

**WILLIAM SIDNEY MOUNT (1807 – 1868)**



*Any Fish Today?*, 1857  
Oil on canvas

**ARTWORK**

A boy stands in the open doorway of a country house holding a string of fish. In the entry, we can see a chair with a book on it, a bright floor covering, and several tools by the door. Happy and healthy looking, the boy appears to be dressed for work in a jacket and cap. Perhaps he is earning money by selling fish that he has enjoyed catching himself, perhaps he is about to speak to the person who lives in the house. The work seems to celebrate the values of living in harmony with the outdoors and hard work.

**ART HISTORY**

During the nineteenth century, the expanding United States was becoming ever more cosmopolitan and industrialized. A growing number of citizens could afford to buy art for their homes, and the market had expanded beyond portraits. Images of the majestic wilderness and works that celebrated the values of ordinary Americans marked a national pride. Genre scenes (or scenes of everyday life), such as *Any Fish Today?* were very popular. City dwellers often enjoyed idealized scenes of nature and country life, from landscapes to images of simple rural pleasures. Nineteenth century genre scenes were often imbued with a moralizing tone, such as that of the values of industry in contrast to idleness. Children, such as the young man depicted here, were often included representing a certain innocence.

**THE ARTIST**

William Sydney Mount grew up in New York and became the foremost painter of genre scenes (scenes of daily life of ordinary people) in the United States. Largely self-educated as an artist, Mount went to work with his brother in a sign painting business. He later achieved some success as a portrait artist and eventually was able to make a living as a genre painter, gaining many followers. Living in rural Stony Brook, New York, William knew well the country life that he painted.



**CONNECTIONS**

As opposed to the young man on the left selling fish in his free time, the boys on the right in Mount's *The Truant Gamblers*, 1835 (New York Historical Society) are gambling when they should

be in school. The farmer walking up seems poised to break up the fun. Scenes and stories of young people's lives were important in nineteenth century America. Some decades after William painted *Any Fish Today*, Mark Twain wrote *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, in which the lives of boys growing up in rural America made for marvelous stories.

Another painting in the Museum's collection that depicts a young person working is John George Brown's *Shine Mister*, 1905. This boy looks happy and healthy, but the truth is that shining shoes in a big city would have been a very difficult life for a child.



William Sidney Mount, *Any Fish Today?*, 1857, oil on canvas; William Sidney Mount, *The Truant Gamblers*, 1835, oil on canvas, New York Historical Society; John George Brown, *Shine Mister*, 1905

## DISCUSSION

What is going on in this picture? What time of day do you think it is? What is the boy doing? Have you ever sold anything? Whose house do you think this is? What do you think he is going to say to them?

THEODORE EARL BUTLER (1861 – 1936)



*Clouds, Giverny, 1911*  
Oil on canvas

### ARTWORK

*Clouds, Giverny* depicts a field in Giverny, France (famous for its impressionist inhabitants.) Cumulus clouds that float in an azure sky dominate the landscape, the clouds accented by rose, blue, and emerald. In the middle ground, a lone tree adorned by a range of colored leaves, bends to the left. To the right, the tree casts a blue shadow at a slight angle, indicating the direction of the sun on this summer day. The shadow lies across a fork of a dirt road emerging from the lower right foreground. Several groups of trees and low-lying clouds are visible in the distance, while flowers, indicated by dabs of color, blanket the painting. Blue shadows on the lower dirt road suggest more trees beyond the edge of the canvas.

### ART HISTORY

In sync with his famous (step) father-in-law, Claude Monet, Theodore Butler exhibited many characteristics of impressionism in landscapes such as *Clouds, Giverny*. Impressionists often painted familiar outdoor locations *en plein air* to capture changing weather conditions, using dabs of pigment to create forms and indicate details. At the same time, Butler's use of color in *Clouds, Giverny* is expressive, the predominance of blue, for example, reflecting a unique vision of the artist. Butler synthesized impressionism and expressive elements of the post-impressionists. By the time this work was painted, he was exhibiting with artists such as Henri Matisse, who is also regarded for his bright palette, departures from natural color, and use of curving line.

### THE ARTIST

A native of Ohio, Theodore Earl Butler (1860-1936) worked in France most of his life. After studying at the Art Students League, the artist went to Paris, where he enrolled at the Académie Julian. Like many other American painters, Butler was drawn to Giverny, a farming area in the Loire Valley near Paris. The village was affordable in the early days of its popularity with artists and attractive due to the marvelous Northern light of the region around the rivers.

For the sake of his ailing father, Butler returned to the United States briefly. He later settled in Giverny with his first wife Suzanne, Monet's stepdaughter. During the marriage, he painted many scenes of his wife and children. After Suzanne's untimely death, Butler returned to the landscape subject, which he had favored earlier in his career. He spent time in the United States during the First World War, becoming involved in the Society of Independent Artists. After Suzanne's sister, Marthe, had helped care for Butler's children (her niece and nephew), he ultimately married her.

