Crystal Bridges
Museum of American Art

Collection Conversations

Audio Guide Script

Tracks

Introduction to Collection Conversations

Welcome to Collection Conversations

George Washington, Charles Wilson Peale

Track 1: The Artist and the Patriot

Track 2: General Washington

George Washington [The Constable-Hamilton Portrait], Gilbert Stuart

Track 1: Portrait of a President 3:04

Mrs. Jacob Franks (Abigaill Levy), Gerardus Duyckinck I

Track 1: A Very Special Family

The Good Shepherd, Thomas Cole

Track 1: An Idealized Landscape

Track 2: Father of American Landscape

War News from Mexico, Richard Caton Woodville

Track 1: Exploring the Image

Track 2: The American Hotel

Home by the Lake, Frederic Edwin Church

Track 1: Life of the Pioneer

Jessica Penn in Black with White Plumes, Robert Henri

Track 1: Portrait of a Modern Women

Track 2: An Influential Artist

Professor Benjamin Howard Rand, Thomas Eakins

Track 1: An Innovative Painter

Track 2: Eakins & Technology

Robert Louis Stevenson and His Wife, John Singer Sargent

Track 1: An Eccentric Composition

Track 2: The Writer and His Wife

The Reader, Mary Cassatt

Track 1: An American Woman in Paris

Track 2: More About Mary

Black-breasted Plovercrest, Martin Johnson Heade

Track 1: The Artist as Naturalist

Track 2: More Than Just Birds

Capri Girl on a Rooftop, John Singer Sargent

Track 1: Artists in Capri

Track 2: A Bold Use of White

Plexus No. 27, Gabriel Dawe

Track 1: About Dawe

Track 2: Process and Installation

Trois noirs sure un rouge (Three Blacks Over Red), Alexander Calder

Track 1: Calder and Europe

Track 2: Calder as Designer

Madawaska – Acadian Light Heavy, Marsden Hartley

Track 1: Portrait of a Maine Boxer

Track 2: A Queer Eye

Track 3: Marsden's Variety of Styles

Blackwell's Island, Edward Hopper

Track 1: Blackwell's Island

Track 2: Hopper's Iconic Style

Track 3: How Hopper Made this Painting

Ambulance Call, Jacob Lawrence

Track 1: Painting as Storytelling

Track 2: A Vibrant Community

Track 3: Lawrence's Style

Little Joe with Cow, Yasuo Kuniyoshi

Track 1: A Variety of Influences

Track 2: Born in a Cow Year

Track 3: Citizen Kuniyoshi

Silver Upper White River, Maya Lin

Track 1: Lin's artwork

Track 2: Materials and Installation

Untitled, Joan Mitchell

Track 1: Mitchell's Unique Style

Untitled, Ruth Asawa

Track 1: Intricate Forms

Lunar Rendezvous, Alma Thomas

Track 1: Thomas's Life

Track 2: Thomas's Career

Our Town, Kerry James Marshall

Track 1: Our Town's Detail

Track 2: Our Town's Style

Introduction to Collection Conversations

Welcome to Collection Conversations

LINDA DEBERRY: Welcome to Crystal Bridges Permanent collection tour. I'm Linda DeBerry and I'll be your guide. This audio tour will highlight key artworks in each of the museum's permanent collection galleries, and you'll hear from museum curators and staff along the way.

[Pause]

LINDA: As you explore Crystal Bridges' Early American Art galleries, you'll hear from Mindy Besaw, curator of American art, as well as Anne Kraybill, Director of Education, and Interpretation Manager Stace Treat.

[Pause]

LINDA: The two boxes on the gallery bridge house Crystal Bridges' modern art collection, works of art from the early part of the twentieth century, up until the 1940s. In this gallery you'll hear thoughts from Margi Conrads, Director of Curatorial Affairs and Strategic Art Initiatives, as well as Jen Padgett, Assistant Curator, Stace Treat, Interpretation Manager, and Associate Museum Educator Kentrell Curry.

[Pause]

LINDA: The final set of galleries on our tour are the Contemporary Art galleries, which house artworks made from World War II to today. In this section, you'll be hearing from Curator Lauren Haynes, and Assistant Curator Alejo Benedetti.

[End of Stop]

George Washington, Charles Wilson Peale

Track 1: The Artist and the Patriot

LINDA DEBERRY: There seem[s] to be a lot of portraits of George Washington. Makes sense, given that he is the Father of our country, but why did Peale paint this one?

ANNE KRAYBILL: Well, Charles Wilson Peale had a close relationship with Washington so he wasn't just commissioned to paint this portrait—he actually served with Washington in the military and so he knew his character very well. He was in the Continental Army and followed Washington across the Delaware River in 1776. So Washington actually sat for him seven times and he painted, you know, a dozen or so portraits of Washington.

LINDA: So this one is when Washington is pretty young. He's not the president yet, is that correct? He's still a general at this point?

ANNE: He is the commander of the Continental Army at this point, right, and there's several variations of this portrait and so this is done over a two-year span following, you know, various battles of significance.

LINDA: So the settings, the objects and the portrait, I understand, are very specifically chosen to kind of indicate Washington's identity. What can you tell me about this version and what that says about him?

ANNE: Sure, it's actually to not only signify his identity—who he is—but it's to signify a very specific place in a very specific battle: the Battle of Yorktown. And that's significant because this was either commissioned by or given as a gift from Washington to the Marquis de Chastellux.

ANNE COUNTINUES: So Chastellux would have actually seen a version of this portrait and received this version to really celebrate this battle that the French—he was a commander in the French army—contributed in helping to defeat the British. And so it was a very specific moment for him. And you can see that on the frame as well, where we actually have it given as a gift to this particular person.

So all of the settings that indicate that, and then even the time in which this was painted over a couple of years. You can see changes in the uniform that are taking place and Peale wanted to depict that very accurately, so you can see that the sash is actually replaced by the epaulets. But Peale chose to include both of them, even though the uniform would have changed because the sash was really associated with being very aristocratic and British and we wanted to have our uniform represent more the United States.

[End of Stop]

George Washington, Charles Wilson Peale

Track 2: General Washington

LINDA DEBERRY: You said Peale knew Washington well. How was the relationship? What did Peale have to say about him?

ANNE KRAYBILL: Peale is actually quoted as saying, “I am well-acquainted with General Washington, who was a man of very few words, but when he speaks, it is on purpose and what I have often admired in him, is he has always avoided saying anything of the actions in which he has engaged in the last year. He is uncommonly modest, very industrious, prudent.”

And you can really sort of see that in this painting where he seems confident but modest. He's not overly arrogant, he's got his hand on his hip and he feels confident in having won this battle.

