed, spot the woman carefully keeping time with her raised right hand. The three musicians must work together to remain in harmony, possibly a reference to the value of self-restraint.

Something to talk about

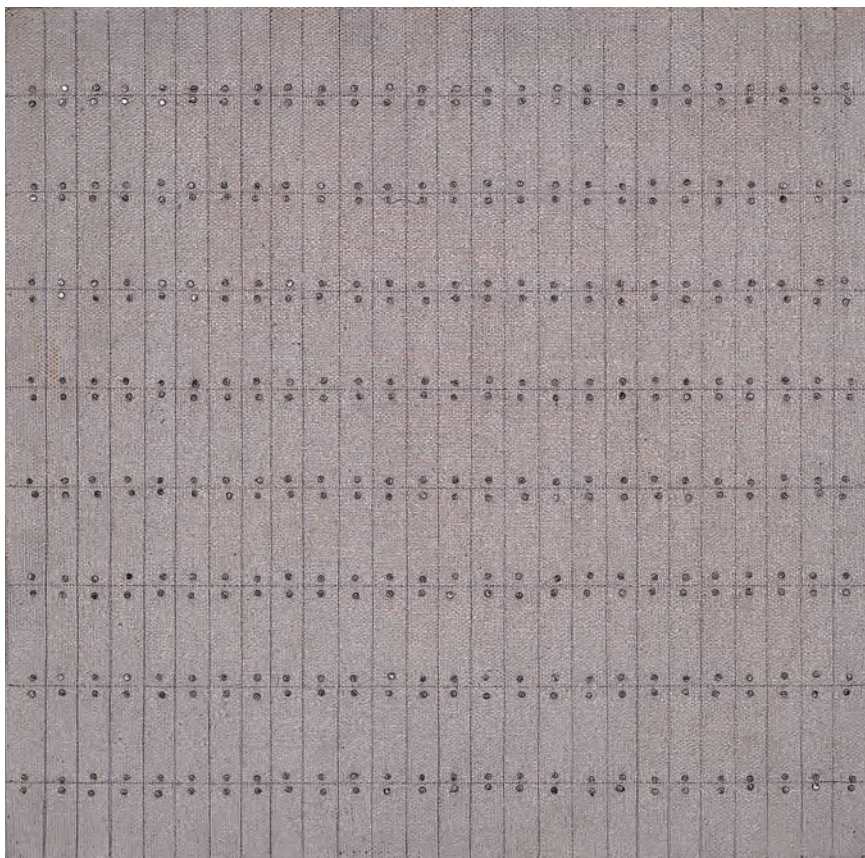
Scholars suggest this painting is a self-portrait of Leyster singing with her husband and friend playing instruments. What musical memory would you choose to immortalize in a work of art?

Who knew?

Leyster's name means "lead star," a common Dutch term for the North Star. The artist often included a star along with her initials when she signed her works. Don't go stargazing here though, as *The Concert* does not include her stellar stamp.

Judith Leyster, *The Concert*, ca. 1633; Oil on canvas, 24 x 34¼ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay





Nailed It

Agnes Martin embraced Minimalism's reductive visual vocabulary—subdued palette, geometric structures—but rejected its assertion that there is no meaning beyond form. Instead, she expressed emotional experience and spiritual content, especially in relation to the natural world.



The Wall #2, 1962

Take a closer look

Here, **Agnes Martin (1912–2004)** rendered what appears to be a severe grid. Yet close perusal reveals traces of the artist's touch. Hand-drawn lines waver slightly. Subtle shifts in color and nail placement further distance Martin's work from the manufactured aesthetic of her peers.

Something to talk about

Martin intended for her works to induce a contemplative state in viewers and encourage them to find personal associations. Given your own experience with this piece, in what ways do you think she “hit the nail on the head”? Where did she miss the mark?

In her own words

“My interest is in experience that is wordless and silent, and in the fact that this experience can be expressed for me in artwork, which is also wordless and silent.”

Agnes Martin, *The Wall #2*, 1962; Oil on canvas, mounted on board with nails, 10 x 10 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © 2015 Agnes Martin/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Plate 1 and Plate 18 from "Dissertation in Insect Generations and Metamorphosis in Surinam"



Plate 1 and Plate 18 from “Dissertation in Insect Generations and Metamorphosis in Surinam,” 1719

A Bug's Life

Maria Sibylla Merian (1647–1717) devoted herself to observing creatures in their natural habitats. At 52, she embarked for Suriname, a Dutch colony in South America. For two years, she recorded flora and fauna populating its gardens, fields, and formidable rainforest.

Take a closer look

These engravings created from Merian's watercolors portray insects and arachnids arrayed on their host plants. Teeming with color, texture, pattern, and minute details, the images marry science and art. Her groundbreaking publication warranted several posthumous editions.

Who knew?

Merian's depictions of metamorphosis helped debunk the belief that bugs generated spontaneously: flies from rotting meat, moths from wool. Before seeing evidence of insects' developmental stages—egg, larva, pupa, and adult—people did not perceive the link between caterpillar and butterfly.

Maria Sibylla Merian, *Plate 1* and *Plate 18* from “Dissertation in Insect Generations and Metamorphosis in Surinam,” second edition, 1719; Hand-colored engravings on paper, Both: 20½ x 14½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gifts of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photographs by Lee Stalworth



Sale Neige



Orange



Sale Neige, 1980

Orange, 1981

Forces of Nature

Joan Mitchell (1925–1992) often found inspiration for her subject matter in urban and bucolic landscapes, from her native Chicago to a country home in Vétheuil, France.

Take a closer look

Mitchell contrasted areas of thick pigment with sections of bare canvas, playing with our perceptions of surface and depth. Crisscrossing brushstrokes create visual rhythm. Despite their seeming spontaneity, Mitchell's paintings evolved over months.

In her own words

"My paintings are titled after they are finished. I paint from remembered landscapes that I carry with me—and remembered feelings of them.... I could certainly never mirror nature. I would like more to paint what it leaves me with."

Who knew?

Sale Neige (French for "dirty snow") references the artist's early memories—gazing at frozen Lake Michigan, falling through the ice in a sledding accident, and being a champion figure skater.

Joan Mitchell, *Sale Neige*, 1980; Oil on canvas, 86¼ x 70⅞ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © Estate of Joan Mitchell

Joan Mitchell, *Orange*, 1981; Oil on canvas, 63¼ x 51 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Conservation funds generously provided in honor of Ed Williams by his family; © Estate of Joan Mitchell





Birds of a Feather

Berthe Morisot was an original member of the Société Anonyme, the group we know as the French Impressionists. Like her male contemporaries, she used a painterly style to capture immediate visual experiences.



The Cage, 1885

Take a closer look

The Cage exemplifies the late style of **Berthe Morisot (1841–1895)**, featuring dynamic brushwork and fragmented color. The raw canvas, visible near the frame, suggests that the artist worked swiftly and spontaneously to capture a fleeting moment.

Something to talk about

Morisot rendered domestic spaces and activities instead of cafés and boulevards favored by her male peers, as these were considered inappropriate subjects for women. She applied impressionist techniques to her everyday life. What might you depict in a still life to reflect your surroundings?

Who knew?

In addition to Morisot, three other women were closely associated with the French Impressionist circle: Marie Bracquemond (1840–1916); Mary Cassatt (1844–1926), also in the museum's collection; and Eva Gonzalès (1849–1883).