## CONNECTIONS

Monet also favored fields in Giverny and flowers as subjects. For example, look at his *Field of Yellow Irises at Giverny* (1887, Musée Marmottan, Paris.) Like Butler, Monet used dabs of bright paint to indicate flowers with an emphasis on the fluffy clouds above. As part of the outreach portion of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade tour, we learned about another American impressionist painter working in France around the same time as Butler. Mary Cassatt painted *Françoise in Green, Sewing* (1908 - 1909). Although Cassatt's interior subject is different from Butler's, she also used bright colors and loose brushstrokes. Another artist who incorporated expressive aspects of Post-Impressionism into his paintings like Butler was the American impressionist, Childe Hassam. Notice the predominance of red and the way that fruit is outlined in red in his high-keyed *Fruit Still Life* (1930).

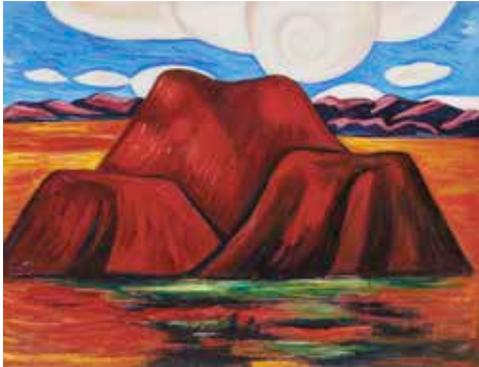


Claude Monet, *Field of Yellow Irises at Giverny*, 1887, oil on canvas, Musée Marmottan, Paris; Mary Cassatt, *Françoise in Green, Sewing*, 1908-1909, oil on canvas; Childe Hassam, *Fruit Still Life*, 1930, oil on panel

## DISCUSSION

What is the focus of this painting? Where do you think the landscape is located? The countryside? Where? What season is depicted in *Clouds, Giverny*? Spring because of the flowers? Fall because of the red leaves on the tree? Or perhaps, summer? What is the weather like? What time of day is it? Are there any colors that you might not expect to find in nature? Blue shadows perhaps? Where is the road headed?

**MARSDEN HARTLEY (1877 – 1943)**



*Earth Warming, Mexico*  
1932  
Oil on paperboard

**ARTWORK**

Marsden Hartley received a Guggenheim Foundation grant in 1931 and a year later traveled to Mexico where he painted *Earth Warming, Mexico*. The painting features three large red mountain-like shapes arranged in a triangular format with dark contour lines. In the distance, pink and blue mountains are positioned horizontally from left to right just beyond the horizon and large billowing forms densely populate a light blue sky. In the foreground, a loose application of green and white pigment, faintly resembling sparse areas of vegetation, is surrounded by an intense saturation of yellow and orange pigment that reflects the intense heat of the midday sun. The strong hues and bold application of paint embody characteristics derived from several major artistic influences. The stark black outlines recall the two-dimensional designs of Bavarian Folk Art, the color mirrors the intense emotionality and expressiveness of the Fauve painters, and the biomorphic rendering of mountains and clouds points to the spiritual characteristics of *Der Bleu Reiter*, and American transcendental philosophy.

**ART HISTORY**

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, modern art movements profoundly changed the way artists interpreted the world. In Paris, Picasso and the Cubists deconstructed visual phenomena and Matisse and the Fauves substituted vibrant colors for literal depictions of the natural world. In Munich, *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider) was formed in 1911 and was led by Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc who emphasized abstract shapes, prismatic colors and spirituality. American-artists were likewise influenced by this new wave of modernism. In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the photographer Alfred Stieglitz opened his famous gallery “291,” which exhibited modern European paintings, African art, and work by American modernists Marsden Hartley, Arthur Dove, and Georgia O’Keeffe. In 1913, the Armory Show, an international exhibition of modern art, introduced modernism on a much broader scale, featuring works by European modernists, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Paul Cezanne, as well as works by American artists, such as Robert Henri, John Sloan and Leon Kroll.

**ARTIST**

Marsden Hartley was born in Lewiston, Maine on January 4, 1877. Hartley began his art training at the Cleveland Institute of Art and later moved to New York to study at the Chase School of Art with William Merritt Chase, a well-respected painter and teacher. Hartley was inspired by the work of

Albert Pinkham Ryder and the transcendentalist ideas embodied in the writings of Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman. In 1913 Hartley traveled to Paris and became acquainted with Gertrude Stein and her circle of artists, which included Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse. After Paris, he traveled to Germany and befriended Kandinsky and Franz Marc. In terms of his own artistic development, his work was greatly influenced by German Expressionism, Bavarian Folk Art, and the mysticism of American transcendental philosophy. When he returned to United States, Hartley traveled throughout the country, including California, New Mexico, and Massachusetts, and returned to his hometown in Maine in 1937. At this time, he became a strong proponent of regionalism, a movement during the 1930s that celebrated local communities throughout the United States.



