

SELF-TAUGHT GENIUS

A Curriculum Guide for Teachers K-12



AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM

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CONTENTS

Development Team	3
Exhibition	4
How to Use This Guide	6
Teaching from Images and Objects in Your Classroom	7
New York State Learning Standards	9
Introductory Lesson	
LIBERTY NEEDLEWORK <i>and</i> FREEDOM QUILT	11
Achievers	
ENCYCLOPEDIA PALACE	19
THE PILE OF ANDRIUS (#67) <i>and</i> GOLD TOWER	23
GENNERAL WASCHINGTON <i>and</i> BIRTH RECORD FOR HANNAH OBERHOLTZER	29
Encoders	
PHRENOLOGICAL HEAD	37
UNTITLED	43
HURLBURT FAMILY MOURNING PIECE	47
HANDMADE BOOK	51
Messengers	
REINA	55
IN THE WORLD.....	59
GIFT DRAWING: THE TREE OF LIGHT OR BLAZING TREE	64
Improvement	
JONATHAN KNIGHT	69
FLAG GATE	74
HUDSONIAN CURLEW WEATHERVANE.....	79
UNTITLED (SIDESHOW BANNER)	84
GIRL IN RED DRESS WITH CAT AND DOG	88
BASEBALL PLAYER SHOW FIGURE	96
A VIEW OF MR. JOSHUA WINSOR'S HOUSE &C.	100
Reformers	
JUG	105
HEWSON-CENTER QUILT WITH MULTIPLE BORDERS	109
BIRDS GOT TO HAVE SOMEWHERE TO ROOST.....	114
Ingenuity	
FLYING MACHINES (4575: BROAD CUTT/4576: VOGEL).....	119
Guides	
AURORA	125
OUTPOST RAID: CHAMPAGNE SECTOR (<i>appropriate for middle and high school levels</i>).....	130
WALTER CHANDLER, Æ 21 MONTHS	134
UNTITLED (FIGURES AND CONSTRUCTION WITH BLUE BORDER)	139
Glossary	143
Print and Online Resources.....	146
Visiting the American Folk Art Museum.....	152

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EXHIBITION

What is self-taught genius? In a newly formed United States this characterization took on dynamic and optimistic dimensions that were pivotal to the development of a start-up nation with no history and conceived on an experimental model: after the War of Independence, all of the nation's citizens were self-taught Americans. At the turn of the twentieth century, the field of American folk art was being defined by collectors, professional artists, critics, dealers, and curators whose search for an authentic American art seemed to be finally answered in works that presented a multivalent picture of national identity, faith, progress, ingenuity, community, and individuality. As the field matured under the umbrella of "folk art," it was also expanded to include a wider variety of expressions and artists working in the present. For the last twenty years, the term "self-taught" has more regularly come to address artistic inspiration emerging from unsuspected paths and unconventional places, giving voice to individuals situated outside the social consensus.

This exhibition proposes a reframing of the conversation to consider the continuum of American folk art through the concept of "self-taught genius" as an elastic and enduring notion whose meaning has evolved over time. As Europe contemplated Young America with a skeptical eye, self-taught genius translated into a somewhat protective posture of pride in self-actualization—an original brilliance that was not based on formal education, training, or classical precedent. The genius of the self-taught in America has been multifarious, echoing the fullness of the Enlightenment theories postulated throughout the eighteenth century to its present association with exception and otherness.

Self-Taught Genius: Treasures from the American Folk Art Museum considers the shifting implications of a self-taught ideology in the United States, from a widely endorsed and deeply entrenched movement of self-education to its current usage to describe artists creating outside traditional frames of reference and canonical art history. Self-taught art, past and present, blurs frontiers between disciplines, makes definitions look constricted, and forces us to reconsider our assumptions about authoritative systems. These individuals have been active participants in the shaping of American visual culture, influencing generations of artists and establishing lively artistic traditions. Recast as self-taught geniuses, they fit within a pervasive but mutable self-taught culture, reflecting life in America as it has changed and as it has been ambitiously dreamed.

Stacy C. Hollander

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National Tour

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM

New York City

May 13–August 17, 2014

FIGGE ART MUSEUM

Davenport, Iowa

November 15, 2014–March 15, 2015

MINGEI INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM

San Diego, California

April 18–August 16, 2015

AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Fort Worth, Texas

October 10, 2015–January 3, 2016

NEW ORLEANS MUSEUM OF ART

New Orleans, Louisiana

February 26–May 22, 2016

SAINT LOUIS ART MUSEUM

Saint Louis, Missouri

June 19–September 11, 2016

TAMPA MUSEUM OF ART

Tampa, Florida

October 1, 2016–January 8, 2017



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Featuring objects from the American Folk Art Museum that reflect American history and culture, this Curriculum Guide is designed to be readily adapted by educators teaching pre-K through high school levels. Although classroom teachers across the city, state, and nation often teach similar content to their students, each educator has a distinct approach to engaging their learners in the material. In response, the museum's education team has created a guide to borrow from and build on to meet the needs of your specific classroom environment and teaching style.

There are multiple objectives for using this Curriculum Guide, designed in conjunction with the traveling exhibition *Self-Taught Genius: Treasures from the American Folk Art Museum*. One goal is to empower educators working with students from across grade levels and with varying abilities to teach from collection images presented here, and to encourage the teaching of American history through an exploration of works of folk and self-taught art. Another is to encourage students to ask critical questions when investigating visual art as a primary source. We hope that this material will support dynamic learning in your classroom and help your students draw parallels with subjects they are already studying.

The images and content included in this Curriculum Guide complement topics and subject areas relevant to students from pre-K through high school. After the introductory lesson plan—serving to set the stage for deeper investigation into expressions of folk and self-taught art—the guide continues with twenty-five additional lesson plans that follow the thematic organization of the exhibition: Achievers, Encoders, Messengers, Improvement, Reformers, Ingenuity, and Guides. You will find that some lessons are centered on just one object, while others focus on two objects in tandem.

For each work of art in this Curriculum Guide, you will find an accompanying color reproduction, background information on the object and its creator, and a list of resources that help illuminate the work. In addition, each lesson plan contains questions to spark discussion as well as suggestions for related activities and projects for students meant to extend their learning even further. The questions section is separated into three categories: **Questions for Careful Looking** ask students to observe each object in great detail and then work together to decode what they see; **Questions for Further Discussion** tie in threads of background information on the objects to further the looking process; and **Questions for Context** help students identify and understand the cultural climate in which the object was created—unlike the Questions for Careful Looking, they encourage students to consider their responses independent of the artwork. Depending on the contextual information your students already have about the originating time and place of the object, you might want to ask these questions before or after students discuss what they see in the image. Please note that several of the following lessons also include images of simulated projects contained in the **Suggested Activities** heading—some are completed project demonstrations, while others offer detail or process shots of the activities you may want to try in your classroom.

Whether you are in the museum or your own classroom, we are certain that you will discover new and inspiring ways to integrate folk and self-taught art into your teaching to make American history and culture come alive for your students!

TEACHING FROM IMAGES AND OBJECTS

Object-based learning, particularly from museum collections, activates students' powers of observation, interpretation, and analysis. At the American Folk Art Museum, our teaching methodology is inquiry-based and discussion-driven. Through facilitated conversation about objects, students construct their own interpretations of the works, thus establishing ownership of their ideas and cultivating confidence and pride in learning. As students link their observations and interpretations to those of their peers and bring their prior knowledge into the conversation, the class develops a collective body of knowledge, while individuals hone their critical thinking skills.

We recommend a few techniques that will help you guide students through the meaning-making process as you facilitate discussions about works of art:

Invite students to look carefully.

Start by asking students to take a minute to look silently at the work of art. At first, this process might be uncomfortable for students who are not accustomed to silent looking, but it will become easier with each new image. This invitation to look is essential; we are rarely encouraged to *slow down* to make observations. By spending a few moments together examining the image, students will start the lesson with a shared experience.

Use repetition in your Questions for Careful Looking.

Repeat questions you have posed to your students with different objects so they can anticipate the questions and feel comfortable responding. Repetition will help students better understand questions they might not have understood the first time, and it will provide them with a series of useful starting-point questions for when they approach an image on their own.

Engage students through open-ended questions.

Open-ended questions create space for multiple viewpoints and more than one "right" answer. In addition, these types of questions encourage discussion as opposed to single-word answers. When asked to respond to an open-ended question, students are invited to participate and share their ideas without fear of giving the "wrong" answer.

Paraphrase all students' comments.

As students offer their ideas and interpretations, paraphrase their comments to ensure that the whole group has heard each student's ideas. In addition, by voicing a student's comment in different words, you validate that comment and let the student know that you have heard the idea and understood it. Be sure to paraphrase all comments in a way that does not suggest that one comment is more valuable than another.

Introduce new vocabulary in authentic ways.

As you paraphrase students' comments, attempt to balance the vocabulary that students already have with new words. Vocabulary is best acquired when presented in context, and a discussion about a work of art in which everyone is focused on a shared stationary image provides a perfect opportunity for this experience.

Ask students to support all observations and interpretations.

Ask students to back up their inferences and ideas with evidence from the work of art to legitimize their interpretations. Ask for visual evidence even when an interpretation seems obvious.

Point to elements of the image to which students refer.

If you have the opportunity to project an image of a work of art, point to areas of the picture that students address in their comments. This helps ground each comment and ensures that all students can see the element being discussed.

Weave background information into the discussion in appropriate and authentic ways.

As students develop their interpretations of the work of art, you may want to share threads of background information with the group. Information about the object should further the looking process, contextualize the artwork for students, or appropriately challenge the group to push the limits of their thinking.

At the beginning of each lesson, you will find Questions for Careful Looking. At times these questions relate specifically to details in the work of art, while in other instances they have a more general scope, and they may appear in multiple lessons in this Curriculum Guide. Both types of questions are equally important in the discussion, but the latter—the more general question—is critical in order for all possible observations to be heard. However, if a general discussion seems to have tapered off, simply asking for further detailed observations can revitalize conversation and allow students who haven't yet shared ideas to find new layers and meaning in the object and lead the group in new directions.

By beginning your discussion of an artwork with concrete observations, you ensure that all students have the same starting point. As the discussion progresses, students will naturally apply a historical context to the work; with markedly increasing ease, they will piece together what they see with what they know. At the same time, they will gain confidence in asking questions about what they see and seeking the information to answer them. As a result, students will use what they have taken from the conversation and apply it to the ensuing project. In the process, students will also gain experience scrutinizing primary sources and works of art in general, while at the same time cultivating their visual literacy and critical-thinking skills.



NEW YORK STATE LEARNING STANDARDS

The lessons in this Curriculum Guide address a variety of New York State Learning Standards, all strands of the New York City Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts, and Common Core Standards (www.corestandards.org). Because lesson plans are designed to be adapted and tailored by educators, they are not accompanied by individual lists of standards addressed. The standards listed below reflect those inherent in many of the lessons and programs in the museum.

The Arts: New York State Learning Standards

- Standard 1: Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performance in the arts and participate in various roles in the arts.
- Standard 2: Students will be knowledgeable about and make use of the materials and resources available for participation in arts in various roles.
- Standard 3: Students will respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting the individual work to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought.
- Standard 4: Students will develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society.

Social Studies: New York State Learning Standards

- Standard 1: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.
- Standard 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.
- Standard 3: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live—local, national, and global—including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the Earth’s surface.
- Standard 4: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of how the United States and other societies develop economic systems and associated institutions to allocate scarce resources; how major decision-making units function in the United States and other national economies; and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and nonmarket mechanisms.
- Standard 5: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the governmental system of the United States and other nations; the U.S. Constitution; the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation.

English Language Arts: New York State Learning Standards

- Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.
- Standard 2: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression.
- Standard 3: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.
- Standard 4: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction.

Mathematics, Science, and Technology: New York State Learning Standards

- Standard 1: Students will use mathematical analysis, scientific inquiry, and engineering design, as appropriate, to pose questions, seek answers, and develop solutions.
- Standard 3: Students will understand mathematics and become mathematically confident by communicating and reasoning mathematically; by applying mathematics in real-world settings; and by solving problems through the integrated study of number systems, geometry, algebra, data analysis, probability, and trigonometry.

New York City Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts

- Strand 1: Artmaking
- Strand 2: Literacy in the Arts
- Strand 3: Making Social, Cultural, and Historical Connections
- Strand 4: Community and Cultural Resources
- Strand 5: Careers and Life-Long Learning in Visual Arts



Liberty Needlework

Lucina Hudson (1787–?)

South Hadley, Massachusetts; 1808

Watercolor and silk thread on silk, with metallic thread and spangles; 18 x 16"

American Folk Art Museum purchase with funds from the Jean Lipman Fellows, 1996, 1996.9.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Following the American Revolution, and in the spirit of Republican Motherhood, numerous academies of learning for girls and young women were established throughout the Northeast. It was the goal of such schools to create a strong sense of patriotic nationhood in a literate body of young women versed in history, geography, some mathematics, and tasteful ornamental arts, filtered through Christian values and ethical philanthropy. Many of the girls attending these schools had experienced the war as young children, or through firsthand accounts of family members.

Lucina Hudson was one of several girls from Oxford, Massachusetts, who attended Abby Wright's (1774–1842) school in South Hadley, Massachusetts, and whose fathers had fought for freedom. The ornamental exercises practiced at the school were typical in choice of topics, from biblical chapters to historical scenes and mourning pieces. This is one of at least five examples of Liberty made under the guidance of Wright. It is interesting that the allegorical figure of Liberty is not represented as an unattainable ideal but as an accessible contemporary. This Liberty is a pretty young woman with her hair ringleted in a classical style, fashionably garbed à la grecque, and carrying a liberty pole topped by a Phrygian cap, a close-fitting hat that was worn in ancient Rome and symbolized liberty.

—Stacy C. Hollander

RESOURCES

Bank, Mirra. *Anonymous Was a Woman: A Celebration in Words and Images of Traditional American Art and the Women Who Made It*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979.

Bradstreet Richter, Paula. *Painted with Thread: The Art of American Embroidery*. Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 2002.

Fox, Nancy Jo. "Liberties with Liberty: The Changing of an American Symbol." *The Clarion* (Winter 1986): 38–47. See www.issuu.com/american_folk_art_museum/docs/clarion_win1986.

Harding, Deborah. *Stars and Stripes: Patriotic Motifs in American Folk Art*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2002.

Hollander, Stacy C. *American Radiance: The Ralph Esmerian Gift to the American Folk Art Museum*. New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with American Folk Art Museum, 2001.

Ring, Betty. *Girlhood Embroidery: American Samplers & Pictorial Needlework, 1650–1850*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.



Liberty Needlework



Freedom Quilt

Jessie B. Telfair (1913–1986)

Parrott, Georgia; 1983

Cotton, with pencil; 74 x 68"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Judith Alexander in loving memory of her sister, Rebecca Alexander, 2004.9.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

When Jessie Telfair invoked the power of a single word repeated over and over in this quilt, she knew the word would reverberate through the history of the United States, back to the “peculiar institution” of slavery and the freedom that she was still struggling to attain in the 1960s at the beginning of the civil rights movement. The making of the quilt was incited by an incident she suffered in those years, when registering to vote was enough to cost this African American woman her job in a school kitchen. The bitterness of that experience still burned years later, and fellow quiltmakers urged her to express the pain through her art. Worked in the colors of the American flag, the quilt cries freedom. In a subtle metaphor, Telfair has set each repeated letter in its own block; all are visually related, but no two are alike.

—Stacy C. Hollander

RESOURCES

Bank, Mirra. *Anonymous Was a Woman: A Celebration in Words and Images of Traditional American Art and the Women Who Made It*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979.

Harding, Deborah. *Stars and Stripes: Patriotic Motifs in American Folk Art*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2002.

Hollander, Stacy C., and Brooke Davis Anderson. *American Anthem: Masterworks from the American Folk Art Museum*. New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with American Folk Art Museum, 2001.



Freedom Quilt



INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- The artworks in this Curriculum Guide are all included in the exhibition *Self-Taught Genius: Treasures from the American Folk Art Museum*. Folk art is partially defined as art made by self-taught artists. What does it mean to be self-taught? What does it mean to be a genius?
- Who do you think of as a genius? Why?
- How might an artist teach him- or herself how to create art? What qualities might one need to possess to be considered a self-taught genius?

QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What is going on in each of these works of art? What do you see that makes you say that?
- In *Liberty Needlework*, what are the different elements of the scene? Describe the foreground, middleground, background, and border.
- Describe the composition of *Freedom Quilt*. How is it organized?
- What can you say about how each object was created? What do you think they would feel like if you could touch them?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- What is a needlework? What is a quilt?
- What skills did Lucina Hudson need to create a detailed artwork such as *Liberty Needlework*? What skills did Jessie Telfair need to create *Freedom Quilt*?
- Imagine holding a needle and embroidery thread. What kind of movements would you make to create the embroidered parts of the artwork? How close do you think you would need to hold it to your face? How would you feel after working on it for a while? How long do you think it would take you to create something like this?
- Now imagine cutting out the letters to form the word *freedom*. How many of each letter did Telfair cut? Examine the Rs. How are they different from each other? What does that tell you about her process?
- *Liberty Needlework* and *Freedom Quilt* were created 175 years apart—one in 1808, the other in 1983. Which is the older one? Can you tell just by looking? What details present in these artworks reflect the time periods during which they were made?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- *Liberty Needlework* was an assignment Lucina Hudson completed in school. How might other girls' projects have looked different?
- Why were girls in the nineteenth-century taught needlework in school? Do you think boys were taught the same skills? Why or why not?
- Girls were judged by their communities, and by potential husbands, on the quality of their artwork, among other things. What message might a careful, well-executed needlework send about its maker?
- *Liberty Needlework* is what is called an allegory—there are symbols throughout the image that can be read to find a deeper meaning on the subject of liberty. How can you interpret the cornucopia? The flag? The hat? The town in the background? What about the girl in the center of the scene? How does she compare to the Statue of Liberty?



- Around the turn of the nineteenth century, Americans were encouraged to decorate their homes with patriotic imagery. Why might liberty have been particularly important to Americans at the time?
- Lucina Hudson’s father fought in the Revolutionary War. What might he have thought about when he looked at her artwork?
- The concept of “Republican Motherhood” was also popular during that time period—women were expected to raise educated, patriotic sons. How does Hudson’s artwork suggest she would conform to the ideals of Republican Motherhood?
- Jessie Telfair made *Freedom Quilt* in 1983, years after she lost her job for attempting to register to vote. As an African American woman living in the South, she was subjected to racial discrimination. Can you find a connection between her experience and the message of her quilt?
- The message of freedom was important to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and ’60s, a time during which many people fought to end the systematic oppression, segregation, and unfair treatment faced by African American citizens like Telfair. Can you think of other prominent figures from the civil rights era who invoked a similar message?
- Knowing the background story behind the creation of this quilt, what do you make of Telfair’s use of red, white, and blue? There is debate about whether it is “ironic, patriotic, or both”—what do you think?
- Lucina Hudson was an early nineteenth-century white schoolgirl in New England; Jessie Telfair was a twentieth-century black woman in the South. Despite their differences, they are linked by needle and thread. Why might so many different women over the past few centuries have used artforms like embroidery and quilting to express themselves?
- How are the messages behind these two works of art similar? How are they different?
- In what ways were and weren’t Hudson and Telfair free and liberated?
- Do you think “liberty” and “freedom” meant the same thing to Americans in 1808 as in 1983? What about today?
- There is a lot to learn about the history of the United States by studying American folk art. How do each of these two artworks by self-taught geniuses tell a story about the United States? Do they tell the same story or a different one?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Coloring:** Give each students black-and-white photocopies of *Liberty Needlework* and *Freedom Quilt* and ask them to color them, either at home or when they are no longer looking at the artworks in color. Compare their different styles, color choices, density of colors, etc., in order to discuss how different artists can leave their own unique marks on the same assignment.
- **List/Collage:** “Liberty” and “freedom” are big ideas and ideals that have always been part of the narrative of the United States. Work with the students to generate a list of words that express their own ideas or the ideals of your class. Have them each select one word that is important to them and create a collaged composition that highlights that word.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Stitches/Cutting Letters:** Give the students needles, embroidery thread, and a backing fabric, and ask them to practice making perfect, tiny stitches. Using a timer, test how many stitches the students can make in one minute. Next ask the students to cut out multiples of the same letter in paper or fabric. Have a discussion about how these activities add to their understanding of Lucina Hudson’s and Jessie Telfair’s skills.
- **Debate:** Divide the class in half to stage a debate. Ask one half of the class to argue that *Liberty Needlework* better tells the story of America, and the other half to argue that *Freedom Quilt* better tells the story.



Stitches/Cutting Letters Activity



Encyclopedic Palace

Marino Auriti (1891–1980)

Kennett Square, Pennsylvania; c. 1950s

Wood, plastic, glass, metal, hair combs, and model kit parts; 11 x 7 x 7'

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Colette Auriti Firmani in memory of Marino Auriti, 2002.35.1

Full title: Encyclopedic Palace/*Palazzo Enciclopedico*/*Palacio Enciclopedico*/*Palais Encyclopédique* or *Monumento Nazionale. Progetto Enciclopedico Palazzo* (U.S. patent no. 179,277)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Born in 1891 in Guardiagrele, Italy, Marino Auriti came to the United States sometime between 1923 and the 1930s. He worked as an auto-body mechanic, but architecture was his passion. Over the course of three years, he executed a model, built on a scale of 1:200, for an ambitious construction called the *Palazzo Enciclopedico* (Encyclopedic Palace). Had it been realized, it would have stood 136 stories or 2,322 feet, and spread across sixteen city blocks in Washington, DC, just slightly smaller than the Burj Khalifa skyscraper in Dubai—completed in 2009, the tallest man-made structure in the world, at 2,716.5 feet. In his highly technical six-page statement of purpose, he wrote: “This building is an entirely new concept in museums designed to hold all the works of man in whatever field, discoveries made and those which may follow, . . . everything from the wheel to the satellite.” Auriti’s own code of ethics is articulated in transfer letters along the lintels of the seven-tiered building, including “Forgive the First Time” and “Do Not Abuse Generosity.” The model was exhibited twice in Auriti’s lifetime, encased in a pyramid-shaped vitrine that he built. Thirty-three years after his death, this piece inspired the theme of the 55th Venice Biennale “The Encyclopedic Palace,” curated by Massimiliano Gioni in 2013.

—Valérie Rousseau

RESOURCES

Gioni, Massimiliano. *The Encyclopedic Palace. 55th International Art Exhibition: La Biennale di Venezia*. Venice: Marsilio Publishers, 2013.

Jentleson, Katherine, and Valérie Rousseau. “From Auto Mechanic to Biennale Star: Who Was Marino Auriti?” See www.selftaughtgenius.org/reads/from-auto-mechanic-to-biennale-star-who-was-marino-auriti.

Venice Biennale website: La Biennale, www.labiennale.org/en/Home.html.



