



Thomas Hart Benton (American, 1889–1975), *Ozark Autumn*, 1949, oil and tempera on panel (wood), Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of the Ida Belle Young Art Acquisition Fund, 2015.6



INTRODUCTION

The following curriculum guide has been developed for docents to serve as a resource for the various topics that will be covered during the tour “The American Scene.” The guide includes the goals and objectives of the tour, the tour structure (including outreach visits to the classroom and museum visits), major themes and topics, information about the artists and artworks featured during the tour, and content standards for the **Alabama Course of Study**.

Goals:

In the Grade 5 curriculum, emphasis is placed on understanding, responding to, and producing art while promoting the elements of art and principles of design through traditional, mixed and digital media. In addition, the curriculum promotes an increased awareness of art and artists in American history and culture.

Objectives:

This tour program is designed to meet several objectives. Students will become familiar with commonly used art terms and will learn to look for signs of history and culture in interpreting works of art. Students will study works of art in four categories: portraits, landscapes, sculpture, and genre scenes, including both realistic and abstract works. They will also experience interactive works of art in the ARTWORKS gallery and create mixed media works of art in the studios (inspired by a work of art they will see in ARTWORKS).

Fifth grade students will:

- Analyze major themes in the collection
- Use visual thinking skills and oral communication to discuss and analyze works of art
- Identify narratives, ideas, and feelings expressed by individual artists in works of art
- Identify historical references in works of art
- Analyze paintings in terms of composition, color relationships, and the principles of balance, unity and variety
- Understand how artists create the illusion of depth on a two dimensional surface
- Understand how artists use materials to create mass and volume in sculpture
- Compare and contrast works of art
- Understand the use of different art materials in the studio
- Apply concepts and ideas present in works of art in the gallery and ARTWORKS to art making in the studio, such as combinations of varied materials, techniques, and layers in a work of art
- Learn about works of art through multi-sensory experiences that encompass sound, movement, and role-playing

TOUR STRUCTURE

Outreach Classroom Visit (30 to 35 minutes)

A Museum volunteer will visit each 5th grade classroom to make a brief presentation. The presentation will prepare students for their upcoming Museum visit, introducing tour concepts including types of art, vocabulary, and themes relevant to the tour and MMFA's Permanent Collection. By examining reproductions of works of art in their classrooms, students will be prepared to discuss works of art on view at the Museum and apply what they have learned to an art making activity.

Tour of the Museum in Three Parts (2 Hours)

1. Gallery Tour (35 minutes)

Works from the Permanent Collection and a selection from a temporary exhibition will be used to explore the themes of American Art, as they pertain to portraits, landscapes, sculptures, and genre scenes. Students will make historical connections, use art vocabulary, develop critical thinking skills in interpreting works of art, and explore ways of looking at art, including analyzing elements of art and principles of design.

2. ARTWORKS Tour (35 minutes)

In the ARTWORKS gallery, students will have an opportunity to use multiple senses to comprehend concepts addressed throughout the tour. Following a discussion of an artwork by Tom Moore, students will engage in physical movements in response to Latin music, while projecting abstract patterns on the Tannenbaum interactive screen. Students will also participate in role-playing exercises when responding to the diorama based on Edward Hopper's *New York Office*, and will learn about creating the illusion of depth using one point perspective and size variations in a genre scene.

3. Studio Activity (35 minutes)

The studio activity will include an art lesson incorporating concepts of the tour. Students will use assorted ordinary objects, colored pencils, and fish images to create an abstract, mixed media art work. The students will take their works of art with them as a record of their experiences at the Museum.

TOUR CATEGORIES

Portrait

A portrait is a painting of one or more human figures. A portrait may include the head and shoulders of the sitter(s), a three-quarter view (from the head to below the waist), and/or a full-length view of the figure(s). A portrait painting may also include attributes that reveal more about the personality of the sitter. These attributes may include the type of clothing that is worn, jewelry, hairstyle, and other objects placed in the vicinity of the subject, such as a book, a pair of glasses, etc. Portraits may be depicted with a plain, dark background, or with a view of an interior space, such as a bedroom or study room; they may also include a window with a view of the surrounding landscape.

Landscape

A landscape is a painting that shows a scene from nature in which the place or the land is the main subject. Landscape paintings are defined by a horizon line, which separates the earth from the sky. The horizon line is equivalent to the viewer's eye level, and is generally placed in the center of the composition as a horizontal axis. However, the placement of the horizon line may be closer to the top or bottom of the picture plane depending on how much land or sky the artist chooses to represent. A centrally placed horizon line adds symmetry to the composition, but an artist may choose to place it higher or lower to make the viewer's perspective more dynamic. Landscapes might represent a dramatic location such as a waterfall, or an ordinary location such as the artist's own garden.