ANNE COUNTINUES: So you can see in the background the flag that is actually signifying the 13 colonies, so this is the Continental Army's flag. Remember, we aren't a nation yet. We have not established ourselves as the United States of America. We are fighting for that independence and then you can see his hand resting on the cannon, really symbolizing that this was a battle that he has won, as he has his hat off, places his hand on his hip, stands confidently gazing out at us, so signifying one of many battles that General George Washington was responsible for winning in securing our independence from Britain. You can even see in the environment, you've got these dark clouds and then there's this little glimpse of blue like this parting, so something is definitely passing so troubled times, this battle, for a brighter future.

[End of Stop]

George Washington [The Constable-Hamilton Portrait], Gilbert Stuart

Track 1: Portrait of a President

LINDA DEBERRY: This portrait seems awfully familiar. Is this the image of Washington that we see on the $1 bill?

MINDY BESAW: Yeah there's lots of reasons why you recognize that. Gilbert Stuart actually painted about a hundred portraits of George Washington and it was in fact one of those portraits that was used as the model for the engraving on the one dollar bill.

In general, Gilbert Stuart was quite lucky, he had a couple of sittings with George Washington so really painted him from life. This was done during his second term as president.

MINDY CONTINUES: Gilbert Stuart would talk about how hard it was to get George Washington to loosen up to just chat while he was being painted so I imagine that the sittings were a little stiff, and maybe that's reflected in the pose of Washington and in the stern expression on his face.

LINDA: It's a very formal pose too—he's got this elegant backdrop with the beautiful red curtain and then there's this what looks like a naval battle off to the left. What do those details tell us about Washington at this stage of his career?

MINDY: Those are all really good points. We can imagine that George Washington isn't exactly sitting in an open-air pavilion with a pillar behind him and a billowing red curtain, so a lot of this we have to remember is the formalities and styles of portrait painting. So the red curtain, that pillar behind him, that would be European portrait conventions transferring over to identifying symbols of a new young nation. It's important to note that he's wearing his suit. This is Washington as a lawmaker, as a leader of the country and not as a military man.

Certainly we do still see his sword peeking out there from his left hand and that is a reminder of his military history, you can see the symbol of the United States on his chair, all of these lead to how we're supposed to interpret George Washington.

MINDY CONTINUES: Now, that military battle or whatever seems to be happening right out the window to the background, that's likely a reference to the Jay Treaty which in fact might be what Washington is holding in his hand. The Jay Treaty was an agreement that would help prevent skirmishes over trade with the British after the Revolutionary War.

LINDA: Now I understand that Alexander Hamilton was a big proponent of that treaty. Did he actually own this portrait?

MINDY: Yeah, Alexander Hamilton was the one who penned the Jay Treaty so part of the very early American government here in the United States, and Hamilton did own this painting.

MINDY CONTINUES: Even in fact in the title of the work we call this The Constable Hamilton Portrait and that's because William Constable, who was a wealthy New York City Merchant, commissioned Gilbert Stuart to make this painting as a gift to Alexander Hamilton. And so it's kind of a fun aspect of the painting—the provenance or the history of the work really tells another story.

[End of Stop]

Mrs. Jacob Franks (Abigaill Levy), Gerardus Duyckinck I

Track 1: A Very Special Family

LINDA DEBERRY: Is this all one family?

STACE TREAT: This is all one family and what's significant about this group of portraits is it's the largest set of a single-family portraiture [from this era] that we have in the United States, believe it or not, there are actually six portraits of the Levy Frank's family. It's pretty rare oftentimes as portraits, you know, are descended through a family, they'll be shared, traded off, sold off over time and so a large collection oftentimes will be broken up over time. And so, it's quite a special gift, in many ways, that we were able to acquire all six of these together.

STACE CONTINUES: They're also significant because they're of a Jewish family and so at the time in the United States, they lived in New York City, there was not a large Jewish community in the colonies at the time. So, they actually became very active in the Jewish community at the time and in fact gave a lot of money and supported the building of the very first synagogue in the United States, which is very important and noteworthy. Jacob Franks, as a matter of fact, the husband to Abigail, he's the portrait where it's the man pointing to the left, he was a very successful businessman and merchant in New York City and very prominent in the Jewish community.

LINDA: What did they do?

STACE: You can see if you look at Moses's picture, he's the one that's pointing to the right so if you see the ship out the window there that indicates that they were a merchant family. They traded in all kinds of things: sugar, naval supplies, and also slaves. You know, keep in mind that this time in history the African slave trade was in full swing in the beginning of the 1700s and they did participate in that as well.

LINDA: What I think of when I see this is that here's a group of people that have come here willingly to make their fortune and in the background there's a whole group of people that may be coming here forcibly.

STACE: Yeah, it's really part of the very complicated story of America, right? We oftentimes like to think that, you know, America is this land of great opportunity and wealth and, of course, our past and our mythology tells us this, and it is partially true, of course, but there are, you know, there are a lot of people, that are also a part of the American story, that did not originate in those hopes and dreams in the same way.

[End of Stop]

The Good Shepherd, Thomas Cole

Track 1: An Idealized Landscape

LINDA DEBERRY: The title and the shepherd figure who's also got a sheep with a what looks like a red cross painted on it, seems to indicate that it is a religious subject, did he incorporate a lot of religious symbolism in his work?

MINDY BESAW: The title The Good Shepherd comes from Psalm 23, that reference to the Lord is my shepherd. Thomas Cole was an artist who believed fully that the grandeur and beauty of nature was a reflection of God's creation, so he wrote extensively on advice for American landscape, the American scene, what should artist think about this, what should any person in the United States think about this.

MINDY CONTINUES: And he encouraged people to go outside even if you were in a city he said you could go find the horizon line see where the sky meets the land you could feel refreshed really quite literally as if that landscape was peaceful, it was some kind of a religion that just refreshed people and so that reflection, the literal connection of God in the landscape, was a large part of Cole's practice.

One thing that's always good to remember when we're looking at landscape painting from this time period is they're fully constructed. Thomas Cole gives us a little bit of evidence of this by placing the shepherd and the sheep in there. We know that's a little bit of a hint that this is allegorical this is based on stories based on religion even though the rest of the landscape it's very convincing as if you've just walked into the Catskills into the American wilderness. But they're constructed. Very carefully composed. The bathing light the sunset off there on the left-hand side all of this gives a feel of where we are but it's very idealized.

LINDA: So this doesn't represent a place in the real world?

MINDY: Correct. It would be based on observations in nature. Certainly, Thomas Cole was outside studying plants, looking at sunsets, but then he would go back to his studio and really compile all those details just to make a beautiful painting.