Encyclopedic Palace



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What are you looking at here? What do you see that makes you say that?
- What materials did the artist use to create this work of art?
- How many tiers does this building have? How many windows would you guess it has?
- How tall do you think it is? How can you tell?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Does the *Encyclopedic Palace* remind you of any buildings you've seen before? Which ones? What do those buildings have in common?
- Marino Auriti designed the *Encyclopedic Palace* as a model for an actual building. If it had been built, how would you feel approaching it? Where would you enter? What would you see once inside? Would you want to go all the way to the top? Why or why not?
- Auriti immigrated to the United States from Italy and worked as an auto-body mechanic. What mechanical skills might have helped him create his artwork?
- What else did he need to help him make the *Encyclopedic Palace* besides his mechanical skills?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- Marino Auriti imagined the *Encyclopedic Palace* to be “an entirely new concept in museums, designed to hold all the works of man in whatever field, discoveries made and those which may follow.” What does this mean? What did he want to do?
- How does the design of the *Encyclopedic Palace* reflect what Auriti intended it to be?
- Over each of the four entrances to the *Encyclopedic Palace*, Auriti placed the flag of a different country—the United States, France, Italy, and Spain. He also inscribed along the lintels of the building, “Forgive the First Time” and “Do Not Abuse Generosity.” How do these details add to your understanding of the artwork?
- If you were going to fill a museum with all of humankind's greatest achievements, what would you be sure to include?
- Auriti envisioned the *Encyclopedic Palace* being built on the Mall in Washington, DC. What other museums are on the Mall? Do you think the *Encyclopedic Palace* would have fit in? Why do you think it was never built?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Mural/Curating:** Draw the outline of the *Encyclopedic Palace* on a large piece of mural paper—if possible, to scale. Ask the students to work together to “curate” the contents of the building. Create a big list of all of the important works of art, inventions, and objects they think should be included. Based on the list, generate seven organizational themes—one for each layer. Which should go on the top? The bottom? Fill in the outline with their thoughts.
- **Calculation:** Give the students the dimensions of the *Encyclopedic Palace*—11 x 7 x 7 feet. Tell them that the model was built at a 1:200 scale. Ask them to figure out how tall and how wide the actual building would have been if built.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Curating:** Create large, elongated rectangles of white paper for each student. Ask them to imagine that their paper is a wall of one level of the *Encyclopedic Palace*—eventually they’ll tape the ends of each sheet together to form a large circle. If it was their job to curate one of the floors, what theme would they choose? What objects, inventions, and works of art would they select to illustrate that theme? Have them use a mix of drawing and collage to create a model of the interior of one of the floors of the *Encyclopedic Palace*.
- **Research/Report:** The *Encyclopedic Palace* served as the inspiration and centerpiece for the 2013 Venice Biennale, a huge and important international art fair. Have students research the 2013 Venice Biennale and write down their answers to two questions: 1) What was the idea behind selecting this work of art as the basis for the Venice Biennale? 2) What does it mean that the work of a self-taught artist was included in the Venice Biennale?



The Pile of Andrius (#67)

Eugene Von Bruenchenhein (1910–1983)

Milwaukee, Wisconsin; December 31, 1954

Oil on corrugated cardboard; 13 x 15 1/2"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Lewis and Jean Greenblatt, 2000.1.24

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

When art comes from outside the expected frameworks of the art profession, it tends to follow unsuspected paths. Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, who dropped out of high school, worked as a florist and a baker before devoting the last forty years of his life to making art. The son of a sign painter and the stepson of a Sunday painter who believed in reincarnation, he was exposed to creative trades and nonconformist ideas from an early age. Rapidly, he “became fascinated with botany and science, and wrote extensively on his own metaphysical theories of biological and cosmological origins, as well as the primal genesis of a genetically encoded collective knowledge. He composed reams of poetry on nature, love, war and politics, and imaginary travels through time and space,” explained art historian Caelan Mys. He identified himself primarily as a multidisciplinary creator; his interests ran from philosophy to painting, drawing, photography, and sculpture. His home became an art environment, transformed by his unrelenting outpouring of expression. Idiosyncratic in his techniques, he finger-painted with oils, fired clay pieces in his kitchen oven, made his own paintbrushes using human hair, and recycled leftover chicken and turkey bones to build his intricate objects.

—Valérie Rousseau

RESOURCES

American Visionary Art Museum website:
“What Is Visionary Art?,” www.avam.org/stuff-everyone-asks/what-is-visionary-art.shtml.

Eugene Von Bruenchenhein Estate website:
www.vonbruenchenhein.com.

Fine, Gary Alan. *Everyday Genius: Self-Taught Art and the Culture of Authenticity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

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Stone, Lisa. “. . . made for love of creation”: Thoughts on the Art of Eugene Von Bruenchenhein. *Folk Art* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 82–90. See www.issuu.com/american_folk_art_museum/docs/folkart_32_3_fall2007.



The Pile of Andrius (#67)

Gold Tower

Eugene Von Bruenchenhein (1910–1983)

Milwaukee, Wisconsin; c. 1970s

Paint on chicken bones and turkey bones; 35 1/2 x 6 x 7"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Lewis B. Greenblatt, 1999.22.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The relationship of man to the cosmic and metaphysical is manifested in the eloquent iconography of self-taught artists, as exemplified by the number of works in which figures are shown rising and ascending. Prototypical of the artist's desire to reach a higher level are visionary architectures and constructions—motifs prevalent in Eugene Von Bruenchenhein's multidisciplinary production, notably his precarious-looking *Gold Tower* made of chicken and turkey bones and model airplane glue, his early *Pile of Andrius* (#67), depicting a metropolis perched atop a hill, and his 1970s skyscraper-fortress paintings. His studies of clouds and his photographs of his wife, Eveline Kalke, whom he nicknamed "Marie" and elevated to the rank of a goddess, recall the same celestial fascination, as does his reference to his creative ego he called "Genii," a play on the diminutive of his first name and the plural form of *genius*. The etymology of the term *genius*, at the end of the fourteenth century was associated with an individual capable of channeling external or divine influence and watching over people. According to Von Bruenchenhein, his Genii acted as a muse, sitting on his shoulder and talking to him; when it stopped talking, the artist would no longer be able to work.

—Valérie Rousseau

RESOURCES

American Visionary Art Museum website:
"What Is Visionary Art?," www.avam.org/stuff-everyone-asks/what-is-visionary-art.shtml.

Eugene Von Bruenchenhein Estate website:
www.vonbruenchenhein.com.

Fine, Gary Alan. *Everyday Genius: Self-Taught Art and the Culture of Authenticity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

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Gold Tower



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- Describe these two works of art. What do they have in common? How are they different?
- What materials might Eugene Von Bruenchenhein have used to create each artwork?
- Talk about the textures.
- What colors do you see?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- What kind of structure does each artwork depict?
- Do you think the structures are real or imagined? Does either artwork remind you of anywhere or anything you've seen or heard about before?
- What might it be like to climb inside of the *Gold Tower*? What about inside of *The Pile of Andrius*? Which one would you rather visit? Why?
- If you didn't know that the same artist created both *The Pile of Andrius* and *Gold Tower*, would you be able to tell? Why or why not?
- *The Pile of Andrius* is two-dimensional, and *Gold Tower* is three-dimensional. How did Von Bruenchenhein create a sense of space and volume even in his two-dimensional, flat work?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- Von Bruenchenhein painted *The Pile of Andrius* on a piece of corrugated cardboard. He obtained some of the cardboard he used for his art from the bakery where he worked. *Gold Tower* is made, primarily, of chicken bones and turkey bones. Where might he have gotten them? Why would he reuse leftovers from his meals to create art?
- Many self-taught artists, unable to buy or uninterested in using conventional art materials, make use of unorthodox materials. Von Bruenchenhein was only able to purchase some of his supplies, but his lack of funds did not stop him from making what he wanted to make. For example, he took a few thousand photographs of his wife and developed the prints in his bathroom; he used auto-body paint to glaze ceramics, which he fired in his kitchen oven; and he made sketchbooks from wallpaper sample books. What qualities and skills did he need to possess in order to execute his ideas?
- Do you think an object like *Gold Tower* would be as compelling if it were created out of something more predictable, like stone or clay? Von Bruenchenhein used his fingertips to paint *The Pile of Andrius*—what would it lose had it been painted with brushes instead?
- Although he held many other jobs, Von Bruenchenhein considered himself primarily an artist and tried, unsuccessfully, to interest the art world in his work. Why might he have faced obstacles in gaining mainstream acceptance during his lifetime? What about his work do you think finally gained him recognition as a self-taught genius?

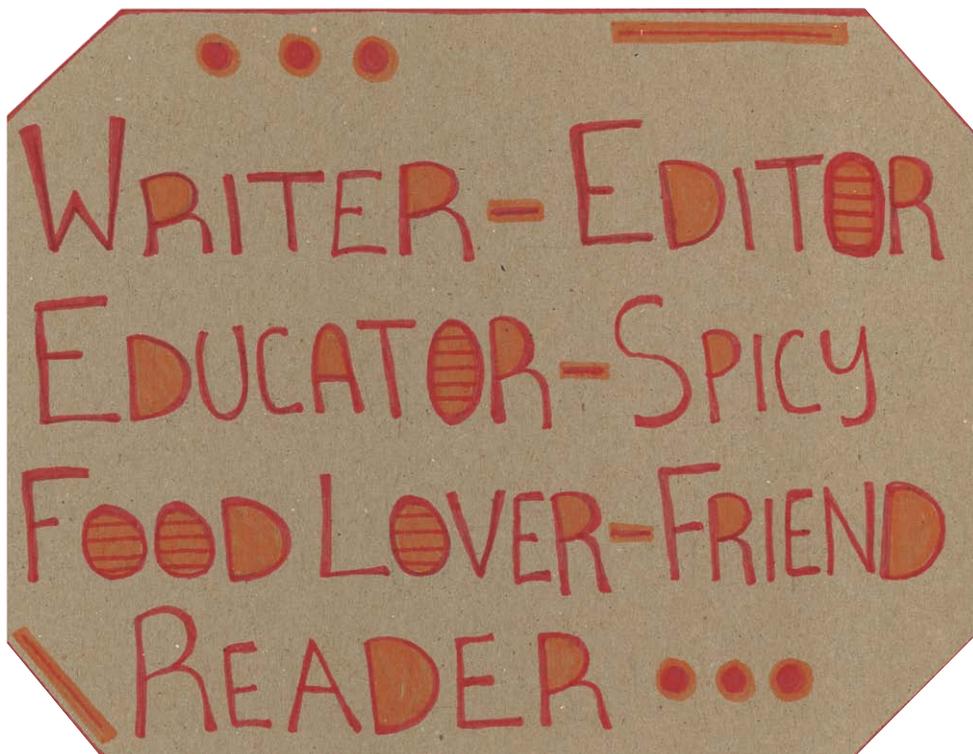
SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Recycled Objects Sculpture:** Eugene Von Bruenchenhein used metallic paint to transform his leftover chicken bones and turkey bones into a beautiful gold tower. Ask students to save thoroughly washed, nonorganic material like bottles, boxes, straws, and bags from their meals over the course of a week. Use glue and string to assemble these materials into sculptures and then paint them gold to transform and unify them.
- **Personalized Plaque:** Von Bruenchenhein created a plaque for himself that read: *Freelance Artist—Poet and Sculptor—Inovator—Arrow maker and Plant man—Bone artifacts constructor—Photographer and Architect—Philosopher*. Ask the students to come up with their own list of hyphenates for themselves and write them nicely on their own cardboard or oak tag plaque. You can extend the activity by taking a photograph of each student holding their plaque and present them on a bulletin board or in a slideshow.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Fingerpainting:** Eugene Von Bruenchenhein often used his finger as a stylus, providing direct contact while painting works like *The Pile of Andrius*. Ask students to paint their own fantastical place using only their fingers as tools. Have a conversation afterward about the benefits and difficulties of finger painting.
- **Research/Decide/Discuss:** Von Bruenchenhein is thought by many to be a “visionary artist.” Ask the students to visit the “What Is Visionary Art?” page on the American Visionary Art Museum’s website. There they will find a discussion about the differences, as some see them, between visionary art and folk art. Then ask the students to read through the information and decide, by their definition, if Eugene Von Bruenchenhein is a visionary artist, a folk artist, or both.



Personalized Plaque Activity

General Waschington

Artist unidentified

Southeastern Pennsylvania; c. 1810

Watercolor, gouache, ink, and metallic paint on paper; 9 5/8 x 8"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Ralph Esmerian, 2013.1.35

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

German Americans were among the forces organized to fight for independence against British tyranny. Known as the German Regiment and formed from settlers in Maryland and Pennsylvania, they participated in major battles in Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. This drawing by an unidentified artist is in the colorful ink-and-watercolor style associated with the Old World tradition of Germanic illuminated documents known in America as *fraktur*. It is probably based on one of the many images of George Washington mounted on horseback that proliferated after the war, testifying to the president as a military leader and the unifying symbol of the new nation. By inscribing in German “George Washington and the city that was built in his name” and the English words “Congress House” on the facade of a building that resembles both Carpenters’ Hall and Independence Hall—sites of the First and Second Continental Congresses—the artist conflates the removal of government from Pennsylvania to the new capitol of Washington, DC, and the establishment of Congress on Pennsylvania Avenue.

—Stacy C. Hollander

RESOURCES

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Hershey, Mary Jane Lederach. *This Teaching I Present: Fraktur from the Skippack and Salford Mennonite Meetinghouse Schools, 1747–1836*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2004.

Hollander, Stacy C. *American Radiance: The Ralph Esmerian Gift to the American Folk Art Museum*. New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with American Folk Art Museum, 2001.

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McKillip, Rebecca. *Pennsylvania Dutch Designs*. Gilsum, NH: Stemmer House Publishers, 1983.

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Richman, Irwin. *The Pennsylvania Dutch Country*. New York: Arcadia Publishing, 2004.



General Washington

Birth Record for Hana Oberholtzer

David Cordier (act. c. 1805–1820)

Miami River Valley, Southwestern Ohio; 1816

Watercolor and ink on paper; 7 3/4 x 12 1/4"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Ralph Esmerian, 2005.8.34

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Little is known about fraktur artist David Cordier, whose highly idiosyncratic drawings distinguish him from the majority of practitioners. Recent scholarship locates him in an area of Ohio settled primarily by Mennonite and other Pietistic Germans from Pennsylvania. Although the document he penned for the Swiss Mennonite Oberholtzer family is unsigned, his unique approach to the art is unmistakable. This example features a large heart containing text that records the birth of Hana Oberholtzer, in 1805. The document was written in 1816, perhaps to commemorate the date that eleven-year-old Hana was baptized and received into the Christian faith.

Cordier worked primarily in brown and black inks rather than the bold colors usually associated with fraktur. Eight faces float in the spaces within and around the heart. Two are contained in the bodies of large birds flanking either side of the heart; a winged head marked with tulips sits inside the interior point of the heart. There is a strong sense of apotheosis in this imagery, derived from the ancient Roman practice of releasing an eagle to ascend with the soul of the deified. The significance is unknown but may be related to births and deaths within the family.

—Stacy C. Hollander

RESOURCES

Earnest, Corinne, and Russell Earnest. *Fraktur: Folk Art and Family*. Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 1999.

Hershey, Mary Jane Lederach. *This Teaching I Present: Fraktur from the Skippack and Salford Mennonite Meetinghouse Schools, 1747–1836*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2004.

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McKillip, Rebecca. *Pennsylvania Dutch Designs*. Gilsum, NH: Stemmer House Publishers, 1983.

Rebuck, Deborah M., and Candace Kintzer Perry. "Fraktur Treasures from the Schwenkfelder Library and Heritage Center." *Folk Art* 28, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 30–37. See www.issuu.com/american_folk_art_museum/docs/folkart_28_1_spr2003.

Richman, Irwin. *The Pennsylvania Dutch Country*. New York: Arcadia Publishing, 2004.



*Hana Oberholzerin,
halte dich Recht, dan
wohl gehen. Palm. 97.*

*Hana
Werde Fromm, und
Töcher wird es Zulekt*

Hana Oberholzerin

ist Geboren, den 6 Tag August, 1805.

Hana Oberholzer, was Bern, August. 6. 1805.

*Fürchte Gott! und halte segn gebott
dann daß gehört allen Menschen*

Zu. geschrieben den 20ten Oct. 1816

Birth Record for Hana Oberholzer

QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

General Washington

- What is going on here? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Who might the man in the center of the drawing be? How can you tell?
- What kinds of buildings do you see in the background?
- What colors do you notice? What might their significance be?
- What materials do you think were used to create this artwork?

Birth Record for Hana Oberholtzer

- Take inventory of this image—what are the different elements?
- What might this object be? How can you tell?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Compare and contrast these two artworks. How are they similar? Different?
- How would you describe the style of the lettering?
- Can you find any text in English on these works? In another language? What language might it be?
- How do the writing and the imagery relate to each other in each artwork? Do they work in the same or in different ways?
- Would you know that the artist intended the man on the horse in *General Washington* to be George Washington without the text? What might account for the differences between this portrayal and the way we know he actually looked?
- What about the faces on the *Birth Record for Hana Oberholtzer*? Who might they depict? Can we answer that question with certainty? Why or why not?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- Both of these artworks are in a style called fraktur. Based on your observations, what do you think fraktur is?
- Fraktur was created, for the most part, in Pennsylvania, between 1740 and 1860. What does that information tell you about the settlers there? Where might they have come from?
- Do you think that these two artworks were created for the same reason? Which one of them had a practical usage? Why might people have created birth records?
- What clues do these two artworks provide us into what was important to the community that created them?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Watercolor & Ink Birth Record:** Ask the students to create their own birth records in the style of the *Birth Record of Hana Oberholtzer*. If possible, use the same materials used by David Cordier—watercolor and ink (thin Sharpie markers will do if India ink isn't available). Whose faces might they include around the central information? What animals, plants, or shapes?
- **Capitol Research/Inscription:** As a group, research the history of the capitol of the United States, online or in the library. What is the definition of a national capitol? Where was the capitol before it was established in Washington, DC? After they learn that the capitol, and the seat of the U.S. Congress, was in Pennsylvania just before moving to Washington, DC, ask the students to write their own inscriptions for *General Washington* drawing on this history.

Middle and High School Levels

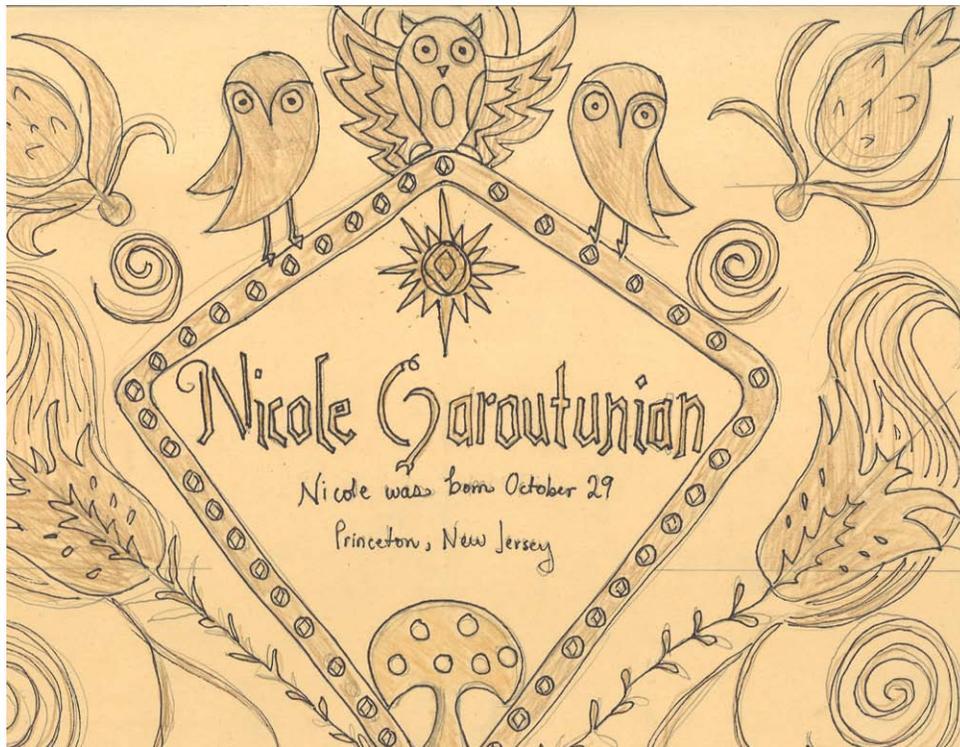
- **Mathematical Analysis/Birth Record:** The *Birth Record of Hana Oberholtzer* is highly organized and nearly symmetrical. Give each student a photocopy of the artwork and ask them to do a mathematical analysis of the image. Approximately how much of the area of the drawing is taken up by the central heart? At what angle are the two heads in the upper corners positioned? Ask them to use their findings to create their own birth record, substituting their own information and designs for David Cordier's but using the same basic mathematical plan.
- **List/Fraktur:** Make a list with your students of their questions about the Pennsylvania Germans during the early nineteenth century. Why did they end up in Pennsylvania? Why are they sometimes called "Pennsylvania Dutch" when they were actually German? What kinds of food did they eat? What kinds of homes did they live in? Assign each question to a group of students to research and then answer with a fraktur-style document or drawing. Make a bulletin board of their findings.





heart circumference: 14.5" $8" \times 5.25"$ large + small heads
 $14.5 = 2\pi r$ area ≈ 16.6 on 40° angles
 $2.3 \approx r$ total area $\approx 42"$
 area = πr^2 $\frac{16.6}{42} \approx .4$ Heart is about 40% of the birth certificate's area.

Mathematical Analysis/Birth Record Activity



List/Fraktur Activity



Phrenological Head

Asa Ames (1823–1851)

Evans, New York; c. 1850

Paint on wood; 16 3/8 x 13 x 7 1/8"

American Folk Art Museum, bequest of Jeanette Virgin, 1981.24.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

When Asa Ames carved this strange and beautiful portrait of a young girl with incised and colorful markings on her scalp, he was testifying to a runaway offshoot of Enlightenment faculty psychology that presented itself as a scientific method for self-improvement. Phrenology was conceived in medical circles as a serious study of brain structure as it related to the human mind. The brain was divided into twenty-seven faculties; it was later proposed that the formation of the skull itself conformed to these faculties.

In America, brothers Lorenzo and Orson Squire Fowler promulgated a form of practical phrenology: through an examination of the bumps on a person's head, one's nature could be analyzed and recalibrated with a program of exercise or by neglect of specific faculties. The Fowlers were major advocates of social reform and published on subjects promoting the benefits of health food, homeopathy, hydropathy, and mesmerism, and also agitating for women's and children's rights, sex education, and other reforms and therapies. The era of self-improvement was now the age of self-help.

Shortly before his death, Asa Ames was living in the household of Dr. Harvey B. Marvin, a homeopath, physician, and practitioner of alternative therapies. It is likely that the *Phrenological Head* was carved around the time of this association. There is no real precedent for the three-dimensional portraits in wood by Ames that are known today. The flat base of the waist- and bust-length carvings seems to derive from a beautiful but short-lived stone-carving tradition in Renaissance Florence, perhaps innovated by Desiderio da Settignano. Like much painted portraiture of the day, the representations are direct, frontal, and iconic in their minimalist simplicity.

—Stacy C. Hollander

RESOURCES

Boston College website: "The Phrenological Organs," www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fnart/phrenology/phrenology_frames.html.

Hollander, Stacy C. "Asa Ames and the Art of Phrenology." *The Clarion* 14, no. 3 (Summer 1989): 28–34. See www.issuu.com/american_folk_art_museum/docs/clarion_14_3_sum1989.

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Lee, Laura. "Carved by Asa Ames: A Chance Discovery Brings New Facts to Light." *Folk Art* 30, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 52–56. See www.issuu.com/american_folk_art_museum/docs/folkart_30_2_sum2005.

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Phrenological Head



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- Describe this object as if to someone who cannot see it.
- What details do you notice?
- What can you say about proportion? Colors? Style?
- How would the *Phrenological Head* feel if you could touch it? What makes you say that?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- What can you tell about the girl depicted in the woodcarving? How did the artist relay that information?
- This object had a purpose beyond that of an art object. What clues can you find about how it was meant to be used?
- Conversely, in the mid-nineteenth century, phrenological heads were popular not just in health clinics but also as home decor. Would you want this *Phrenological Head* decorating your home? Why or why not?
- Other phrenological heads were monochromatic and depicted no more than the head and neck. What did Asa Ames do differently and what effect does that create?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

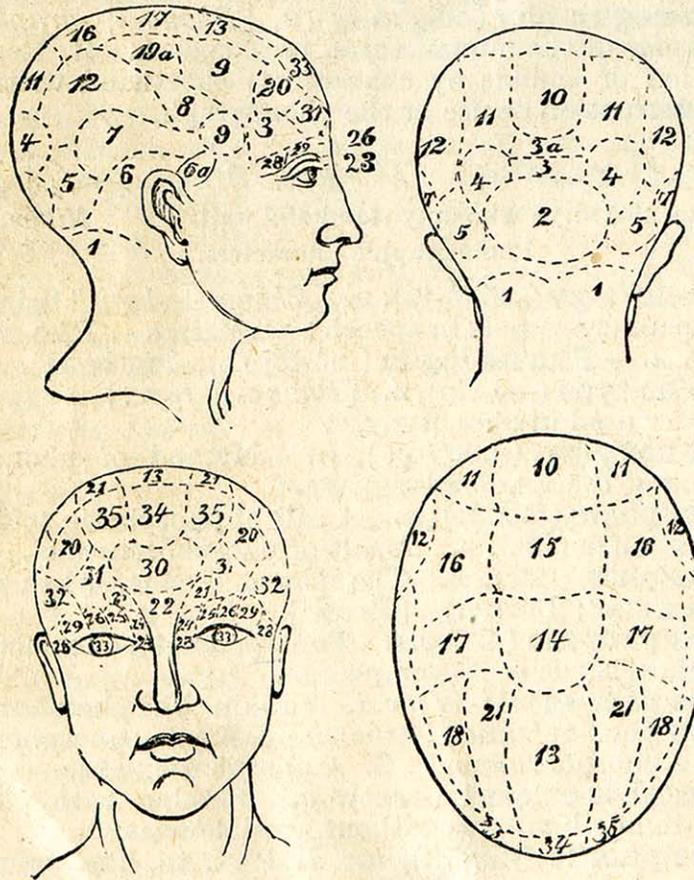
- Share with students this quote from famed humorist Mark Twain about his experience with a phrenological reading.