Genre

A genre scene is a scene from everyday life in a particular time and place. In contrast to a portrait, a genre scene captures the day-to-day activities of people in the home or community. For example, people depicted in genre scenes may be engaged in a casual conversation, working in a factory or office, sewing a knitted sweater, or having a picnic or meal with family and friends. Scenes from every day life may also help us understand the historical context of a moment in time, in terms of the customs and labor practices that characterize certain groups of people of a particular class, race, gender, ethnicity, or region.

TOUR CATEGORIES

Sculpture

A sculpture is a three-dimensional work of art that has height, width, and depth. When viewing a sculpture, you can walk around it to get multiple views and comprehend what the forms look like in three-dimensional space. Sculpture, therefore, should be distinguished from paintings, which are created on a flat surface to create the illusion of space rather than occupying a “real” and physical space that the viewer is situated in. Since sculpture is three-dimensional, artists tend to use materials that can be molded like clay, carved like marble, or when transformed into another material, produce solid forms made of bronze or glass. Sculpture may also be constructed with found objects that have been discarded and reassembled. Some sculptures might represent figures or objects, or forms inspired by the imagination.

(SUBCATEGORY)

Abstraction

Abstraction deviates from realism and reduces the world to simple forms, lines, and colors. Likewise, abstract art provides a general view of the world, at times alluding to particular objects that share the same basic forms. Abstraction can also be formless or fluid, evoking an emotional response to color or recalling ideas that inform our understanding of visual phenomena.

Mixed Media Works

Works of visual art that combine various materials, including traditional art materials and or found objects, often in layers or three dimensions, and often employing varied techniques. While the used of mixed media dates to the ancient world, the inclusion of ordinary material in art appeared in the late nineteenth century and became more common in the early twentieth century.

Note: Works of visual art that include other art forms such as music can be referred to as “multi-media.”

CLASSROOM OUTREACH PRESENTATION 2016-17

Note to Presenters: The following is a loose “script.” It contains suggested questions you can ask to begin a discussion and prepare the students for their visit to the Museum. The classroom presentation should last approximately 30 to 35 minutes. The bolded words in the script are key vocabulary that you will have printed and on hand for the presentation.

Introduction:

Hello, my name is _____. I am here from the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts to talk to you about some of the works of art you might see and the work of art you will make when you come to the Museum soon. Who has been to the Museum? What was your favorite part of the experience? When you come to the Museum you will not only get to see many original works of art and make your own artwork, you will even get to dance for a few minutes!

Let’s look at some reproductions of some of the artwork you may see when you visit the Museum. You will see examples of **portraits**, **landscapes**, **genre scenes**, and **sculptures** created by well-known American artists. Some of them were created a long time ago and some more recently. Look very closely to see how each artist has a different style!

PORTRAIT



Françoise in Green, Sewing, 1908 - 1909
Mary Cassatt

This type of painting, created 100 years ago by Mary Cassatt, is called a **portrait**. Does anyone know what a **portrait** is? A **portrait** is a painting of one or more individuals or people. Before the invention of the camera, **portraits** were the only way of capturing the likeness of a person. The artist Mary Cassatt spent a lot of time living in France, and often painted **portraits** of women and children. It was not common for women to be working artists during Cassatt’s lifetime, and her choice to paint the every day lives of women and children was also unusual.

What is Françoise doing in the picture? Françoise is sewing in her **portrait**, probably because she enjoyed sewing. Many years ago girls often learned how to sew by hand. What can you tell me about the clothes she is wearing? How would the material of the dress feel if you could touch it? In art terms the word **texture** is used to describe how things feel or appear to feel. Would anyone wear a dress like this today? Where would someone wear a dress like this?

Imagine your **portrait** is going to be painted by a famous artist and will be seen by all of your family members and friends as well as people 100 years in the future. What type of objects and clothing would you want included in your **portrait**? What would these objects say about you? Where would you like to be pictured?

Notice all the objects in the painting that are either blue or green—can you name some of them? What color is the rug on the floor in the **background**? What color is the bow in her hair? They are warm colors and are very different than the cool green or blue colors. The artist used these **contrasting** colors to add variety or interest to her composition.

Look at the light shining on part of Françoise's face and one of her arms. Where do you think the light is coming from? (window nearby? light in the room?) Notice the difference or **contrast** between the light on the left side of her face and arm and the darker shadows on the opposite side.