Berthe Morisot, *The Cage*, 1885; Oil on canvas, 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 15 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photo by Lee Stalsworth



Staffelsee in Autumn



Breakfast of the Birds



Staffelsee in Autumn, 1923

Breakfast of the Birds, 1934

Moody Hues

Gabriele Münter (1877–1962) favored landscapes and interior scenes as subject matter. A prominent figure in German Expressionism, she manipulated formal elements to render her emotional responses to subjects rather than their precise physical appearance.

Take a closer look

Münter applied paint in broad, thick strokes. She did not model objects in light and shadow. Instead color, outlined by dark lines, creates dimension and structure.

Something to talk about

Color, for Münter, served expressive purposes by creating a sense of atmosphere or capturing the essence of an experience. What mood does she evoke with the vivid palette for an autumnal landscape? With a muted, almost monochrome interior for a winter scene?

Who knew?

The artist collected Bavarian folk art called *Hinterglasmalerei*. These images painted on the reverse side of glass featured black contour lines filled with bright pigment.

Gabriele Münter, *Staffelsee in Autumn*, 1923; Oil on board, 13¼ x 19¼ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

Gabriele Münter, *Breakfast of the Birds*, 1934; Oil on board, 18 x 21¾ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn



Pansy Napangati (Napangardi)

Jugamarra, Sitting with Spears
Watching Women Dancing



Jugamarra, Sitting with Spears Watching Women Dancing, 1997

Sweet Dreams

Pansy Napangati (Napangardi) (b. ca. 1948) combines Western materials with a traditional Aboriginal Australian visual vocabulary derived from sand and body painting. The first female painter in her community, she learned to depict creation stories—or Dreamings—through close observation.

Take a closer look

The network of fractal forms, dots, and other shapes signify the actions suggested by the title. Concentric circles may denote sacred sites, “U” shapes indicate women, and white dots on a base of red ochre identify ceremonial objects.

Something to talk about

Contemporary Aboriginal art is highly coded because the places, stories, and rituals represented are sacred. Those outside of an artist's community aren't able to fully interpret their works. What symbols, forms, and colors might you use to paint an important tale of your heritage?

Who knew?

Western Desert “dot paintings” emerged in the 1970s. Previously, art was transitory and made by men. Women artists have been active in this modern movement as it affords opportunities to raise their status, funds for the community, and awareness of diverse cultures in Australia.

Pansy Napangati, *Jugamarra, Sitting with Spears Watching Women Dancing*, 1997; Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 28 x 1 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Ann Shumelda Okerson and James J. O'Donnell; Photo by Lee Stalsworth





Survival Mode

Describing herself as a “collector of souls,” Alice Neel willfully focused on the human figure when abstraction held sway. Unflinching portraits of her Spanish Harlem neighbors, like this one of Carlos Negrón, both dignify individuals and provide trenchant social critique.



T.B. Harlem, 1940

Take a closer look

Alice Neel (1900–1984) positioned the 24-year-old against a plain background, focusing attention on his face and physical condition. Heavy black outlines, oppressive space, physical distortions, and a mournful palette elicit shock, empathy, and anger at conditions that allowed such suffering.

Something to talk about

Neel intended paintings like *T.B. Harlem* to highlight the struggles of the urban poor and effect change. Abstract artists at the time typically ignored the everyday in favor of the timeless. What role do you think art can/should play in society?

In her own words

“I’ll tell you what you can see [in their faces]. Their inheritance, their class, their profession. Their feelings, their intellect. All that’s happened to them. You see everything in their faces.”

Who knew?

In the 1940s, tuberculosis spread rapidly in overcrowded urban neighborhoods, and treatments were invasive. Negrón's bandage covers the wound from a procedure to collapse and “rest” the infected lung by removing ribs. Despite his dire appearance, Negrón lived into his late 60s.

Alice Neel, *T.B. Harlem*, 1940; Oil on canvas, 30 x 30 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © The Estate of Alice Neel; courtesy of David Zwirner, New York



Anna Claypoole Peale

Nancy Aertsen



Still Life with Strawberries



Nancy Aertsen, ca. 1820

Still Life with Strawberries, ca. late 1820s

Details, Details

Anna Claypoole Peale (1791–1878) excelled at painting watercolor-on-ivory portrait miniatures and still lifes. The delicate detail and intimate scale of her pieces beckon viewers closer.

Take a closer look

Notice the rich, warm hues—like scarlet red and chestnut brown—Peale used to enliven her subjects and create depth. Her deft choice and application of color ensured Peale's reputation for precise naturalistic renderings.

Something to talk about

Portrait miniatures and still lifes each require skills distinct to the medium and style. How does Peale's brushwork and handling of space differ in these two works?

Who knew?

While Peale learned the technique of watercolor-on-ivory painting from her father, the art form was pioneered by another woman artist, Rosalba Carriera (1675–1757), also in the museum's collection.

Anna Claypoole Peale, *Nancy Aertsen*, ca. 1820; Watercolor on ivory, 3½ x 5¼ x ½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photo by Lee Stalsworth

Anna Claypoole Peale, *Still Life with Strawberries*, ca. late 1820s; Oil on canvas, 8¼ x 10¼ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photo by Lee Stalsworth



Sarah Miriam Peale

Susan Avery



Isaac Avery



Susan Avery, 1821

Isaac Avery, 1821

A Family Affair

Sarah Miriam Peale (1800–1885) belonged to a talented family. Her father and uncle were prominent American artists, as were two sisters and seven cousins. Peale painters are known for their meticulous attention to detail.

Take a closer look

The Avery portraits provide clues to their socioeconomic status. Susan's jewelry, tortoise-shell combs, and cashmere shawl, together with Isaac's jeweled tie pin, speak to their prosperity. But their open postures and facial expressions make them seem approachable rather than aloof.

Something to talk about

Paired paintings of spouses are called “pendant portraits.” Often such images become separated over time. Art historians must then rely on details within the paintings to reunite them. Which details in these works indicate that they belong together?

Who knew?

Widely considered the first professional female painter in the United States, Peale portrayed a number of influential political figures, including the Marquis de Lafayette and Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton.

Sarah Miriam Peale, *Susan Avery*, 1821; Oil on canvas, 35¼ x 27½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Museum purchase: The Lois Pollard Price Acquisition Fund; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

Sarah Miriam Peale, *Isaac Avery*, 1821; Oil on canvas, 35¼ x 27½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Museum purchase: The Lois Pollard Price Acquisition Fund; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Still Life of Fish and Cat



Still Life of Fish and Cat, after 1620

The Cat's Meow

Clara Peeters (1594–after 1657) helped pioneer the genre of still-life painting. She was also the first artist known to feature fish. Her arrangements of food, flowers, vessels, and the occasional feline influenced later artists.

Take a closer look

The artist's ability to replicate the appearance of things was key to her success. Note her judicious application of white paint to create the illusion of moist eyes, oysters' brackish baths, opalescent scales, and translucent shrimp shells.

Something to talk about

Most still lifes feature inanimate objects, but Peeters included a cat, a common pet at the time. How does its presence affect your experience of the painting?

Who knew?

As one of the few women working professionally as a painter in Europe at the time, Peeters should be considered a trailblazer. Owing to her gender, her life and artistic contributions went largely unrecorded by history.

Clara Peeters, *Still Life of Fish and Cat*, after 1620; Oil on panel, 13½ x 18½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay





Stag Party?