He found a cavity on one place; a cavity where a bump would have been in anybody else's skull. . . . He startled me by saying that the cavity represented a total absence of humor. . . . After three months I went to him again, but under my own name this time. Once more he made a striking discovery—the cavity was gone, and in its place was a Mount Everest—figuratively speaking—31,000 feet high, the loftiest bump of humor he had ever encountered in his lifelong experience!

What does this quote tell us about how phrenology was received by some people in the nineteenth century?

- Show the students the image of a phrenology chart from the c. 1895 *Webster's Academic Dictionary* or the phrenology charts on the Boston College website. What qualities were being examined through phrenology? Which would you hope to have or not have?
- People used phrenology both to dispel and to confirm stereotypes. What might some of the dangers or benefits have been in judging people by the shape of their skulls?
- How does the medical industry today differ from that of the nineteenth century? Why might people have been drawn to the idea of phrenology?
- What other diagnostic strategies, medical conditions, and treatments from the past are now outdated?

Phre-nol'o-gy (-nŏl'ŏ-jÿ), *n.* [Gr. φρήν, φρενός + *-logy*.] **1.** Science of the special functions of the several parts of the brain, or of the supposed connection between the faculties of the mind and organs in the brain. **2.** Physiological hypothesis that mental faculties, and traits of character, are shown on the surface of the head or skull; craniology. — **Phre-nol'o-gist**, *n.* — **Phren'o-log'ic** (frĕn'ŏ-lŏj'ĭk), **Phren'o-log'ic-al**, *a.*



A Chart of Phrenology.

1 Amativeness ; **2** Philoprogenitiveness ; **3** Concentrativeness ; **3 a** Inhabitiveness ; **4** Adhesiveness ; **5** Combativeness ; **6** Destructiveness ; **6 a** Alimentiveness ; **7** Secretiveness ; **8** Acquisitiveness ; **9** Constructiveness ; **10** Self-esteem ; **11** Love of Approbation ; **12** Cautiousness ; **13** Benevolence ; **14** Veneration ; **15** Firmness ; **16** Conscientiousness ; **17** Hope ; **18** Wonder ; **19** Ideality ; **19 a** (Not determined) ; **20** Wit ; **21** Imitation ; **22** Individuality ; **23** Form ; **24** Size ; **25** Weight ; **26** Coloring ; **27** Locality ; **28** Number ; **29** Order ; **30** Eventuality ; **31** Time ; **32** Tune ; **33** Language ; **34** Comparison ; **35** Causality. [Some raise the number of organs to forty-three.]

From Webster's Academic Dictionary, c. 1895

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Drawing:** The *Phrenological Head* is based on a real child. Have students draw the head and bust as they see it and then continue drawing the child's body using the clues the artist has given them.
- **Self-Description:** Ask students to write a paragraph about their own personality traits. Encourage them to be as specific and descriptive as possible.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Pinterest Board:** Ask students to create a Pinterest board of phrenological heads and other outdated diagnostic tools. View them in class and have a discussion about what they have in common and what technology we have now that has helped make objects like phrenological heads obsolete.
- **Write & Perform Scenes:** After students have researched phrenology on their own, ask them to pair up to write and perform short scenes between a doctor and patient in which the patient is examined.
- **Psychologist Demo:** Invite a psychologist to the classroom to discuss the ways he or she diagnoses patients and how that differs from what was done in the past.





Drawing Activity



Untitled

Judith Scott (1943–2005)

Oakland, California; before 1991

Yarn and fabric with unknown armature; 6 1/2 x 62 x 11"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Creative Growth Art Center, Oakland, California, 2002.21.5

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Judith Scott—born deaf and with Down syndrome—joined the Creative Growth Art Center in Oakland, California, in 1986, one year after her twin sister, Joyce, became her custodial guardian. There she spontaneously engaged in creative work for the last eighteen years of her life, following her own impulse and preferences in terms of media. Her sculptures bring to mind giant cocoons or mummies. Even though they are probably figurative, none were titled. Once finished, Scott would leave the objects on her worktable, without any attempt to display them. The understructures are composed of discarded or found items, such as electric fans, foam packaging, tubes of various sorts, and yarn cones. She would disguise the core with lengths of knotted cloth or yarn (her long-standing material) using a wide range of binding techniques—wrapping, knotting, tying, lacing, stitching, knitting, and crocheting—until it developed into an anthropomorphic bundle. Secretive like sarcophagi and somehow silent with their sound-absorbing texture, Scott’s sculptures offer a subtle experience of intimacy, placing us at the crossing point of dual states—the visible and the invisible, the origin and the end, birth and death.

—Valérie Rousseau

RESOURCES

Creative Growth Art Center website:
www.creativegrowth.org.

MacGregor, John. *Metamorphosis: The Fiber Art of Judith Scott*. Oakland, CA: Creative Growth Art Center, 1999.

Ogden, Scott, and Michael Hearn. *Make*. Lander, WY: Asthmatic Kitty, 2011. DVD, 68 min.



Untitled

QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- Describe what you see. How would you explain it to someone who couldn't see it?
- What materials do you see?
- What colors do you notice?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- What techniques do you think Judith Scott used to create this object?
- What textures do you notice? How would it feel to touch it or hold it in your arms?
- How did Scott use color in this sculpture?
- Does it remind you of anything you've seen before?
- If this sculpture could make noise, what sounds would it make?
- If this sculpture could move, how would it move?
- Imagine being in a room filled with sculptures like this one. What would that experience be like?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- Judith Scott's sculptures are often described as "anthropomorphic"; they almost seem human. What, if anything, about this work of art reminds you of a person?
- Even though Scott's work can remind viewers of many different things, it is actually abstract. Using this sculpture as an example, can you explain what "abstract" means?
- Scott created her sculptures by wrapping objects in yarn and fabric. The objects she wrapped were assorted items she had available to her in the art studio where she worked, like yarn cones, electric fans, and video cameras. These supports are called armatures. What armature might be inside of this sculpture?
- If you wanted to know for sure what armature Scott used, how could you find out? Would you want to know or keep it a mystery?
- Scott had Down syndrome and was deaf; she created art in a studio space for adults with special needs called Creative Growth Art Center. Do you think her different abilities played a role in the art she created? Why or why not?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Yarn Sculpture:** Try out Judith Scott's process. Supply students with assorted everyday materials (toilet paper or paper towel tubes, empty plastic bottles, etc.) and yarn in various colors. Ask them to wrap, knot, and cover their armatures with the yarn and see what they create.
- **Storytelling:** Let students know that the word yarn can mean "story." When people "spin a yarn," they create stories off the top of their head. Assemble students in a seated circle. Take a ball of yarn and, holding onto the end, toss it to a student, who will start off a story about Scott's sculpture. That student then tosses it to a classmate, who'll continue the story, and toss the yarn to another classmate, and so on.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Drawing from Sculpture:** Judith Scott's work is three-dimensional. Ask students to try to translate what makes her artwork compelling—the colors, textures, volume, mystery—into a two-dimensional drawing. How can they interpret her work through drawing techniques?
- **Research/Report:** Ask students to visit the Creative Growth Art Center's website and study one of the other artists who works or has worked in its studio. Have them present to the class on that person's creative process and artwork.



Hurlburt Family Mourning Piece

Probably Sarah Hurlburt (1787–1866)

Connecticut; c. 1808

Watercolor and ink on paper; 17 x 20" oval (sight)

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Ralph Esmerian, 2013.1.43

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1799 Young Americans came together to mourn the death of George Washington. As they had been united in striving for independence, they now were joined in grief. Schoolmistresses used such events as opportunities to reinforce feelings of patriotism in their students. Mourning pieces were one manifestation of this public sentiment. An artistic outgrowth of the Romantic movement in Europe, they relied on a codified iconography based on funerary motifs from the classical world recently uncovered at archaeological sites such as Herculaneum and Pompeii. These elements were mixed with Christian symbolism to produce a hybrid that was at once tasteful and morally sound. Within the formal language of the mourning piece, practitioners were free to combine the elements in any manner they chose. Often it was the schoolmistress who designed the mourning composition that came to be associated with her school, but sometimes it was the student who freely created with the building blocks of the convention.

The school that produced this unique watercolor of repeated weeping women is not yet identified. It memorializes Connecticut farmer Lemuel Hurlburt (1750–1808) and two of his young children, who died in 1776 and 1795. The memorial was probably painted by his daughter Sarah, who would have been twenty-one at the time and possibly a student in a Hartford school.

—Stacy C. Hollander

RESOURCES

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Hurlburt Family Mourning Piece

QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What is going on here?
- What can you say about the people in this scene?
- What might they be doing? What do you see that makes you say that?
- What are they gathered around? Can you read the inscriptions?
- How would you describe the setting?
- What material was used to make this painting?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- What are the people in this scene wearing? What can you tell about them based on their clothing? What can you tell about the time period? Do you think they always dressed like this? Why or why not?
- Describe their poses. What are they doing? Why?
- If you could hear what is going on in this scene, what would you hear?
- How would you describe the mood of this painting?
- What do you think the relationship is between the people in this painting and the ones being memorialized on the gravestones? The artist who probably created this painting has the same last name as the one that appears on the gravestones. How does that add to your understanding of the artwork?
- How do the trees fit into a painting about mourning? What about the white house in the background?
- Would the painting feel different if we could see the women's faces? Why or why not?
- Although mourning paintings were a tradition in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Sarah Hurlburt's composition is unlike any other. What is the role of repetition in this painting?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- If we were viewing this painting in 1808, when it was created, we might have been able to easily decipher several symbols and signs the artist included, as they were a common part of the visual vocabulary of the time. What do you think some of those symbols represent?
- People in the early United States based mourning drawings like this one on classical ideas of mourning from Greece and Rome. What do you see in the painting that might have a classical influence?
- This painting was created not long after the American Revolution. Why do you think early Americans had a fascination with classical Greece and Rome? Can you think of any other examples of classical influence on early American art, politics, or society?
- Before coming to the United States, European mourning paintings often memorialized public figures. How is this painting different? Can you connect that shift—from the public to the personal—to other ideals prevalent in early America?
- It is thought that this painting could have been created by Sarah Hurlburt in a finishing school. In the early nineteenth century, finishing schools taught girls skills like watercolor painting, embroidery, speaking French, and playing the piano, so that they could use these skills to entertain guests and to present a carefully constructed picture of themselves to a potential suitor. What might a visitor, or even a potential husband, know about Sarah Hurlburt by viewing her artwork?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Body Language:** Sarah Hurlburt used the body language of the figures she painted to show emotion. Ask students to write down an emotion on a slip of paper, gather their papers into a bowl, and then have each student randomly select an emotion. Ask students to convey that word through their body language. Other students can guess what emotion they're portraying by studying their poses.
- **Poetry:** As a group, transform the *Hurlburt Family Mourning Piece* into a poem. Looking at the painting, generate a list of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Write them in three columns on the board. Then, go back into the list and pull words from each column to create a short poem. Have a conversation comparing the poem to the painting. What does each capture that the other one cannot?

Middle and High School Levels

- **Memorial Mural Field Trip:** Visit a memorial mural in your neighborhood or another one nearby. Compare and contrast the more contemporary art form with Sarah Hurlburt's mourning piece. Ask students what other popular art forms today deal with mourning.
- **Curating:** Ask students to look at the website for the American Folk Art Museum's 2010 exhibition *Women Only: Folk Art by Female Hands*. Then tell them to imagine they are the curator of a smaller version of that exhibition. Have them choose two or three other works of art from the show that share a theme in common with the *Hurlburt Family Mourning Piece* and design a wall of the exhibition by sketching the artworks on a large sheet of white paper. Then have them write "wall text"—a title and small paragraph explaining their chosen theme.



Handmade Book

James Castle (1899–1977)

Boise, Idaho; 1920–1950

Soot and saliva on found paper, bound with string; 12 x 10 3/16" (closed)

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Thomas Isenberg, 2001.32.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

James Castle's deafness is somehow perceptible in the evanescent, smooth, and subtle surfaces of his compositions, leaving an apparent silence. Illiterate, he also never adopted conventional means of communication, neither titling, dating, or commenting on his artworks, foiling our attempts to establish a chronology and a comprehensive evolution in his practice. Firsthand accounts describe his focus and inventiveness when it came to conceiving his own artistic tools and techniques. He refused to use typical art materials when they were offered; he drew with soot—dampened with his saliva—from the family stove on discarded envelopes and other paper goods that he picked from the post office and general store his parents managed out of their residence in rural Idaho. Castle's distance from the influences of established culture led him to treat aspects of society in isolation, rather than as part of an implicit structure. Developing his own unique communication system and visual vocabulary, he was thus able, especially in his handmade books, to expose the gap between sign and signified—we are shown scraps of words, rearranged letters, scribbles imitating text, linguistic clues. Therefore, he seems to express that a meaningful language is the product of conventions. The present album is made up of fourteen pages from recycled envelopes, showing original postmarks and return addresses. The sheets, sewn together with string, are cluttered with thumbnail sketches reminiscent in scale of postage stamps, illustrating small scenes of interiors, portraits, religious images, and family snapshots.

—Valérie Rousseau

RESOURCES

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Handmade Book

QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What kind of object is this? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Describe some of the specific images.
- What else is on these two pages besides drawings?
- What materials and colors do you notice?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- What kind of book do you think this is? What does it remind you of that you've seen before? How is it different?
- What do the drawings on these two pages have in common with each other? How are they different?
- Are the drawings and the other marks on the pages related to each other? If so, how?
- If you were going to tell a story based on what you see, what would it be?
- If you could turn the page, what do you think you would find?
- How would you describe James Castle's drawing style? What shapes does he use? What techniques?
- Create a list of adjectives you'd use to describe Castle's *Handmade Book*.

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- James Castle was born deaf and did not speak, read, write, or use sign language. What role do you think an object like this *Handmade Book* could have played in helping him communicate?
- Castle's parents' home served as a general store and the town post office. How did Castle incorporate his surroundings into his artwork? What evidence can you find in *Handmade Book* to support that?
- Castle created his artwork by making drawing tools with sharpened twigs, paste with flour and water, pages with discarded mail, and ink with soot. What skills did he need to repurpose everyday materials in this way?
- How might Castle's work have been different if he and his family had lived somewhere else or worked in another field?
- Castle did not attend school until he was ten years old. Then, for a short period of time, he lived at a residential school for the deaf and blind, where he learned an oral method of communication and, from his classmates, sign language. He was not able to sustain either method of communication when he returned home to his family. How might his life have been different had he grown up today rather than in the very early twentieth century? What laws, systems, and technologies are in place now that could have broadened his access to other methods of communication?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Portraits:** Have students draw portraits of each other mimicking James Castle’s characteristic blocky shapes and using similar materials. Crush up vine charcoal so that it is like soot. The students can mix it with a little bit of water and draw using disposable wooden chopsticks to emulate Castle’s use of sharpened twigs.
- **Book of Days:** Have the students take visual notes on their days in the style of Castle. They can use composition books or small spiral-bound notebooks, or they can make their own booklets by stapling together folded sheets of paper or by using the simple binding technique described below.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Bookbinding:** Teach students a simple binding technique to create their own books. Fold a small stack of paper (three sheets or so) in half horizontally. On the centerfold, punch or poke holes one inch from the top, one inch from the bottom, and in the center. Measure a length of string three times the length of the book’s spine. Thread the string through the top hole from the back, back out through the middle hole, in through the bottom hole, then back out through the middle hole. Tie together the ends of the string at the top (it will resemble a figure eight). This is called a “pamphlet” binding. They can use these books to take Castle-style notes over a time period of several days and then share with the class.
- **Writing:** Ask students to replace some of the squiggly lines in Castle’s *Handmade Book* with actual writing. What do they think he might have wanted to say about each drawing?



Bookbinding Activity



Reina

Martín Ramírez (1895–1963)

Auburn, California; c. 1960–1963

Paint, crayon, pencil, and collage on pieced paper; 48 x 16 1/2"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of the family of Dr. Max Dunievitz and the Estate of Martín Ramírez, 2008.25.1, © Estate of Martín Ramírez

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Divinities, celestial themes, rising figures, and flying vessels are typical cosmic subjects from the iconographic directory of self-taught artists. Included in this category are pedestaled and idealized women, singularly or all at once goddess, star, femme fatale, Madonna, and empress. *Reina* (queen) by Martín Ramírez does not depict a popular Mexican figure like the Virgin of Guadalupe but a woman with the attributes and posture of the Immaculate Conception—the Virgin Mary, queen of heaven and earth. The consecration of the Immaculate Conception is an act by which someone, married or not, makes a commitment to take Mary into his own life. This piece is one of the many versions of a celebrated theme by the artist, who was known to be a devout Catholic. When represented in his works, she rarely wears the traditional blue scapular but, rather, attire displaying the recurring patterns—repetitive and hypnotic stripes, curls, and ribs—seen in the artist’s landscapes and architectural structures. The dark piece of cloth draped across her forearms suggests the letter M from his first name. Referring to another work by Ramírez with a very similar figure, art historian Víctor M. Espinosa alleges that it could be an image of the artist’s wife, for whom he may have felt guilty for abandoning: “There is something human, something not sacred in the image.”

—Valérie Rousseau

RESOURCES

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Reina



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What do you see?
- Describe the figure. What is she wearing? What is she doing?
- What shapes and patterns do you see?
- How many pieces of paper does it look like the artist used to make this drawing?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- What does the figure convey by the way she is standing?
- What other clues can you find to tell you who the figure might be?
- What is the relationship between the word *REINA* and the figure, both in terms of meaning and style?
- Discuss the snake. What does the snake add to the drawing?
- What is the effect of the repetition of lines in this drawing?
- What techniques did Martín Ramírez use to create volume in this drawing?
- How did Ramírez use his materials here? How would the drawing feel different if it had been done on one rectangular sheet of paper rather than several smaller, irregularly sized pieces?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- Martín Ramírez was from Mexico but came to the United States in 1925 to try to find work in order to send money back to his family. What major economic event occurred in 1929 that would have caused him to have great difficulty finding employment?
- Because of hardships related to the Great Depression and other factors such as his inability to speak English, Ramírez was committed to a psychiatric institution. Even though California was where he spent the rest of his life institutionalized, Mexico had a continued influence on Ramírez's artwork. How do you see that influence in *Reina*?
- Ramírez's artwork often referenced places he used to go and sights he used to see in Los Altos de Jalisco, Mexico. Where might he have seen an image like *Reina*? Why might it have been important to him?
- Looking closely at the materials that Ramírez used, what can you guess about where he got them? He used lined paper scavenged from the nurses' station and unrolled cigarette paper to create his art; he made the glue to collage the papers together with potato starch and his own saliva. What skills and traits did Ramírez need to innovate in this way?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Found Materials & Portraiture:** Martín Ramírez did not let his vision for a particular drawing be constrained by his materials. He extended his drawing surface until he had the size and shape he needed to execute his artwork. Ask the students to draw a person who is important to them, using materials at hand like Ramírez did—paper scraps, flattened paper cups, lined paper—as a surface for their artwork. Have them draw in the style of Ramírez, with parallel lines and a limited color palette.
- **Investigating Images/The Great Depression:** Do an image search on the Internet for “Great Depression.” Look at a series of photographs and ask the students to use the images to discover what life was like for many people during that time period. What about Ramírez’s circumstances might have made it particularly hard for him to get by?

Middle and High School Levels

- **Art Forgers:** In 2007, 120 additional works of art made by Martín Ramírez during the last three years of life were discovered; up until that point, only 300 of his drawings were known. Ask the students to become art forgers. Have them research more images of Ramírez’s work on the American Folk Art Museum’s website. After they’ve become familiar with his style and methods, ask them to do their best to create a work that could pass for a recently discovered Ramírez drawing. What materials will they use? What subject matter will they choose? What stylistic choices will they make? Have a competition to see who was most convincing.
- **Art & the Economic Context:** The Great Depression affected the lives of many artists in addition to Martín Ramírez. Ask the students to research Depression-era artwork and present on one piece that they discover.



In the World

Consuelo (Chelo) González Amézcua (1903–1975)

Del Rio, Texas; 1962

Ballpoint pen on paper; 28 x 22"

American Folk Art Museum, Blanchard-Hill Collection, gift of M. Anne Hill and Edward V. Blanchard Jr., 1998.10.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

I have a world in my thinking

Full of joy and full of art

For Del Rio I am always singing

School of arts I couldn't afford

And for that I thank the Lord

For what he has given me is the truth of his great love

For him I write

And carve a stone

And make a drawing

And sing a song

—Chelo

In addition to creating drawings, Consuelo (Chelo) González Amézcua made stone carvings and held poetry readings that included dancing and singing. Born in Mexico, she and her family moved northwest across the border to Del Rio, Texas, when she was ten years old. Her enthusiasm for mythology, music, and art was nurtured by her schoolteacher parents, who were also talented musicians and storytellers. Her condensed and fluid ballpoint pen drawings, which she called *filigranas*, evoke Mexican filigree jewelry and its arabesque patterns. This style also recalls the technique of *paperolles* (quilling)—crowning achievements of patience created by nuns in monastic communities and used in modest churches to imitate the gold and silver watermarks of smiths. Chelo embraced an almost mediumistic process she described as “mental recordatorio,” or memory drawing, and did not make any preliminary sketches. After outlining the primary figures, she embellished her drawings with patterns often derived from pre-Hispanic architecture, Mexican embroidery, and Islamic, Egyptian, and classical motifs.

—Valérie Rousseau

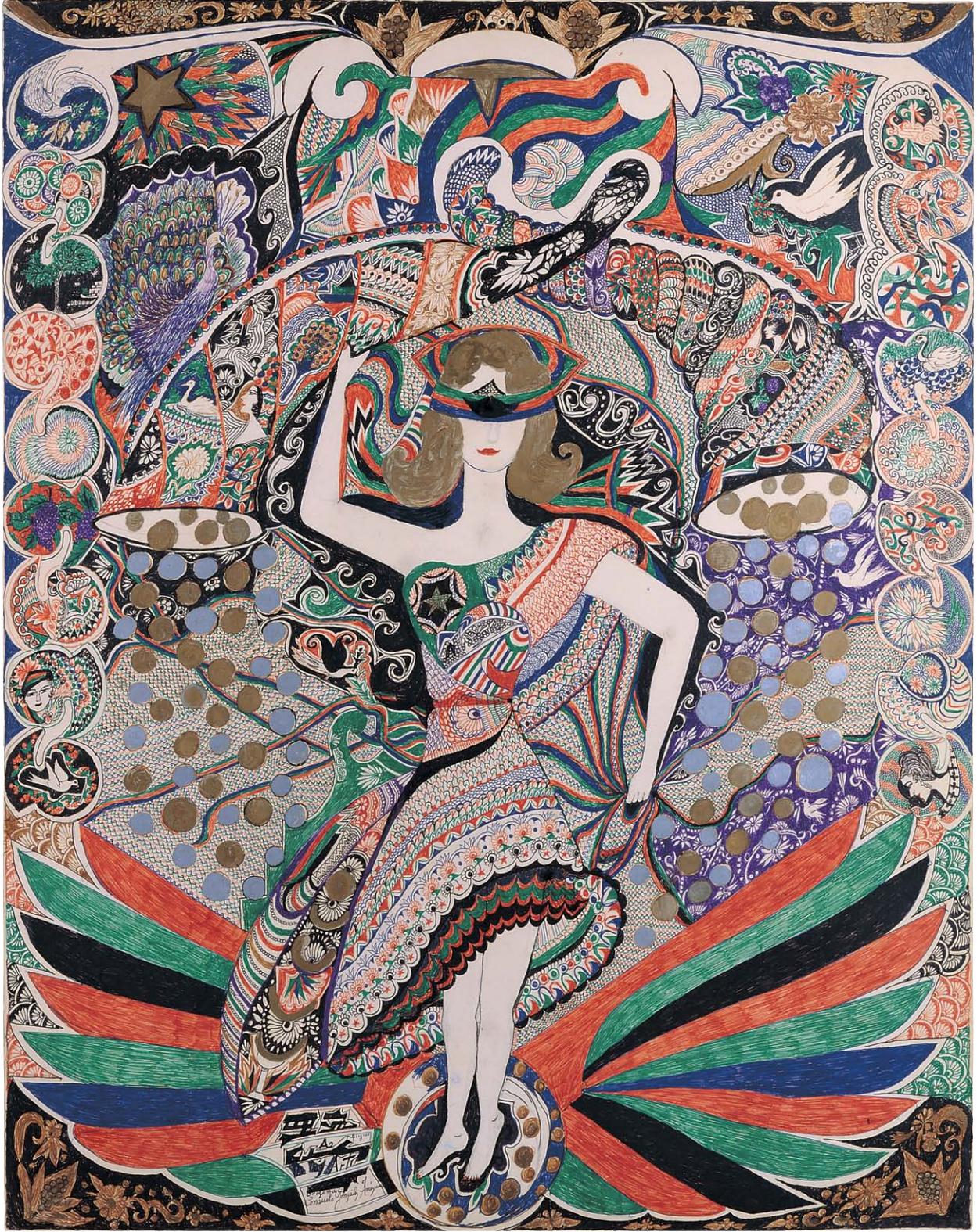
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The University of Texas at Austin website: “Consuelo ‘Chelo’ González Amezcua Artist, 1903–1975,” Great Texas Women, www.utexas.edu/gtw/amezcua.php.