## CONNECTIONS

Henri Matisse, the leader of the Fauve movement, used color in a way that added emotional intensity to traditional subject matter, such as nudes, still life, and interior scenes. Matisse's employment of the green stripe in his portrait of Madame Matisse was in direct response to conservative critics, who found *The Woman with a Hat* (see Cassatt sheet) exhibited at the *Salon d'Automne* more appropriate for savages than civilized people. Franz Marc, who participated in the first exhibition of *Der Bleu Reiter*, imbued his cubist inspired animal paintings with color filled with emotional and spiritual meaning. Wassily Kandinsky was a Russian artist who settled in Munich and taught at the Bauhaus School of Art and Architecture. He explored the meaning of abstraction as form that possessed inner beauty and spirituality:

“Form, in the narrow sense, is nothing but the separating line between surfaces of colour. That is its outer meaning. But it has also an inner meaning, of varying intensity, [Footnote: It is never literally true that any form is meaningless and "says nothing." Every form in the world says something. But its message often fails to reach us, and even if it does, full understanding is often withheld from us.] and, properly speaking, FORM IS THE OUTWARD EXPRESSION OF THIS INNER MEANING. To use once more the metaphor of the piano—the artist is the hand which, by playing on this or that key (i.e., form), affects the human soul in this or that way. SO IT IS EVIDENT THAT FORM-HARMONY MUST REST ONLY ON A CORRESPONDING VIBRATION OF THE HUMAN SOUL; AND THIS IS A SECOND GUIDING PRINCIPLE OF THE INNER NEED.” - Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*



Henri Matisse, *The Green Stripe*, oil on canvas, 1905, Statens Museum for Kunst; Franz Marc, *Rehe im Walde (II)*, oil on canvas, 1914, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe; Wassily Kandinsky, *Composition IV*, oil on canvas, 1911, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

## DISCUSSION

Do you think the air in the location represented in the painting is warm or cool? What sort of day is it? How would you describe the artist's style? Has he used his imagination, or how does the painting look different from the real world?

**GEORGE INNESS (1825 – 1894)**



*Medfield, 1877*  
Oil on canvas

**ARTWORK**

Inness moved to Medfield, Massachusetts in 1860 to escape the pressures of the art world in New York City. The landscape featured here was painted during his second period in Medfield, after he returned from Italy in 1875. Inness depicts a landscape that is calm and serene with autumn colors and expressive brushwork, bathed in a mild afternoon sunlight. The mood is melancholy and tranquil, perhaps reflecting his memories of Medfield as a peaceful place to live and work. The painting represents a transitional phase in Inness's work, in which the artist combined detailed renderings of the natural world and the effects of light and color to evoke a spiritual presence.

**ART HISTORY**

During the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, Americans were inspired by the romanticism of the American landscape. Inspired by the vast areas of land that comprised the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, Americans envisioned the land as unspoiled by civilization, embodying the presence of God and Manifest Destiny. As territories expanded and populations increased, the perception of landscape painting, in Europe and America, shifted from allegorical to geographical. Landscape painting would henceforth derive its power from qualities inherent in nature, rather than from literary, biblical, or mythological sources. For example, George Inness was influenced by three major movements that embraced the power of nature: The Hudson River school, the Barbizon School in France, and a movement known as Luminism. The Hudson River School was comprised of painters who depicted landscapes in the Hudson River Valley, including the Catskill, Adirondack, and White Mountains. In Europe, the Barbizon school embraced the native landscape of France, such as the Forest of Fontainebleau. Luminism was an American landscape style that emphasized the effects of light, often portraying the landscape as reflecting spiritual presence. As a whole, landscape painting during the 19<sup>th</sup>-century had an empirical focus, with the visual splendors of nature serving as the catalyst for lofty conceptions of the natural world.

**ARTIST**

George Inness was born in Newburgh, New York to John William Inness, a farmer, and his wife, Clarissa Baldwin. Inness's family moved to New Jersey when he was about the age of five. During his early training, he studied for several months with an itinerant painter, John Jesse Barker, and in his teens he worked as a map engraver in New York City. In 1851, Inness traveled to Europe where he spent fifteen months in Rome, and studied the landscape paintings of French artists



Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin. He also met the painter William Page who mostly likely introduced him to the theology of Emanuel Swedenborg. Inness moved to Medfield in 1860 with the intention of finding a better market for his Barbizon style paintings. In 1870, Inness went to Rome with the intention of staying there permanently, but later decided to return to Medfield in 1875. Inness's work of the 1880s reveals his interest in Swedenborgian theology, the belief that the spiritual world is present in nature.

## CONNECTIONS

George Inness painted during a time that encompassed a period of westward expansion, in which the United States expanded its territories to the west of the Mississippi river. Due to this movement westward, expeditions were arranged to explore new territories, and artists drew their inspiration from them. Subsequently, landscape paintings would address themes of Manifest Destiny, spirituality, Transcendentalism, and scientific discoveries.