Portrait of Irene, 1957
Irving Kriesberg

This reproduction of a painting in the museum is also a **portrait**. Who is it a **portrait** of? What do you see that makes you say that? How is it different from the **portrait** of Françoise that we just saw? What more can we say about the differences? (unnatural colors in overall composition of Kriesberg, ages of girls, a bust vs almost full length, frontal vs profile view) The **portrait** of Françoise sewing is more **realistic** in appearance than this **portrait** of a girl named Irene. In art terms, this is a more **abstract** work of art.

LANDSCAPE



Medfield, 1877
George Inness

Landscape is another category of paintings you will find at the Museum. What is a landscape painting? A **landscape** is a painting that shows a scene from nature in which the place or the land is the main subject.

Let's look at this reproduction of a **landscape** painting. How do you think you would feel in this **landscape**? What do you notice in the picture? Where do you think the artist painted this scene? What makes you think so?

The artist, George Inness, painted this **landscape** near Medfield, Massachusetts, where he moved in 1860 to get away from the pressures of living in New York City.

During the 19th century, artists were inspired by the American wilderness. People moved westward to build settlements following the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, and artists like George Inness found religious and spiritual inspiration in nature. Notice how Inness painted the sunlight and sky in this **landscape**, with the light reflected in the water and light shining on the trees. What time of day do you think it is?

Now follow the sky down to the land. The line where the sky meets the land is called the **horizon line**. Where is the **horizon line** in this **landscape**? Yes, in this picture the artist decided to put the **horizon line** near the middle of the painting. Sometimes artists paint the **horizon line** up at the top of the picture with more land showing, and sometimes they place it at the bottom of the picture, with more sky showing.

Let's look at these drawings illustrating different placements of **horizon lines**. Also notice in these different views of **landscapes** that the road seems to become narrower and narrower in the distance as it goes back toward the **horizon line**. The place where the sides of a road or river converge or come together on the **horizon line** is called the **vanishing point**. This is a trick that artists use to give the **illusion of depth** in a painting. In art terms this is called using **one point perspective**. Look again at the George Inness **landscape** and notice how the pond becomes narrower as it nears the **vanishing point** on the **horizon line**.



Clouds, Giverny, 1911
Theodore Earl Butler

Let's compare the **landscape** painted by George Inness with one painted by an artist named Theodore Butler. How is this **landscape** different? (brighter colors, less detail, closer up view, the Inness includes animals and buildings). What do you see that makes you say that? Where do you think this **landscape** was painted? What kind and time of day do you think it is? What do you see that makes you say that? Do you think the seasons are the same or different in Inness and Butler's **landscapes**?

Where is the **horizon line** in this picture? The **horizon line** is lower in Butler's **landscape** because the greater focus in his painting is on the clouds in the sky. Notice the road in the picture. It is wider at the bottom of the painting (**foreground**). Then the road splits into 2 roads and each road appears to become narrower as it moves into the **middle ground** of the painting, and finally ends at one of two different **vanishing points** on the **horizon line**. This artist uses the technique of **perspective** to give the **illusion of depth** in his painting. What do you see in the **background** of this **landscape** picture?

GENRE SCENES



Holidays in the Country, The Cider Party, 1853
George Henry Durrie

Today we've looked at two types of paintings. Who can remember the types of paintings we've talked about? (**portraits and landscapes**). Another type of painting at the Museum is like this reproduction. It is a scene of everyday life, painted in a **realistic** style. In art terms it is called a **genre** painting. A **genre** scene captures the day-to-day activities of people in the home or community.

What is happening in this scene? Is this a painting of a scene set in the country or city? Is this a scene of everyday life that you would see today? When do you think it was painted? What do you see that makes you say that?

Notice the people of different races in the picture. The artist, George Henry Durrie, painted this in 1853, as a commentary about the major political debate of the early 19th century: the question of slave holding in the South and the movement to abolish slavery. As this painting shows different races hanging out as friends, what side of the war do you think the artist was on? Durrie used many symbols in his painting, including the animals. Some say the pig represents the coming troubles of the war. The upside-down horseshoe hanging on the door may also represent being out of luck; foretelling the upcoming Civil War fought over these issues.

Notice how the artist creates the **illusion of depth** with the diagonal line of the open barn door, leading you to look into the dark interior of the barn.



New York Office, 1962
Edward Hopper

If the previous painting was of the country, where is this set? Although the artist's main focus is on the big city and the architecture, this painting is also of everyday life.