Patricia Piccinini's sculptures celebrate unexpected confluences of the recognizable. She transports viewers to a fantastical future where hybridized beings resembling humans, animals, and machines roam the earth.



The Stags, 2008

Take a closer look

In *The Stags*, **Patricia Piccinini (b. 1965)** accentuates affinities between organic and manufactured forms. Multi-armed scooter mirrors suggest branched antlers. Sinuous fiberglass curves evoke the contours of necks and haunches. Taut vinyl resembles hide, while gears and dials mimic eyes.

Something to talk about

By mingling machine and mammal, the artist urges us to contemplate how the built and natural worlds cooperate and clash. In what instances do these environments work in concert? When do they impinge upon one another?

In her own words

“The world I create exists somewhere between the one we know and one that is almost upon us.”

Who knew?

Piccinini acknowledges that her creations are born out of collaborations with specialists, including automotive engineers, model makers, and spray painters.

Patricia Piccinini, *The Stags*, 2008; Fiberglass, automotive parts, and cycle parts, 69¾ x 72 x 40¾ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Patricia Piccinini; Photograph by Graham Baring



American Collection #4:
Jo Baker's Bananas



American Idol

Jo Baker's Bananas belongs to "The American Collection," a series of 12 story quilts created by Faith Ringgold to celebrate African American history and culture. This work features the U.S.-born French performer wearing her famous fruit fashion statement.



American Collection #4: Jo Baker's Bananas, 1997

Take a closer look

Faith Ringgold (b. 1930) combines textile designs with painted forms and patterns. See if you can distinguish the brushstrokes from the fabric prints.

Something to talk about

Ringgold's story quilts often combine word and image to develop a narrative. In *Jo Baker's Bananas*, the artist omits the use of text. What tale might you tell to describe this work?

In her own words

"After I decided to be an artist, the first thing that I had to believe was that I, a Black woman, could penetrate the art scene, and that, further, I could do so without sacrificing one iota of my Blackness or my femaleness or my humanity."

Who knew?

Josephine Baker (1906–1975), who rose to prominence in the 1920s, refused to perform for segregated crowds. Ringgold depicted her because Baker actively participated in the Civil Rights Movement and Ringgold's mother idolized her.

Faith Ringgold, *American Collection #4: Jo Baker's Bananas*, 1997; Acrylic on canvas with pieced fabric border, 80½ x 76 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Purchased with funds donated by the Estate of Barbara Bingham Moore, Olga V. Hargis Family Trusts, and the Members' Acquisition Fund; Faith Ringgold © 1997; Photo by Lee Stalsworth



Gynaecology Couch



Dormitory



Gynaecology Couch, 1992

Dormitory, 2011

Absence Minded

Using photographs as source material, **Julie Roberts (b. 1963)** creates paintings that address the power that medical and social institutions have over the body. Human figures, though suggested, are often conspicuously omitted.

Take a closer look

Note the rich surfaces of thickly applied paint in contrast to the smooth areas where it is difficult to discern the artist's hand. These variations add an expressive, human element to her precise renderings of sterile implements and interiors.

In her own words

"I've always felt strongly about justice, about talking about when something isn't right.... Maybe one day I'll feel I've earned the right to a landscape or a pure abstract painting."

Who knew?

Growing up in Wales, Roberts drew objects in the nursing home where her mother worked and spent time in a morgue-turned-shelter for women and children. While pursuing her MFA, she visited the Glasgow Royal Infirmary to sketch hospital equipment and furniture.

Julie Roberts, *Gynaecology Couch*, 1992; Oil and acrylic ground on canvas, 83 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 72 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; Photo by Lee Stalsworth

Julie Roberts, *Dormitory*, 2011; Oil on linen, 46 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 53 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; Photo by Lee Stalsworth



Michelle Jacuzzi—Untitled (#7) (“Ricas y famosas”)



Inge and Her Mother Ema in the Living Room (“Ricas y famosas”)



Michelle Jacuzzi—Untitled (#7) (“Ricas y famosas”), 1999

Inge and Her Mother Ema in the Living Room (“Ricas y famosas”), 2000

“Real” Housewives

The “Ricas y famosas” series, created from 1994 to 2000, shares its name with a popular Latin American soap opera. Like the television show, the photography by **Daniela Rossell (b. 1973)** underscores the ways popular culture creates and disseminates female stereotypes.

Take a closer look

Each subject constructs her own image by selecting her clothing, pose, facial expression, and setting. We are intended to read such details as clues to the individual’s identity. The artist considers these works a commentary on the predetermined roles women play.

Something to talk about

These photographs offer an unfettered peek into the world of wealthy Mexicans. What words come to mind when viewing these settings and the women who inhabit them? What opinions do you form about the subjects and their lifestyle?

Daniela Rossell, *Michelle Jacuzzi—Untitled (#7)* (“Ricas y famosas”), 1999; Chromogenic print, 50 x 60 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Daniela Rossell, Courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali, New York

Daniela Rossell, *Inge and Her Mother Ema in the Living Room* (“Ricas y famosas”), 2000; Chromogenic print, 50 x 60 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Daniela Rossell, Courtesy of the artist and Greene Naftali, New York



Roses, Convolvulus, Poppies, and Other Flowers in an Urn on a Stone Ledge



Flower Power

Dutch artist Rachel Ruysch was a court painter, wife, and mother of 10 who remained artistically active into her 80s. Her vibrant floral pieces made her one of the most celebrated artists of her day.



Roses, Convolvulus, Poppies, and Other Flowers in an Urn on a Stone Ledge, ca. late 1680s

Take a closer look

Paintings by **Rachel Ruysch (1664–1750)** reward close inspection. She renders blooms and foliage with precise details and naturalistic textures. Typically her floral arrangements are also astir with ants, butterflies, beetles, and other insects.

Something to talk about

Ruysch's still lifes are anything but motionless. How has her use of color, composition, and lighting added visual energy and drama to this work?

Who knew?

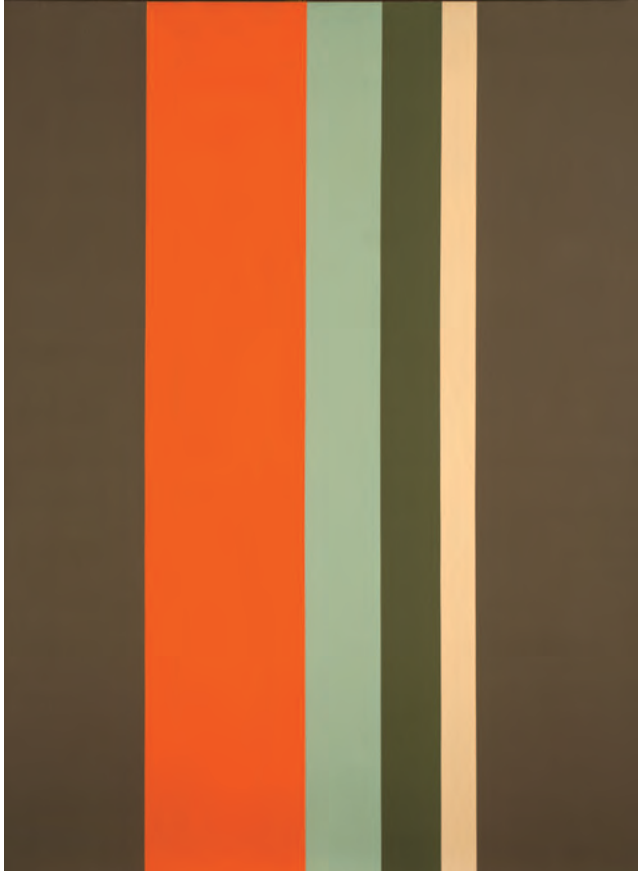
Ruysch grew up amid one of Europe's great Curiosity Cabinets. Assembled by her scientist father, it contained preserved anatomical specimens, exotic birds, insects, and plants. Exposure to such items may have encouraged the accuracy with which she rendered individual flowers.