[End of Stop]

600 Museum Way Bentonville, Arkansas 72712 T 479.418.5700 F 479.418.5701 CrystalBridges.org

The Good Shepherd, Thomas Cole

Track 2: Father of American Landscape

LINDA DEBERRY: Wow, it sounds like he had a lot of influence on other painters of his time.

MINDY BESAW: Yeah really his tenants were influential for a whole generation--two generations really. In his essay on American scenery from 1835 Thomas Cole wrote extensively about the picturesque nature of landscape and he would say things like 'the wilderness is yet a fitting place to speak of God,' really re-emphasizing that the important nature of seeing the Almighty in the landscape.

MINDY CONTINUES: One of the things he also really emphasized for himself [and] for other painters that came after him was that the American scenery was the most worthwhile part of landscape painting to paint. While you could go to Europe, you could get trained in Europe, you should reflect on all those classical ruins that Europe had, American wildness and wilderness, that was where it was at.

So he said: “landscape is in fact the exhaustless mind from which the poet and the painter have brought such wondrous treasures--an unfailing fountain of intellectual enjoyment where all may drink and be awakened to a deeper feeling of the works of genius and a keener perception of the beauty of our existence”.

LINDA: People sometimes refer to Thomas Cole as the father of American landscape painting. Why was he so important and what was groundbreaking about the paintings that he made?

MINDY: Well, Thomas Cole actually emigrated from England with his family when he was a teenager so sometimes it's a little ironic that he's the father of American landscape painting but if you go back to the early part of the 19th century, one of the things that was happening for American art was “how could American art really find its voice?” and part of that was “what was unique about America that perhaps Europe didn't have”.

Thomas Cole was one who advocated and thought about our wilderness. He thought that the wildness of the wilderness was our heritage for the United States, so there's something about founding American landscape painting [that’s] a bit like a national identity.

LINDA: I understand that this is the last work that he completed. Did he die shortly after finishing this one?

MINDY: You're right this is the last painting that he completed. He died quite unexpectedly in his 40s-it was complications due to the flu so it was completely unexpected and had really been a loss for American landscape painting.

[End of Stop]

War News from Mexico, Richard Caton Woodville

Track 1: Exploring the Image

LINDA DEBERRY: This painting has a real rich variety of detail every person here has a very specific response to the news, they all have different facial expressions.

MINDY BESAW: So what you really have here is eleven figures and of those the figures that are getting that immediate reaction are all standing on the porch. They're all men—we get a little bit of a snapshot of the different types of people at the time... from the dandy dress really nicely, to the man with a hole in his glove, you can see his thumb poking through... he's the one talking to the old man there in the front on the right. The old man is meant to represent a Revolutionary War hero, so we have different generations perhaps different backgrounds and yes lots of different reactions as he said.

LINDA: So what kind of news were they getting about the Mexican-American War at this point?

MINDY: Well quite frankly it's a little unclear what he's actually saying. Richard Caton Woodville was painting this kind of scene to appeal to a really broad range of audiences, so it would be acceptable and exciting for an audience member who was in support of the war. It might have been acceptable and exciting for an audience member who was a little leery of the war news.

We get such a wide range of reactions to that because then as a viewer I can identify with whoever in this scene most closely matches maybe my feelings about the war. Richard Caton Woodville was a master of this appealing to a broad audience.

And, going down back to the figures again... all those guys on the porch, what do they have in common?

LINDA: They're all white guys.

MINDY: They're all white guys. And who's off the porch? So if we think of this as symbolic democracy, look on the far right and you see the women...

LINDA: Mm-hmm. Poking out the window.

MINDY: She's poking out the window... So she's off that framework of the porch, but she does get to be in the hotel... Sometimes some people would say she's in the hotel because that’s the domestic sphere for the ladies...

LINDA: Right.

MINDY: And then who else is off the porch?

LINDA: I've got the African-American man and child.

MINDY: Yeah, they're down there at the bottom and if you think of this as a social hierarchy, they're literally at the bottom even of the canvas. So they're off there, they're also attached to the ground perhaps a little bit more related to labor, their occupation, and they also did not partake in the privilege of those that would be part of the democracy on the porch.

MINDY CONTINUES: Now thinking about reactions to the news, they're very interested in what's happening and that's because if this is the war news with Mexico and because of the time that it's painted, this is probably news of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and that was tied to an acquisition of a lot of land. The African Americans are interested because there was great debate about whether that new land would be slave or free so they really have part in all of this as well.

[End of Stop]

War News from Mexico, Richard Caton Woodville

Track 2: The American Hotel

LINDA DEBERRY: So this American Hotel that's pictured here—was that a real place?

MINDY BESAW: No. Richard Caton Woodville, again, these artists they're using a realistic style to convince us that we've just happened upon a scene, that we might be just walking by on the street.

All of these things are carefully composed. He gives us enough hints that it's convincing that it exists. For example, look at the post in the front on the left [which] as a sign that says post office. If you go all the way to the top and where it meets the pediment of the porch, part of the woodwork is falling off even. So those little rich details of tattered corners, papers that are peeling off, all of that gives us a sense that this actually exists.

MINDY CONTINUES: The American Hotel is a bit more symbolic. The porch, the pórtico, which has this reference back to Greek democracy, the pediment on the top, the capitals, all of this is meant to give us that sense of America, of democracy.

A couple of the other interesting aspects of the painting, a little bit of detail that might maybe contribute to hints of how we should read the work, look at the sign of the American Hotel. The head of the bald eagle is severed off. And 'American' is divided. So these are hints that maybe not everything is as it should be with the country, with democracy, there is unrest afoot.

MINDY CONTINUES: Going back down to the African American figures—they're dressed in red, white, and blue. I think it's always important to remember when we're looking at art that these artists are making big decisions when they paint the works. They're using their imagination and they're constructing a scene and conveying all kinds of messages to us.

It's no mistake that they're red, white, and blue. And again if you were either for or against slavery you could read that and interpret it multiple different ways.

[End of Stop]

Home by the Lake, Frederic Edwin Church

Track 1: Life of the Pioneer

LINDA DEBERRY: This painting shows a pioneer couple making a home in the wilderness. What made the image of pioneers so relevant at that time?

MINDY BESAW: Well, during the mid 19th century the United States was in the midst of the land of the frontier. That frontier was the magical lining where roughness, pioneer spirit, [and] individuality met that kind of border of developing civilization. The frontier was moving a lot of course in this time period as we acquired more land constantly. In 1846, the Oregon Territory was acquired so the boundary between the United States and Canada was set. Right after that [in] 1848 Mexico ceded Texas and the western lands to the United States. In 1849 [there] was the gold rush in California and this was painted not long after that.