Describe the colors in this city scene. What time of day is it? What do you see that makes you say that? What is happening in this picture? What is the woman behind the desk doing? What do you think the letter she is holding says? Is she alone?

How many people do you notice in the painting? Who seems to be the most important? How does the artist make her seem more important? Let's look more closely at the difference in size of the people. (measure with fingers) The woman holding a letter is nearly twice as big as the two people in the space behind her, so she seems to be closer to us. The woman in the **foreground** also has more details on her face, while the face of the person behind her is blurry.

Also notice that the lights on the ceiling appear to get smaller and smaller, suggesting that they go back into space. As we discussed previously, artists use all sorts of tricks to make a flat, **two-dimensional** painting look like it has depth, or is **three-dimensional**. Creating size differences in a painting, with larger, more detailed objects in the **foreground**, and smaller, less detailed objects in the **middle ground** or **background** is another "trick" to create the **illusion of depth**.

SCULPTURE

We've looked at some examples of paintings you may see when you come to the Museum (**portraits, landscapes, and genre paintings**). Paintings are **two-dimensional** works of art, such as the reproductions we've seen today. They have height and width.

You will also see **sculptures** when you visit the Museum. **Sculptures** have three dimensions, such as this box when opened: it has height, width, and depth (demonstrate this with the folded box).



Hiawatha's Marriage, 1868
Edmonia Lewis

This is a picture of one of the **sculptures** you may see at the Museum. This **sculpture** by Edmonia Lewis depicts the marriage of Hiawatha and Minnehaha, based on a poem published in 1855 by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The marriage of the hero, Hiawatha, from the Ojibwa tribe, to Minnehaha from the Dakota tribe helped make peace between the two Native American groups. Looking at the **sculpture**, how do you think Hiawatha and Minnehaha feel about each other?

Sculptures can be made from materials such as clay, stone, metal, or **mixed media**, and they can be modeled, carved, or assembled. What material do you think Edmonia Lewis used to create this **sculpture**? It is made from marble, which is a fairly hard stone that artists carve to make **sculptures**. Is this **sculpture realistic** or **abstract**? Edmonia carved many details in the clothing that each of the figures is wearing, adding to the **sculpture's** realism. How do their clothes compare to those of couples in modern-day weddings?

Edmonia Lewis was the daughter of a Native American mother and an African American father. She was around twenty-one in 1865 when President Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves in the South near the end of the Civil War. Edmonia started college and studied **sculpture** in Boston and traveled overseas to Rome, Italy, a city famous for its ancient marble **sculptures**. She

became well known for her **sculptures** in a day and time when women, especially African American women, were not often recognized as artists.



Self-Portrait: When the Left Side of the Brain Meets the Right Side of the Brain, ca. 2006, Charlie Lucas

Now let's look at a **sculpture** by a well-known Alabama artist named Charlie Lucas. What does the **sculpture** look like? What is the person holding? The name on the book says "Tinman". This **sculpture** is a **self-portrait** of the artist, whose nickname is "Tinman", since he often uses recycled metals, such as tin, to create his **sculptures**. What materials do you think Charlie Lucas used to create this **sculpture** (recycled car parts & metals)? This particular **sculpture** is a **mixed media** artwork, which means that it is made from a variety of artistic materials.

Charlie Lucas's decision to use discarded materials reflects the changes in our modern day society. Due to advances in technology, we have produced large amounts of commercial goods like cars and other machinery, leading to an excess of discarded materials. Rather than let them go to waste, this artist uses those materials to create art. Charlie Lucas did not go to art school, but he has a strong belief that education can greatly enhance your growth and development as a person. As he says, "education expands you out."

How is this **sculpture** different from Edmonia Lewis's *Hiawatha's Marriage*? Edmonia Lewis's **sculpture** is a **realistic** representation of human figures, and Charlie's **sculpture** is an **abstract** representation of himself. Charlie Lucas's **sculpture** is a **mixed media sculpture**, made of recycled car parts and metals. Edmonia Lewis's **sculpture** is made from a single material, marble, so it is not **mixed media**.

CREATING MIXED MEDIA ARTWORK

We have discussed that **mixed media** artwork is made from a variety of artistic materials. The example we just discussed (Charlie Lucas's *Self Portrait*) is a **sculpture**, but **mixed media** is not always **sculpture**. Some **mixed media** artwork is **two-dimensional**, some is **three-dimensional**, and some can even be a combination of both!