Rachel Ruysch, *Roses, Convolvulus, Poppies, and Other Flowers in an Urn on a Stone Ledge*, ca. late 1680s; Oil on canvas, 42½ x 33 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

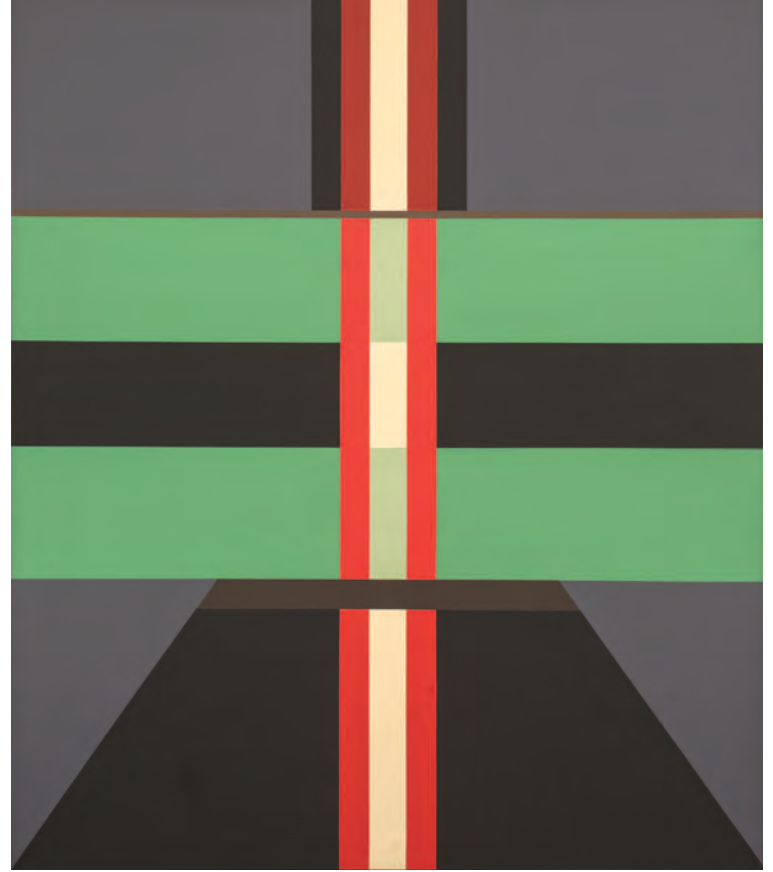


Fanny Sanín

Acrylic No. 7



Acrylic No. 3



Acrylic No. 7, 1970

Acrylic No. 3, 1988

Straight Up!

Colombian-born **Fanny Sanín (b. 1938)** began her career creating gestural abstractions akin to those of American counterpart Lee Krasner (1908–1984), also in the museum's collection. Sanín shifted to an ordered style in 1969 and visually balanced, rhythmic paintings became her hallmark.

Take a closer look

The strong verticality of *Acrylic No. 7*, typical of Sanín's early geometric works, highlights the canvas's surface. In the 1980s, she added horizontal and diagonal lines to her compositions, as in *Acrylic No. 3*. These elements create a depth of field that draws us into the piece.

Something to talk about

The artist mixes her own colors, generating many variations before identifying the perfect hues. How would you describe Sanín's choice and placement of colors?

In her own words

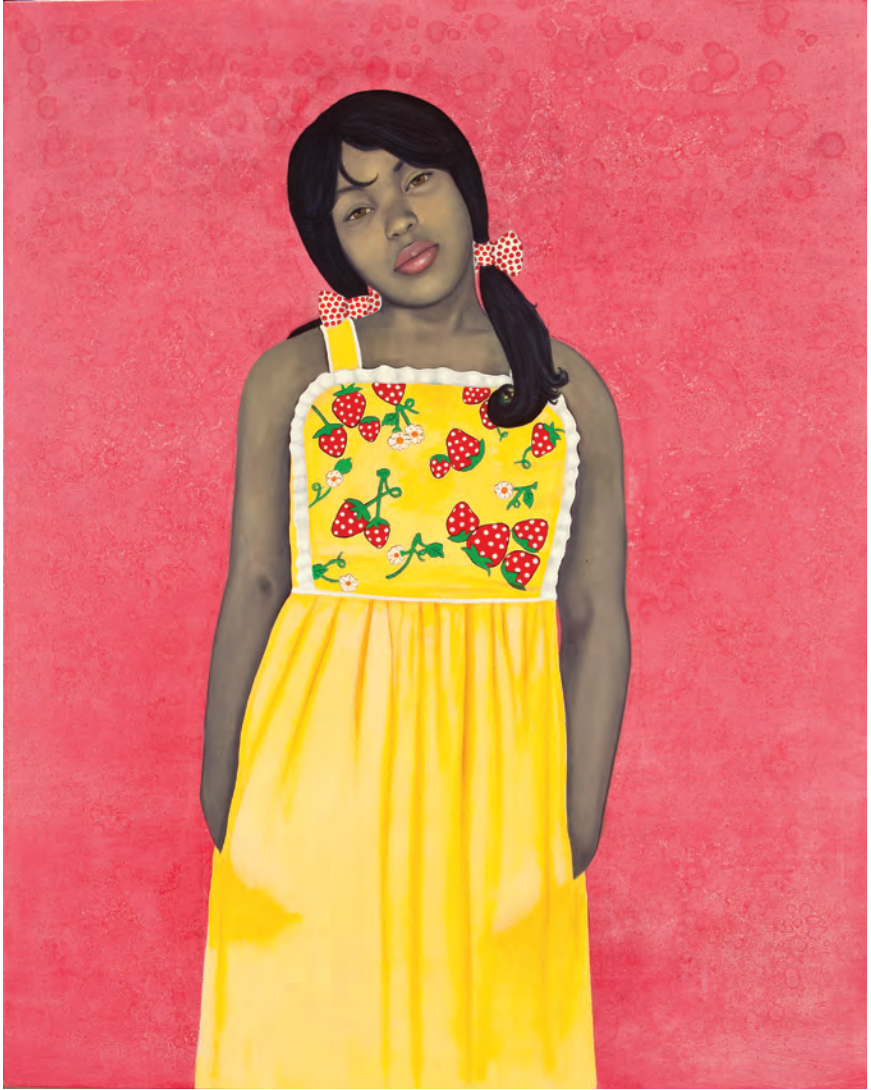
"Drawings are the first and most important part of my creation. I do many studies on the same idea, thinking of color, structure, order, and harmony."