In the World



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- Take inventory of the drawing and make a list of everything that you see.
- After you think you've noticed everything, look for one more image you didn't see before.
- What colors do you notice?
- What materials did Chelo Gonzalez Amezcua use to create this drawing? How can you tell?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Describe the figure in the middle of the drawing. What is she doing? What do you see that makes you say that? Try out her pose.
- The figure's eyes are covered. How would the drawing be different if they were uncovered?
- What is the figure's relationship to the designs around her? Does she seem connected to them? Disconnected?
- Chelo González Amézcua gave this drawing the title *In the World*. What does that mean in relation to the drawing? What title would you give it?
- The artist covered nearly every part of the paper with drawing—there is almost no blank space. What effect does this create?
- González Amézcua and her parents were musicians. What kind of music would you hear if you could listen to this drawing?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- How would you describe the style of this drawing?
- Chelo González Amézcua called her style “Texas filigree.” A dictionary definition of *filigree* is: “ornamental work especially of fine wire of gold, silver, or copper applied chiefly to gold and silver surfaces.” Why might the artist have used this term to describe her work?
- Another term that applies to González Amézcua's aesthetic style is “horror vacui.” Use the Latin you know to deduce what this terminology might mean. How does the result of this stylistic choice impact our reading of the work?
- González Amézcua's had myriad influences—pre-Hispanic architecture, Mexican embroidery, Islamic, Egyptian and classical motifs, and various kinds of symbolism. Can you identify parts of the drawing that might symbolize something? What might they symbolize?
- González Amézcua was born in Mexico and lived much of her life in Texas. She wrote on one of her drawings:

Soy americana de descendencia mexicana, y por doquiera que voy se llevacon dignidad el nombre de los Estados Unidos y de México. I am an American of Mexican descent, and wherever I go, I take with me the dignity of the United States and Mexico.

(Great Texas Women, The University of Texas at Austin, www.utexas.edu/gtw/amezcua.php).

What did she mean by that? Can you think of other artists or public figures that draw on both their country of origin and the United States for inspiration?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Ballpoint Pen Drawing:** For most of her career, Chelo González Amézcua used ballpoint pens as her artistic medium for her very intricate drawings. Give each student a ballpoint pen and an index card. Ask them to copy a detail from *In the World* without revealing to anyone else what they plan to draw. After they've completed their drawing, have them exchange drawings with another person and try to find that person's detail in the larger drawing. What new aspects of the work did they notice during the exercise? What was the experience of drawing with ballpoint pen like? Why might the artist have preferred it to pencil?
- **Noting Symbols & Motifs:** Keep this drawing posted up on the wall in the middle of a larger piece of white paper. As the school year progresses, make notes on the paper when the students encounter one of the images included in the drawing during their studies. For instance, if they learn what a dove might symbolize, make a note near the drawing on the dove. After studying Egypt or the Mayans, find motifs in the drawing that relate to aspects of the work.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Ballpoint Pen Self-Portrait:** Ask the students to create a self-portrait in the style of Chelo González Amézcua, in which they use ballpoint pen and fill up every bit of white space on the page. Ask them to choose whether or not to cover their eyes in the drawing and to select symbols from various cultures to include in their “filigree.”
- **Compare & Contrast:** Pair *In the World* with selections from Gloria Anzaldúa's semi-autobiographical book *Borderlands/La Frontera*, which deals with gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, identity, and more, including the “artificial” border between Mexico and the United States. What “borders” does each work address? Do they both seem to express the same viewpoint?





Ballpoint Pen Self-Portrait Activity



Gift Drawing: The Tree of Light or Blazing Tree

Hannah Cohoon (1788–1864)

Hancock, Massachusetts; 1845

Ink, pencil, and gouache on paper; 16 x 20 7/8"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Ralph Esmerian, 2013.1.3

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

America was founded on an alternative model of government that permitted greater freedom of expression than had been possible in most of Europe. Utopian, perfectionist, and separatist experiments that were within but not of the main body were largely tolerated, if not welcomed. Vestiges of the transcendent nature of genius are retained in visionary images that were revealed to Shaker “instruments” by deceased Shaker leaders or sacred figures during a period of religious revival in Shaker history known as the Era of Manifestations or Mother’s Work.

This is one of two nearly identical gift drawings of the tree of light—or life—by Hannah Cohoon, who was a twenty-nine-year-old mother of two children when she joined the Shaker community in Hancock, Massachusetts, in 1817. The motif would have been well known to Cohoon, as it was prominent in American quilting, needlework, and watercolors beginning in the eighteenth century. The tree of life was also a source of inspirational imagery for the original Shakers who emigrated from England in 1774 under the charismatic leadership of Mother Ann Lee. Cohoon’s vision was delivered by an angel whom she saw “as distinctly as [she] ever saw a natural tree.” This spirit guide moved Cohoon to record a glorious and moral representation that was received by her as a gift and would serve as a gift to inspire others. And in a practical aside, so typical of the dual nature of Americans in every walk of life, Cohoon also cautions on the back of this drawing that the recipient not touch the paint as it might flake off in her hands.

—Stacy C. Hollander

RESOURCES

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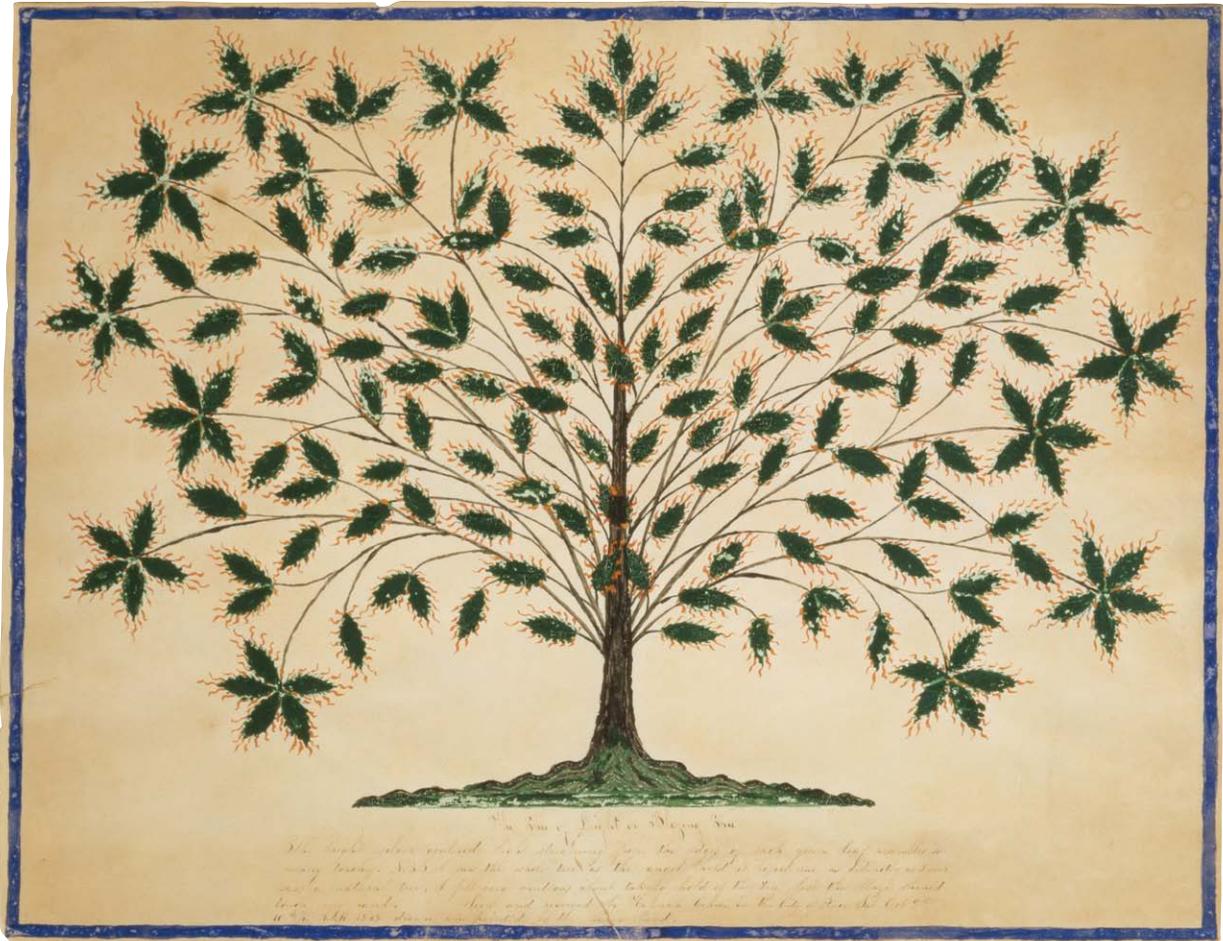
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Gift Drawing: The Tree of Light or Blazing Tree



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What do you notice?
- What are the different elements of this drawing?
- How many colors do you see? Name the colors.
- What materials were used to make this drawing?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- How would you describe the style of this drawing?
- What can you say about the organization of the drawing? Is it symmetrical?
- In what ways does or doesn't this tree resemble a real one?
- Do you think Hannah Cohoon was looking at a real burning tree when she made this drawing? If not, where might the imagery have come from?
- The inscription at the bottom of the drawing reads:

The bright silver colored light streaming from the edges of each green leaf, resembles so many torches. N.B. I saw the whole tree as the angel held it before me as distinctly as I ever saw a natural tree. I felt very cautious about taking hold of the tree lest the blaze should touch my hand. Seen and received by Hannah Cohoon in the City of Peace Sab Oct. 9th 10th hour p.m., 1845. Drawn and painted by the same hand.

What do you think that means? Where did Hannah Cohoon get the idea for this drawing?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

Note: Additional information for these questions can be found in France Morin, ed., *Heavenly Visions: Shaker Gift Drawings and Gift Songs*.

- Hannah Cohoon was a member of a religious community called the Shakers. They formed communities apart from the outside world and believed in living simply. Can you see that idea reflected in this drawing? Why or why not?
- Officially, Shakers are called the United Society of Believers; they formed in England, seeking a more personal expression of Christianity. As part of the teachings of their early leader, Mother Ann Lee, they would dance and literally shake when they were worshipping, leading people to nickname them “Shaking Quakers.” In 1774 Mother Ann Lee moved the Shakers to America. Why might they have thought America would be a better place for them than England?
- Shaker gift drawings, like this one, were created during a period of spiritual revival called the Era of Manifestations, or Mother Ann’s Work, between 1837 and 1860. This was a time when Believers were leaving the Shaker communities for the outside world or were not taking Shaker teachings as seriously as they once had. Certain Believers, known as “instruments,” believed that they could receive spiritual “gifts” directly from Shaker leaders who were no longer living, and even from historical figures like Christopher Columbus or George Washington. What do you think these drawings did for the community?
- In the early days of the Shaker communities, women and men were considered to be equal. As the years went on, however, women’s roles became increasingly limited. The “instruments” who received gift drawings were most often women. How might Shaker women have reacted against the restrictions placed upon them?



- The Shakers' 1845 Laws included this ruling: "No maps, charts, and no pictures or paintings, shall ever be hung up in your dwelling-rooms, shops, or office. And no pictures or paintings set in frames, with glass before them shall ever be among you." What does this tell you about how the Shakers themselves viewed gift drawings?
- The Shakers valued ideals like pacifism, collectivism, simplicity, and celibacy. Why might these ideals have been appealing to people in the mid-nineteenth century? Are they still appealing today?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Tree of Life Drawing:** Hannah Cohoon made several other drawings of the tree of life. Ask the students to draw their own interpretation of the tree of life. What does the title mean to them?
- **Shaker Song:** Some Shaker gifts came in the form of songs. Listen to the song "Simple Gifts" on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYi9Vr8bHJY. Analyze the lyrics and learn to sing the song.

Simple Gifts

'Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free,
 'Tis a gift to come down where we ought to be.
 And when we find ourselves in the place just right
 'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
 When true simplicity is gain'd,
 To bow and to bend we shan't be asham'd,
 To turn, turn will be our delight
 Till by turning turning we come round right.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Research/Drawing:** Ask students to conduct research (online or at the library) on Shaker objects such as oval boxes, wooden clothespins, benches, and dressers. Have them each create a large, detailed drawing of one such object. When they bring in and present their drawings, use them as a jumping-off point for discussing Shaker aesthetics and how they relate to the Shaker value of simplicity.
- **Timeline/Documentary:** Visit the PBS website and study the Shaker timeline. Then visit the two clips of the Ken Burns documentary called *The Shakers*. The first clip addresses the question, "Were the Shakers successful?" Listen to the answer, and then ask the students to answer the question for themselves.





Jonathan Knight

Artist unidentified

Connecticut; c. 1797

Oil on paperboard, mounted on Masonite; 34 x 24"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Ralph Esmerian, 2005.8.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The artist who painted this gentle portrait of Jonathan Knight (1789–1864) is not yet identified, but the portrait itself is in the straightforward style of self-taught genius established after the Revolutionary War. The simple interior is painted Prussian blue, the ubiquitous “medium blue” found in early American homes. Knight sits in a painted Windsor chair with bold turned legs, a cat curled on the patterned floorcloth beneath his feet. He is reading a book of proverbs open to Psalm I Kings 3:7: “I am but a little child.” Knight was probably at least seven or eight years old when this portrait was painted; he has already been breeched—put into long pants—and wears adult-style clothing. An early portrait, perhaps of his mother or grandmother, hangs on the wall behind him.

Knight’s father had been an army surgeon during the war, and his mother was the daughter of a physician. Their son followed in these footsteps, training generations of doctors at Yale for more than fifty years. In 1838 Knight was appointed to the Chair of Surgery at Yale School of Medicine and was instrumental in the formation of the American Medical Association, serving as its first president. After his death, one biographer wrote, “The ‘beloved physician’ was the well earned title given him by all who knew him.”

—Stacy C. Hollander

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Jonathan Knight



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What is going on here?
- What can you say about the figure? What stands out about him?
- How would you describe the setting?
- What objects are included in this portrait?
- How many patterns can you find?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Consider the sitter's clothing and surroundings. When do you think Jonathan Knight lived?
- What do you think his life was like?
- Do you think he lived in an urban or rural area? Why? What do you think his house was like?
- What do you make of the portrait within the portrait? Who might it depict? Why might it be included in the composition?
- The artist made use of every inch of space in the portrait. What is placed in the foreground, the middleground, and the background?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- Jonathan Knight holds an open book. The page reads, in part:

*I am but a little / child, I know not / how to go out or / come in, give / me therefore O / Lord, a wife
and / understanding / heart that I may / discern between / good and bad / approve, and / follow
the / things that / are exel / lent.*

The artist could have included any book, or even any Biblical passage; why might this one have been chosen?

- Based on the evidence in this painting, what can you imagine about Jonathan Knight's personality?
- As an adult, Jonathan Knight had great success in the medical profession. Upon his death, a biographer wrote:

He was a clear-headed, logical lecturer; he was a careful, competent surgeon; he was an able organizer and administrator. These are the outward trappings of success, but his worth may be expressed in other terms. One can not look at his picture or review the limited number of letters written to him and by him without being impressed by the genial, kindly, warm-hearted personality. The 'beloved physician' was the well earned title given him by all who knew him.

What does this quote mean? Looking at this portrait, painted sixty-seven years earlier, is there any evidence that Jonathan Knight would grow up to have the qualities the biographer notes?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Self-Portrait:** Ask students to re-create the portrait of Jonathan Knight as a contemporary self-portrait drawing. Whose portrait would they include hanging on the wall? What would be under their chair? What book would they be reading?
- **Portraits Conversation:** Visit the American Folk Art Museum’s website and peruse the gallery of Early Portraiture. Find other portraits of children. What do they have in common with Jonathan Knight? Have a conversation about children whose portraits weren’t painted, like enslaved children or very poor children, and why the students think they weren’t.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Poetry Reading:** Ask students to select a poem or a passage from a book they would like to be immortalized holding. Host a reading in which each student has the opportunity to share the passage with the class and explain why he or she chose it.
- **Portraits Discussion:** Visit the American Folk Art Museum’s website and peruse the gallery of Early Portraiture. Ask the students to list some of the elements and features that many of these portraits have in common. Make sure to discuss the fact that most of the portraits are in everyday settings rather than extraordinary ones, and that the sitters are portrayed in a straightforward rather than idealized manner. How might these honest, everyday portraits relate to early American values?





Self-Portrait Activity



Flag Gate

Artist unidentified

Jefferson County, New York; c. 1876

Paint on wood with iron and brass; 39 1/2 x 57 x 3 3/4"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Herbert Waide Hemphill Jr., 1962.1.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A creative mind transforms something as mundane as a farm gate into an artistic statement and an exclamation of patriotism. Probably made around the time of the American centennial, this gate in the form of an American flag proclaimed the maker's pride in one hundred years of nationhood. Each of the stripes is separately carved in rippling waves so that the flag appears to be blowing in the breeze. The two sides differ slightly, with thirty-seven white stars on one side and thirty-eight on the other (the thirty-eighth state, Colorado, entered the Union in 1876). The gate may have been made for Robert Darling's farm on Pulpit Road in the town of Antwerp, Jefferson County, New York.

—Stacy C. Hollander

RESOURCES

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Flag Gate



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What is this object? How can you tell? What in particular lets you know that this is a gate?
- How is this flag similar to today's American flag? How is it different?
- What material is it made from?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- What skills did the artist have to possess in order to create the *Flag Gate*?
- In making the *Flag Gate*, this artist combined a functional object and a recognizable symbol, yet created an object that is unique and individual. How did the artist express his or her own creativity?
- The artist created an object that is often made of fabric instead of wood. How did he or she use the wood to convey motion?
- How would our experience of looking at the *Flag Gate* change if the red stripes were straight? If the white stripes were solid rather than allowing us to see the underlying structure of the gate?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- This gate was possibly made for use on the farm of Robert Darling, in upstate New York, in 1876. What additional significance does that year lend to the *Flag Gate*? How does the date affect both how the flag looks and why it might have been made in the first place?
- What does "patriotism" mean? Why might people have felt particularly patriotic in 1876?
- There is reason to think that this gate could have been based on an item used in centennial fireworks displays. Why do we set off fireworks on Independence Day? Why do people fly American flags outside their homes today?
- What is the purpose of a gate? What do you make of a gate shaped like an American flag?
- Extend the metaphor: Who is allowed into America? Who is kept out? Is this different today than it was in 1876? In what ways?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

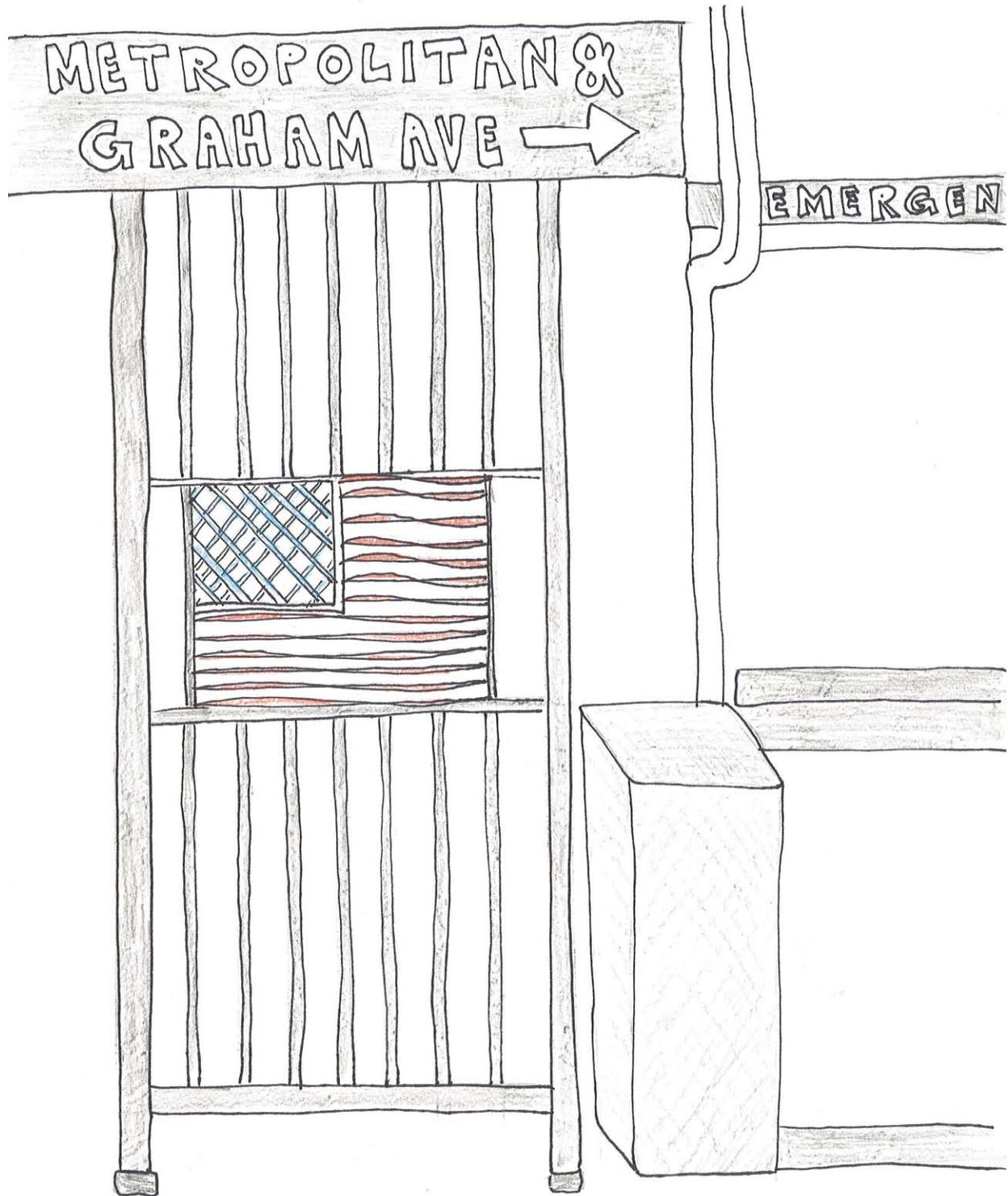
Elementary School Level

- **Flag Door:** Ask the students to transform a door in your classroom (interior or exterior) into an American flag using simple materials like construction paper, crepe streamers, and measuring tape. Have them consider how the artist who created the *Flag Gate* adapted his or her design to the size and function of the gate, as well as the materials he or she had available. Will they have to stretch proportions? Work around a window or doorknob?
- **Neighborhood Symbol Hunt:** Take a short neighborhood walk, with digital cameras if available, and look for patriotic symbols. How many flags do the students see? Where do they see them? What other symbols besides flags can they find? How might those symbols have changed over time? How might they change in the future?