Hook, Line, and Sinker, 1990, Tom Moore

Hook, Line, and Sinker by Tom Moore is a **mixed media** artwork that combines aspects of two and **three-dimensional** work. What do you think is going on in this artwork? Does the fish seem to be staying still or moving? In the **background**, Tom Moore uses lines, shapes, and patterns to create rhythmic movement all around the fish. The artist further adds to that visual motion with the fish itself, which is a **three-dimensional** aspect of the artwork, as if it is jumping out of water. What seems to be below the fish in the water?

What types of materials do you think were used to create this artwork (wood, paint, spray foam insulation)? This was started from a flat (**two-dimensional**) surface and some parts of the artwork were sculpted into **three-dimensional** portions. What parts look like they are **three-dimensional** (water, fish, textures)? What parts are **two-dimensional** (**background**, border)? Is this artwork **realistic** or **abstract**?

You will get to make your own **mixed media** artwork inspired by this Tom Moore creation when you come to the Museum!

Closing:

When you visit the Museum you will see some of the paintings (**portraits**, **landscapes**, **genre scenes**) and **sculptures** I have shown you today, and you will create your own **mixed media** artwork in the studios. You will also experience interactive works of art in the ARTWORKS gallery. Remember not to touch any of the paintings or **sculptures** in the Museum, as we want to protect the artwork so many other people can come and enjoy the works of art in the future. We look forward to seeing you very soon at the Museum.

THOMAS HART BENTON (1889 -1975)



Thomas Hart Benton
Ozark Autumn, 1949
Oil and tempera on panel
(wood)

ARTWORK

This painting depicts the culmination of a corn harvest in the fall of the year. A harvester kneels in the foreground shucking an ear of corn. On the same foreground plane a large stack of cornstalks creates a massive triangular shape that mirrors the form created by the harvester and his basket. Two other harvesters load a mule-drawn cart. The painting combines these simple genre elements (activities from daily life) within a landscape setting of undulating fields, a tree line, simple dwelling, and sky. The compositional elements are streamlined into tightly integrated horizontal bands that extend from bottom to top implying recession into space. When he painted this work in the middle of the twentieth century, Benton knew that the labor-intensive activities he depicted here were relics of a bygone era. Mechanized farming became common soon after the development of the internal combustion engine in the early twentieth century, and with the loss of manpower to the armed forces during the Second World War, the use of gasoline-powered equipment in farm work became the norm throughout America. Thus, in this painting Benton purposely evokes an America of the past, and a culture that had been supplanted by modern practices and values.

ART HISTORY

In 1934, *Time* magazine published an article about three American painters associated with the Midwest—Thomas Hart Benton (Missouri), John Steuart Curry (Kansas), and Grant Wood (Iowa)—who collectively became known as Regionalists. At that time America was suffering a “cultural identity crisis.” The Great Depression was at its height, and in Europe the increasing conflict among warring political philosophies such as Socialism, Communism, and Fascism along with the destruction of the aristocratic power elites, left the United States questioning its own future and its role on the world stage. International turmoil led many Americans to support political isolationism and a spirit of nativism, seeing America’s traditions of individualism and independence as a clear alternative to the chaos abroad. Benton had been trained in the styles of European Modernism both in Paris and New York, however he never embraced any of the idioms associated with twentieth-century Modernism in his work, and he was considered by the progressives of the New York art world as a reactionary both politically and artistically. When he left New York to return to his home state of Missouri in 1935, he adopted a “populist” identity as an “anti-intellectual” and a proponent of “traditional American values.” Regionalism came to be seen as a style in opposition to the Modernism championed by art critics of the East Coast.

ARTIST



Thomas Hart Benton (1889–1975) was born into a family prominent in Missouri politics. He received his earliest art education while his father was a member of the United States House of Representatives between 1897 and 1905. He began studying painting at the Chicago Art Institute in 1906-1907, and the following year he continued his studies at the Académie Julian in Paris. In 1912 he moved to New York where he was involved in the early abstract art scene, and where his works were displayed in exhibitions like the Forum Exhibition of 1916, which was his first public exhibition. Sensing the tide of the times, however, he executed a series of murals featuring themes from American history and culture in the more conservative, representational style that garnered him positive public notice. In 1935 he left New York to serve as head of the painting department at the Kansas City Art Institute. This offer gave him a reason to leave New York, where his subjects and conservative style were pointedly criticized by the art establishment inclined to look more favorably on European-based Modernism, to return to Missouri, where he gained more appreciation for his work.