LINDA: So does this painting different from the work Church'd done before?

MINDY: Yeah, Frederic Edwin Church, much like his teacher Thomas Cole had focused a lot on allegory on stories where could these grand landscapes tell these narratives that seem to be much more imaginary than they were really literal with this painting of the Pioneer we almost get a sense that Church has witnessed this very scene it seems to be convincing it's very much an American scene of the time so that subject of pioneer life was very new to him but again appropriate for this time period.

LINDA: This image pictures rural life as being sort of ideal. I know that there are details that tell a story here—what do those details tell us?

MINDY: Sure, this is a great painting to take a closer look [at] we have the log cabin in the foreground; someone is maybe cooking supper or heating it; you have a little smokestack with that coming out. So you have the log cabin, which is the developed part of this. The land has been cleared so presumably trees have been cut down to build the Cabin. The figure in the foreground is walking down the road maybe even going back to the cabin. Off onto the far right is a small canoe with a man standing in that canoe shooting his gun out of the frame of the Picture. To the far right, if you look closely, in that boat there's a little animal—perhaps a wild stag the success of the hunt up to this point. We get a glimpse of maybe some of the difficulties that you would have to go out and hunt for your meal but it really is idyllic, it's developed; its peaceful--this is a very horizontal scene. While the craggy mountains that meet up to the developed place may give us a sense that this is not an easy life it can be a bit hard, the wildness of nature is still very present for us in the scene.

MINDY CONTINUES: But Frederic Edwin Church gives us hope. Look in the distance—there seems to be almost a spotlight of light on another part of the land that's been developed like this little community that's rising up. So even though the mountain on the far right is a bit dark [and] a little wild, there are these glimpses of highlighted spaces where perhaps we've seen progress more development.

[End of Stop]

Jessica Penn in Black with White Plumes, Robert Henri

<u>Track 1: Portrait of a Modern Women</u>

STACE TREAT: We're standing in front of a portrait of Jessica Penn. It's actually called ‘Jessica Penn in Black with White Plumes’. It's from 1908 painted by the artist Robert Henri, but I'm curious, Linda, what do you see in this painting? How do you respond to it?

LINDA DEBERRY: The first thing I notice is that the lace on her front, her face, her hat, her gloves all sort of stand out from the rest of the painting. It all seems to be dark and recede but those parts seem to pop forward. She also has a very confident look on her face, sort of a sassy look to me it seems a little bit unusual for the time to look like such a powerful opinionated woman and then I'm also drawn to the real richness and luxury of the way he's rendered the dress. The dark on dark paint of the dress is really fascinating and it must have been very challenging to produce.

STACE: Yeah, well you hit on a lot of the really important elements of this painting and that's, to me, a real credit to the artist himself. So, we're drawn to the face and that's no mistake. Certainly, Robert Henri felt that the face was the thing, right? He did a lot of innovative things at this time period and you had mentioned that she looks like a very confident and strong and forward kind of woman and we might even refer to that as a very modern woman.

LINDA: So who is Jessica Penn? Why do we care about her?

STACE: Well Jessica Penn was actually a popular actress and dancer; she actually was a part of the Ziegfeld Follies in New York. She's an interesting character - look at that red hair! She was very attractive.

STACE CONTINUES: She is one of Henri's favorite models. He painted her several times, the first time in 1902 and this painting is in 1908. You can see, like with the red hair, she had green eyes, a tiny waist, and long legs, so you could imagine that she was probably very popular. Now at the time it wasn't very common for actresses or other types of you know women that were acting in theater or maybe even burlesque shows things like that weren't normally rendered in paint by artists, but Robert Henri, one of his things and one of the things that he taught to his students was to get out there, get out in the world, let the world, let the city, and even let some of the seedier things of the city, if you will, inspire you to paint what's around you.

[End of Stop]

Jessica Penn in Black with White Plumes, Robert Henri

Track 2: An Influential Artist

LINDA DEBERRY: So what about Robert Henri? He was a teacher. What else can you tell me about him?

STACE TREAT: One of the first things you might notice about Robert Henri is the way he pronounces his last name. It's spelled like the French "Henri" however he was born Robert Henry Cozad in Nebraska, his dad was actually a professional gambler and later a real estate broker. Kind of an interesting character there, he apparently shot and killed a man in Nebraska over a land dispute and ended up having to flee with his family to Denver and both of his sons changed their last names. So they were of French ancestry so he wanted to change you know his middle name was Henry so he decided to change it to Henri but mispronounced it basically.

STACE CONTINUES: Henri eventually moved East. He started out in Philadelphia and eventually made his way to New York. He supported himself by teaching and that's why he was able to actually paint portraits of people that he wanted to paint, as opposed to commissions—people that he needed to paint for money. So he chose people that were interesting to him, right? In fact he usually sat and chatted and had informal conversations and got to know his sitters. Another important thing is you notice the scale of this painting, right? It's a full-length portrait. This was sort of uncommon as well especially for women. Another thing that's very unique about his style is that he also painted these full-length portraits with dark backgrounds. In fact, he didn't want really anything to detract from the beauty of the sitter or the subject of the painting. So you notice that the portrait has a dark background and then you've got this also a black dress—it's so masterful how he's able to capture that dress, right? That fabric and the way she's holding it and you see it. So getting that detail in is quite an amazing thing.

STACE CONTINUES: So there are a whole series of paintings that he did in the first decade of the 20th century of primarily women in this full-length stage. And this portrait of Jessica Penn is one of the finest. He said he liked to paint what he characterized as “my people”. In fact here's a quote, “The people through whom dignity of life is manifest. That is, who are in some way, expressing themselves naturally along the lines nature intended for them.”

So one can look at this marvelous portrait of Jessica Penn and get a sense that both the woman that we're looking at and the man who painted her are pretty interesting and fascinating people.

[End of Stop]

Professor Benjamin Howard Rand, Thomas Eakins

Track 1: An Innovative Painter

LINDA DEBERRY: This is a portrait painted by Thomas Eakins. Can you tell us a little bit about who Eakins was?

ANNE KRAYBILL: Sure! So Thomas Eakins was born in 1844 in Philadelphia and he was very much encouraged to pursue his artistic interest. He went to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts to study but like many artists he went abroad for more training, studying in Paris, and then he came back to the U.S. in 1870 and he settled back in Philadelphia and he really then became Philadelphia's painter.

LINDA: And this was painted about midway through his career?

ANNE: Well this was painted in 1874 and so you know he's definitely a painter by then. He has done a lot of portraits of intimate friends and family and this is a little bit of a transitional piece for him. This sitter, Rand, is a personal friend—Dr. Benjamin Rand—and he was actually his chemistry teacher when he was in high school.