Fanny Sanín, *Acrylic No. 7*, 1970; Acrylic on canvas, 69 x 51 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the artist; © Fanny Sanín; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

Fanny Sanín, *Acrylic No. 3*, 1988; Acrylic on canvas, 45¾ x 40 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the artist; © Fanny Sanín; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



They call me Redbone but I'd rather be Strawberry Shortcake



Grays Anatomy

Amy Sherald perceives racial identity as something we construct and perform. She presents her subjects with unusual costumes and props. The resulting characters seem to float, spot-lit against vivid backgrounds—fantastic and playful, yet uncanny.



They call me Redbone but I'd rather be Strawberry Shortcake, 2009

Take a closer look

Amy Sherald (b. 1973) works from color photographs of her models, but renders their skin tones in a range of gray shades. By removing the “color” of her subjects, Sherald challenges our cultural tendency to view color as race.

In her own words

“While attending private schools and being one of two or three black children, I was raised to be conscious of how I acted, spoke, and dressed. This performing aspect of my identity...was the key to my social acceptance and assimilation.”

Who knew?

Former First Lady Michelle Obama selected Sherald to paint her official portrait in 2018, making the artist the first African American woman honored with such a commission.

Amy Sherald, *They call me Redbone but I'd rather be Strawberry Shortcake*, 2009; Oil on canvas, 54 x 43 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Steven Scott, Baltimore, in honor of the artist and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the National Museum of Women in the Arts; © Amy Sherald; Photograph by Lee Stalworth





Painting Prodigy

Elisabetta Sirani was a prolific young painter from the progressive city of Bologna, Italy. Trained as an artist by her father, Sirani produced almost 200 artworks between the age of 17 and her untimely death 10 years later.



Virgin and Child, 1663

Take a closer look

In this painting, **Elisabetta Sirani (1638–1665)** portrayed an intimate moment between a loving mother and child. Mary wears a turban favored by Bolognese peasant women. The garland of roses foreshadows both the crown she will wear as Queen of Heaven and her son's crown of thorns.

Something to talk about

In painting this Christian subject, Sirani emphasized the humanity rather than the divinity of the Holy Family. If you did not know the title of the work, would you still recognize the subject? Why or why not?

Who knew?

Sirani completed paintings very quickly. But her speed, together with her gender, led to accusations that her father was lending a hand. To counter this suspicion, Sirani opened her studio, inviting the public to observe her at work.

Elisabetta Sirani, *Virgin and Child*, 1663; Oil on canvas, 34 x 27½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Conservation funds generously provided by the Southern California State Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Jaune Quick-to-See Smith

Indian, Indio, Indigenous



Indian, Indio, Indigenous, 1992

It's All in the Details

Of Salish, French-Cree, and Shoshone heritage, **Jaune Quick-to-See Smith (b. 1940)** bridges Native American art forms and Western, modernist styles. Her work frequently addresses the past and present treatment of native peoples.

Take a closer look

Smith has described her artworks as inhabited landscapes. They participate in ongoing socio-political dialogues related to past, present, and future. Look closely at the layered paint, fabric, and other elements to tease out her intended narrative(s).

Something to talk about

The artist sometimes uses cultural and historical references to highlight issues of tribal policy, human rights, and the environment. In this work, how does her choice of imagery encourage us to consider ethnological and cultural concerns from a Native American viewpoint?

In her own words

“My work comes from a visceral place—deep, deep as though my roots extend beyond the soles of my feet into sacred soils.”

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, *Indian, Indio, Indigenous*, 1992; Oil and collage on canvas, 60 x 100 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Museum purchase: Members' Acquisition Fund; © Jaune Quick-to-See Smith



SoHo Women Artists



SoHo Women Artists, 1978

History Lessons

This monumental group portrait by artist and activist **May Stevens (1924–2019)** portrays her with neighbors and art-world colleagues. Here, Stevens references the recent history of the feminist art movement and the women advocating for social change.

Take a closer look

The artist used individual photographs of her friends to compose this work. She wanted to show them as individuals as well as part of a professional community. Note shifts in light, shadow, and scale that indicate different source material for each figure.

Who knew?

Stevens honors inspirational predecessors. Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010), also in the museum's collection, models one of her bulbous sculptures. Background text and skirt reference Steven's 1976 portrait of Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–1656), one of many historical women rediscovered by feminists.

May Stevens, *SoHo Women Artists*, 1978; Acrylic on canvas, 78 x 142 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Museum purchase: The Lois Pollard Price Acquisition Fund; © May Stevens and Ryan Lee Gallery, New York



Untitled (Babies)



Untitled (Nicole with Bird)



Untitled (Babies), 2005

Untitled (Nicole with Bird), 2006

Framed

Works by **Angela Strassheim (b. 1969)** have an uncanny quality that derives partly from her time as a forensic photographer. Documenting crime scenes taught her to approach subjects with clinical detachment and give background details and focal points equal significance.

Take a closer look

Strassheim's photographs exploring her childhood memories or girls' lives appear to record ordinary experiences. Yet the unrealistic perfection of immaculate rooms and impeccable children introduces a disquieting undercurrent.

In her own words

"Every aspect of every picture is controlled and important. The place is as specific as the person as what's worn as what they're doing. They're all staged. Everything is framed very specifically."

Angela Strassheim, *Untitled (Babies)*, 2005; Chromogenic color print, 40 x 30 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Angela Strassheim; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth

Angela Strassheim, *Untitled (Nicole with Bird)*, 2006; Chromogenic color print, 40 x 30 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Angela Strassheim; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth





Transatlantic Crossing

Céline Marie Tabary painted recognizable yet abstracted scenes of her native France and Washington, D.C., where she relocated in 1938. The move was prompted by her friendship with Lois Mailou Jones (1905–1998), also in the museum's collection, whom she met at the Académie Julian in Paris.



Terrasse de café, Paris, 1950

Take a closer look

Céline Marie Tabary (1908–1993) portrays a lively Parisian café scene. Beneath pink umbrellas, waiters in white jackets serve patrons who enjoy a moment of leisure. By fracturing the forms into geometric shapes, the artist creates energy and movement.

Something to talk about

Cafés like the one in Tabary's painting, have long been celebrated not only as places for social interaction but also for intellectual discourse. Where can this type of stimulating environment be found today?

Who knew?

Lifelong friends and colleagues, Tabary and Jones taught art classes in Jones's Washington studio beginning in 1945. Known as "The Little Paris Studio," its collaborative and dynamic atmosphere attracted artists like Alma Woodsey Thomas (1891–1978), also in the museum's collection.

Céline Marie Tabary, *Terrasse de café, Paris*, 1950; Oil on canvas, 32 x 39 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Corinne Mitchell; Painting conservation funds generously provided by the Southern California State Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts





Home Grown

Known for creating large, hand-built vessels, Margaret Tafoya favored local materials, techniques, and imagery. Devoted to pottery traditions native to the Santa Clara Pueblo in New Mexico, she refused to use a potter's wheel.



Jar, ca. 1965

Take a closer look

Margaret Tafoya (1904–2001) decorated her pottery with relief carvings of traditional symbols. Examine the jar closely to locate imagery Tafoya incorporated.

Something to talk about

The artist's highly polished pots blur the line between utilitarian object and artwork. Consider items in your own home. In which pieces do you value function over form? Vice versa?

In her own words

"When I was small, like all pueblo children, we sit around Mother's side when she is making pottery. We get a piece of clay and try to make animals or maybe bowls...and whether we knew it or not, through our playing with clay we learned pottery making."

Who knew?