CONNECTIONS

By the time Benton painted *Ozark Autumn* in 1949, America had entered a period of profound transformation. After the Second World War the evolution from an agrarian to an industrialized society had been accomplished, and Americans shifted from an emphasis on domestic issues back to an engagement with international concerns—America was on the brink of becoming the world power economically and politically that it became in the second part of the twentieth century. The societal changes wrought by these shifts led some Americans to feel a longing for the cultural values and mores associated with the past, symbolized most profoundly by the activities and people of the rural and agrarian communities that were slowly being abandoned by a shift to urban centers and the world of commerce. Through the art of his later career, Benton sought to capture what he felt was the character of this land and these people. He saw a society grounded in an appreciation for freedom, democracy, personal accountability, pragmatism, and hard work. *Ozark Autumn* was painted literally in the "autumn" of the artist's career—an elegiac, landscape-based tribute to a great country founded in these principals. Regionalism also found many adherents among artists in the American South where the agrarian tradition remained relatively strong. An excellent example is John Kelly Fitzpatrick (1888–1953) who was a founder of the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts. His paintings like *Monday Morning*, 1934 (1935.05) and *Alabama Foothills*, 1938 (1938.09) show that Fitzpatrick adopted subject matter that was similar to Benton's—scenes of rural communities and their people going about their daily lives.



John Kelly Fitzpatrick, *Monday Morning*, Oil on Masonite, 1934, and *Alabama Foothills*, 1938, Oil on Canvas

DISCUSSION

Do you know what the Ozarks are and where they are located? Why do you think the artist titled this painting *Ozark Autumn* instead of something else like "Gathering Corn?" If the painting were titled *Ozark Spring* how do you think it would be different from this painting? What would the colors and mood of a painting titled *Ozark Spring* be like? Why do you think that? How does the season fall make us feel? What events of the fall define our lives and activities?

GEORGE HENRY DURRIE (1820 – 1863)



Holidays in the Country, The Cider Party, 1853
Oil on canvas

ARTWORK

The central narrative of the painting consists of four men who have gathered in a barn for a cider party, with music as entertainment. A black male, seated on a box with a fiddle in his left hand, appears to have taken a respite from his performance. To the left of the fiddler, three white males are standing, with smiles on their faces, as if they have just experienced a satisfying performance. The central figure holds a pitcher of cider in one hand and a glass in the other, while the black male seated to the right extends his hand in anticipation of the drink. The animals in the painting add another layer to the narrative, as the horse, dog, and pig gaze cautiously at one another, adding a certain degree of tension to the scene. There are several details in the painting that help provide a historical context. A horseshoe hangs from the barn door on the right with prongs pointed downward as a sign of bad luck. A caricature drawing on the same door bears a close resemblance to President Martin Van Buren. He is also recalled by the initials OK found on the opposite door, a reference to his nickname, “Old Kinderhook”, as well the Democratic O.K. Club, which promoted his re-election. The initials S. B. on the barn door and the white sack inside the barn allude to the two factions of the Democratic Party, the “Free Soilers” and the “Barn Burners,” who united in 1848 to nominate Van Buren.

ART HISTORY

Genre paintings are generally defined as narrative-driven scenes of everyday life painted in a realistic style. By the mid-19th century, genre scenes were common in popular print media, and artists would often have their work reproduced in journals like *Harper's Weekly* or as prints by Currier and Ives. Capturing the democratic spirit of the American homeland, artists portrayed men, women and children in a variety of settings, including scenes of domestic life, political events, agricultural and industrial labor, and leisure and entertainment. In general, genre scenes reflect the dynamic changes in America at the time, including events related to the Civil War, the changing attitudes to women's roles in society, the debates over immigration, and the shifting patterns of race relations following the manumission of slavery and the removal of Native Americans. The most important and influential genre painter of the 19th century who draws close parallels to Durrie is William Sidney Mount. Mount was not the first, but the foremost 19th - century painter who depicted the common man at work and at leisure. Mount featured whites and blacks together in the same social setting, reflecting democratic ideals at a time when racial boundaries were strictly enforced. For example, Mount, who was from a family of musicians, painted a wonderful portrait of an African American musician, titled, *The Banjo Player*, which conveyed the power of music as a lively and unifying force.

ARTIST

George Henry Durrie (1820-1863) of New Haven, Connecticut, was an artist who aspired to become a landscape painter. Not academically trained, George and his brother John studied art independently, receiving support from their father, who exhibited their work at his store during the day, and held public drawings during the evening. After studying with local artist, Nathaniel Joselyn, Durrie pursued a career as an itinerant portraitist, and later established himself as a landscape painter. Currier and Ives, the 19th-century publishers of popular chromolithographs, reproduced Durrie's winter landscape paintings, which gave him wider exposure as an artist. A watershed moment in his career occurred in 1853 when his choice of subject matter changed from landscape to genre paintings, as represented in *Holidays in the Country*, *The Cider Party*. Scenes from everyday life were quite popular in the mainstream journals of the day, which may have influenced Durrie's decision to expand his repertoire. He was not well known outside of the New Haven, Connecticut area, and did not receive much attention until the mid 20th-century, when art historians took a renewed interest in genre scenes and Regionalism, which was popular during the New Deal era.