Middle and High School Levels

- **Flag Object Mock-up:** In a rural area, an artist might be able to make a living creating gates shaped like flags. Would there be a need for the *Flag Gate* in your area? Have the students identify a utilitarian object appropriate for their neighborhood and create a mock-up, decorated with a flag, in either two or three dimensions.
- **Political Paragraph:** Pick two ideologically opposed politicians—past or present—and have students write a paragraph reflecting on the *Flag Gate* in each politician’s voice.
- **Research/Report:** Ask students to consider who was and who wasn’t allowed through the “gate” of America in 1876. Although in 2013 Cory Booker became only the ninth African American senator in U.S. history, there were actually two African American senators in the 1870s: Hiram Revels and Blanche Bruce. Ask students to research one of these senators and write one to two pages answering the question “Was the ‘gate’ of America open to Hiram Revels and/or Blanche Bruce?”





Flag Object Mock-up Activity

Hudsonian Curlew Weathervane

Artist unidentified

Seaville, New Jersey; c. 1874

Gold leaf on sheet metal, with iron straps; 46 1/8 x 92 1/4 x 3/8"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Alice M. Kaplan, American Folk Art Museum trustee (1977–1989), 2001.3.2

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Discretionary income and time for entertainment were byproducts of growing economic stability and industrialization. Activities that were once associated with survival, such as hunting, were now practiced for sport. The stylized abstraction of this large silhouette weathervane would have presented an irresistible shooting target cut against the sky. In fact it was made for a nineteenth-century shooting club in Seaville, Cape May County, New Jersey. Before legislation limited the hunting and shooting of wildfowl and other birds, they were slaughtered on a wholesale scale for sport, food, and fashion. This weathervane is in the form of a Hudsonian curlew, one of the species popularly hunted in the area. The unidentified maker used iron strapwork and applied iron to create an abstract simulation of the markings along the curlew's face and one wing on the side of its body. The Curlew Bay Club was informally established about 1874, and incorporated two years later. It resembled a small hotel, with ten bedrooms on the second floor, and two bedrooms and a large dormitory room on the third. The weathervane, perhaps made in a local iron shop, was situated on a forty-square-foot, two-story barn behind the clubhouse. By 1890 the club was operated as a year-round sportsman's retreat and summer campground.

—Stacy C. Hollander

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Hudsonian Curlew Weathervane

QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What are you looking at? How can you tell?
- What does this object have in common with a real bird? What is it missing?
- What is it made out of? What do you see that makes you say that?
- What would it look like if viewed from other angles?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Is this a realistic bird? How would you describe the style?
- How many lines did the artist use to “draw” this bird? What does each one of them do?
- Does it surprise you that this object is almost eight feet long? Where could something of this size have originally been displayed?
- Because this object is a weathervane, it would have been installed on top of a building. What is the function of a weathervane?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- The *Hudsonian Curlew Weathervane* was originally placed on top of a building in Seaville, New Jersey. What can you guess about the location of this town?
- What connection might the people of Seaville have had to a bird like the Hudsonian curlew? Have you ever noticed specific kinds of birds living beside the water?
- Why might a town situated near a large body of water have a particular need for a weathervane? Why might they have had a greater need for a weathervane in 1874 than they do today? If you wanted to discover which direction the wind was blowing, what could you do to find out today?
- Not just any shape works as a weathervane. Study the shape of this weathervane to see if you can figure out why its beak would always point in the direction the wind was blowing. How is it engineered to do that?
- One side of a weathervane must always have a greater surface area than the other. What other sorts of engineering concerns did the maker of the *Hudsonian Curlew Weathervane* need to consider?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

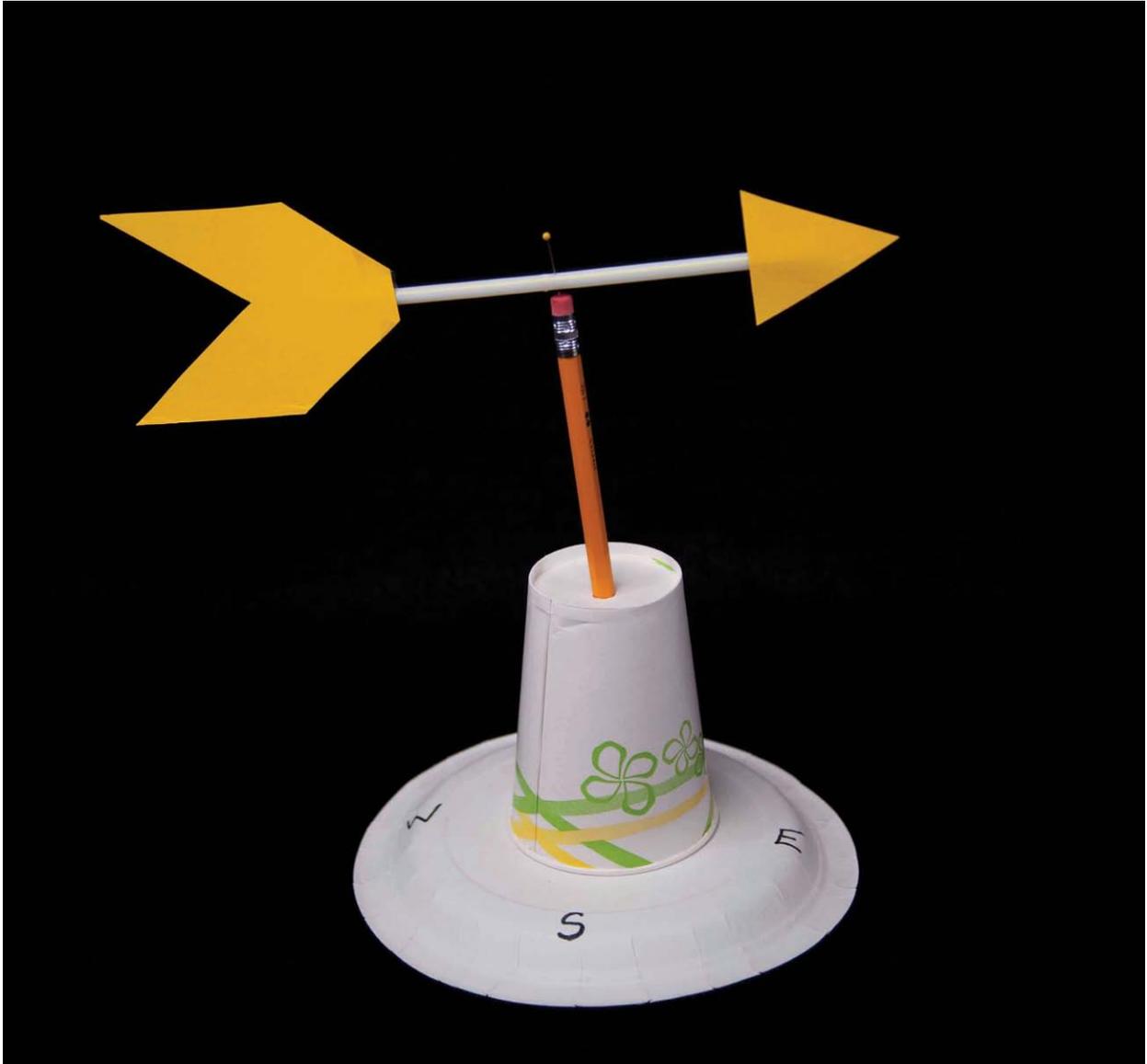
Elementary School Level

- **String Drawing:** Have a conversation about the simple silhouette of the weathervane and how the artist was able to break down a bird into its most basic shapes. Give students three arm's lengths of string (in just one color). Challenge them to create a recognizable animal by "drawing" with the string. Once they are happy with their shapes, they can use glue to affix the string to a piece of construction paper or oak tag. Ask them to explain how they decided what parts of the animal to include and what to leave out. You can share some books or images of animals for reference.
- **Paper Cup, Pencil & Straw Weathervane:** Have the students create their own small weathervanes. Turn a paper cup upside down and poke a pencil through it so that the end with the eraser is sticking up. Using a straight pin, attach a plastic straw (not the bendable kind) to the eraser. The pencil and straw should form a T shape. Tape a small paper triangle to one end of the straw and a larger paper chevron to the other, so that the straw now resembles an arrow. Attach the whole thing on top of a sturdy paper plate with Model Magic (or glue or tape). You can add something heavy like a few rocks inside the overturned cup so that it doesn't tip in the wind. On the paper plate, have the students label compass points with North, South, East, and West. Head outside and discover which direction the wind is blowing. As an extension, you can make a graph by measuring the wind direction over the course of a week.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Silhouette:** Ask students to copy the silhouette of the *Hudsonian Curlew Weathervane* on a large piece of paper with marker. Don't allow them to revise their work. Have them compare what they drew to the image of the original. What did they get right? What would they need to practice? How does this exercise add to their understanding of the artist's skill?
- **Assorted Materials Weathervane:** Assemble balsa wood scraps, oak tag, pins, tape, glue, paper plates and cups, straws, and other assorted materials. Ask students to figure out how to create their own weathervanes, working alone or in groups. Go outside to test their work and discover which ideas were most or least successful, and why.





Paper Cup, Pencil & Straw Weathervane Activity



Untitled (Sideshow Banner)

Attributed to Fred G. Johnson (1892–1990); O. Henry Tent & Awning Co.

Chicago, Illinois; 1930–1940

Oil on canvas; 89 x 117"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Tom Conway, 1987.14.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sideshow banners are painted signs on canvas that were designed to lure carnival- or circus-goers into a sideshow tent, where they would be encouraged to pay extra to see mesmerizing performances or repellent specimens of the unusual, sensational, exotic, and bizarre, alive and in the flesh: Lion Face Girl, The Most Unusual Married Couple, Tattooed Wonder, Big Footed Girl, Lobster Boy, Frog Boy, Eeka's Native Haunts, Lifts Weights with Hair. Sideshows were a popular diversion from the 1870s to the late 1960s. The banners were the repository of outrageous racial stereotypes, sexist representations of women, and discriminatory attitudes toward individuals afflicted with all sorts of deformities. This exploitive treatment received shockingly little public outcry and persisted into the latter half of the twentieth century. With its codified style and aesthetic, the sideshow banner recalls other art forms, like graffiti. Recognized for their effectiveness, these announcements make use of advertising tools and techniques—symbols, characters, terminology, lettering, caricature, and exaggerated traits.

Sideshow banners are defined by a visual clarity; however, the act depicted in this piece is unclear. It is attributed to Fred G. Johnson, who worked for the O. Henry Tent and Awning Company in Chicago for forty years and was considered to be one of the finest sideshow banner painters. The back of the banner bears a handwritten inscription, "Radium Girl," but the elements in this scene do not relate to that classic stage illusion, which involves binding and confining a female assistant in a box and seemingly piercing her from all sides by inserting rods and blades through the surface. The banner, rather, portrays a technician illuminating the bones of a bathing beauty, albeit with a spotlight rather than an X-ray machine.

The X-ray machine was introduced—and apparently demonstrated on members of the public—at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904. No one at the turn of the century was aware of the dangers inherent in such exposure.

—Valérie Rousseau

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Untitled (Sideshow Banner)



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What is going on here? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Talk about the two figures. How are they dressed? What are they doing?
- Where do you think this scene is taking place? Why?
- Describe the colors you see.
- What materials did the artist use to create this work?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- What can you tell about the two people on the banner based on what they're wearing? Their hairstyles?
- What is the relationship between them?
- Describe the man's body language. What does he seem to be doing?
- What can you say about how the woman is standing? What are some words you would use to describe her?
- Talk about the way gender presentation relates to this work of art. What about each of the figures is typically feminine? Masculine? Do they conform to gender stereotypes? How do they transgress gender norms of the mid-twentieth century?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- This work of art is known as a sideshow banner. What role do you think the sideshow played in the circus? What role did the banner play?
- The act depicted involves X-rays, and an inscription on the back says "Radium Girl." Does that help you understand what is happening here?
- Do you think this banner was an effective promotion for the sideshow act? What techniques did the artist use to draw in passersby? Why do you think the artist added the word *ALIVE* to the corner?
- X-ray technology was discovered in the late nineteenth century. Why might 1930s audiences pay to see a woman be X-rayed?
- What do we know to be true about X-rays now that wasn't as fully understood in the past? Would a sideshow act like the one depicted in this banner be deemed safe today?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Banner Advertisements:** Ask students what entertainments they like to go see. The movies? Sporting events? Certain circus acts? In the bright, bold style of the sideshow banner, have them create banner advertisements for their favorite entertainment. If possible, use rectangles of gessoed canvas and poster paint.
- **Dr. Seuss/Drawing:** Read the Dr. Seuss book *If I Ran the Circus*. Ask students to imagine they could add a page to the book about Radium Girl. Have them create a drawing of the circus banner and write their own Seussian verse about the act.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Vintage Clothing Drawing:** Have the students research clothing styles of the 1930s and '40s and then create their own drawings from Radium Girl's point of view looking out at her audience.
- **Research/Report:** Ask students to research famous historical sideshow circus acts, such as the conjoined twins Cheng and Eng, the Bearded Lady, or Tom Thumb, and have them write a short biographical paper that also answers the question, "Did the circus help or exploit these performers?"



Girl in Red Dress with Cat and Dog

Ammi Phillips (1788–1865)

Vicinity of Amenia, New York; 1830–1835

Oil on canvas; 30 x 25"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of the Siegman Trust, Ralph Esmerian, trustee, 2001.37.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Despite the serenity of hundreds of sitters painted by Ammi Phillips, the artist's life was dramatically bookended by almost incomprehensible events: he was born in the optimistic dawn of the newly formed United States of America, and he died with the country riven by the Civil War. The name "Ammi" derives from the biblical book of Hosea and means "my people." His works paint a picture of national unity through incisive portraits of friends and neighbors, primarily in the border areas of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York.

Phillips's career is characterized by dramatic shifts in palette and style, from the light-suffused visions of c. 1815 to the color-saturated and stiffly staged portraits of the 1850s and '60s. *Girl in Red Dress with Cat and Dog* was painted during the artist's so-called Kent period, which lasted from about 1829 through 1838. It is one of several portraits of children wearing similar red dresses and seated with a small dog by their feet. One cannot regard the group without equating their geometric precision and luminosity of large fields of pure color with religious art of the Middle Ages. The symbolic association of rare and costly colors with specific religious figures, such as vermilion used for the robes worn by Mary, is also echoed in this portrait. A clue to Phillips's professional longevity, even after the introduction of photography, may lie in his earliest known advertisement of 1810, wherein he promises to provide "correct likenesses . . . in the prevailing fashion of the day," a pledge he was to fulfill for more than fifty years.

—Stacy C. Hollander

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Girl in Red Dress with Cat and Dog



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What is going on here? What do you see that makes you say that?
- How many figures are there in this painting? What is their relationship to each other?
- Is there a background?
- Focus on some of the details and describe them.
- This painting has been described as “geometric.” Squint at the painting to blur the details. What shapes do you see?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Ammi Phillips was able to show many different textures in this painting. How did he achieve the look of the shiny metallic brads on the stool? The transparent lace on the dress? The pleated fabric on the girl’s pantaloons?
- What can we tell about this little girl just based on looking? When might she have lived? In what kind of place? How do her clothing, pose, expression, and even the fact that a portrait of her was made contribute to our understanding of her life?
- What do you think this little girl would do for fun? What do you see that makes you say that? Would you want to play with her? Why or why not?
- What can’t we tell about this child just from looking at her portrait?
- How would you describe the style of this painting? Is it realistic? If we could see a photograph of this exact same scene, how might it differ from the painting?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- During the mid-nineteenth century, little girls parted their hair in the middle and boys parted their on the side. Children also wore coral beaded necklaces as symbols of protection. How might this portrait look different if it were painted today? What might the little girl be wearing? What might her hair look like? What accessories would she be wearing?
- Ammi Phillips made his living as a portrait painter. Over the years, he changed his style in order to match the popular look of paintings at the time. Why might he have done this?
- What are some special qualities of this painting that you might note if you were trying to attribute another painting from this time period to Ammi Phillips?
- In the nineteenth century, because of a number of factors, it was not uncommon for children to die before they reached adulthood. How might this have contributed to the market for portraiture?
- Even after photography was invented, parents still wanted to have portraits painted of their children. What were early photographs like? What could a painting capture that early photography could not?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Geometric Shapes:** Ammi Phillips's work is often characterized in mathematical terms because of the artist's interesting use of exaggerated volume and shapes, as well as his focus on balance. Cut out a variety of geometric shapes—circles, squares, rectangles, rhombuses, triangles—from red, white, and brown construction paper. Have the students identify and discuss the characteristics of each shape. Then, ask them to re-create *Girl in Red Dress with Cat and Dog* from these shapes as best they can by arranging and gluing them onto black paper. Have a conversation to recap what they learned about the painting through the exercise.
- **Storyboard:** Ask students to imagine a day in the life of the girl in the red dress. What might she have been doing an hour before she posed for her portrait? Three hours after? Give them the storyboard template (see next page) and ask them to copy this painting, as best they can, into one of the boxes—whether it is the first, second, or third is up to them. Then have them fill in the other boxes with what they imagine the girl was doing either before or after she posed for her portrait, and write appropriate captions. Make sure they can justify their ideas with evidence from the painting.

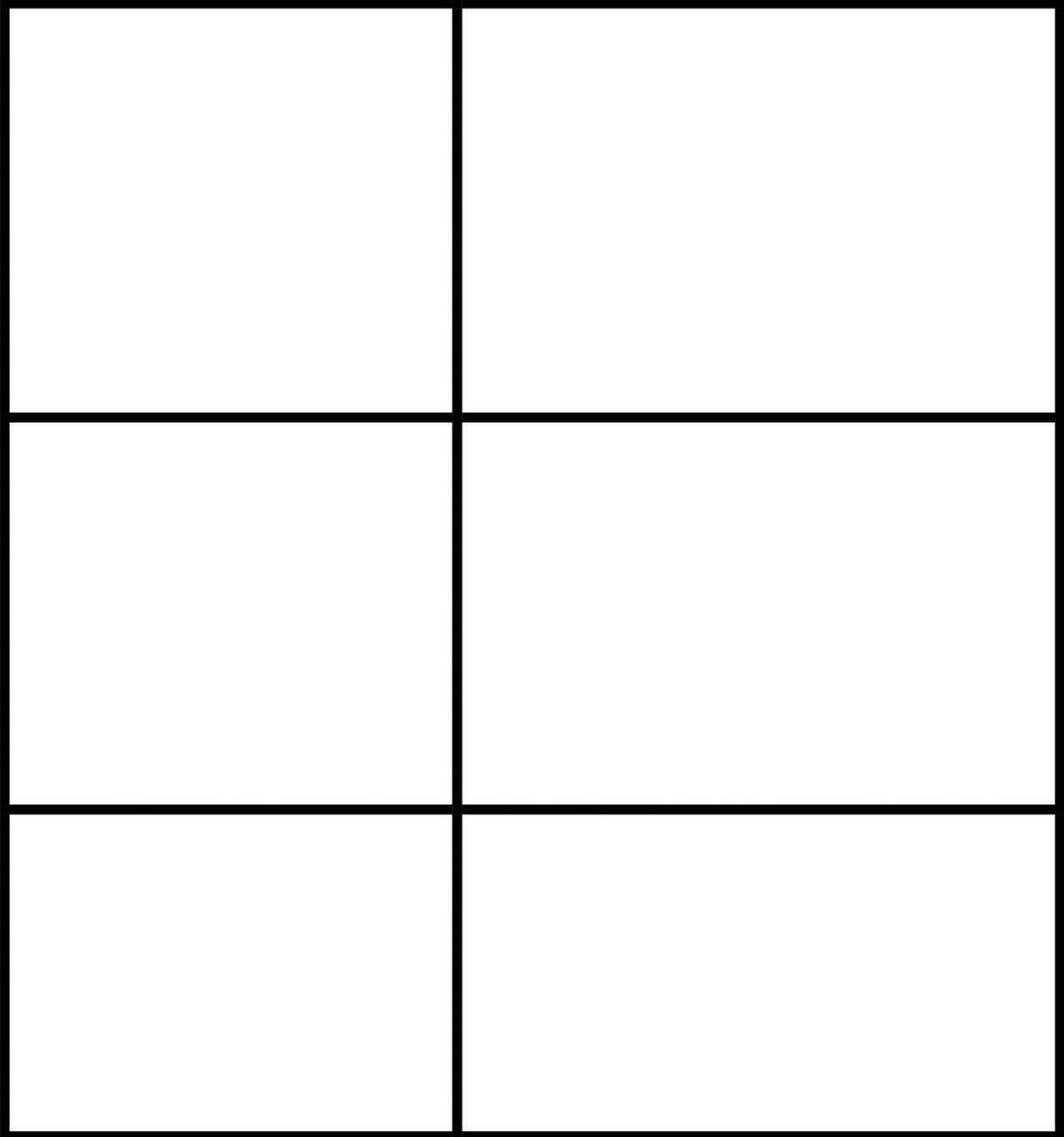
Middle and High School Levels

- **Portrait Challenge:** Because Ammi Phillips changed his style a few times during his career, his body of work was once attributed to at least four different artists. Have the students work in groups to examine three additional portraits by the artist in the American Folk Art Museum collection. Ask the students to develop a list of qualities of an Ammi Phillips portrait. Then show them one more Phillips portrait—*Gentleman in a Black Cravat*—alongside *Portrait of a Miller* by Erastus Salisbury Field. Ask them to identify which portrait is by Ammi Phillips. What evidence can they give to back up their argument?
- **Portrait Pair-Off/Reflection:** Ask students to adopt the flat, geometric style that Phillips used in *Girl in Red Dress with Cat and Dog* to create a portrait of a classmate. Give them a few minutes to pair up and to decide on their own poses. Have the first group sketch their partner for seven to ten minutes, then switch. After they've completed their sketches, they can use pencils or oil pastels to color their portraits. Have the students write a two-paragraph reflection on the experience. What was it like to pose? To draw? Which experience did they prefer? Why? What were the challenges with each? What new understanding can they bring to the *Girl in Red Dress with Cat and Dog* after this experience?

Image credits, following pages:

Page 94: *Lady in a Gold-Colored Dress*, Ammi Phillips (1788–1865), probably New York, Connecticut, or Massachusetts, 1835–1840, oil on canvas, 33 1/2 x 28 1/4", American Folk Art Museum, gift of Joan and Victor Johnson, 1991.30.1. *Young Man and Red Drapery*, Ammi Phillips (1788–1865), Connecticut, Massachusetts, or New York, c. 1820, oil on linen, 29 1/2 x 23 1/2", American Folk Art Museum, gift of Louise W. Floeckher in memory of Louis M. Colton, 2010.5.1. *Three Children of Henry Joslen Carter*, Ammi Phillips (1788–1865), Stockbridge, Massachusetts, 1860, oil on canvas, 28 3/4 x 37 1/2", American Folk Art Museum, gift of Cynthia K. Easterling in honor of her grandmother Grace E. Carter, 2012.5.1. Page 95: *Portrait of a Miller*, Erastus Salisbury Field (1805–1900), South Egremont, Massachusetts, 1836, oil on canvas, 30 1/2 x 25 1/4", American Folk Art Museum, gift of Cyril Irwin Nelson in honor of Howard and Jean Lipman, 1981.13.1. *Gentleman in a Black Cravat*, Ammi Phillips (1788–1865), Probably New York, Connecticut, or Massachusetts, 1835–1840, oil on canvas, 33 1/2 x 28 1/4", American Folk Art Museum, gift of Joan and Victor Johnson, 1991.30.2.





