

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!



STUCK INSIDE

Look:

Examine all the details of this fine Roman interior—the tapestries, architectural features, mosaic tile, and marble pool. Now look again! What else do you see?

Do you notice the bustling activity in the distance?

What about the group of women in the middle of the painting?

Who seems to be the center of attention—and why does she capture your attention?

Discuss:

What is happening here? What is it that makes this painting appear so real, so convincing, and so easy to “read?”

Talk about a time when you were stuck inside and felt so sick you had to miss a party—hopefully not your own!

About the Artist: Instead of momentous historical events, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema's (1836–1912) much-admired paintings of classical antiquity depict aspects of everyday life imaginable in any era. In fact, they show activities that would have been familiar to his Victorian patrons, but in historical costume. Whether a Greek sculptor at work or a convalescent Roman girl worried about missing the banquet being prepared behind her, the artist's scenes are made to look "real" by a host of archaeologically correct details.

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Gerard Donck (Dutch, born before 1610–died after 1640), *Portrait of Nicolaes Willemsz. Lossy and his wife Marritgen Pieters*, 1633, oil on panel, 18 3/4 x 24 3/4 inches, Museum purchase with funds from the Berchel H. and Alice Dale Harper Estate and bequest of Rose Marie Baumgarten, 2017.2

STUCK INSIDE

Look:

Mr. Lossy and his wife are not as stiff as they seem! Can you spy at least three clues that show they are makers of merry music?

And just what are those instruments?

A shawm is a wind instrument, like an early oboe, and a virginal is similar to a small harpsichord—both were popular in seventeenth-century Dutch homes.

Discuss:

Talk about why this couple would want to be painted together surrounded by their instruments, sheet music, and songbook?

What do these things communicate about the couple?

Does it appear there is “harmony” between them? Sure, because when they get tired of playing music, they can always turn to checkers.

About the Artist: Although there is very little documentary information about Gerrit Donck (before 1610–after 1640), his distinctive style of painting and printmaking reveal a recognizable artistic personality. Active in Amsterdam, he painted small scale portraits and genre scenes. He also engraved or provided the designs for most or all of the illustrations in playwright and composer JH Krul’s songbook *The Honest Pastime* (1634). This connection, as well as the instruments that appear in his works, suggests that he appreciated music.

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Mariano Fortuny y Carbo (Spanish, 1838–1874), *The Visitor*, 1867, oil on panel, 10 ½ x 17 ½ in.; 26.67 x 44.45 cm, Gift of Francis T. B. Martin, 1995.36

STUCK INSIDE

Look:

You're stuck inside an artist's studio—and what a studio!

Can you tell this artist is also a collector? His room is filled with colorful props and everything an artist needs.

How many of these items can you locate: easel, palette, paper, mahl stick, Japanese screen, canvas, mirror, patron, Flemish rug, Japanese fan, and the most important prop of all—his model wearing her favorite striped tights!

Discuss:

What's going on in this painting?

Make up a short story about a day in the life of this artist, his visitor, and the model. Don't forget to title your tale!

About the Artist: Mariano Fortuny (1838–1874) was celebrated for his scenes of Spanish and Moroccan daily life. Joining French Academic painters, he combined their detailed descriptive approach with a striking colorism and spirited brushwork that derived from Spanish masters. Fortuny's manner is reminiscent of the shimmering Rococo style and thus particularly suited to this episode supposedly set in an eighteenth-century atelier. However, this studio looks contemporary, filled with items that nineteenth-century artists collected as props.

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Jean-François-Pierre Peyron (French, 1744-1814), *The Death of Socrates*, 1788, oil on canvas, 39 x 53 ½ in.; 99.06 x 135.9 cm, Museum Purchase with additional funds from The Robert H. and Mildred T. Storz Trust; E. James and No, 1999.55

STUCK INSIDE

Look:

Let your eyes hop from color to color—first to the primary colors, then to secondary colors, and then to all the dim, dark shades of silver, violet, and grey between.

How has the artist used vivid color, and strong light to emphasize the drama of this scene?

Now, with your finger, trace all the diagonal lines you see in the fabric, forms, and figures. Look closely! Where do you think this drama is unfolding?

Discuss:

The ancient philosopher Socrates, who we know from the title is nearing the end, raises a hand and scolds his grief stricken pupils. What does he say to them?

How does the artist show us what Socrates' students think of their teacher?

Have you ever had a teacher you loved very much, even though they were strict?

About the Artist: Jean-François-Pierre Peyron (1744–1814), a French Neoclassical painter, was born in Aix-en-Provence, France. In 1767, he worked in Paris as a pupil to Rococo painter Louis Jean François Lagrenée (1725–1805). After winning the prestigious Prix de Rome in 1773, he moved there to continue his studies. His time in Italy was a success, and he created innovative work that moved beyond the gallant mythologies and sugary pastorals favored by his predecessors. Today, Peyron's works are held in museums worldwide.

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Look:

Mirror, mirror in her hand, who is the fairest in the land?

Closely examine this little painting and make a list of everything you see—from the velvet cushion at her feet to her delicate leather gloves—that shows us the sitter is indeed a “fair” lady.

Does knowing that this painting is smaller than a sheet of typing paper add to the mood of the artwork or affect the way you feel about it? How so?

Discuss:

How do we know this woman in white won't be stuck inside her room for long?

If you were to make up a story about *The Necklace*, what is she preparing for and what will happen next?

About the Artist: Benjamin-Eugène Fichel (1826–1895) won worldwide esteem as a painter of intimate genre scenes, which he regularly showed in the Salon exhibitions. His elegant scenes set in eighteenth-century interiors responded to a vogue for Rococo refinement. Subjects were often painters in their studios, but he also loved to represent cardplayers, diners, and elegant toilettes, applying considerable skill to the depiction of beautiful fabrics and the period items that create his authentic-looking settings.

Benjamin-Eugène Fichel (French, 1826–1895), *The Necklace*, 1866, oil on panel, 9 3/8 x 7 9/16 in.; 23.81 x 19.21 cm, Gift of Francis T. B. Martin, 1995.34