Tafoya's family reflects the matrilineal heritage of her craft. Her mother, Sara Fina Gutierrez Tafoya (1863–1949), developed the pottery style now associated with the Santa Clara Pueblo. Margaret's daughter, Lu Ann Tafoya (b. 1938), also in the museum's collection, continues the tradition.

Margaret Tafoya, *Jar*, ca. 1965; Blackware, 17 x 13 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © Margaret Tafoya





Late Bloomer

After more than 35 years as a D.C. public school teacher, Alma Woodsey Thomas retired to focus on painting. She developed her signature style in her mid-70s. At 80 years old, Thomas became the first African American woman to have a solo exhibition at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art.



Iris, Tulips, Jonquils, and Crocuses, 1969

Take a closer look

Alma Woodsey Thomas (1891–1978) created paintings that appear quite structured, but individual brushstrokes reveal her spontaneity. Find evidence of her working process, including faint vertical pencil lines and overlapping colors. Observe the overall effect of the palette and pattern.

Something to talk about

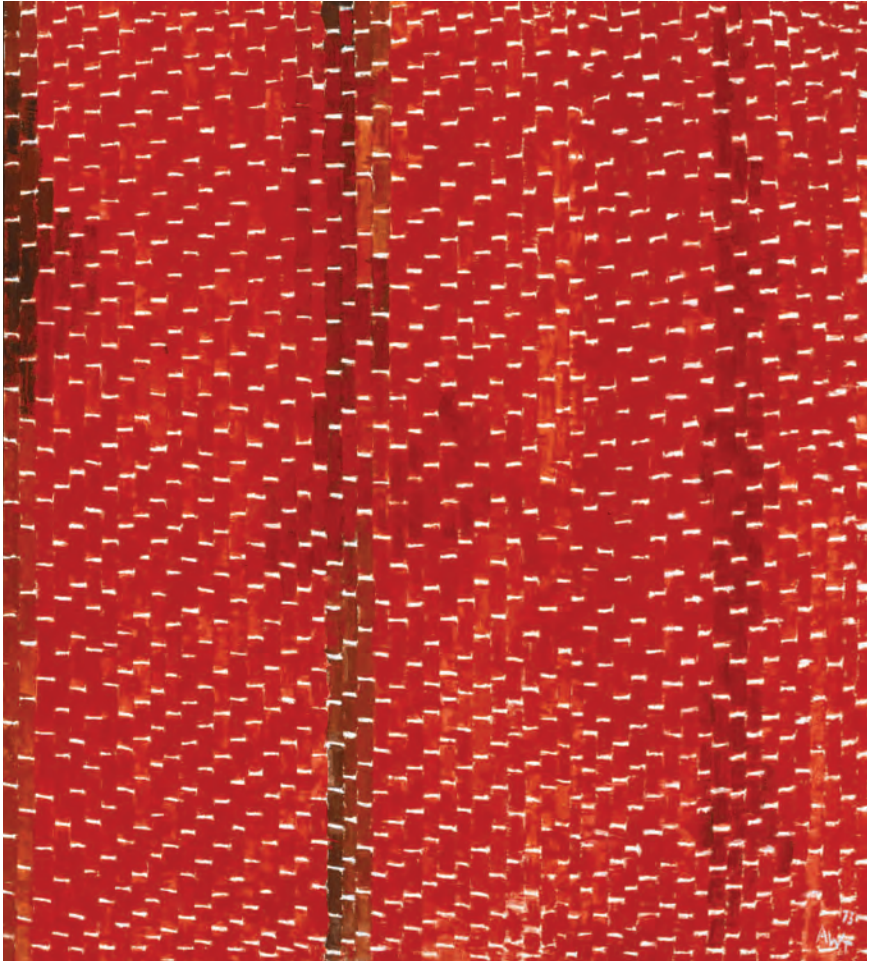
Thomas believed in the expressive quality of color. What mood or idea do her hues convey? How would we experience the work differently if it were monochromatic?

In her own words

“My paintings reflect my communion with nature, man’s highest source of inspiration.”

Alma Woodsey Thomas, *Iris, Tulips, Jonquils, and Crocuses*, 1969; Acrylic on canvas, 60 x 50 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © Estate of Alma Woodsey Thomas; Photograph by Lee Stalworth





Shoot for the Stars

The Space Race, a rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States for spaceflight dominance, captivated Alma Woodsey Thomas. As the U.S. explored uncharted territory, the artist did too. Thomas landed on her abstract style just before the first astronauts set foot on the moon in 1969.



Orion, 1973

Take a closer look

Alma Woodsey Thomas (1891–1978) created her signature “Alma Stripes” by allowing the unpainted canvas to show between her freehand dabs of paint. Though linear in nature, her vertical lines and rectangular dashes are not perfectly geometric.

Something to talk about

For Thomas, red symbolized the power required to break from Earth's gravity. Note the variations of that hue in *Orion*. What would you name them to describe this painting to someone who couldn't see it?

In her own words

“The use of color in my paintings is of paramount importance to me. Through color I have sought to concentrate on beauty and happiness, rather than on man's inhumanity to man.”

Who knew?

Born in the segregated south, the artist moved with her family to Washington, D.C., in 1907. The house that she called home and studio until her death still stands at 1530 15th Street, NW. It bears a plaque recognizing Thomas's artistic contributions.

Alma Woodsey Thomas, *Orion*, 1973; Acrylic on canvas, 59% x 54 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; © Estate of Alma Woodsey Thomas; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth





Bedazzling!

Mickalene Thomas often works with rhinestones, glitter, and enamel. Inspired by art history, popular culture, and Pop art, her depictions of African American women examine concepts of female identity and beauty.



A-E-I-O-U and Sometimes Y, 2009

Take a closer look

Working from a projection of a photo-booth image, **Mickalene Thomas (b. 1971)** defines her subject's contours with black rhinestones. At first glance, the glossy pink panel appears uniform, as if machine-made. Yet subtle color shifts and paint layers confirm Thomas's creative presence.

In her own words

"I feel like the rhinestones in my paintings are like that really glossy lipstick that women wear. It's another level of masking, of dressing up."

Who knew?

Thomas titles many of her works after songs. "AEIOU Sometimes Y" was a dance club and MTV hit in 1983 for the two-man group Ebn-Ozn. Catch the video on YouTube.

Mickalene Thomas, *A-E-I-O-U and Sometimes Y*, 2009; Plastic rhinestones, acrylic, and enamel on panel, 24 x 20 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Deborah Carstens; © 2009 Mickalene Thomas, Courtesy of the artist and Lehmann Maupin; Photograph by Lee Stalworth



Plaid Houses (Maquettes)



Plaid Houses (Maquettes), 2005–11

Felt Like Home

Laure Tixier (b. 1972) explores relationships between humans and the built environment. *Plaid Houses*, a series of diminutive maquettes, or sculptor's models, recall childhood blanket forts while referencing dwellings from around the world.

Take a closer look

Inspect the hand stitching that joins felt walls and roofs. Survey how these soft structures sit and sag.

Something to talk about

These works evoke personal associations with domestic architecture. Which of Tixier's houses reminds you most of your childhood home? Which would you prefer to live in today? Why?

In her own words

"These architectures are bodies with felt skin."

Who knew?

The word "plaide" in Scottish Gaelic means blanket.