CONNECTIONS

In addition to landscape painting, genre paintings or scenes from everyday life were popular subjects in America during the mid 19th-century. The interest in everyday life coincided with a growing middle class, immigration from Europe, and an emerging industrial economy. In "Democratic Vistas," Walt Whitman described the everyday American as the embodiment of its deepest values:



George Caleb Bingham, *The County Election*, 1852, oil on canvas, Saint Louis Art Museum; William Sydney Mount, *The Banjo Player*, 1856, oil on canvas, Museums of Stony Brook; Nathaniel Currier, *Barn Burners* (Cartoon), 1848

"We see our land, America, her literature, esthetics, &c., as, substantially, the getting in form, or effusement and statement, of deepest basic elements and loftiest final meanings, of history and man -- and the portrayal, (under the eternal laws and conditions of beauty,) of our own physiognomy, the subjective tie and expression of the objective, as from our own combination, continuation, and points of view -- and the deposit and record of the national mentality, character, appeals, heroism, wars, and even liberties -- where these, and all, culminate in native literary and artistic formulation, to be perpetuated; and not having which native, first-class formulation, she will flounder about, and her other, however imposing, eminent greatness, prove merely a passing gleam; but truly having which, she will understand herself, live nobly, nobly contribute, emanate, and, swinging, poised safely on herself, illumin'd and illuming, become a full-form'd world, and divine Mother not only of material but spiritual worlds, in ceaseless succession through time -- the main thing being the average, the bodily, the concrete, the democratic, the popular, on which all the superstructures of the future are to permanently rest."

Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas*

DISCUSSION

What is going on in this painting? What do you think each animal symbolizes? How would you describe race relations as they are portrayed in Durrie's painting? How does Durrie's depiction of race relations correspond with the historical events of the time?

FRANCIS WILLIAMS EDMONDS (1806 – 1863)



Time to Go, 1857
Oil on canvas

ARTWORK

Seated in the humble abode of a protective father, a young man dressed in a jacket and slacks converses with a young woman with the hope of pursuing a courtship. The woman tilts her head modestly, as if embarrassed by the words of her suitor. The couple appears to have established an intimate connection, but they are not alone. The father, seated on the left, has his back slightly turned away from the couple, avoiding direct interference. Yet, his seeming detachment from the conversation belies the uneasiness of his pose and physical proximity of his presence. He glances over his shoulder with a sidelong look, while stoking the embers in the cast iron stove and gazing impatiently at the young couple. Without opening his mouth, we can read his mind. “Young man, I think it’s ‘time to go’.”

ART HISTORY

Genre paintings were quite prominent in American art by the mid 19th-century. This was attributed to a rising middle class, in which men, women, and children played a prominent role in the daily economic life of American society. Scenes of everyday life were featured in magazines and reproduced in the popular print media, which made them accessible to the masses. In terms of earlier antecedents, the tradition of genre painting had its roots in 17th-century Dutch painting, which often depicted a wealthy merchant class enjoying the daily life afforded them by thriving trade and commerce. The town of Hudson, in upstate New York, where Edmonds was raised, preserved many features of Dutch society, including displays of civic and private virtue. For example, the painting by Edmonds draws parallels to Gabriel Metsu’s *The Intruders*, c. 1660, and Gerard ter Borch the Younger’s, *The Suitor’s Visit*, c. 1658. In all three paintings, a male suitor appeals to a woman in the presence of other family members, expressing sentiments of love and familial bonds.

ARTIST

Francis Williams Edmonds was born in 1806 and raised in the town of Hudson in upstate New York. Edmonds was discouraged from studying art, but his parents tolerated his ongoing interest in the field. By the age of thirteen, Edmonds experimented with painting techniques, and tried working from nature. He desired to become an engraver, but he could not afford the fees for



an apprenticeship. Encouraged to pursue a more practical profession, Edmonds entered banking in 1823 when his uncle, Gorham A. Worth, secured a position for him at the Tradesmen's Bank in New York City. By 1826, Edmonds resumed his art studies. He took evening classes at the Antique School at the National Academy of Design, and later exhibited his work in the National Academy of Design's annual exhibitions. After traveling to Europe with fellow American artists Asher B. Durand and John Kensett, Edmonds resumed his life in the states. He re-married and continued to paint, but only sparingly, due to the demands of the banking profession.

