

Joslyn Art Museum Art Chats

Check out the artwork and the prompts, and start an artful discussion with the people you love. Great for all ages!



PEOPLE WHO POSE

Look:

Up close, personal, and powerful—that's the artist's plan! Spend time enjoying all the shimmering details of this portrait.

How do the vibrant colors and lively patterns express the attitude and personality of the sitter?

What is she thinking?

Discuss:

Imagine a story between the sitter and the artist. Do they know and respect each other?

What do you wonder about this portrait?

If you were asked to make a portrait of your friend, what would it look like? What colors, patterns, and objects would you include to capture their personality?

About the Artist: Brooklyn-based artist Mickalene Thomas entered the residency program at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 2002, where she developed her now iconic depictions of strong, confident African American women decorated with collages and rhinestones. Her portraits feature glamorous subjects who embrace their gender and skin color, projecting a vision of black femininity and power. She describes *Din*, as a shy medical student who transforms “like a chameleon” when she models, becoming self-assured and bold.

Mickalene Thomas (American, b. 1971), *Din, une très belle négresse 1*, 2012, acrylic, oil, enamel, and mixed media on wood panel, 102 x 84 in. (259.1 x 213.4 cm), Museum purchase, gift of The Sherwood Foundation, 2019.6 © 2020 Mickalene Thomas / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

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Think about the color, light, and shadow in this portrait.

Now notice the subject himself—his posture, his hands, his attitude. What is he holding? Where is he looking? What is he thinking?

Discuss:

What message is the artist communicating about his friend, J. Laurie Wallace?

When you quietly examine this portrait, how does it make you feel?

Can you relate to his quiet moment of reflection? When was the last time you were lost in thought?

About the Artist: Thomas Eakins (1844-1916) entered the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1862, and in 1866 went to Paris to study further under the painter Jean-Léon Gérôme. Before returning to the United States in 1870, he traveled to Spain, where he encountered the work of Diego Velázquez and Jusepe de Ribera, whose trenchant realism and dramatic use of light were influential. Eakins taught at the Pennsylvania Academy, where he built a following of students, including one talented student, J. Laurie Wallace, who would eventually move to Omaha in 1891 and serve as Director of the Western Art Association.

Thomas Eakins (American, 1844-1916), *Professor John Laurie Wallace*, 1885, oil on canvas, 50¼ x 32½, 127.64 x 82.5 cm, Gift of the James A. Douglas Memorial Foundation (1971), 1941.24

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Angelica Kauffmann (Swiss, 1741–1807), *A Portrait of Mary Tisdal Reading*, c. 1771–1772, oil on canvas, 24 3/4 x 29 3/4 in., Museum purchase with funds from The Jack Drew Art, Endowment Fund for 18th- and 19th-Century Art, 2016.9

PEOPLE WHO POSE

Look:

Take turns “reading” this portrait with others. Name something you see:

“I see a _____. What do you see?”

Then each person should name the previous observation and add a new one:

“I see a _____ and a _____. What do you see?”

Discuss:

When you are finished “reading” the portrait, grab a book, fancy up your hair and clothes, and try posing like the sitter, Mary Tisdal.

Talk about all of the things you need and what role each will play for the recreation. Don’t worry if you can’t find a herd of sheep!

About the Artist: Angelica Kauffmann (1741–1807) excelled in music and art from a young age. When her family moved to Italy, she discovered the Neoclassical painting style in Florence, connected with the British community in Rome, and studied the Old Masters in Naples. The artist became known for depicting female sitters, and she often placed them in allegorical settings. Celebrated in her own time, Kauffmann continues to be recognized as one of the most successful women artists prior to the late-nineteenth century.

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Look:

Study this impressive portrait, taking in all you see.

What do you notice about Mató-Tópe's posture and regalia—his clothing, feathered headdress, ceremonial ornaments and weapons—that might suggest his position in society?

If you think he looks like a highly respected military and religious leader—you would be right!

Discuss:

Make a guess about the use and meaning of all the emblems and objects you see.

If you were posing for a portrait, what would you want included it, and what would they mean?

About the Artist: Karl Bodmer's (1809–1893) journey with Prince Maximilian zu Wied (1782–1867) in 1832–34 took him across nearly three-quarters of the North American continent. Only twenty-three years old at the outset of the expedition, Bodmer had received little formal training, yet he was already a skillful watercolorist and landscape painter. Venturing into a wilderness few artists before had seen or described, he proved to be an astute observer of nature, with a keen eye for specific detail.

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Look:

A portrait of a princess! Carefully examine this sculpture—from the top of her head to rough edges of her broken arm—and jot down everything you notice.

What clues do you see that reveal something about the biography of Amenirdas?

When and where did she live?

What do you see that makes you say that?

Discuss:

If you could ask the sitter, Amenirdas, one question about her life, what would it be?

You might like to ask her about her brother, Piye, the first black pharaoh to rule ancient Egypt!

About the Artwork: *Amenirdas I, the Divine Consort* is a black granite frontal fragment of a full-length female portrait statue. The high standard of commemorative portrait sculpture maintained during the Late Period (700 BCE to 100 AD) is reflected in this work. It also demonstrates the independence, position of responsibility, and respect commanded by certain women in ancient Egyptian society.