Thomas Cole, for example, was a leading artist of the Hudson River School who painted *The Course of Empire*, which depicted civilization through various stages of growth and destruction. Henry David Thoreau, the author of *Walden*, wrote of his experiences in the woods, capturing the experience of man's relationship to nature:

"Our village life would stagnate if it were not for the unexplored forests and meadows which surround it." [...] "We need the tonic of wildness, — to wade sometimes in marshes where the bittern and the meadow-hen [American coot] lurk, and hear the booming of the snipe; to smell the whispering sedge where only some wilder and more solitary fowl builds her nest, and the mink crawls with its belly close to the ground."



Thomas Cole, *Course of Empire (Destruction)*, 1836, oil on canvas, New York Historical Society; Timothy O'Sullivan, *Shoshone Falls, Snake River, Idaho, View Across the Top of the Falls*, 1874, albumen print. Smithsonian American Art Museum; John James Audubon, *Black-bellied Darter*, 1836, engraving, etching, aquatint, and watercolor.

Timothy O'Sullivan was a 19<sup>th</sup> - century photographer who was employed by Mathew Brady, the famous Civil War photographer. After the war, O'Sullivan was the official photographer of the U.S. Geological Exploration of the 14<sup>th</sup> Parallel and took photographs of the West to attract settlers. John James Audubon was an avid bird watcher and naturalist who documented birds of North America.

## DISCUSSION

Medfield is a painting about a specific place, but also represents an ideal depiction of a landscape that transcends time and place. How is the scene ideal or idealized? Could you find an area like this to paint around Montgomery? What time of day do you think it is? What season do you think it is?

**THOMAS MORAN (1837– 1926)**



*Dusk Wings*, 1860  
Oil on canvas

**ARTWORK**

At the close of day, a single figure strolls toward a distant sunset. The “dusk wings” or rays of the sun illuminate the sky, as they stream through the clouds. This setting sun catches one of the trees in the background and illuminates the flora and rock formations in the foreground and near distance. Moran rendered the plants and flowers of the wilderness in meticulous detail in this ideal landscape, most likely derived from an area of rural Pennsylvania. A botanist (plant scientist) can actually identify most of the plants in this painting, as they are so detailed.

**ART HISTORY**

An interest in the transcendent qualities of nature was popularized by the art and literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The sense that the divine could be experienced in nature had long held importance for Native Americans. Later, influenced by European romantics, mainstream American society eventually embraced the search for signs of God manifest in nature. The tiny figure walking into the distance, dwarfed by the nature that surrounds him, can be understood to convey the insignificant role that mankind plays in the great expanses of the universe.

As in Europe, the growing appreciation for landscape paintings in the United States corresponded to the onset of the industrial revolution, and the rapid development of urban centers, particularly on the Eastern seaboard. What had begun as an agrarian society in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century was transformed, and as a result pastoral/wilderness areas receded. Additionally, Americans took pride in the size and potential of the American continent, the varied beauty of the land it encompassed, and travel to awe inspiring locations became a favorite pastime. Beginning with the Hudson River school painters in the 1820s, American painters took the American landscape as a primary subject.

**THE ARTIST**

Thomas Moran emigrated from England to the United States in 1844 with his parents, who were seeking a better life. He was apprenticed to an engraver in Philadelphia. Early in his artistic training, Moran was exposed to the work of the great English landscape painter, J.M.W. Turner, who was known for capturing the essence of the landscape through creative composition and color. The accuracy of detail in Moran’s paintings reflects his belief in the English critic John Ruskin’s advocacy of truth to nature. Later in his career, Moran took part in the US geological expeditions to Yellowstone and the Tetons. Like other artists and photographers, Moran played an important role in documenting the American West prior to the migration of settlers from the East.



## CONNECTIONS

Thomas Moran described his approach to painting natural scenery in a romantic way, “I place no value upon literal transcripts from Nature. My general scope is not realistic: all my tendencies are toward idealization. Of course, all art must come through Nature; but I believe a place, as a place, has no value in itself for the artist only so far as it furnishes the material from which to construct a picture.”

In addition to romantic concepts of the natural world in the wake of industrialization, and faster, more efficient modes of travel, other social and political motives fostered love of the land and landscape painting. The doctrine of Manifest Destiny asserted that it was a God given right for Americans to claim the continent as their own. Americans also took pride in dramatic natural sites such as Niagara Falls, which were tourist attractions in the same manner as ancient ruins that could be found in Europe.

On the left is the *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, 1872 (Smithsonian), one of the works Moran painted to document the natural scenery of the American West. On the right is another work in the MMFA collection by Moran, *The Half Dome View From Moran Point*, 1887, an etching he made of a point in Yosemite that was named for him.



Thomas Moran, *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, 1872, oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum; Thomas Moran, *Dusk Wings*, 1860, oil on canvas; Thomas Moran, *The Half Dome View From Moran Point*, 1887, etching

## DISCUSSION

Thomas Moran's painting shows a man walking in the countryside as the sun is setting. Can you describe what sounds the man might be hearing on his walk? What time of year do you think it is? Does it look like the air is warm? Or cool? What do you see that makes you think so? Can you make up a short story that tells why this man is walking alone in the country? Why did he decide to take his walk? Is he going somewhere specific or just wandering? Describe his feelings as he walks—is he happy, lonely, peaceful or afraid?