Laure Tixier, *Plaid Houses (Maquettes)*: *Blue Japan House, Blue Art Deco House, Red Deconstructivist House, White Hut, Acid Green Dome House, Brown Usha Hut, Pink Tower, Turquoise Blue Colonial House (Barbados), Orange Breton House*, 2005–11; Wool, felt, and thread, dimensions variable; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Les Amis du National Museum of Women in the Arts, Paris, France; © Laure Tixier; Photograph by Pharoah Marsan





Colorforms

Anne Truitt often referenced the natural world through color and title. In Greek mythology, a dryad is a female spirit who inhabits forests, specifically oak trees.



Summer Dryad, 1971

Take a closer look

Anne Truitt (1921–2004) achieved her signature silken surfaces by methodically straining acrylic paint, applying up to 40 layers of pigment, and sanding between coats. View her simple geometric form from different angles, observing the play of light and shadow across its glossy green planes.

Something to talk about

Truitt used sculpture to express abstract concepts like time and human existence. Her works invoke recognizable forms—crucifixes, tombstones, picket fences, solitary figures—to invite associations between the concrete and the intangible. What references does this piece bring to mind?

In her own words

“I conceive the sculptural form in space, as if the color itself came into being as a form.”

Who knew?

The artist created *Summer Dryad* at her studio in the Cleveland Park neighborhood of Washington, D.C., just a few miles northwest of the museum.

Anne Truitt, *Summer Dryad*, 1971; Acrylic on wood; 76 x 13 x 8 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the Holladay Foundation; © Anne Truitt



Living Room, from the series "100 Little Deaths"



Moais, from the series "100 Little Deaths"



Living Room, from the series "100 Little Deaths," 2002

Moais, from the series "100 Little Deaths," 2002

Dead to the World

For her "100 Little Deaths" series, German-born, Brazilian-raised **Janaina Tschäpe (b. 1973)** invented episodes of her own demise. Inserting her body into landscapes and interiors around the globe, she linked herself with specific sites while isolating herself from other people.

Take a closer look

Each photograph in this series vacillates between reality and fantasy, comedy and tragedy. Contemplating individual works, we seek the prone protagonist and craft her narrative. Considered together, the images function as the artist's visual diary, recording her connection to various places.

Something to talk about

How does Tschäpe's body interact with and change each location? Why might an artist elect to use her own form instead of a model's?

Who knew?

The artist's first name refers to the Afro-Brazilian queen of the ocean and goddess of the sea. Paying homage to her namesake, some of Tschäpe's "deaths" occur in or near water.

Janaina Tschäpe, *Living Room*, from the series "100 Little Deaths," 2002; Chromogenic color print, 31 x 47 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection, Photo courtesy of the artist; © Janaina Tschäpe

Janaina Tschäpe, *Moais*, from the series "100 Little Deaths," 2002; Chromogenic color print, 31 x 47 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection, Photo courtesy of the artist; © Janaina Tschäpe





Woman's Work?

For centuries, people presumed women couldn't (or shouldn't) be sculptors. Carving stone or casting bronze was considered too physically challenging. Elizabeth Turk is happy to exert herself: "The challenge, intellectually and physically, makes it real.... A dialogue with stone tests you."



Wing 5, 1998

Take a closer look

Elizabeth Turk (b. 1961) uses drills, files, and sanders to shape massive marble blocks into forms that appear fragile or lightweight. Here, buoyant wings settle on the gallery floor, and the central piece balances precariously on its narrow base, appearing to defy gravity.

Something to talk about

Turk intends us to experience this work from different angles. Walking around the sculpture or looking from above and below provides many viewpoints and possible interpretations. How does your experience of the piece change as you move?

Who knew?

This sculpture has a connection to Washington, D.C., history. Turk created it from marble blocks that were left over after completion of the Lincoln Memorial and had been in storage since 1922.

Elizabeth Turk, *Wing 5*, 1998; Colorado Yule marble, Component A: 60 x 31 x 25 inches, Component B: 15 x 65 x 13 inches, Component C: 11 x 64 x 22 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Tony Podesta Collection; © Elizabeth Turk



Suzanne Valadon

The Abandoned Doll



The Abandoned Doll, 1921

Growing Pains

Before picking up a paintbrush, **Suzanne Valadon (1865–1938)** was a trapeze performer and artists' model. The latter connected her to Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Though largely self-taught, Valadon also learned techniques by watching these artists.

Take a closer look

Fiercely independent, Valadon never fully embraced the artistic trends favored by her contemporaries. Rather, she developed her own distinctive style. Note her unidealized figures, compressed space, bold colors and patterns, and heavy black outlines that differentiate forms.

Something to talk about

The sitters are Valadon's relatives but she chose to keep them anonymous. Therefore, this painting speaks to universal human experiences, such as adolescence. What evidence does Valadon provide to suggest that the girl depicted is still a child? Almost an adult?

Who knew?

Passionate about animals, Valadon supposedly kept a goat in her studio to eat artwork she did not like and fed caviar to her cats.

Suzanne Valadon, *The Abandoned Doll*, 1921; Oil on canvas, 51 x 32 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Wallace and Wilhelmina Holladay; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



Hellen van Meene

Untitled (30)



Untitled (79)



Untitled (30), 1998

Untitled (79), 2000

Up Close and Personal

Hellen van Meene (b. 1972) creates smaller works than many contemporary photographers. The images' tight framing and modest size invite an intimate experience between viewer and subject.

Take a closer look

Van Meene carefully constructs her compositions by posing her subjects, selecting their clothing, and choosing the setting. Yet, the resulting images appear candid and natural.

In her own words

"When I am asking a model to do something that does seem somewhat strange, I treat it as if it is a normal thing to ask and I think that creates an atmosphere where it's not a strange or unnerving thing to ask of someone."

Who knew?

The artist does not use professional models. Often she photographs young women from her hometown of Alkmaar in the Netherlands. When commissioned to work in other countries, such as Japan, van Meene asks young women she meets there to pose for her.

Hellen van Meene, *Untitled (30)*, 1998; Chromogenic color print, 11¾ x 11¾ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Hellen van Meene, Courtesy of the artist and Yancey Richardson Gallery

Hellen van Meene, *Untitled (79)*, 2000; Chromogenic color print, 15¼ x 15¼ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Hellen van Meene, Courtesy of the artist and Yancey Richardson Gallery; Photograph by Lee Stalsworth



M. L. Van Nice

Swiss Army Book



Dinner with Mr. Dewey



Swiss Army Book, 1990

Dinner with Mr. Dewey, 2002

Double Booked

M. L. Van Nice (b. 1945) considers her artist's books "installations writ small." While some function as books, others are sculptures inspired by publications. She aims to challenge viewers' preconceptions about knowledge and systems of classification.

Take a closer look

Van Nice's pieces often incorporate found objects, such as matches, pen nibs, bottles, and bones. Within the context of her works, these items acquire new visual and symbolic meanings.

Something to talk about

Van Nice believes viewers appreciate the unexpected in art. Which aspects of the artist's work surprise you? Why?

In her own words

"Art has no rules of engagement, no mandatory method of approach. This is the strength of it. Where there are no rules, there are no boundaries."