This portrait was actually done when Professor Benjamin Rand was at Thomas Jefferson College and [it] had recently been determined that faculty of significance would have their portraits commissioned. And so Eakins is certainly trying to demonstrate that he can be a professional portrait painter to the officials at that College.

LINDA: So this wasn't commissioned by the officials, this is Eakins showing that he should be commissioned by the officials?

ANNE: Exactly. It's him demonstrating that, you know, he has the ability to render not only just the likeness of somebody, but if you look at this portrait it's almost like an environmental portrait as well.

LINDA: It's clear that it's a formal portrait but it's a little bit different. He’s not looking at us, it's a little bit of a more informal way. Can you talk about that? Explain that a little bit.

ANNE: Yeah if you think about formal portraiture it's usually, you know, the sitter is looking directly at us they have maybe some signal symbols of their profession around them - books or things like that - but in this one it's almost like we have caught Professor Rand in a moment. It's like a photographic snapshot. He's sitting in this intimate interior office space. He's got his finger placed on the page of a book almost holding his spot.

ANNE CONTINUES: He's petting his cat, that's the only thing looking out at us, engaging with us, almost territorial. And all of these objects that signify who he is as a person and a profession sit around him.

We've got a graduated cylinder, a microscope, a rose, so perhaps he's just been out for the evening, he's come back in and he can't help himself, he's got to dive back into his work.

[End of Stop]

Professor Benjamin Howard Rand, Thomas Eakins

Track 2: Eakins & Technology

LINDA DEBERRY: One question I have about this informal style of portrait is that: was this different? Was this new for the time or is this just a different style of portraiture that was being done? Because it's so informal, I wonder if it would have stood out as being different?

ANNE KRAYBILL: Well I think it may have stood out as being a little bit different than somebody who was commissioning a formal portrait of themselves, but you have to think about the time in which this is painted, and all of the new tools that artists had available to them, including photography.

ANNE CONTINUES: So Thomas Eakins used photography quite a bit to study the figure, to study the form. He also used new techniques in science and so he would actually go to Thomas Jefferson College and take anatomy classes there with the medical students so that he could really understand the human form. So because you have all of those advances, he is kind of taking portraiture in a new direction. It feels a little bit more informal. It feels like it could just be a sort of photographic snapshot, if you will.

[End of Stop]

Robert Louis Stevenson and His Wife, John Singer Sargent

Track 1: An Eccentric Composition

LINDA DEBERRY: It looks almost like his wife has been cut off there and then the door coming between them makes them seem like maybe there's an argument. What was that relationship like?

MINDY BESAW: Their relationship was certainly very complicated. They first met when Franny was still married even though she had been separated at the time she was an American and so a lot of their relationship they were separate. So she would go back to the United States and then join him again. Robert Louis Stevenson was a Scotsman so they would travel all over together.

MINDY CONTINUES: It seems to say [in] this painting that there was you know a rift between them; they seemed divided. I think that's maybe reading into their relationship a little too much. They were certainly very much in love even though probably also very normal like other couples might be where you have ups and downs it goes back and forth.

LINDA: I understand that the Sargent gave this portrait to the Stevensons—what did they think of it?

MINDY: That's a great question. So again they were friends, [and] John Singer Sargent painted Robert Louis Stevenson three times in fact. So this was a gift to them. They thought it was somewhat odd—even Stevenson said 'it's excellent but it's too eccentric to be exhibited.' Fanny would say things like 'it's lovely but it has a rather insane appearance.' So this awkwardness, the strangeness of it, was known even at the time.

MINDY CONTINUES: Now despite all of those strange comments about the look of the painting the couple came to love it and they took it with them when they moved to Samoa in 1890 for example. So they really did keep it in their collection and enjoyed it through their lives.

[End of Stop]

Robert Louis Stevenson and His Wife, John Singer Sargent

Track 2: The Writer and His Wife

LINDA DEBERRY: This is a portrait of Robert Louis Stevenson. Who exactly was Stevenson?

MINDY BESAW: If that name sounds familiar it might be because you've read one of Stevenson's novels. He wrote Treasure Island [and] he wrote The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde for example. He was a Scottish writer and his wife is Fanny Osbourne.

LINDA: We have quite a few works by John Singer Sargent in the collection and some of them are in a very different style than this. What can you tell me about John Singer Sargent?

MINDY: John Singer Sargent was an American by parentage but he lived in Europe most of his life. He studied in Paris [and] he really lived in London for a long time and he traveled. Sargent is most well-known for large scale portraits of primarily wealthy individuals—that's how he really made his living. Happily in our collection we have some small intimate portraits and paintings that were painted more when Sargent was painting for himself, painting for experimentation, painting for developing his own style and so these really give a little different glimpse of the artist.

LINDA: This seems like a really unusual arrangement [in] this picture. Stevenson is pacing in one direction, his wife is way over in the corner, why would Sargent depict them that way?

MINDY: Sargent painted this as an intimate portrait of his friend. So unlike some of those paintings that he would paint on commission where he was really trying to please a patron this was a bit more experimental. He talked about it as if you were walking into a room and interrupting a moment, so you really became part of the activities of the household. And you're right Robert Louis Stevenson is pacing, he's walking away from us as if he just glimpsed ‘oh you came in; here you are,’ as if we've surprised him in the midst of a thought. His wife over on the right hand side is Fanny Osbourne. She's wearing an oriental exotic garb. These were fashionable at the time-- this interest in all things Japanese or Asian was really part of society.

MINDY CONTINUES: She's facing in the complete opposite direction. The composition is very modern—it's broken up into thirds. Then you have that odd door that's open. We get a glimpse even to the front door--there's light back there, the little glints off of the metal that seem to be on the staircase draw us back in, the squares of the paintings that are framed on the right hand side seem to repeat these rectangle shapes. Over all the composition is very modern. It's very unusual, yes and very unique.

[End of Stop]

The Reader, Mary Cassatt

Track 1: An American Woman in Paris

LINDA DEBERRY: Mary Cassatt—that's a name that everybody seems to know. What made her stand out so much?

MINDY BESAW: She became really famous as part of the Impressionist circle in France. So oftentimes when you have exhibitions or even conversations about French Impressionism—Claude Monet [and] Edgar Degas, Mary Cassatt comes into that. She was unique in that group—not only was she one of the few female artists of the Impressionists but she was the only American artist to be admitted into that group for their exhibitions.

LINDA: I understand that Cassatt painted a lot of women—a lot of household women doing household things, and here she's reading. That seems like a pretty modern concept for the time with the increased literacy among women, is that the case?