**MAX WEBER (1881 – 1961)**



*View of Roslyn, New York,*  
ca. 1922–1925  
Oil on canvas

**ARTWORK**

From a viewpoint that seems to be on the other side of the road partially visible in the foreground; we look across a body of water, colorfully lit with reflection, to an enclave of houses, nestled among trees. While the leaves appear to be in the early stages of changing, patches of color and visible brushstrokes define the trees and bushes. And the forms of the buildings are rather boxy and outlined. The entire painting is a lively tapestry of color.

**From MMFA “News”:**

“When Weber moved to Long Island in 1921 he and his wife left the urban bustle of upper Manhattan for a quieter natural environment where they could raise a family. They purchased a small house about five miles south of Roslyn, and the artist purchased a car . . . so that he could drive the rural roads looking for likely subjects. The Museum’s painting *View of Roslyn, New York*, is one of a number of works he painted while he lived in this house near Garden City.”

**ART HISTORY and THE ARTIST**

**From MMFA “News”:**

“The painter Max Weber was one of the first American artists to personally experience the art world in Paris in the first decade of the twentieth century, a time of amazing transition in the history of art. In Weber’s case, this experience included meeting and learning from artists like Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Henri Rousseau, and taking tea at the salon hosted by art collectors Gertrude Stein and her brother Leo... in other words he was in the heart of it.

After his return to the U.S. in 1909, Weber created a range of work that was influenced by the Cubists initially, but his style regularly evolved over his forty-year career. [*View of Roslyn*] is a painting by Weber created during the 1920s when he had moved to Long Island . . . It is a landscape depicting the village of Roslyn on the north shore of Long

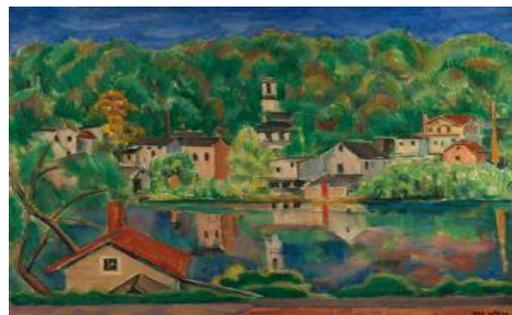
Island, painted from a vantage point just across a body of water known as the Roslyn Pond. While representational (we can readily see trees, town, and pond), it is also clearly in keeping with the reductive tendencies of Modernism—buildings composed of simple geometric shapes and the rest a symphony of varied brushstrokes in green, blue, rust, and tan. Though he largely left Picasso’s Cubism behind, he maintained a love of the style of the French Post-Impressionist Paul Cézanne, who created monumental landscapes in this same palette and with the same intent: to capture the soul of this peaceful place in paint.”

“[*View of Roslyn*] introduces the modernist approach to art and design that dominated in Europe and America for years to come.”



### CONNECTIONS

People often compare the “tapestry-like” surface of Webster’s paintings to the work of early modern French master Paul Cezanne, along with noting a similarity in the two artists’ exploration of form and the patches of brush strokes, as described previously.



Paul Cezanne, *Reflections in The Water*, oil on canvas, private collection

### DISCUSSION

What sort of place did Max Weber paint? Would you like to live here or visit this place? What season do you think is represented in the painting? What sort of landscape would you like to paint? What colors do you see in this landscape? Did the artist use warm or cool colors?

**MARY CASSATT (1844-1926)**



*Françoise in Green, Sewing*  
1908-1909  
Oil on canvas

**ARTWORK**

Mary Cassatt is known for her paintings of mothers and children, but in some of her later artworks she focused on individual children engaged in a solitary activity. Françoise was most likely a young girl from the village of Mesnil-Theribus, Oise near Cassatt's home in France. In this painting, a young girl, eight to twelve years old, is seated in a white-framed armchair, just beyond an entryway to an adjacent parlor. The young girl is engaged in needlework, her head is slightly bent as she focuses intently on plying the needle. She wears an elegant dress with a taffeta or silk-flounced skirt and green and white stripes complemented by a white blouse with ruffles. The girl is placed in the center of the painting, and the chair behind her is turned slightly to the left to echo the diagonal patterns of the floor design. A green curtain at the top left and a white mantle at the top right are separated by a small ochre rectangular wall space with white wood trim, which, together, form a frame around her head.

**ART HISTORY**

Impressionism began as a French art movement that consisted of independent artists who chose to rebel against the traditional French Academy. Led by Manet's bold and direct painting style and subject matter that abandoned academic subjects for everyday scenes, the Impressionists embraced a new wave of independence that was not bound by any one individual style. Impressionists placed great value on the immediacy of the brushstroke and preferred the color and light of plein air painting or painting outdoors. Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot were members of the Impressionist group; two female artists whose work featured women and children as their primary subject matter. A little over a decade following the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874, the collector Paul Durand Ruel held his first exhibition of Impressionist paintings in New York, and soon after, American artists and collectors would embrace Impressionism as an important artistic development.