M. L. Van Nice, *Swiss Army Book*, 1990; Ink on paper, linen, wood, pen nib, and ribbon, 5½ x 24½ x 11½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Museum purchase: The Lois Pollard Price Acquisition Fund; © M. L. Van Nice

M. L. Van Nice, *Dinner with Mr. Dewey*, 2002; Mixed media, 32 x 42 x 20 inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Museum purchase: Members' Acquisition Fund



Fenómeno de ingravidez (Phenomenon of Weightlessness)



Fenómeno de ingravidez (Phenomenon of Weightlessness), 1963

The Gravity of the Situation

Interested in science and metaphysics, **Remedios Varo (1908–1963)** often merged the two in her work. Varo reflects her concerns regarding humankind meddling with nature as well as her excitement about the potential for science to unify us.

Take a closer look

This work illuminates Varo's fascination with relativity and the fourth dimension. It depicts an astronomer reacting to a sudden shift in his tidy observatory. Contrast the neatly ordered orreries (models of the solar system) with the disconnected, floating earth and its moon.

Something to talk about

The figure struggles to stay balanced in a topsy-turvy space. He reaches for the hovering globe as his feet seem to rest in two different dimensions. Recall a time when you felt your world was being turned upside down. How did you persevere?

Who knew?

The spatial shift depicted references special relativity. It describes Lorentz Equations, which starts with a graph with an X- and Y-axis. Rotating this graph 30 degrees demonstrates the shift in space-time for different states of motion.

Remedios Varo, *Fenómeno de ingravidez (Phenomenon of Weightlessness)*, 1963; Oil on canvas, 29½ x 19¾ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts. Gift from private collection



Joana Vasconcelos

Viriato



NATIONAL MUSEUM
OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS

Viriato, 2005

Off the Hook

Joana Vasconcelos (b. 1971) explores consumer culture, collective identity, and our assumptions about what constitutes art. This Portuguese artist is known for enveloping everyday items, such as pianos, laptops, or decorative objects, in crocheted and knitted material.

Take a closer look

In *Viriato*, Vasconcelos cloaks a lawn ornament in elaborate needlework, contrasting mass-produced with hand-crafted. The lacy covering invites us to peer at the details beneath, while also competing for our attention with the figure it masks.

Something to talk about

Because handmade textiles are universally rich with associations, Vasconcelos incorporates them in many of her works to encourage multiple interpretations. How do your associations with crochet and similar techniques affect your response to *Viriato*?

Who knew?

Viriato was a first-century leader in the area of present-day Portugal. He is credited with turning back an invasion of his homeland by the ancient Romans.

Joana Vasconcelos, *Viriato*, 2005; Faience dog and handmade cotton crochet, 29½ x 17¾ x 15¾ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Joana Vasconcelos; Photograph by Lee Stalworth



Kara Elizabeth Walker

Freedom, A Fable: A Curious Interpretation of the Wit of a Negress in Troubled Times



Untitled de Kara Walker



Freedom, A Fable: A Curious Interpretation of the Wit of a Negress in Troubled Times, 1997

Untitled de Kara Walker, 2014

In the Shadows

Disquieting silhouettes by **Kara Elizabeth Walker** (b. 1969) recall inhumane treatment of enslaved people in the Antebellum era. Her depictions of racial violence and stereotypes challenge us to reflect on the legacy of slavery and presence of bigotry in contemporary life.

Take a closer look

The artist manipulates positive and negative space to create detailed figures and objects. Notice the mood created by her intricate jet-black shapes against stark white backgrounds.

In her own words

"I wanted to make work where the viewer wouldn't walk away; [they] would either giggle nervously, get pulled into history, into fiction, into something totally demeaning and possibly very beautiful."

Who knew?

Considered artist's multiples, *Freedom, A Fable* is from an edition of 4,000 and *Untitled de Kara Walker* is one of 1,000. The latter commemorated Walker's 2014 installation *A Subtlety*, an "homage to the unpaid and overworked" in America, at Brooklyn's former Domino Sugar Refinery.

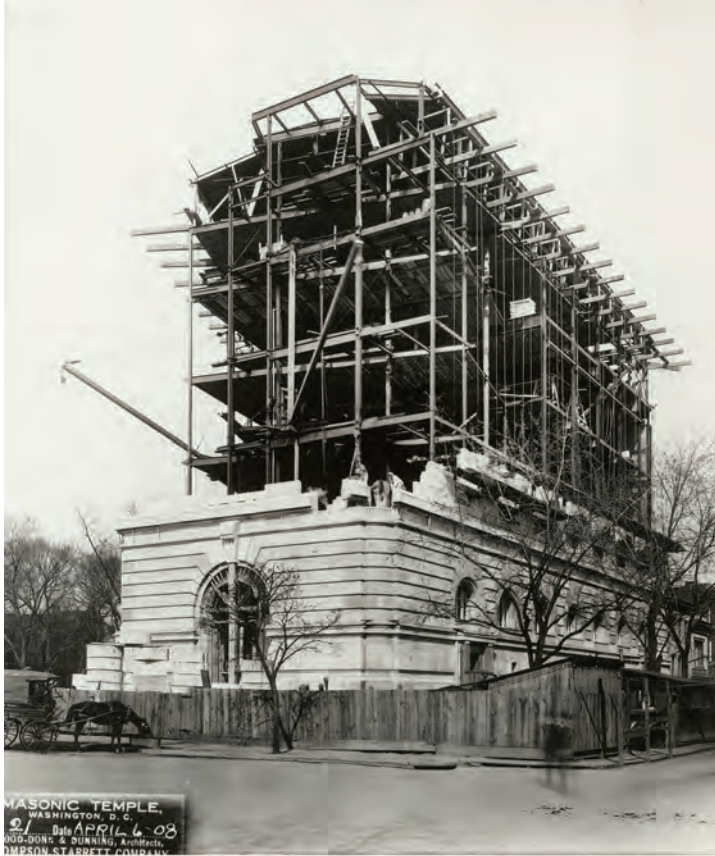
Kara Elizabeth Walker, *Freedom, A Fable: A Curious Interpretation of the Wit of a Negress in Troubled Times*, 1997; Ink on paper, laser-cut black card stock, and leather binding, 8¼ x 9½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Marla Prather; © Ellie Bronson

Kara Elizabeth Walker, *Untitled de Kara Walker*, 2015; Ceramic, 8 x 8 x 4½ inches; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Promised gift of Steven Scott, Baltimore, in honor of Dr. David Driskell; Photo by Lee Stalsworth



Waddy B. Wood (architect)

During construction



As the Town Theatre



During construction, 1908

As the Town Theatre, ca. 1982

If These Walls Could Talk

Completed in 1908 as a temple for Freemasons, a male-only fraternity, this edifice has a storied history. Over the years, it witnessed secret Masonic rituals and public film premieres. In 1987, it became the only museum solely dedicated to women's creative contributions.

Take a closer look

From March 25 through September 25, 2022, Washington, D.C.-based artist MISS CHELOVE's 6-story mural *She: A Forest Floor Flow* will grace the museum's west façade. The artist's bright colors, organic shapes, and sinuous lines contrast Wood's formal Renaissance Revival structure.

Something to talk about

This building's cornerstone is said to include Masonic paraphernalia such as its acts of incorporation; portraits of members George Washington and Theodore Roosevelt; U.S. proof silver coins; and commemorative medals. If we could add to this time capsule today, what should we include?

Who knew?

The Great Hall appeared as a backdrop for R2-D2 and friends in the fan flick *Star Wars: Revelations* (2005) and as the German Embassy in *Loose Cannons* (1990), starring Dan Aykroyd and Gene Hackman.