MINDY: Well, you have a few good points in that question and one is that Mary Cassatt did tend to paint women, friends, people that she knew, children and a lot of times in interior settings. Part of that was the restrictions on women of her level in society had a lot less freedom to mill about Paris at the time. It wouldn't have been proper for her as a female—a single female—to go wandering around. She couldn't have gone wandering around by herself—she would have needed an escort. That really hampered on her freedom so her subjects are things that are a little more intimate, a little more known to her, closer to home.

MINDY CONTINUES: So in one case we might say ‘oh this is a familiar scene; it's an interior subject; it must be someone that she knows and she's reading’. You could leave it at that but this is also a modern woman reading so it tells us some things about maybe even Mary Cassatt's views but certainly the views of the woman that is reading. Novel[s] rose to new heights of popularity at the time. They had cheap editions, they were published in thousands and the discrepancy between men and women in literacy levels in France and many other countries at the time had almost disappeared. So this female reading as a pastime was a great subject for many artists at the time.

LINDA: I think then reading also signified one status that you had time and leisure to read.

MINDY: Yeah also part of the modern life would be that you would work shorter hours so there was a little more leisure time to do activities in Paris such as visit the park, take an afternoon outing, read a book.

LINDA: I understand however that some people thought of reading—particularly women's reading reading of novels—was frivolous or even a dangerous pastime for women.

MINDY: It's an interesting thing to point out that she is reading a novel as if this was a frivolous pastime—perhaps something that would be more acceptable might be reading religious texts. Women weren't often portrayed reading the newspaper—that seemed to be a pastime that was reserved for men.

MINDY CONTINUES: You know, really putting the business on the men's side [and] the books, the frivolous pastimes on the women's side. It's hard to believe that what you were reading would have even been a clue to the gender divisions at the time in society.

[End of Stop]

The Reader, Mary Cassatt

Track 2: More About Mary

LINDA DEBERRY: Tell me a little bit about Mary Cassatt, what was her life like?

MINDY BESAW: Mary Cassatt was born in Philadelphia, but she lived most of her life in France. So we might ask as an American artist, what what is her lasting importance for us here in the United States? Some of that is because she was remarkable in that group of men Impressionists in France, it's being a woman, being an American. The other important part of Mary Cassatt and her whole family is they were instrumental in bringing Impressionism to the United States. She talked to a lot of collectors in the United States, advised them on which paintings to buy and then these end up in collections like the Art Institute of Chicago, which has one of the best collections of French Impressionism in the U.S.—some of that is because of the Cassatt family.

LINDA: Was she a feminist, a feminine activist in any way?

MINDY: I think you could certainly read into what she was doing as feminist activist. I'm not sure that she would have ever celebrated herself that way, because again it was very against her societal standing to proclaim that. I can imagine that she was frustrated with the limitations placed on women at the time and therefore painting a lot of interior scenes or intimate scenes. I also hesitate to read too much into that because we tend to categorize ‘oh she's a female; she was painting interior scenes or just people that she knew.’ It really would not be Mary Cassatt if she was painting other things, and so sometimes we have to be careful about our 21st century views overlaying on artists of the time.

[End of Stop]

Black-breasted Plovercrest, Martin Johnson Heade

Track 1: The Artist as Naturalist

LINDA DEBERRY: So I understand that these paintings were more than just a collection of beautiful paintings they were also a really ambitious project, because he had to do so much travel to see these birds in the wild but also, to capture the colors and the iridescence of their feathers he had to come up with some pretty special paints.

MINDY BESAW: Yeah, Martin Johnson Heade was an amateur naturalist and a self-proclaimed fan of hummingbirds. He had painted as many species as there were in the United States and knew to really find more he needed to travel to South America. So Martin Johnson Heade traveled down to Brazil in 1863 to 1864, with the primary intent of studying and painting hummingbirds.

MINDY CONTINUES: It's interesting because Martin Johnson Heade is not only a painter but the naturalism, the obsession with birds, [and] this part of American art that we don't think about as much today was very much a part of his personality as well. Then of course you have the simple fact that you have to travel to South America in the 1860s to even find the species to paint. So yes, a remarkable undertaking, for really what amounts to tiny intimate beautiful little paintings.

LINDA: I've heard that nobody really knows how he captured those colors, is that true?

MINDY: Well I certainly don't know how he captured those colors. He was a bit obsessed by getting the layers of paint the luminosity of the feathers to really come through the brightness that was shown in those red feathers [and] the pink feathers and just being able to convince a viewer that you were looking at the real hummingbird.

LINDA: I think that he meant to reproduce these as a set similar to Audubon's Birds of America. What happened with that?

MINDY: Well we have to remember that he's traveling to Brazil in 1863 and 1864 which is also the height of the Civil War. How those publications tend to work was that you would get funders to subscribe to the publication, they would really have to invest the money upfront really having the faith that you would deliver, so that's how John James Audubon's publications came to fruition. Martin Johnson Heade was having trouble getting a lot of investors because of the time period of the Civil War, so that's probably one reason that it didn't happen, but another reason it didn't happen is that once Heade was done in Brazil he went to London to start working with printers.

MINDY CONTINUES: He was going to use the new process of chromolithography. Chromolithography could convey not only the black and white drawing of the work but also should have been able to render the color. Martin Johnson Heade was a bit of a perfectionist [and] those prints never quite met his high expectations when it came to luminosity of the feathers [and] really conveying the color to his expectations and high standards.

LINDA: So none of them were ever printed.

MINDY: There are some prints here and there but it was never printed as a bound volume as this ornithological book that would have been sold to subscribers that never came to fruition.

[End of Stop]

Black-breasted Plovercrest, Martin Johnson Heade

Track 2: More Than Just Birds

LINDA DEBERRY: Was there anything else that came from his travels in Brazil?

MINDY BESAW: Martin Johnson Heade painted landscapes while he was down there. Certainly as we can see he painted all of the specimens—his studies of the hummingbirds.

What makes his paintings so unique and I think what we can really see with his time in Brazil is he spends as much time capturing the habitats—the landscape of South America—as he does studying the hummingbirds. Each of these paintings is almost like two paintings in one. Other artists who were painting birds would focus more on the bird and maybe a few of the little details.

MINDY CONTINUES: You can see how the tendrils of certain leaves might come out or we know where the nest is in comparison to usually a male and female bird together so we can see all of the species—that might have been where others stopped. Martin Johnson Heade painted a full landscape and then seems to almost overlay that landscape with his details of the hummingbirds.

[End of Stop]

Capri Girl on a Rooftop, John Singer Sargent

Track 1: Artists in Capri

LINDA DEBERRY: The title of this Capri Girl on a Rooftop, tells me that it was painted in Capri, where exactly is Capri?