CONNECTIONS

Edmonds was a strong proponent of genre painting, a tradition that has its roots in 17th-century Netherlandish art. In 1840, Edmonds submitted two paintings to the National Academy of Design that focused on the theme of courting. *Sparkling* (1839) and *The City and the Country Beaux* (c.1839) relate to his later work in the Museum's collection, but also recall paintings by the 17th-century Dutch artists Gerard ter Borch the Younger and Gabriel Metsu.



Gerard ter Borch the Younger, *The Suitor's Visit*, c.1658, oil on canvas, National Gallery, DC; Gabriel Metsu, *The Intruder*, c.1660, oil on panel, National Gallery, DC; Francis William Edmonds, *The City and the Country Beaux*, c.1839, oil on canvas, The Clark

DISCUSSION

Francis Edmonds' painting *Time to Go* depicts courtship during the 19th century. When looking at the painting by Edmonds, how does courting compare to dating in today's society? For example, is it still customary for young men to get the approval from the father before dating his daughter? How do you think the father is responding? How do you know it's time to go? Compare the painting by Edmonds to Gerard ter Borch the Younger's *The Suitor's Visit*. How are the paintings similar? How are they different?

EDWARD HOPPER (1882 – 1967)



New York Office
1962
Oil on canvas

ARTWORK

Framed by rectangular piers, a large, square window offers a view into a vast workspace. The office is on the first floor of a corner building. To the left, a quiet alley recedes in a blue shadow. The building on the opposite side of the alley has yellow and green window shades on the first and second floors respectively. The sidewalk in front of the office is also uninhabited, while the viewer's perspective seems to be from the street.

In the office, a solitary woman in a blue dress stands behind a desk and telephone, opening a letter. Light shines across the blue wall to her proper right side. Several indistinct figures are visible near a door in the background. The architecture of the city seems to both overwhelm and draw attention to the figure, paused in a moment of daily life.

ART HISTORY

An American icon, Edward Hopper forged his own style reflecting many influences. Throughout his career, he shared with his teacher Robert Henri a fascination with the urban scene and a dedication to American realism. While many American painters painted familiar scenes in the years between the World Wars, Hopper continued to paint in a realistic style during the latter part of his career.

At the same time, Hopper's reduction of scenes such as *New York Office* to simple geometric forms and stark planes of light and shade are evocative of popular forms of abstraction, such as color field painting. Hopper's work is psychologically modern, exploring the lives of individuals in the city - in this case the working woman of the sixties - and beyond. While the stillness, quiet, and dramatic lighting that pervade his compositions have many precedents, Hopper's works are often considered in relation to film noir. And film sets have been built in response to his paintings

THE ARTIST

Edward Hopper studied with American Masters William Merit Chase and Robert Henri. A lifelong resident of New York, he also spent time in Paris and on the New England coast, all of which he painted. Scenes such as *New York Office* reflected his daily travels around the city. Hopper also had experience as a commercial illustrator of a business publication, and the office was a common theme in his work. In many ways this painting is the quintessential Hopper – a glamorous figure paused for a moment, separated from the viewer by a window, unaware of being observed. A similar sense of detachment, austerity, and theatricality define many of Hopper's works.



Edward Hopper, *Bow of the Beam Trawler Widgeon*, 1926, watercolor and graphite on paper; Edward Hopper, *Nighthawks*, 1942, Art Institute of Chicago; George Luks, *Tea Party*, 1922, oil on canvas

CONNECTIONS

Many of Hopper's compositions are reduced to the essential elements. Another Hopper painting in the Museum's collection is focused on the bow of a boat, *Bow of the Beam Trawler Widgeon*, (1926). The painting features mechanical fishing equipment typical of Hopper's interest in modern American life. Hopper's painting *Nighthawks* (Art Institute of Chicago, 1942) presents a view from a city sidewalk through a window, similar to that in *New York Office*. Another work by an artist trained as an illustrator that celebrates a moment of everyday life in New York City is *Tea Party* (1922) by George Luks.

DISCUSSION

What is going on in this picture? What is the woman doing? What does the letter say? Where is this office located? How does the artist make the space appear to be three-dimensional? The figures in the back are smaller, and the lights become reduced in size as they recede. What direction is the light coming from? Does this look like an office of today? The telephone looks old fashioned. What is our point of view?