Storyboard Activity





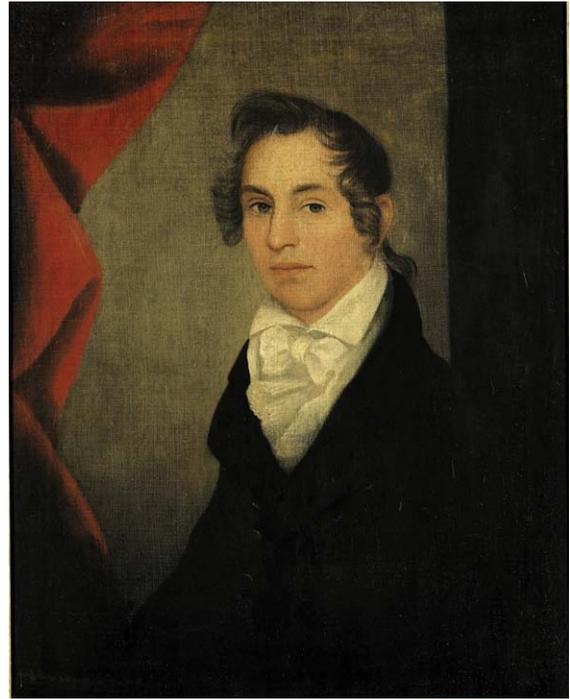
The little girl is getting ready to have her portrait painted. She wants her cat, Lucy, to be in the painting with her but she won't come out from under the bench. It is hard to bend down to get her because of the girl's big red dress.



Roger the dog sits still for the whole portrait painting session but the girl and Lucy are squirmy. Ammi Phillips has to paint quickly to capture them.



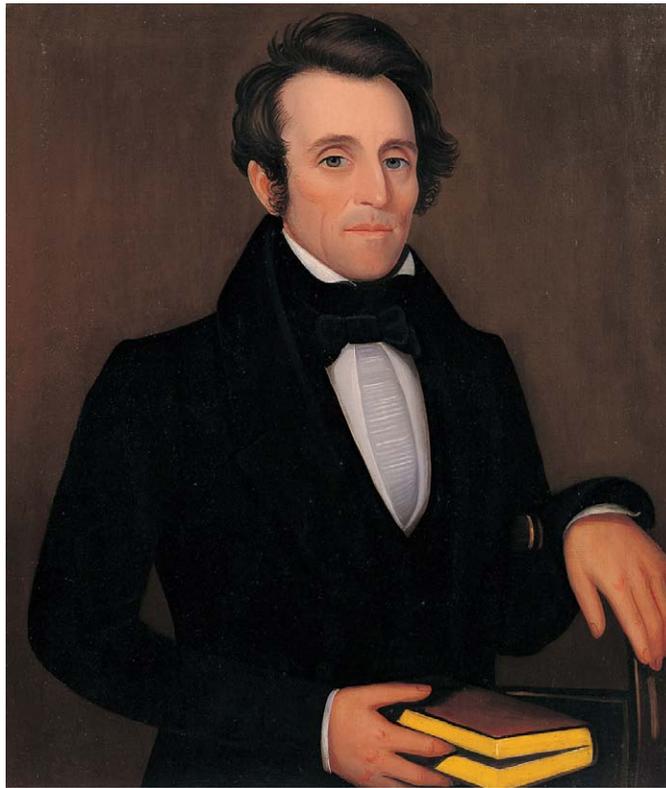
As soon as she can, the little girl lets Lucy jump out the window. She wishes she could go play too, but her dress is too big and wide - she could never fit out the window.



Portrait Challenge Activity

**These three portraits are all by Ammi Phillips.
Study them and see if you can pick out some characteristics of his work.**





Portrait Challenge Activity

Which portrait is by Ammi Phillips and which is by Erastus Salisbury Field?



Baseball Player Show Figure

Samuel Anderson Robb (1851–1928)

New York City; 1888–1903

Paint on wood; 76 x 21 3/4 x 24" (with wheeled base)

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Millie and Bill Gladstone, 2008.26.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Baseball, stated poet Walt Whitman, is “our game . . . America’s game.” To some it is perfect metaphor for America itself: there are strict rules to govern conduct, and success is dependent on people working together, but there are many opportunities for individual achievement. Baseball evolved from earlier games such as the British rounders. By the mid-1840s, the rules were codified and the game was being played publically by formal teams. It was not until later in the nineteenth century, however, that baseball took on national dimensions and individual players were celebrated. For one thing, in the early decades most people did not know what the players looked like. As their likenesses began to appear on commercial products such as cigarette premiums, the cult of celebrity grew.

This carving may depict Michael J. “King” Kelly, the most popular player of the 1880s. Kelly was one of the first baseball players to negotiate the use of his image into his contract with the Boston Beaneaters. The figure was made by Samuel Anderson Robb in his New York City woodcarving shop. Robb had located at 114 Centre Street in 1888 and remained at this address until 1903. He is credited with contributing to what came to be known as the “New York style” of show figure, life-size carvings used to advertise tobacco and other goods that were often based on well-known figures or caricatures of familiar stereotypes.

—Stacy C. Hollander

RESOURCES

Hollander, Stacy C., and Brooke Davis Anderson. *American Anthem: Masterworks from the American Folk Art Museum*. New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with American Folk Art Museum, 2001.

Vecsey, George. *Baseball: A History of America’s Favorite Game*. New York: Modern Library, 2008.



Baseball Player Show Figure

QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What are you looking at? How can you tell?
- Describe the figure, starting from his head and working down to his toes. Who do you think he is? What do you think he does? Why?
- What is he standing on?
- What words do you see?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- What can you guess about when this object was made? What makes you say that?
- How does this baseball player look different from baseball players of today?
- What can you say about the baseball player's body language? Try standing like him. What would your next move be?
- How did Samuel Anderson Robb manipulate his materials—wood and paint—to create the baseball player's lifelike stance?
- Robb spent time as an apprentice to other woodcarvers, and studied at Cooper Union, where he had the opportunity to draw from live models. How could this have informed his work?
- Art historians do not know if Robb based this woodcarving on a specific baseball player or not. What do you think? Why?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- Can you find a connection between the baseball player and the words on the base he is standing on? Tobacco companies used to produce baseball cards. What other reasons might people have had for associating baseball players with a tobacco product like cigars?
- This object is called a show figure. It would have been placed outside of a shop. What kind of shop might this baseball player have been in front of?
- Schooling was not mandatory or necessarily accessible to everyone in the nineteenth century, and as a result many adults did not know how to read. How might show figures have helped stores do business?
- Robb came from a long line of ship carvers; he learned how to carve figures by making figureheads—the figures that decorated the prows of sailing ships. What industrial changes in the nineteenth century might have influenced many artists who carved figureheads to switch to making show figures? What invention made sailing ships less popular?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Model Magic Show Figure:** Visit the collection gallery on the American Folk Art Museum’s website to view other show figures. Ask the students to create their own show figures for a shop of their choice using Model Magic, another type of air-drying clay, or oak tag.
- **Advertisements Log:** Ask the students to keep a log of the advertisements they see over the course of a week in which people represent different brands or products. Ask them to find the connections between the spokespeople and what they’re selling. How is that relationship similar or different than that of the baseball player and the tobacco shop?

Middle and High School Levels

- **Compare/Contrast:** Samuel Anderson Robb was one of the most prominent show figure carvers of his time in New York. Ask students to use the American Folk Art Museum’s website to research other show figures from the nineteenth century. Have them pick one and write a page describing the differences and similarities between that show figure and the *Baseball Player Show Figure*.
- **Research/Report:** Cigarette and tobacco advertising is now tightly regulated. Have students research whether the *Baseball Player Show Figure* legally would be able to stand outside of a tobacco shop today.
- **Baseball Intersections:** Ask students to come up with other instances of baseball intersecting with American history—with war, with civil rights, with drug use, etc. Have them pick one point of intersection, research it, and present it to the class.



A View of Mr. Joshua Winsor's House &c.

Rufus Hathaway (1770–1822)

Duxbury, Massachusetts; 1793–1795

Oil on canvas, in original painted wood frame; 28 x 32 3/16 x 2" (framed)

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Ralph Esmerian, 2013.1.19

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

After the Revolutionary War, Duxbury, Massachusetts, became a center of the shipbuilding industry largely through the efforts of leading citizens Joshua Winsor, his brother Nathaniel, Ezra Weston Sr., and Samuel Delano. By 1787 sixty-four Great Banks fishing vessels were in commission, and the Winsors were successfully engaged in mackerel and cod fishing; theirs were the first wharves to be built in Duxbury specifically for business. It was during this period of achievement that Joshua Winsor chose to have his extensive properties documented by Rufus Hathaway, a young artist who rode through town in 1793, when he painted at least ten portraits of the Weston family, and again in 1795, when he portrayed Winsor's daughters. Soon after his marriage to Judith Winsor later that year, Hathaway studied to become a physician, and although his primary occupation thereafter was medicine, his creativity continued to find expression in paint and poetry.

Among the many anecdotal details Hathaway included in the painting of Winsor's home, wharves, and warehouses that stored the salted fish that had been dried on flakes are Joshua Winsor himself, holding the keys to his extensive storehouses; a large black dog on the doorstep of his impressive home; a fishing vessel named *The Rising Sun*; and a figure shooting at geese flying overhead.

—Stacy C. Hollander

RESOURCES

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Kurlansky, Mark. *Cod: A Biography of the Fish That Changed the World*. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.



A View of Mr. Joshua Winsor's House &c.



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What is going on here? What do you see that makes you say that?
- What kind of setting is this? How can you tell?
- How many people do you see? What are they doing?
- During what time period do you think this painting was made? What evidence can you find?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Read the inscription at the bottom of the painting. Do you think one of the figures in the painting is Joshua Winsor? Which one might he be? How can you tell?
- Do you think this painting was created by observation or from imagination? Why?
- The artist, Rufus Hathaway, may have been painting from life, but he still made many creative choices about how to portray this scene. What can you say about the proportion of the sky to the land in this painting? How might the painting have been different if it were weighted differently?
- Imagine yourself as one of the figures in the painting. What would you hear? What would you smell? How would you feel?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- Joshua Winsor lived in the town of Duxbury, Massachusetts, and owned the properties you see in this painting as well as others. Based on the setting, what kind of business do you think Winsor was in? Why might this have been a great location for first shipbuilding and then cod and mackerel fishing?
- Based on the evidence in this painting, what can you guess about Joshua Winsor's place within his community?
- The home depicted here is not the original structure but a new building constructed during the prosperous years of Joshua Winsor's business. What architectural details can you find? What do they remind you of?
- Some of the buildings owned by Joshua Winsor in the eighteenth century still stand today. Do you think the cod and mackerel business is as lucrative today as it was in his time? Why or why not?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Snapshot Drawing:** One might say that this painting is a snapshot of life at Joshua Winsor's house. Ask the students to create their own "snapshot" drawings of a day in their lives, considering the same elements Hathaway did: architecture, setting, action, clothing.
- **First-Person Reflection:** Ask students to choose one of the figures in the painting and write a first-person reflection on the scene from that figure's point of view. Have them include as many sensory details as possible.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Cod Recipes:** Over time, cod has been an extremely important commodity in many different cultures. Ask students to research recipes for cod dishes from at least three different geographical regions. What do each of those places have in common? If you have the resources, make some of the recipes for the students to try.
- **Public Service Announcement:** Today, cod fishing is a controversial business. Ask students to research some of the issues surrounding the cod industry. Ask them to create a public service announcement or an infographic about the way overfishing cod influences other industries and the environment.





Jug

Dave Drake (c. 1800–c. 1870)

Lewis J. Miles Pottery, Edgefield County, South Carolina; 1853

Alkaline-glazed stoneware; 14 1/2 x 12 x 11 1/2"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Sally and Paul Hawkins, 1999.18.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Although free and enslaved black Americans formed a great part of the artisan workforce, relatively few have been recognized for their creative contributions. The history of the potter known as Dave has slowly been recovered, in large part because of his own brave assertion of self through signatures and poetic texts that he incised into the clay bodies of the pots he made 1834–1864. More than one hundred examples bear his name or date, and twenty-six have snippets of original poetry and observations. A seventeen-year period with no poetic inscriptions may indicate an environment hostile to such expressions of individuality.

Dave lived in the household of Harvey Drake until 1833. The earliest piece possibly by his hand is dated 1821 and was made in Drake's factory. In the ensuing years he worked for and was traded among potteries in the Edgefield district known as Pottersville, whose owners—Drake, Gibbs, Landrum, Miles, Rhodes—were interrelated by partnerships and through marriage. Dave ultimately became one of two identified Edgefield potters capable of making pots with a capacity greater than twenty gallons. His method of construction for such large vessels involved turning the base on a wheel then adding coils that were smoothed as the walls were built up. This simple ovoid jug was made at the pottery of Lewis J. Miles and was probably used as a syrup or whiskey jug. During the years he was associated with Miles, Dave developed the drippy ash-based alkaline glaze evident on this jug. After Emancipation Dave took the surname of his first owner, Drake. In the Federal Census of 1870 he is listed as David Drake, occupation turner.

—Stacy C. Hollander

RESOURCES

Cheng, Andrea. *Etched in Clay: The Life of Dave, Enslaved Potter and Poet*. New York: Lee and Low Books, 2013.

Hill, Laban Carrick. *Dave the Potter: Artist, Poet, Slave*. New York: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2010.

Koverman, Jill Beute. *I made this jar: The Life and Works of the Enslaved African-American Potter, Dave*. Columbia: McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina, 1998.

PBS website: "Music in Slave Life," *The Slave Experience: Education, Arts, and Culture*, www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/experience/education/feature.html.

Todd, Leonard. *Carolina Clay: The Life and Legend of the Slave Potter Dave*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2008.



Jug



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What are you looking at? How can you tell?
- Describe the shape, colors, and textures of the jug.
- What do you think it is made out of? Why?
- How big do you think it is?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Can you read in the inscription on the jug? It says: “LM October 26, 1853 Dave.” What could that mean?
- Dave was an enslaved African American potter who lived in South Carolina. To learn the craft, he trained with other potters, including, possibly, one of his masters, Harvey Drake, whose surname Dave took after emancipation. What skills did he need in order to become a potter?
- What are some adjectives you would use to describe the style of the jug?
- Dave Drake created larger pieces of pottery than was typical. Imagine lifting the jug empty and then imagine lifting it full of something. What might it feel like to hold the jug?
- What effect do the drips of the glaze give to the jug? How would the jug look different if the glaze covered its entire surface? If it wasn't there at all?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- Dave Drake lived in Edgefield County, which was an agrarian community famous for its pottery. Why might people who lived and worked on plantations have needed jugs like this?
- Drake often inscribed his pottery with poetry, couplets, or dates and locations like he did on this jug. Why do you think he might have done this?
- Because enslaved people were not legally permitted to learn to write, his simple act of writing on pottery can be seen as one of sedition—an act to inspire rebellion. Why was literacy forbidden for enslaved people?
- Drake did not write on his pottery for a period of time. Why might he have hidden his ability to write?



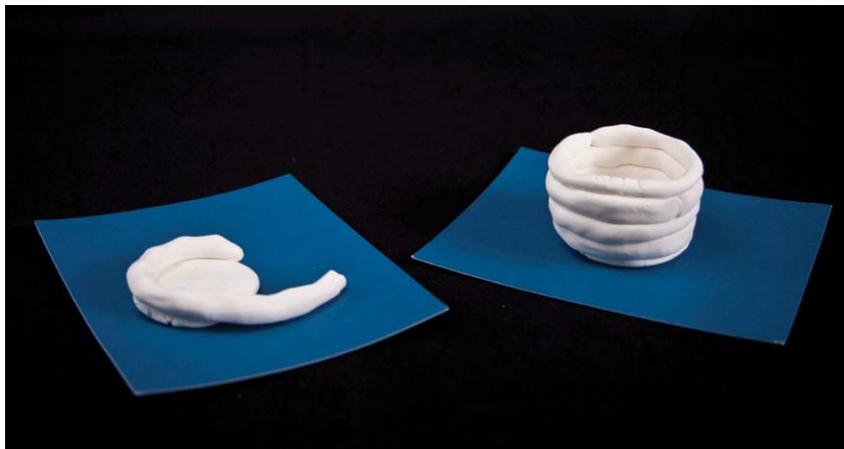
SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Model Magic Coil Pot:** Dave Drake had a unique method for building his large pieces of pottery. He would turn the base on a potter's wheel and build up the sides and top with clay coils. Have the students use Model Magic to make a very simple coil pot. First flatten a small portion of clay into a base for the pot. Divide the rest into four pieces. Roll each out into a snake shape. Coil the first on top of the circumference of the base. Coil the remaining snakes on top of that one. Then, smooth the coiled edges to create an even outer surface. Ask students to use a sharp pencil to inscribe their pots as Drake did.
- **Book Summary:** Read *Dave the Potter: Artist, Poet, Slave* by Laban Carick Hill or *Etched in Clay: The Life of Dave, Enslaved Potter and Poet*, a novelized biography by Andrea Cheng. Have students draw a large outline of the jug and write a summary of the book inside the outline.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Clay Coil Pot:** Dave Drake had a unique method for building his large pieces of pottery. He would turn their bases on a potter's wheel and then build up the sides and top by coiling clay. Ask students to create a coil pot with air-drying clay. Students will each need a piece of clay about the size of an orange, a plastic butter knife, and a small cup of water. Ask them to form a quarter of their clay into a round disc—a base for their pot. Next, have them take a piece of their remaining clay and roll it out into a cylinder long enough to fit around the top of the circumference of their base. With their plastic knife, they should make cross-hatches around the edge of their base and on one side of their cylinder. Dampen both sets of cross-hatches and coil the cylinder on top of the base. Then have them use wet fingers and the back of their knives to smooth the two pieces of clay together on both the inside and outside. They should repeat the process until they use all of their clay, using one hand to stabilize the pot from the inside as they smooth their coils. They should make sure to stagger the seams where the ends of the cylinders are joined so that they do not line up. Once their pot is finished but before it dries, they should use a very sharp pencil to make an inscription, as Drake did. Make sure they know that creating a coil pot is much harder than it looks and that it is okay if their pot collapses.
- **Slave Songs/Discussion:** Visit “Music in Slave Life” on the PBS website *The Slave Experience: Education, Arts, and Culture*. Listen to some of the songs as a group and discuss the place that those songs had in the lives of enslaved people. How do they relate to Drake's life and work?



Model Magic Coil Pot Activity



Hewson-Center Quilt with Multiple Borders

Artist unidentified; center block printed by John Hewson (1744–1821)

United States; 1790–1810

Cotton and possibly linen; 85 1/2 x 76"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Jerry and Susan Lauren, 2006.5.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The earliest artists represented in this exhibition experienced the American Revolution firsthand. The strength of their belief in self-determination and resilience in the face of the exigencies of war and a dramatically shifting political-economic landscape established the rugged individualism of the American character early and indelibly. John Hewson was a skilled British calico printer who arrived in America in 1774 with an intimate knowledge of textile printing technology and a letter of recommendation written by Benjamin Franklin, whose encouragement of mechanical genius was well known and who ardently advocated for equal opportunities of self-improvement for artisan tradesmen. In defiance of the British ban on domestic manufacture of printed textiles, Hewson set up a printworks and bleaching yard in an area outside Philadelphia and advertised that he had patterns for “printing calicoes and linens for gowns, &c., coverlids, handkerchiefs. . . .”

Hewson joined the Philadelphia militia and was quickly captured by the British. He escaped and reestablished his print business, though in straitened circumstances, and was honored for his ardent support of American independence and industry in 1788 by representing the Pennsylvania Society for the Encouragement of Manufactures and the Useful Arts in the Grand Federal Procession, which marked the ratification of the United States Constitution. Today he is best known for block-printed squares featuring a vase overflowing with flowers and sheaves of wheat and surrounded by motifs of butterflies and birds that typically were used as the center medallions of quilts such as this example.

—Stacy C. Hollander

RESOURCES

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www.quilt1812warandpiecing.blogspot.com.

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Wulfert, Kimberly. “The Man of Many Vases: John Hewson, Calico Printer.” *Folk Art* 32, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 58–69. See www.issuu.com/american_folk_art_museum/docs/folkart_32_3_fall2007.



Hewson-Center Quilt with Multiple Borders



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What are you looking at? How can you tell?
- What patterns do you see?
- How would you describe the colors used here?
- What material is this object made from?
- How are the pieces of material attached to each other?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- This is a quilt. A quilt is a kind of blanket that typically has three layers: the top, which is what you can see here; a back; and stuffing or batting in the middle. The three layers are stitched, or quilted, together to keep them from separating. Why would a quilt need all three of these layers?
- How many different patterns of fabric did this quiltmaker use? Make a list.
- How are the different patterns and shapes organized? Is this quilt symmetrical? Why or why not?
- How are quilts typically used? To keep a person warm, a quilt does not have to be decorative. Why do you think many of them are?
- This quilt is more than two hundred years old. How might it have survived in such good condition all of these years?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- The center block of this quilt was cut from fabric printed by a Revolutionary War-era English textile printer named John Hewson. Soon after he set up his printing operation in Philadelphia, the British captured him. Why might the British have banned manufacturing businesses like Hewson's in the colonies?
- After being captured, Hewson escaped and reestablished his business, although on a smaller scale. Would you have done the same thing? Why or why not?
- In 1788 Hewson represented the printing industry in a parade celebrating the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. What does that tell you about how he was seen by his fellow citizens?
- Is it surprising that an image like the one in the center of this quilt—a vase filled with flowers—had such serious implications during the Revolutionary War era? Can you think of any other examples of something that seems apolitical actually being very political?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Block-Print Quilt:** Create a class block-printed quilt. Give each student a small wooden block and adhesive foam sheets. Have them cut out a shape (or several shapes) from the foam and affix it to the wooden block to create a stamp. Give each student a little dish of fabric paint and a square of linen or cotton or oak tag to print on. Depending on your time and resources, the blocks can be sewed or glued together to form a quilt.
- **Speech:** Ask students to put themselves in John Hewson's place at the moment of his capture by the British. How might he have felt? Do they think he regretted creating his textiles? Ask them to write a small speech he might have delivered in his own defense.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Linoleum Prints:** Create linoleum prints on fabric. Give each student his or her own linoleum block (there is softer linoleum for school use called Softoleum) and a piece of cotton or linen. Ask the students to sketch a simple design onto the block and, using linocut tools (straight knives, as well as U- and V-shaped tools), carve away all but the lines or areas they would like to print. Squeeze fabric paint into shallow dishes and have the students dip their block and stamp it on the fabric. Ask them to pay careful attention to how they print—do they want a random pattern? Rows? Concentric circles?
- **Research/Report:** Ask students to visit the American Folk Art Museum's website and read about other quilts in the collection, looking for other places in which American history and quilting intersect. Ask them to present a quilt, and its place in history, to the class.





Linoleum Prints Activity



Birds Got to Have Somewhere to Roost

Thornton Dial Sr. (b. 1928)

Alabama; 2012

Wood, carpet scraps, corrugated tin, burlap, nails, and enamel on wood; 61 1/4 x 48 x 10"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of William S. Arnett, 2013.6.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The highly poetic and evocative titles of Thornton Dial's artworks—*Bone Dry* (2011), *Freedom Cloth* (2005), *History Refused to Die* (2004), *The Art of Alabama* (2004), *Equal Opportunity: Mosquitoes Don't Discriminate* (2002), *Cotton-Field Sky Still over Our Head* (2001)—relate to the embedded brutality endured by African Americans during their quest for justice through historical phenomena such as the civil rights movement, as well as the victory of their oral culture. These inflammatory topics take a more philosophical note and slightly dissolve in *Birds Got to Have Somewhere to Roost*. One can suggest that this relief painting depicts a fragment of a pervasive Southern phenomenon called the "yard show," a West African custom that survived four hundred years of New World oppression, as art historian Robert Farris Thompson has formulated. These ever-changing installations are symbols of tenacity, survival, and rebirth among abandoned things. This painted construction by Dial may specifically sustain the idea that everybody has to have a home and reference the comfort the home implies. A prototypical piece of his latest works, it refers to agriculture, rural communities, and relationships between people, animals, and nature. The distribution of gold, silver, and pink tones, the interplay of textures, and the growing movement of the weed makes this piece ethereal and weightless.