MINDY BESAW: Capri is a small island off the Italian coast in the Gulf of Naples.

LINDA: So he must have been quite a well-traveled fellow—what brought him there?

MINDY: He came to Capri early in his career. One of the remarkable things even about this painting is that he was only 22 years old when he painted it, so it just it really shows you his innate skills as an artist. Capri was a popular resort destination for European artists in the nineteenth century. I think Sargent's painting can even show us why—it looks like it was beautiful there.

It was popular with a lot of other travelers too—for example there were many artists that traveled to Capri. There were even art studios that were created on the island of Capri because artists would go there and enjoy. And you can imagine if there are other artists there, it would create a really exciting place to be. So not only just the beauty of the landscape and the light but you would get to hang out with your fellow artists as well.

MINDY CONTINUES: The dancer is a Capri local that Sargent painted several times, Rosina Ferreira, he seemed to be really struck with her profile so she tends to be painted in profile. She also tends to be painted in the midst of this dance that she's doing here on the top of the building.

She's dancing the tarantella—a kind of folk dance with light rapid footwork. The figure to our left was likely accompanying her by music that had a very fast upbeat tempo—perhaps singing [and] playing that tambourine. We can almost see her mouth open. So these two figures give us a bit of the action of the scene in an otherwise very still and static painting.

[End of Stop]

Capri Girl on a Rooftop, John Singer Sargent

Track 2: A Bold Use of White

LINDA DEBERRY: One of the things that I noticed about this painting that I point out to people is how we get this idea that there are white buildings on the mountainside but they're just strokes of white paint. Is this a different style than he had shown elsewhere?

MINDY BESAW: We can see that Sargent is being influenced by Impressionism here so using just dabs of paint to really give us a sense of a building. But exactly—if you look closely especially look at even the setting sun—it's just one big glob of paint right there in the sky. Going back to Sargent's innate talent as an artist he uses a lot of white in this painting. It seems almost counterintuitive that you would make the whole almost half of the painting white—on the bottom; the sky is almost white; the white of the sun.

MINDY CONTINUES: And as you said then that rhythm of the white buildings that seem to be peppering the hillsides in the—background this was a very bold move in creating a composition but he made it work.

LINDA: I see that there's some writing down there in the left hand corner too in red. What's that about?

MINDY: It says “To my friend Fanny—John Singer Sargent.” So the painting was a gift from Sargent to his childhood friend Frances Sherborne Ridley Watts. She was another member of a group of American expatriates living in Europe.

[End of Stop]

Plexus No. 27, Gabriel Dawe

Track 1: About Dawe

LINDA DEBERRY: Gabriel Dawe made this work specifically for Crystal Bridges, is that right?

ALEJO BENEDETTI: That is correct.

LINDA: And it debuted in the 2014 exhibition State of the Art. What can you tell us about Dawe and how he came to make this work for the space?

ALEJO: Yeah, so, Gabriel Dawe is a Dallas-based artist, and we first came in contact with him for State of the Art which was this big contemporary show that we did in 2014 and our thinking was, you know, great art is happening all across the US, it's not just in New York and LA, and so we went to over a thousand artists' studios.

ALEJO CONTINUES: Gabriel Dawe was one of them, and his story is really pretty amazing in terms of how he got to making these massive installations. So he was born in Mexico, grew up there, and [short pause] he has this very vivid memory of going in and seeing his grandmother teaching his sister how to sew. [short pause] And he said, "Grandma, can you teach me how to do that?" and she said, "No that's only for girls. Boys don't learn how to sew," and that always stuck with him. And by the time he got into college and he's starting to think about, "Okay, how do I function as an artist? What's really interesting to me?" He had that memory, and he said, "All right, well, if boys don't sew, I'm still going to use all that material that I'm going to explode it out into real space. I'm going to take up tons of space with this thread."

[End of Stop]

Plexus No. 27, Gabriel Dawe

Track 2: Process and Installation

LINDA DEBERRY: So, how is this made? I can't imagine how that could be done and how long it must have taken him to do it.

[short pause]

ALEJO BENEDETTI: Yeah, so, the way that he did it is that after coming and seeing this space, seeing this stairwell, he set up this system of "eye" hooks that you can see all around the stairwell, and then he took 13 miles of string and he got up on a ladder and he had this long rod and he went back and forth, back and forth for an entire week. And we actually have a pretty interesting video of him doing that, if you want to check on the app, it's included here. [short pause] But this is just part of his process. It takes a long time for him to construct these.

[pause]

LINDA: It's really beautiful but it's also unexpected. And it must really captivate people when they think they're just coming down a regular stairwell and then there's this amazing thing.

ALEJO: Absolutely. Yeah, so, actually one of my favorite things to do is go and stand in this space and watch the reaction that people have and it's so funny, because you see them walk down the stairs, and then they say "Whoa," and then grab out their phone and start taking pictures. And I totally understand that impulse, makes perfect sense, but this is my best defense as to why folks need to come and see our work in person, because no picture can do this work justice, can do the experience justice, because, if you stand on one side, it's totally different from standing anywhere else.

ALEJO CONTINUES: And so, in order to understand this work and actually experience this work, you have to be there in person. It's spectacle used the best way spectacle could possibly be used.

[End of Stop]

Trois noirs sure un rouge (Three Blacks Over Red), Alexander Calder

Track 1: Calder and Europe

LINDA DEBERRY: Alexander Calder was a very famous artist; his work is in many collections worldwide. Interestingly, I hear he was practically born into the art world. Can you tell me a little about his life and his early career?

LAUREN HAYNES: Calder's father and grandfather were sculptors who worked in figurative bronzes, and his grandfather contributed to the monumental statue of William Penn that's on the dome of the Philadelphia City Hall, and by the age of nine Calder had his own workshop and is making jewelry for his sister's dolls.

LAUREN CONTINUES: He later went to school for engineering and he became fascinated with antique astronomical devices and models of the solar system and then he went to Europe and met many of the modern artists that he would become inspired by, and in 1931 he went to Piet Mondrian's studio, who was one of his greatest influences, and that really led him to think a lot about abstract sculpture and bright colors.

[pause]

LINDA: Okay so Europe had a big influence on Calder, and I understand it was through meeting French artist Marcel Duchamp that he began making his signature work, the mobiles. Was that related also with some of the instruments he was tinkering with earlier?

LAUREN: Yes and Duchamp was the one who sort of coined this term in 1931, to describe Calder's work, because it moved - this idea of something being mobile and he also talked a lot about these differences between this idea of a mobile and a standing mobile and something that was stable, but they all share these qualities of movement and animation.