**ARTIST**

Mary Cassatt was an American painter and printmaker who spent most of her adult life in France. She was a close friend of Edgar Degas and exhibited her work with the French Impressionists.



Cassatt was born in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania. She was born into an upper middle class family, which enabled her to travel throughout Europe as part of her education and training. Cassatt studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and was a fellow student of Thomas Eakins.

Discouraged by the limitations for women at the Academy, Cassatt decided to move to Paris, accompanied by her mother and other family members. Although women were also forbidden at the time to attend the *École des Beaux Arts*, Cassatt was able to study with Jean Léon Gérôme, a painter of Orientalist themes, and Thomas Couture, winner of the Prix de Rome in 1837.

In 1867 Cassatt had her first painting accepted by the annual Paris Salon exhibition titled *A Mandolin Player* and continued to submit work until the Franco Prussian War. Cassatt traveled to Spain and was greatly influenced by the work of Velasquez, whose influence was recognized earlier in the work of Manet. Edgar Degas invited Cassatt to participate in the Impressionist exhibition, at which time her paintings departed from the traditional academic style and depicted women and children using a light, airy, impressionistic palette.

### CONNECTIONS

The term “Impressionism” was first coined by Louis Leroy in his review of the first Impressionist Exhibition, which was derived from a painting by Monet titled *Impression Sunrise*. Leroy’s review took the form of a dialogue that represented two skeptical viewpoints:

*Impression I was certain of it. I was just telling myself that, since I was impressed, there had to be some impression in it — and what freedom, what ease of workmanship! A preliminary drawing for a wallpaper pattern is more finished than this seascape.*

Impressionism, while emphasizing color and light, was more of a movement than a style, and artists who were members often exhibited paintings that varied in technique and subject matter. Degas was one artist and friend of Cassatt’s who shared her interest in the pastel medium and printmaking. Although their subject matter differed, they both used the two mediums to expand the boundaries of their art and impressionism as a whole. Below are a few representative examples of works by Edgar Degas, Berthe Morisot, and Monet; artists who were important members of the Impressionist group.



Edgar Degas, *The Ballet Rehearsal*, gouache and pastel, 1875, Frelinghuysen Collection; Berthe Morisot, *In the Dining Room*, oil on canvas, 1875, National Gallery, DC; Claude Monet, *Impression Sunrise*, oil on canvas, 1873, Musée Marmottan

### DISCUSSION

Mary Cassatt never had children of her own because she felt that motherhood was incompatible with her career as an artist. How did her life as a single woman influence her choice to paint women and children? What is the girl in the painting doing? If a girl was dressed this way today, where might she be going? What do children wear around the home?

**ERASTUS SALISBURY FIELD (1805-1900)**



*Portrait of Bartlett Doten,*  
1833-1834  
Oil on canvas

**ARTWORK**

Erastus Salisbury Field painted this portrait of Bartlett Doten in 1833-1934. Bartlett was a merchant and manufacturer in Sheffield, Massachusetts and Bridgeport, Connecticut. Born in 1807 in Plymouth, Doten was a descendant of John Doty, a passenger on the Mayflower. Field depicts Doten in formal attire, with special attention given to the jacket, vest, and hairstyle. His status as a prosperous merchant is further supposed by the inclusion of a finely decorated shirt pin and watch chain suspended from his vest. In contrast to the finely rendered details of his attire, Field depicts Bartlett with irregular proportions, exaggerating the left ear and making the arms appear shorter in relation to the body. The proportions of the body appear awkward, but the artist succeeds in capturing the sitter's character and status in society. Field also painted a portrait of Bartlett's wife Augusta, which is featured next to the Bartlett in the same museum gallery.

**ART HISTORY**

During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, artists traveled to Europe to study art of the Old Masters, and museums and art academies were established in America for the first time. Yet, in spite of these developments, many artists were self-taught. Artists would often study from reproductions of paintings or work as an apprentice for a local artist or sign painter. While some painters would become members of prestigious academies like the National Academy of Design, other artists established their own private portrait painting businesses for wealthy patrons. They were called "itinerant painters" because they often traveled to different locations to reach as many patrons as possible.

The prevalence of self-taught artists had a lot to do with more people moving from Europe to America. The increase in population can also be attributed to growth in the economy, the expansion of territory, and an expanding middle class.

**ARTIST**

Erastus Salisbury Field was a traveling portrait painter who worked in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York. He painted primarily for wealthy patrons, depicting elaborate clothing, jewelry and upholstery to reflect their status in society. Field's parents encouraged him to paint, and he started his professional career by the mid 1820s. Field married Augusta Mason in 1833, and the couple had four children. Field traveled to New York and studied with the famous American artist, Samuel

F. B. Morse, but was largely self-taught. By the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, Field took an interest in daguerreotypes, an early form of photography. He used photographs to capture likenesses and some of his later portraits were painted photographs. In 1859, after his wife died, he moved with his daughter to Plumtrees, Massachusetts, where he set up a studio and painted a variety of subjects, including history and religious paintings, as well as panoramas.