—Valérie Rousseau

RESOURCES

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Birds Got to Have Somewhere to Roost



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- Take inventory of this work of art. What are the different elements you notice?
- Describe the textures. What would they feel like if you touch them?
- What materials did the artist use? What colors?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Spend a timed, silent thirty seconds staring at this work of art. How does it change as you continue to look at it longer?
- This painting is layered with different materials and paint. What visual effect does that technique create? How would the painting look different if it were flat rather than a relief painting with three-dimensional materials incorporated into it?
- Is this a representational or abstract painting? Can you read a story in this painting? Why or why not?
- What is the mood of this painting? How does it make you feel? Why?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- The title of this painting is *Birds Got to Have Somewhere to Roost*. Does knowing that title change the way you “read” the painting? What does that expression mean?
- An art critic described this painting in a magazine review as being about “nature overtaking dead or overbuilt land.” Why might she explain it in this way? Do you agree or disagree?
- Thornton Dial Sr. is an African American artist from Alabama. Much of his artwork engages with the struggles of people in his community during the periods of slavery, the “Great Migration”—the movement of African Americans from the rural South to cities in the North, Midwest, and West—industrialization, and the economic downturn of 2008. Can this painting be viewed through a political lens? If so, how?
- Dial did not begin to focus on making art until he retired. Initially he destroyed his artwork; he was both afraid of what would happen if the messages it contained, which were critical of the white establishment, were discovered. In addition, he wasn’t sure if he was even allowed to make art. Why might a self-taught artist like Dial be unsure or afraid about issues like this?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Recycled Materials Toys:** Thornton Dial Sr. was creative his entire life. As a child, he and his siblings did not have any store-bought toys, so they made their own. Ask students to create their own toys using recycled materials such as toilet paper or paper towel tubes, empty bottles, string, etc. Have a conversation about what that experience was like. Are there benefits to creating your own toys rather than purchasing them or receiving them as gifts?
- **Lists:** Dial took his title *Birds Got to Have Somewhere to Roost* from a well-known expression. Ask the students to generate a group list of other expressions and discuss what each means. Have them come up with situations in which it would be appropriate to use these expressions.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Relief Painting/Assemblage:** *Birds Got to Have Somewhere to Roost* is a relief painting, or assemblage—it has three-dimensional elements. Assemble a selection of thin metal strips, carpet squares, and other assorted materials. Ask students to create their own dynamic composition using these materials in addition to paint on canvas.
- **Read/Discuss:** Read all of or a selection from “Composition in Black and White: A Collector’s Fight to Get an Untrained Artist into the Canon,” an article by Paige Williams in the *New Yorker*. Discuss the issues raised in the article about race, representation, and exploitation of African American self-taught artists by white collectors, dealers, and audiences in the art world.





Flying Machines (4575: Broad Cutt/4576: Vogel) (double-sided)

Charles A. A. Dellschau (1830–1923)

Houston, Texas; c. 1920

Ink, watercolor, pencil, and collage on paper; 17 x 17 1/2"

American Folk Art Museum, Blanchard-Hill Collection, gift of M. Anne Hill and Edward V. Blanchard Jr., 1998.10.16a, b

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The oeuvre of Charles Dellschau (born in 1830 in Prussia) proves witness to the profound break caused by the arrival of modernity at the beginning of the twentieth century, sealed by the consequences of the First World War. His earliest drawings and collages reflect the technological progress at the end of the nineteenth century: balloons and airplanes filling the sky—an expression of man’s desire to master heaven and earth. Dellschau, a retired butcher, closely followed various early aeronautical adventures, thanks to his subscriptions to several magazines and newspapers of the time (*Scientific American*, the *Houston Daily Post*, the *Houston Chronicle*, the *Houston Press*). From 1899 to 1922, he described and drew the story of a secret club of aeronauts (the Sonora Aero Club) that would have existed in California between 1850 and 1860. Dellschau claimed that he and other members of the club built, flew, and then dismantled at least two flying machines. In accordance with the club’s rule of secrecy, Dellschau showed the drawings to no one outside his family. Flying Machine 4575, an ink drawing on a penciled grid, is what Dellschau termed a “Broad Cutt”—a cross section that reveals the mechanics of the vessel.

Dellschau’s faith in technological progress was lost with the onset of the war, which saw the invention of both aerial and gas warfare. The photos and articles Dellschau glued onto his works possess real epic power; their narrative force is heightened by the interweaving of world history—clippings about memorable events, mostly aeronautical exploits or disasters—and Dellschau’s autofiction.

—Valérie Rousseau

RESOURCES

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Flying Machines (4575: Broad Cutt)



Flying Machines (4576: Vogel)

QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- Describe this work of art. What details do you notice?
- What is the subject of these drawings?
- How do the two images relate to each other?
- What can you say about the border and the layout of the pages?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Charles Dellschau depicted a vehicle in these drawings. What kind of vehicle is it? Do you think it is realistic? Does it remind you of any vehicle you've seen before?
- Dellschau filled the entire surface of his drawing. What techniques did he use to cover the paper edge to edge?
- The artwork is double-sided, meaning the artist drew on both sides of the piece of paper. How does that add to your understanding of these drawings? What might it mean that one side shows the front of the aircraft and the other side shows the back?
- What can you say about the writing on these drawings? How does it relate to the images?
- A newspaper clipping about a pilot is collaged onto the drawing. It refers to one of his "daring exploits." Why might Dellschau have chosen this particular clip for his drawing?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- Charles Dellschau claimed that his drawings of flying machines depicted creations he and the other members of an organization called the Sonora Aero Club built, flew, and dismantled in 1850s California, and that club rules forbade him from showing them to anyone outside of his family. No other evidence of this club exists. Do you think this machine could actually have flown? Why or why not?
- Dellschau created drawings of flying machines, which he bound in notebooks, between 1908 and 1920. This was during a time when much of the country had an interest in flight—why do you think this particular time period inspired that curiosity?
- Discuss some of the background information on Dellschau's life. Does knowing about Dellschau's personal history affect the way you view his artwork? Why or why not?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

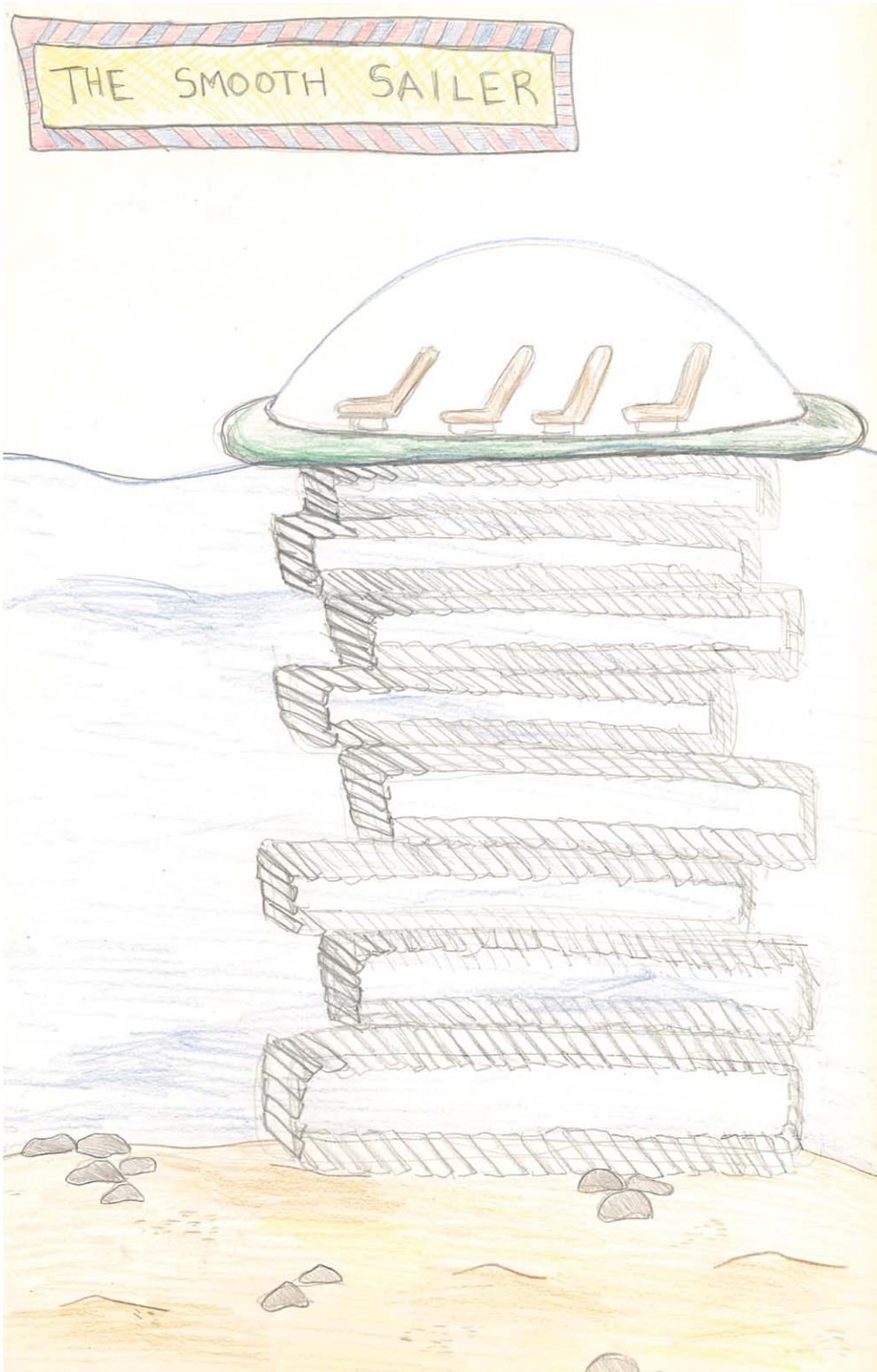
Elementary School Level

- **Aircraft Invention Drawing:** Charles Dellschau knew what airplanes and helicopters looked like, yet he designed his flying machine to look quite different. Ask students to create a drawing of their own inventions for a new, better kind of aircraft. Make sure they can explain how it would work.
- **Transportation Timeline:** On a long sheet of butcher paper, create a timeline of transportation in your city from 1800 to the present (or the future). Research the major forms of transportation over the years and have the students, working in groups, collage images of those vehicles onto the timeline. Discuss how and why transportation evolved over the years.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Fiction-Writing:** Use the Charles Dellschau drawings as a jumping off point for writing fiction. Ask students to write a short story that somehow involves Dellschau's flying machine.
- **Compare/Contrast:** Have students trace the invention of the airplane from the earliest attempts at flight to the first successful one. What did the designs have in common? What did they do differently?





Aircraft Invention Drawing Activity



Aurora

Artist unidentified

New England; c. 1818–1822

Watercolor on silk, with applied gold foil and paper label, in original gilded wood frame

24 7/8 x 28 3/8 x 2 1/4" (framed)

Gift of Ralph Esmerian, 2005.8.46

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There is a strong element of apotheosis in this homage to Aurora, goddess of the morn. Such imagery became popular after the death of George Washington, who was sometimes pictured in mythological terms ascending to heaven. This is one of ten related watercolors from an unidentified school, most with Massachusetts histories and five of which feature similar renditions of Aurora. In each the goddess is in a chariot drawn by two eagles or horses and embellished with collaged gold paper stars. The painting on silk is related to other schoolgirl arts such as mourning pieces, which also included townscapes. Symbolizing earthly existence, the main drama of such projects suggested leaving this realm for the rewards of the world to come. The poem, whose source is not yet identified, is printed on paper and affixed to the silk surface. *Aurora* has survived in its original frame with a label by the Boston concern Stillman Lothrop. The address on the label dates the watercolor between 1818 and 1822.

Religious, historical, and mythological themes were deemed appropriate topics for schoolgirls as they perfected the ornamental arts. Other pieces belonging to this group relate the biblical story of Jephthah's Rash Vow as well as Naiads, a type of nymph from classical mythology.

—Stacy C. Hollander

RESOURCES

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Aurora



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What is going on here? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Talk about the figures in this painting. What are they doing?
- Describe the landscape. What kind of place is this?
- What colors and materials do you see?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Study the details of this composition. What can you guess about the time period it was created based on what you see?
- The artist who created *Aurora* is unidentified, although we do know that she was a schoolgirl in New England. She used watercolor on silk and gold foil to make her artwork. What does her use of those fine materials tell you about what her life experiences might have been like?
- How were homes lit during her era, the early nineteenth century? How would these materials have looked under candlelight?
- This image combines realism and fantasy. Which aspects of the artwork are realistic? Which are fantastic?
- Who do you think the woman in the chariot is? Why?
- Imagine yourself in her place. How would you feel?
- Where do you think she is going? Where did she come from?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- There is an inscription written on paper at the bottom of the painting. It says:

*Hail, bright Aurora, fair Goddess of the Morn! / Around thy splendid Car, the smiling
Hours submissive wait attendance, ascend—and / reillumine the face of Nature with thy
refulgent beams, & from the Arch of Heaven banish night.*

What might that mean? What traditions or stories does it draw on?

- The United States was still very new when *Aurora* was created. How does the concept of aurora, or dawn, relate to the recent creation of the United States of America? Extending the metaphor, if dawn is the recent creation of the United States, what was night?
- At the time, finishing schools and academies were created with the purpose of educating girls, not just for their own benefit but for the purpose of creating literate, patriotic young women capable of raising the first new generation of American men. To this end, they were taught Greek, Latin, history, philosophy, religion, and more, as well as ornamental arts like painting and needlepoint. This ideal was called Republican Motherhood. The schoolgirl who created *Aurora* was being trained in this mold. How does her painting exemplify Republican Motherhood?
- Artwork like *Aurora* could serve as an indicator of a girl's skills. If she was able to make a beautiful, careful, detailed painting like *Aurora*, what might that inform a potential husband?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

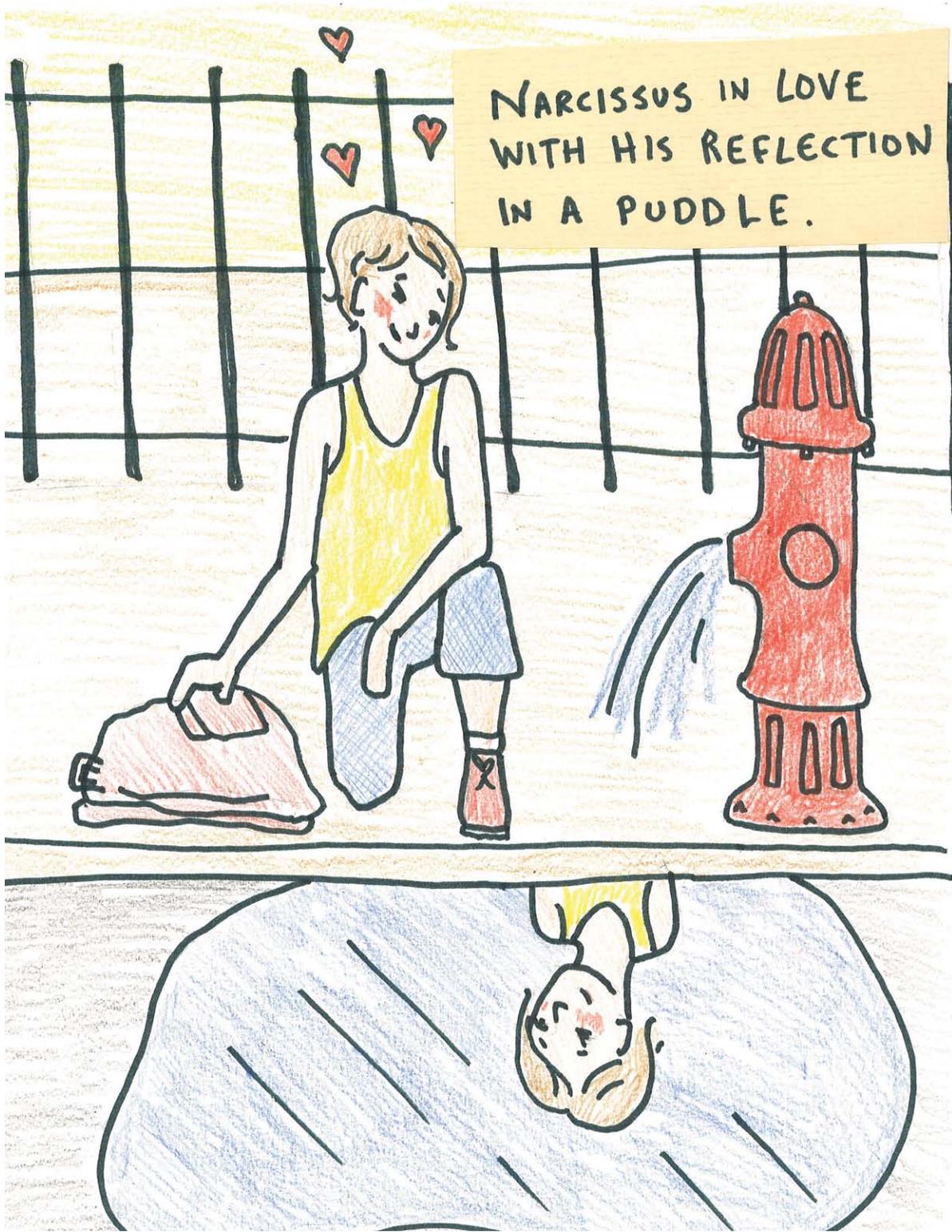
Elementary School Level

- **Writing:** Ask students to imagine themselves as sailors on the ship or people in the buildings in *Aurora*. What would it be like to look up and see *Aurora*, the angels, the chariot, and the creatures pulling it up in the sky? Have them write a first person account.
- **Myth Drawing:** *Aurora* is based on a myth, yet the artist combined the mythological element in the sky with her contemporary real-life surroundings on the ground. Read a myth or series of myths with your students and ask them to create a drawing that also combines their contemporary setting with a classical myth.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Myth-Writing/Interpretive Drawing:** Myths were often used to explain natural phenomena. These myths were then passed down through the ages, interpreted, and reinterpreted. Ask the students to write their own short myths to explain a natural phenomenon. Then, have them trade stories with a classmate and interpret their classmate's story in a drawing.
- **Metaphors:** *Aurora* can be interpreted as a metaphor for the dawn of America. Brainstorm with students some contemporary national issues, international current events, or historical moments you've been studying. Ask them to take to the American Folk Art Museum's website and peruse the image galleries to find a work of art that could be seen as a metaphor for that issue. Have them present their ideas to the class.





NARCISSUS IN LOVE
WITH HIS REFLECTION
IN A PUDDLE.

Myth Drawing Activity



Outpost Raid: Champagne Sector

Horace Pippin (1888–1946)

West Chester, Pennsylvania; 1931

Oil on fabric; 18 x 21"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Patricia L. and Maurice C. Thompson Jr., 1999.25.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During World War I, Horace Pippin served in the well-known and respected Fifteenth Regiment of the New York National Guard, an all-black infantry unit. The regiment served under French command because of the U.S. Army's concern over integration. Spending more time abroad than any other infantry, its members exhibited enough heroics during the war to be nicknamed the "Hell Fighters" by the Germans. Pippin was wounded and sent home after serving one year. Ten years later, he started painting scenes of his memories of the war, although his right arm had to be supported by his left hand whenever he worked at his easel. *Outpost Raid: Champagne Sector* is an early painting, executed only three years after the artist started to explore paint. The subdued palette of grays, browns, and black is typical of the artist. It is as if the entire confrontation occurs in shadows. Two men are standing in a trench. An American soldier enters from the left; judging by his French helmet, gear, and weapons, he is probably a member of Pippin's regiment. On the right, a German soldier in a pale blue uniform and beret stands beside a sentry box. The scorn on the face of this soldier is the only emotion apparent in the painting, and it creates a vast distance between the two men. Silhouetted and hiding behind a bed of sandbags in the center of the composition are more American soldiers. While Pippin's war paintings—his first subject matter—document a particular moment in global history, they also subtly address the issues of race and injustice in American life.

—Valérie Rousseau

RESOURCES

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Outpost Raid: Champagne Sector



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What is going on here? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Describe the figures. How are they dressed? What are they doing?
- Where is this scene set? What kind of place is this?
- Talk about the palette, or the colors you see.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Who are the two people depicted in this painting? What is their relationship to each other? How can you tell?
- How does Horace Pippin use the figures' body language to tell us about them? In this moment, how do you think each soldier feels?
- Although there are two main figures in this painting, as well as others in the background, only the face of the soldier on the right is visible. What effect that does give?
- What is the mood of this painting? What choices did the artist make to create that mood? How do the palette and the setting contribute? For example, how would your experience of this painting be different if the sky were blue?
- Pippin's style of figure painting has been described as "flat." What do you make of the fact that there is less volume and shading on the people than on the sandbags and shelter in this composition?
- What do you think is about to happen next? What clues can you find in this painting to support your ideas?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- Horace Pippin was a soldier during World War I. Ten years after being wounded and sent home, he began to paint memories of his experiences during the war. How does this information add to your understanding of the painting?
- Pippin was African American. His all-black unit spent more time abroad than any other infantry and was nicknamed the "Hell Fighters" by the Germans, against whom they were fighting. Despite these successes, his unit served under France rather than the United States. Why do you think the United States was concerned about integrating the army?
- Much of Pippin's artwork can be interpreted as criticizing treatment of African Americans and African American soldiers in the U.S. Put yourself in Pippin's place. Why might he have been critical? Conversely, why do you think some African Americans signed up to fight in World War I despite not being treated as equal citizens?
- How do you see issues of race playing out in this particular painting?
- Trench warfare prevailed during World War I. Based on what you can see in this painting, what was a trench? Trenches were meant to protect soldiers as they fought against their enemies, who were entrenched on the other side of an empty "No Man's Land." This painting is titled *Outpost Raid: Champagne Sector*—what does that tell you about what is happening?
- Sandbags often lined the trenches where soldiers were stationed as they fought. What technical role do you think the sandbags played in the soldiers' defense?
- What do you think life was like in the trenches?
- What technology has been developed since World War I to make this form of warfare less successful?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Middle and High School Levels

- **Painting:** Have students look through newspapers from the last few years to research images of modern warfare. Ask them to create a painting in the style of Horace Pippin based on one of the images they find. Follow-up conversations can include how warfare has changed over the years as well as how rendering the scene in Pippin's style affected the meaning of the image.
- **Quotes Discussion:** Read students the following quote:

We must not eat with them, must not shake hands with them, seek to talk to them or to meet with them outside the requirements of military service. We must not commend too highly these troops, especially in front of white Americans.

—General John J. Pershing, in a secret communiqué concerning African American troops sent to the French military station with the U.S. Army, August 7, 1918
(www.edsitement.neh.gov)

Pair this quote with this passage, or another, from Pippin's wartime journals:

Ther we're not one them that did not look to his maker to bring him throu his hird fight. All tho it were hird to do in that place to do gods will but we did the best we could. I did not care what or wher I went at. I ask got to help me and he did so and this the way I came through that tirebell and hell place, for the whole intir batel feel were hell, so it were no place for any houmen been to be. . . .

—"Notebooks and Letters: Notebook Fragments, c. 1920," Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (www.aaa.si.edu)

Have a class discussion about the way these two men wrote about the war.



Walter Chandler, Æ 21 Months

Walter Chandler (1826–?)

Elizabethtown, New Jersey; 1850

Watercolor and gouache on paper; 2 3/4 x 3 1/4"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Ralph Esmerian, 2013.1.16

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A separation between the public and private spheres of family life is carefully maintained in this tiny gem. Drawn with extraordinary precision, the front of the portrait is carefully inscribed with the legend “Walter Chandler, Æ 21 months. Painted by his father in the year 1850.” The reverse offers a different level of information, and one intended for the eyes of the nuclear family alone. Written in pencil is a sentiment that touches on the intimacy of a man and wife and the memory of generations: “To my dear wife. This little sketch of our first born, a tribute of fondest love and affection, was painted in Elizabethtown, N. Jersey; the room being the same, in which his dear Sister “Maggie” was, soon after, born, and dear Grandfather subsequently died.”

Tiny Walter Jr. (1848–1924) is finely dressed as though he is in fact sitting for his portrait. Although photographs were available by the time this was made, the artist chose to describe his son with the insight only he could capture, yet the depiction is on the scale of a daguerreotype. The miniature size also relates it to the earlier tradition of miniature portraits in lockets, again intended for the private appreciation of a loved one. The painted medium allowed the father to show the child actively engaged in pushing his grain-painted wheelbarrow across a room filled with furniture that appears exaggeratedly large, emphasizing the little boy’s age.

Walter Jr. worked in Manhattan as an insurance broker and remained in Elizabethtown until 1905, when he moved to New York City. Eventually, he became manager of Equitable Life Insurance Company, at 120 Broadway.