## CONNECTIONS

The profession of portrait painter was relatively novel in 19<sup>th</sup>-century America. Jobs were available in commercial art fields, like lithography, but fine art portraiture was not available to the average person. Portraits were costly, so only members of the middle class could afford them. As a result, artists became itinerant and traveled to different places to reach as many customers as possible.

Itinerant painters were often self-taught artists who relied on unusual approaches to painting portraits. Some employed the use of the “headless portrait,” which enabled artists to add a different face to the same body or attire featured in other portraits. Below are examples of paintings by self-taught painters, including a photograph of an installation on view in ARTWORKS, the Museum’s hands-on gallery space.



Ammi Phillips, *Lady in a Gold-colored Dress*, 1835-1840, American Folk Art Museum; C.R. Parker, *Mrs. Hines Holt*, 1838, oil on canvas, Finn Holt Foundation; Faceless Portrait, ARTWORKS II Gallery

## DISCUSSION

Erastus Salisbury Field’s portrait of Bartlett Doten conveys him as a man of relative wealth. What can you identify in the painting that reflects his status in society? Field pays close attention to the facial features, but exaggerates the limbs and proportions of the body. Can you identify the exaggerated features in this portrait?

What is going on in this painting? What do you see that makes you say that? (Facilitating a discussion with open-ended questions can offer a range of responses, and students will look more critically at works of art when asked to find examples to support their ideas).

**IRVING KRIESBERG (1919-2009)**



*Portrait of Irene*  
1957  
Oil on canvas

**ARTWORK**

While upon first glance this work might appear to be a medley of colors, a shoulder length portrait emerges. The patchwork of bright colors in the center of the canvas forms the outline of a female's neck and face in *Portrait of Irene*. Her head is turned to the side, her face viewed in profile. And the shape of her cranium is distinct. While the areas of color suggest facial features, none is clear. Her dark hair is tied back in a ponytail. Irene's collared shirt, with its consistent white tone accented by patches of subtle color, is arguably the most realistic element of this dreamlike painting. The background is purely abstract, as if a color field painting.

**ART HISTORY**

For navigating the boundaries between the figurative and the abstract, Kriesberg is often referred to as a "Figurative Expressionist." He was one of the artists featured in the landmark 1952 Museum of Modern Art exhibition, *15 American Painters*. Others featured in the show included artists such as Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock, whose work was strictly dependent on formal elements such as color and line and devoid of any representational imagery. Kriesberg's choice to paint specific figures and creatures stood in opposition to the aim of the Abstract Expressionists to address the universal. Both Kriesberg's smaller scale works and the Abstract Expressionist's grand canvases were highly expressive of the artists' emotional and psychological states.

**THE ARTIST**

A Chicago Native, Irving Kriesberg (1919-2009) was educated at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and New York University. For much of his lifetime, the artist was a resident of New York City where he taught at Columbia and nearby Yale. In addition to creating paintings such as *Portrait of Irene*, he also sculpted and worked in pottery, which he studied in Japan. He also spent time in Mexico and India; both countries have abundant examples of traditional art forms as bright as Kriesberg's work. In addition to bold and expressive use of color, Kriesberg's depictions of animals and humans were defined by abstraction.

## CONNECTIONS

Irving Kriesberg's painting *Portrait of Irene* (1957) has much in common with the Abstract Expressionist works on view in the same gallery, such as Philip Guston's *Road* (1959). Note especially the visible brushstrokes in the contiguous areas of color that fill the Guston and the Kriesberg. At the same time, Kriesberg's work is markedly different from the others near it due to the inclusion of a figure. It is also more intimate in scale than Ida Kohlmeyer's canvas beside it. (The Guston, closer in size to Kriesberg's, was intended as a study for a larger painting.) While critics may have overlooked Kriesberg in his day due to his ongoing interest in the figure, his work has much in common with the early twentieth century French group of painters labeled the Fauves (wild beasts in French). Artists of this group such as Henri Matisse were scandalized in their lifetime for their bright and unnatural use of color in figurative works of art continued in Kriesberg's painting. Do you find an affinity between Henri Matisse's *Woman With a Hat* (1905 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) and *Portrait of Irene*?



Guston, *Road*, 1959, oil on paper mounted to Masonite; Ida Kohlmeyer, *Tri*, ca. 1960, oil on canvas; Henri Matisse, *Woman with a Hat*, 1905, oil on canvas, SFMOMA

## DISCUSSION

This is a very abstract portrait - the colors used to depict Irene would likely only appear in an artist's imagination. What sort of mood do the bright colors of this painting suggest? Lighthearted? What about the golden light behind Irene? A window perhaps? Where do you imagine Irene to be? What do you think she looks like? What do you think of her?