—Stacy C. Hollander

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Walter Chandler. Æ 21 Months

QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What is going on here? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Take inventory of the painting—list everything that you see.
- What is the child doing?
- There is a caption on this painting. Can you read it?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- The child in this painting is named Walter Jr. Did you think he was a boy at first? Why or why not?
- Why might little boys have worn skirts in the nineteenth century and earlier? What might have been easier for them? Even after children could use a bathroom by themselves, it was easier for them not to have to undo complicated buckles and belts.
- Little boys were “breeched”—or switched to wearing pants—sometime between the age of two and eight. What do you think it represented for a boy to be breeched?
- What is Walter Jr. playing with? Do toddlers still play with toys like this? Why do you think toys like this have remained popular? What do they help toddlers learn how to do?
- What can you say about scale in this painting? How does the artist help us see the world through a child’s eyes?
- How many colors do you see in this painting? Where are colors repeated? What effect does this very limited palette give? How would the painting look different if the colors in the rug were totally different than the colors in Walter Jr.’s clothing? What if all of the furniture were in different colors, too?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- The Chandlers lived in what was then called Elizabethtown (now Elizabeth), New Jersey. What can you tell about their house from this painting? How many rooms would you guess it had?
- Walter Sr. was identified in the census as being a farmer. When Walter Jr. grew up, he was a businessman in Manhattan, but he still lived in his hometown in New Jersey. What new technology allowed him to commute?
- Elizabethtown was rural when Walter Sr. was a young man in 1850. How do you think it changed by the time his son was an adult? How might the railroad have changed it?
- As much as Elizabethtown may have changed between 1850 and 1924, it is possible that the interior of this house hasn’t changed much—some houses are still decorated in this style, with these same kinds of furniture today. Why do you think that might be?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Baby Picture Annotations:** Find a baby picture of an adult who students will know—yourself, your principal, a historical figure you’ve been studying, such as the Barack Obama childhood photograph shown on the following page in the activity illustration. Photocopy the picture at the center of a sheet of paper with plenty of room around it. Give each student a copy but do not reveal who the subject of the baby picture is; have them annotate it by drawing arrows to different elements and describing them and what they might say about the subject (hairdo, outfit, background, toys or other objects). Compare the students’ different ideas. At the end, reveal who it is. Are there any connections between what the students saw in the photograph and what they know about that person today?
- **Nursery Rhyme:** The nursery rhyme “Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush” has its origins at approximately the same time this painting was painted. Explain to the students that the chorus is always the same but the verses change depending on who is singing the song.

*Here we go 'round the mulberry bush, the mulberry bush, the mulberry bush / Here we go
'round the mulberry bush so early in the morning*

*This is the way we brush our teeth, brush our teeth, brush our teeth / This is the way we brush
our teeth on a cold and frosty morning*

You can sing it with them and/or show them this YouTube video to get them acquainted with the song if they aren’t already: www.youtube.com/watch?v=lr2PUHiw8Ek . To do the movements that go with the song, hold hands and move in a circle as you sing the chorus and then break when you get to the verses to act them out. On one large sheet of paper, write a few verses in the voice of Walter Chandler Jr. What would he have done with his day? On a second large sheet of paper, write a few verses in the voice of your class. What do you do with your day? Perform both versions.

Middle and High School Levels

- **Nursery Rhyme Writing:** Many nursery rhymes we still sing or recite today originated in the nineteenth century or earlier—Walter Chandler Sr. and his wife, Elizabeth, could have entertained Walter Jr. with many of the same ones you heard when you were little. Make a list of nursery rhymes on the board. What qualities do they share? What formal aspects of nursery rhymes make them appealing to children? Ask students to write a modern nursery rhyme using the conventions of the traditional ones—repetition, rhythm, rhyme, and the opportunity for movement/participation.
- **Railroad Research:** The railroad dramatically changed the Chandlers’ community. Ask students to research the origins of the railroad system in the United States and discover some of the ways in which communities were affected by the railroad.
- **Railroad Debate:** In recent decades, the United States has not been focused on train travel while other countries have devoted resources toward building high-speed train lines, as well as creating and maintaining the infrastructure to keep trains a viable, attractive transportation option. Ask students to find newspaper articles from the last four years debating the issue of the railroad system in the United States. Based on what they find, ask them to form an opinion, backed up with facts, on whether they are for or against reinvesting in the railroad system.



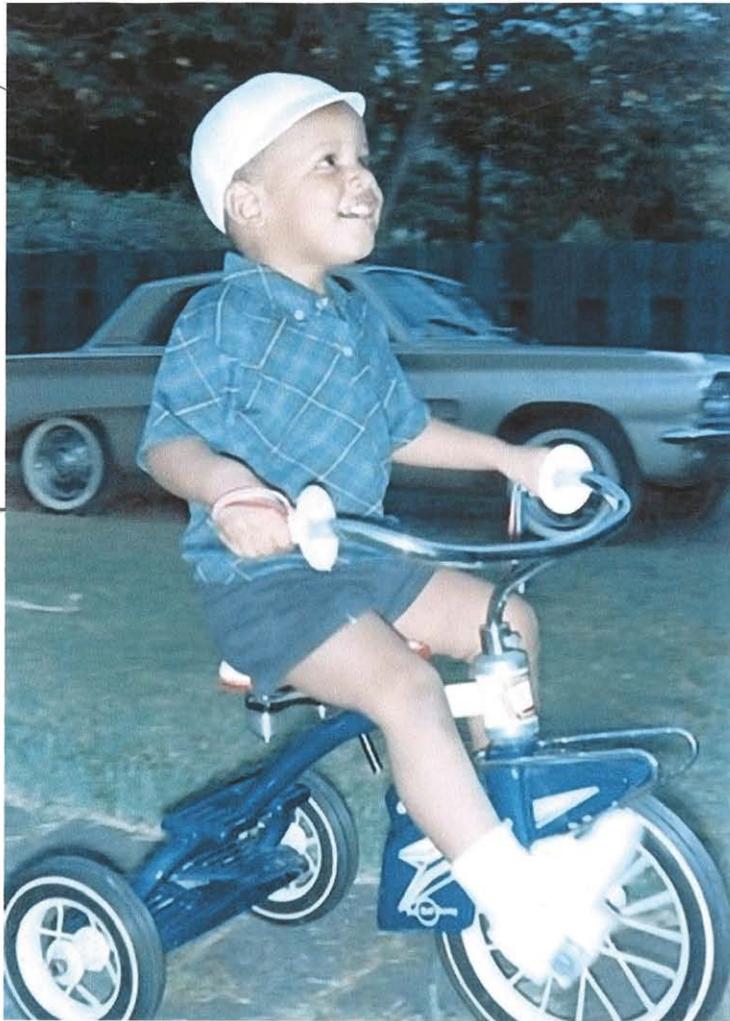
TREES,
NOT IN A
DESERT
OR A
BIG CITY.

HIS SMILE LOOKS
FAMILIAR!

LOOKING
UP AND
SMILING AT
SOMEONE
BIGGER -
MAYBE HIS
MOM?

HIS CLOTHES
ARE SO NEAT
+ CLEAN FOR
A LITTLE
BOY PLAYING
OUTSIDE.
MAYBE IT'S
HIS BIRTHDAY.

OLD CAR.
1960s?
HE WOULD
BE IN
HIS
50s
TODAY.



DRIVEWAY,
SIDEWALK,
GRASS - PROBABLY
NOT IN A BIG CITY

HAS A NICE
TRICYCLE.
FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES
ALLOW HIM TO HAVE
AT LEAST SOME
NEW TOYS.

Baby Picture Annotations Activity

Untitled (Figures and Construction with Blue Border)

Bill Traylor (c. 1854–1949)

Montgomery, Alabama; c. 1941

Poster paint and pencil on cardboard; 15 1/2 x 8"

American Folk Art Museum, gift of Charles and Eugenia Shannon, 1991.34.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

How do we interpret the central visual axis in twenty similar works by Bill Traylor, around which animals and figures chase one another when not falling into empty space? Is this structure the public fountain from the everyday landscape of the artist, or a life-threatening statement that conjures up, all at once, the darkness of crucifixion (crosses), the brutality of lynchings (gallows), and the miseries of slavery (cotton presses)? Beyond his pictures, Traylor left few records of his own thoughts. As explored in the 2013 American Folk Art Museum exhibition *Traylor in Motion: Wonders from New York Collections*, each work is more than an isolated incident—on the contrary, they respond to each other, and form the sequences of a personal cinema. Instead of being merely a basic depiction, the subject becomes a visual statement structuring Traylor’s mind, bringing together hidden symbols from Kongo Vodou, Hoodoo, Southern Baptist, Freemasonry, and blues sources, as well as layers of references: slavery, uncensored violence in the Jim Crow era, and turbulence within the black enclave known as “Dark Town” in Montgomery.

—Valérie Rousseau

RESOURCES

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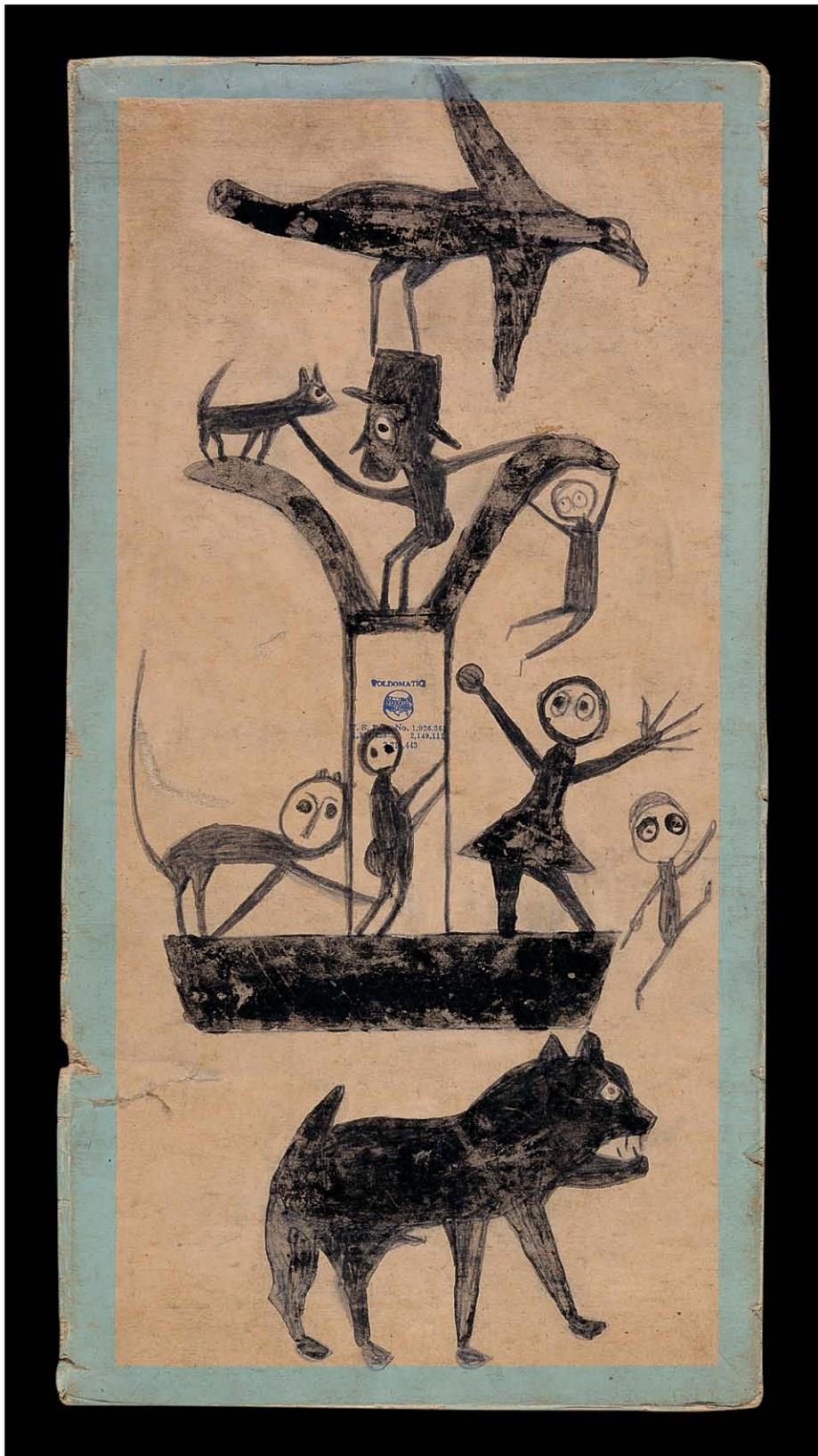
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Untitled (Figures and Construction with Blue Border)



QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What is going on here? What do you see that makes you say that?
- How many figures are there? What are they all doing?
- What colors do you see?
- Which colors do you think were painted by the artist, and which are original to the support, or material, that the artist drew on?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Bill Traylor called compositions like this one “exciting events.” What exciting event is taking place here?
- What can you say about balance in this drawing? What is each figure balancing on? How might they have wound up there? Try standing in some of the figures’ positions.
- If you were to pick a main figure in this drawing, who would it be? Why?
- Traylor created his art on found materials, such as cardboard from shoe boxes and dry cleaners, but the relationship between the shape of his supports and his drawings is never accidental. Even when he was given access to drawing paper he chose not to use it, although he did adopt some other conventional art materials like poster paint. How would you describe the shape of this particular piece of cardboard? How did he compose this drawing to take advantage of that shape? How would the drawing look different if it were on a square piece of cardboard? Or cardboard oriented horizontally rather than vertically?
- “Negative space” is the space around and between the motifs of a drawing. How did Traylor use negative space in this drawing?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- Bill Traylor was born into slavery; even after Emancipation, he remained working on the same plantation until he was in his eighties, at which point he moved to Montgomery, Alabama. He began to draw once he was living in the city. What might have prevented him from starting earlier?
- Can you find any evidence in this drawing of Traylor’s experiences living on a farm? In the city?
- Traylor often wore a tall hat like the man at the center of this composition. Perhaps the most famous American citizen who wore a stovepipe hat, though, was Abraham Lincoln. How can you connect Bill Traylor and Abraham Lincoln?
- Many people read Traylor’s compositions as having to do with race and race conflict because he was an African American man born into slavery, and because he lived through the Civil War and Emancipation, among other reasons. How can you interpret this drawing through that lens?
- Others don’t find conflict but humor in his drawings. Do you agree with one side or the other? With both? With neither? Why?
- Traylor created his work on the street, but his work might not have been preserved if not for a chance encounter between Traylor and a younger, white artist named Charles Shannon, who recognized his talent. Unlike many self-taught artists, Traylor was acknowledged for his artwork during his lifetime. Still, the New York art world did not accept him as a self-taught genius for many years. Why do you think some people appreciated Traylor’s work and some did not?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Elementary School Level

- **Drawing:** Ask the students to redraw this artwork using the same objects and characters but to change the composition so that the meaning of the drawing is different.
- **Drawing:** Have the students imagine they could fast-forward this composition. Have them draw what would happen next.
- **Character Profile:** Read together *It Jes' Happened: When Bill Traylor Started to Draw*, by Don Tate. Put together a character profile of Bill Traylor. What are some of his character traits?

Middle and High School Levels

- **Cardboard Drawing:** Collect, or have the students collect, found pieces of cardboard. Ask them to create their own Bill Traylor-inspired compositions, keeping in mind Traylor's use of negative space and the way he took advantage of the shape of his supports. Use pencil, crayons and/or poster paint to simulate his materials.
- **Music Sharing:** Traylor's work has been described as musical. Ask students to find pieces of music that connect in some way to Traylor's compositions. Have them bring in their songs and present their selection to the class.
- **Biography Writing:** Ask students to research and write a short biography of Traylor, emphasizing the part of his story that affects them the most.



GLOSSARY

Allegory

A story, poem, or artwork that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning—often a moral or political one.

Anthropomorphic

Ascribing human form or attributes to something that is not human.

Assemblage

A sculptural composition assembled or constructed from an arrangement of objects and materials. May refer to both the process of creating a work and the finished composition.

Background

The part of a composition that appears to be farthest away from the viewer; it is typically closest to the horizon.

Centennial

Associated with the commemoration of a significant event that happened a hundred years prior.

Collage

The practice of creating an image by arranging and adhering relatively flat elements to a surface. This technique allows the artist to bring disparate visual elements into a united composition.

Composition

The plan, placement, or arrangement of elements such as colors, forms, shapes, and space in an artwork.

Corrugated

Describes a material or surface that has uniform ridges and grooves.

Filigree

Intricately designed ornamental work especially of fine gold and silver applied to surfaces.

Folk art

Art created by people who had no academic training in the arts, though they may have received training through apprenticeships or family tradition. It is not a single art form but includes a diverse range of visual expression, such as painting, drawing, sculpting, textile work, and pottery. Folk art is often utilitarian, religious, handmade, rooted in a crafts tradition, and/or stemming from a communal tradition. It encompasses the highly personalized expression of self-taught creators.

Foreground

The area of a composition—often at the bottom—that appears to be closest to the viewer.



Found object

Common objects (natural materials as well as man-made items) that are not normally considered art materials but which are incorporated into an artwork.

Fraktur

A highly artistic and elaborate eighteenth- or nineteenth-century calligraphed and illuminated drawing or document created in a Germanic area of settlement in North America.

Great Depression

The Great Depression (1929–1939) was the deepest and longest-lasting economic downturn in the history of the Western industrialized world. In the United States, the Great Depression began soon after the stock market crash of October 1929. In subsequent years, consumer spending and investment dropped, causing steep declines in industrial output and rising levels of unemployment as failing companies laid off workers. At its worst—in 1933—some 13 to 15 million Americans were unemployed and nearly half of the country’s banks had failed.

Great Migration

The Great Migration was the movement of six million African Americans out of the rural Southern United States to the urban Northeast, Midwest, and West that lasted up until the 1960s. Driven from their homes by unsatisfactory economic opportunities and harsh segregationist laws, many blacks headed north, where there was a need for industrial workers that first arose during World War I. During the Great Migration, African Americans began to build a new place for themselves in public life—confronting economic, political, and social challenges and creating a new black urban culture.

Horror vacui

Latin for “fear of empty space.” In visual art, the term refers to the entire surface of an artwork being filled with intricate detail.

Lintel

A horizontal architectural element, usually carrying the load above an opening.

Metaphor

A literary device wherein a comparison is made by referring to one thing as another.

Middle ground

The part of the composition that appears between the foreground and the background.

Monochromatic

Having only a single color, represented by different hues and tints.

Needlework

The process of creating images embroidered in silk or wool onto a fabric ground, typically silk or linen. Often framed for display, they could be used as covers for small wooden cabinets or decorative fire screens. Like samplers, needlework was an important part of the education of young women of means in Europe and America in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries.



Negative space

The space that surrounds the subject of an image. Negative space helps to define the boundaries of positive space and brings balance to a composition.

Phrenology

A pseudo-science conceived in Vienna near the turn of the nineteenth century, phrenology is the study of the conformation of the skull based on the belief that it is indicative of mental faculties and character.

Pileus

A close-fitting cap worn in ancient Rome and symbolizing liberty.

Quilt

A bedcover consisting of three layers—a decorated textile top layer, an inner layer of filling, and a bottom fabric layer—that are stitched together, often decoratively, to hold each of the layers in place.

Shakers

The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, known as the Shakers, is a religious sect founded in the eighteenth century in England, having branched off from a Quaker community. They were known as "Shaking Quakers" because of their ecstatic behavior during worship services. In 1747 women assumed leadership roles within the sect. Shakers today are mostly known for their celibate and communal lifestyle, their pacifism, and their model of equality of the sexes, which they institutionalized in their society in the 1780s. They are also known for the simplicity of their lifestyle, architecture, and furniture.

Show figure

Three-dimensional lifelike and life-size figures, often carved from wood, designed to advertise tobacco and other businesses in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Spangles

A small piece of shiny metal or plastic used for ornamentation, especially on clothing.

Trench warfare

Combat in which each side occupies a system of protective trenches.

Weathervane

A form of folk sculpture that served both functional and decorative purposes. Weathervanes in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America were crafted by hand from wood or metal. They were used primarily to indicate wind direction—important for those with itinerant occupations and to individuals whose work could easily be impacted by weather conditions. Weathervanes were often used as trade signs and atop churches.



PRINT AND ONLINE RESOURCES

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VISITING THE AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM

STUDENT AND EDUCATOR PROGRAMS

The American Folk Art Museum offers a range of discussion-based gallery and artmaking programs for students, including single visits and multi-session museum-school partnerships. For more information on current programs for students or additional educator programs, please call 212. 265. 1040, ext. 381, or e-mail grouptours@folkartmuseum.org. Information about all programs can also be found on the museum's website, www.folkartmuseum.org.

TOURS, PRE-K TO GRADE 12

Offered September–June, Monday–Friday, 10 AM–4 PM

All programs are discussion-based and interactive and are led by experienced educators. Students will further develop their critical-thinking skills through dynamic conversations and activities centered on works of art. Programs relate to the New York State Learning Standards and the New York City Curriculum Blueprint. The program you choose will be customized for your students' age group and abilities; the museum welcomes inclusion classes and students with disabilities or special needs. The museum can accommodate up to thirty students at time.

The museum offers a series of themed tours—including Introduction to Folk Art, People, Places, and Artists' Materials—that can be tailored for any age group. All groups have the option to sketch as part of the gallery experience and access the museum's Touch Collection. The complete list of tour themes, descriptions, and fee structures can be found on the museum's website.

MUSEUM-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Multi-session collaborations between the museum's education department and schools combine exhibition-based programs with specialized classroom visits by an experienced museum educator. These multiple-visit school partnerships provide students with a unique opportunity to hone their critical-thinking skills and powers of observation. Customized to meet each school's objectives, school partnerships can also include artmaking workshops, professional development for school staff, and programs for families. School partnerships are appropriate for all age levels. A listing of sample partnership programs can be found on the museum's website.

RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

You are invited to create a workshop specifically for your staff at the grade, school, or regional level. Museum educators will work with you to develop a program that meets the needs of your specific group. The museum also offers additional free curriculum guides that integrate folk art into classroom learning: **Folk Art Revealed** (pre-K–grade 5 and grades 6–12) is a guide to teaching American history and culture through folk art; **In the Realms of Henry Darger** (grades 9–12) explores important themes in the work of the twentieth-century self-taught artist known for his vivid panoramic watercolors and includes selections from the artist's writings; and **Quilts Exploration Guide** delves into aspects of the museum's quilt collection. Each guide includes color images of works in the museum's collection, lesson plans, a glossary, and bibliographic resources. Curriculum guides can be downloaded from the museum's website.

PLANNING YOUR VISIT

- Programs are offered at the museum during the school year Monday through Friday, anytime between 10 AM and 4 PM.
- The museum does not allow self-guided groups. All groups must have a reservation with a museum guide.
- Groups must have one adult chaperone per every ten students; chaperones and teachers are responsible for supervising groups.
- Tours in select languages, including American Sign Language and visual descriptions, are available. Additional lead time may be necessary to schedule such a tour.
- Reservations must be made at least two weeks in advance. The museum accepts payment through purchase order; the museum's vendor number is MUS005000.
- Buses may drop off school groups in front of the museum; there is no parking lot.
- There is no lunch area onsite, but there are several public outdoor seating areas steps away; please inquire when you book your visit.
- To make your reservation, please e-mail group tours@folkartmuseum.org or call 212. 265. 1040, ext. 381.

ACCESSIBILITY

The museum is fully accessible and welcomes groups with special needs. Copies of labels and wall texts are available in large print. American Sign Language interpretation tours, verbal imaging tours, and tours of touch objects from the museum's Touch Collection are available by request with one-month advance notice. For more information, please contact the education department at 212. 265. 1040, ext. 381.

MUSEUM LOCATION

2 Lincoln Square (Columbus Avenue at 66th Street), New York City

MUSEUM HOURS

Tuesday–Thursday 11:30 AM–7 PM

Friday 12–7:30 PM

Saturday 11:30 AM–7 PM

Sunday 12–6 PM

Closed Monday

School programs are offered Monday–Friday, 10 AM–4 PM, September–June

ADMISSION

Free

Fees apply for school programs; please inquire when you book your visit.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Subway: 1 to 66 St/Lincoln Center

Bus: M5, M7, M11, M20, M66, M104

GENERAL INFORMATION

www.folkartmuseum.org

212. 595. 9533