**JOHN SINGER SARGENT (1856 – 1925)**



*Mrs. Louis E. Raphael  
(Henriette Goldschmidt)*  
ca. 1906  
Oil on canvas

**ARTWORK**

Elegant and beautiful, Henriette, the wife of a London bank director, was painted by John Singer Sargent over 100 years ago. Adorned in a shimmering dress and jewels, the lady rests her elbow on a mantelpiece in an interior setting that is as stunning as she is. Light streams in from an unseen window at the left illuminating Henriette and the room she finds herself in, Sargent's London studio. Expanding our view into the room, the mirror also offers a glimpse of Henriette's profile. The column on the mantelpiece recalls the enduring popularity of the classical style as Henriette's dress represents the latest fashion. The highlights and loose brushstrokes in the painting add to the overall effect of opulence.

**ART HISTORY**

The interest in light and reflective surfaces along with the virtuoso brushwork reflect Sargent's interest in the Dutch and Spanish masters. At the same time, Henriette is a modern woman; and we can note the influence of Sargent's Impressionist friends in the loose brushstrokes and highlights. Many associate the painter's work with realism too. While some criticized Sargent for being too daring, others found his work confined by precedent. His paintings not only fit in with historic collections but looked fresh and new. And most of all it seems he was loved for rendering his subjects as elegant and lifelike. Although the camera had been invented, the rich and famous continued to have their likenesses recorded in Sargent's portraits.

**THE ARTIST**

The most popular society portraitist of his day, John Singer Sargent lived his life in Europe. After moving to Paris with his family, he studied under the painter Carolus-Duran, who taught him the *alla prima* painting technique of wet-on-wet. When he painted Henriette, Sargent was living in London, where he was a member of the Royal Academy of Arts. While he was loved for his portraits of everyone from President Teddy Roosevelt to dancers, he painted many other subjects, including the First World War from the battlefield.



## CONNECTIONS

Around the turn of the twentieth century, portraits often commemorated important men and the wives and daughters of wealthy families. Prior to World War I, business was booming and many who had recently made their money were eager to make their names. John Singer Sargent painted the newly rich and aristocrats alike, capturing the luxury of the era. On the left, you can see *The Wyndham Sisters*, 1899 (Metropolitan Museum of Art), an example of a portrait by Sargent of the daughters of a wealthy man in the family's London home. On the right is a painting from the Museum's collection of a woman artist from Alabama, *Portrait of Anne Goldthwaite*, 1895. This portrait was painted by another female artist from Alabama, Clara Weaver Parrish. The sitter's jacket and hat tell us that she is ready to work.



John Singer Sargent, *The Wyndham Sisters*, oil on canvas, 1899, the Met; John Singer Sargent, *Mrs. Louis E. Raphael (Henriette Goldschmidt)*, ca. 1906, oil on canvas; Clara Weaver Parrish, *Portrait of Anne Goldthwaite*, 1895, oil on canvas

## DISCUSSION

What is going on in this painting? What do you see that makes you say that? If you were having your portrait painted, what would you wear? What would you include? Do you think Henriette liked having her portrait painted?

**KAREN LAMONTE (1967 - )**



*Ojigi—Bowling*, 2010  
Cast glass

**ARTWORK**

This sculpture represents a human “figure,” however the person is not present, just the person’s garment. It is life-size, and is cast in glass in three pieces. In this case, the garment shown is a kimono, a traditional robe that is worn in Asia, particularly in Japan and in China. There is no trace left of the person who originally modeled for this sculpture; only her posture, showing a slight forward bow from the waist with arms relaxed at her sides. This stance conveys many human characteristics, among them humility, grace, modesty, and elegance. The glass of the kimono appears very tactile and soft, revealing all the wrinkles and creases of the fabric, belying the hard, glossy sheen that characterizes a glass surface.

**ART HISTORY**

Fashion history and art history, particularly classical sculpture, directly inspired LaMonte's cast glass sculpture. This is seen in her emulation of draped fabric and also in her removal of heads and limbs that leaves her works resembling many Greek and Roman antiquities. Gian Lorenzo Bernini's (Italian 1598-1680) marble *Ecstasy of Saint Theresa*, 1647-1652 from the Cornaro Chapel in Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome is a specific inspiration in posture and draping. LaMonte’s work also falls within the realm of twentieth-century Studio Glass, a movement that began in the early 1960s when individual artists began to look for ways to produce glass art outside of factory settings where it had been traditionally made by teams of craft persons.

**ARTIST**

Karen LaMonte grew up visiting world-class museums such as the Frick Collection and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. It was in institutions such as these where she encountered classical Greek and Roman statuary, 19<sup>th</sup>-century neoclassic marbles, and Baroque paintings, objects that later provided inspiration for her own art. Her inspirations were only part of the equation, however; LaMonte also attended the Rhode Island School of Design to learn the techniques necessary to create her complex works. There, LaMonte initially studied painting and printmaking before turning to glass. In regard to finding a medium for her art, she says, "I felt limited by painting so I started looking around for other things. When I discovered glass I knew that was it. Working with glass is really challenging physically, which I really like because I think I'm hyperactive."