[End of Stop]

Trois noirs sure un rouge (Three Blacks Over Red), Alexander Calder

Track 2: Calder as Designer

LINDA DEBERRY: So I know that Calder, he's well known for his mobile's but he made a lot of different things I mean from the jewelry and then large architectural things…[short pause] Can you tell me a little bit about some of those other projects he did?

LAUREN HAYNES: Calder was a designer and he played with space and scale in a variety of forms. His jewelry included organic forms and brass wires such as spirals and curves, and it's interesting because this is a form that's been seen in art since the time of cave paintings and the jewelry was simply made by bending wire together and not any other tools, but what he was able to accomplish with this was kind of fascinating.

[pause]

LAUREN CONTINUES: This idea of Calder being interested in motion and play, he also had a taste for theater, so he sculpted the dancer Josephine Baker, and he worked as a stage hand and he created sets for Martha Graham, who was a modern dancer in the 1930s, and then in 1968, he created Work-in-Progress, a ballet where his mobiles took the place of dancers. He also even delved into architecture, creating ceiling designs and acoustic patterns for cultural spaces. Ultimately he wanted existence to be an aesthetic environment that you experienced through a combination of senses, materials, and movement in space. So everything that you were experiencing was being influenced by everything else around you.

[End of Stop]

Madawaska – Acadian Light Heavy, Marsden Hartley

Track 1: Portrait of a Maine Boxer

LINDA DEBERRY: So, the title of this work is "Madawaska," is that the name of . . . [pause] Who is this person, is that his name? And what does the title have to do with who he is?

JEN PADGETT: The title is actually "Madawaska--Acadian Light-Heavy," and while it appears to depict a figure, that title doesn't tell us very much about who this individual is. The artist Marsden Hartley was interested in depicting this person as a kind of representative figure. He had traveled back to his native Maine in the latter part of his career, in the 1930's and the 1940's, and often chose the rugged, hard-working individuals of Maine as his subjects. So, this young man was an unnamed figure who was a boxer, and you get that sense of his athleticism from his rather strong build.

JEN CONTINUES: You've got these really broad shoulders, he's got very large hands. Hartley emphasizes the hands and you get that sense of his strength and his ability. So, not only is he an athlete, a boxer, but you might also imagine that in the Maine woods, he is out splitting logs and engaged in a lot of physical activity.

LINDA: Yeah, he has this appearance of being, [pause] well, really buff for the time period I think, but also he's presented sort of lovingly. I think maybe that's why I thought maybe he would have a name. Who was he to Hartley? Was this somebody that he knew and why maybe he chose to depict this particular guy?

[pause]

JEN: You're right that there is something very sensitive about the portrayal, how we have that strong light coming in from the left-hand side that illuminates the figure, you get that sense that Hartley was looking at him very carefully and observing him. But the title really has three parts: "Madawaska," which is the town in Maine, the small town that Hartley visited and where this boxer lived; "Acadian," which is a kind of person of French descent. So, people of French descent who had been expelled from Canada in the 1750's were "Acadian," and many of them had moved to Maine, so that's the kind of second part of the title; and then "Light-Heavy" refers to his boxing class, his kind of size. So, you have those three elements that give a descriptive background about the figure, but not very much about him.

[End of Stop]

Madawaska – Acadian Light Heavy, Marsden Hartley

Track 2: A Queer Eye

LINDA DEBERRY: There is something a little bit erotic about this guy too. I understand that Hartley was a homosexual man, does that play into the work at all?

JEN PADGETT: Absolutely, and you might be thinking about the period in which Hartley was painting that expressions of homosexuality were considered very taboo or very illicit. That, expressing that sexuality through art was something that Hartley had to do in veiled ways. So, in painting an image of a very masculine figure, during the period, [pause] the perhaps straight viewer of this work wouldn't pick up on that homoerotic quality but instead think "Ah, yes. A very masculine boxer, that's a very manly subject."

JEN CONTINUES: And the stereotypes of homosexuality at that time wouldn't have registered in this kind of image but of course for Hartley, who really admired the masculine beauty of this figure and foregrounds him as somebody who is strong and who is really this iconic figure, that it definitely has that homoerotic quality to it; that he was interested in male beauty and foregrounding that.

LINDA: So he might have been speaking two different ways to two different audiences. This is almost like a code that might have been picked up and read differently by different people who viewed it.

JEN: I think that's very true, and it really adds to the complexity of the image and the idea that we can see a variety of things in it.

[End of Stop]

Madawaska – Acadian Light Heavy, Marsden Hartley

Track 3: Marsden's Variety of Styles

LINDA DEBERRY: I've seen some of the other Marsden Hartley artworks in the collection. There's several of them, which is wonderful, but they are really widely divergent. This one is almost realistic compared to the others. Can you talk to me a little bit about that wide variety of styles in his work?

JEN PADGETT: Sure, Hartley was a great experimenter. He was very active in trying to innovate and discover new approaches to painting. So, at some point in his career, that meant that he moved to something that was entirely abstract, creating images that are mostly made of symbols all together that result in a very flat kind of painting.

JEN CONTINUES: At other times, he looked to American folk art and to European folk art as inspiration and we have works that are reverse oil on glass paintings, in which he depicts flowers in this very kind of simplified language of form that recalls this folk art style of painting. But in this image, you're right, that he is doing this very bold, figurative subject and doing it in a way that uses some of those lessons from abstraction: having those hard, dark edges to the figure that make him stand out and help kind of flatten him against this nondescript background, that's just this bold red color. But that idea that he had a variety of different styles that he experimented with through his career, that, we see in a really wonderful way in our collection because we have a range of works by him.

LINDA: It would be a lot of fun to go through and find some of those works by Hartley and compare those styles.

JEN: Absolutely, it shows you his immense creative ability and just the different kind of approaches he took depending on whether his subject might be a still life or a landscape, a figure, or something that has no kind of reference to something that we might see in the outside world.

[End of Stop]

Blackwell's Island, Edward Hopper

Track 1: Blackwell's Island

LINDA DEBERRY: So [pause], we're standing in front of a painting by one of the best-known American artists of the twentieth century: Edward Hopper. I just love this guy, and before we jump into the beautiful painting, Margi, can you tell us a little bit about Edward Hopper and why he's so important?

MARGI CONRADS: Sure, Hopper started his early career as a commercial illustrator, and from that work, he became a really skilled draftsman; Hopper knew how to draw. He also learned about how to capture the essence of a subject through line and composition, and those two aspects of his art live across his entire career. He studied with the noted New York artist Robert Henri, and Henri brought a new way of thinking about art in America. They looked at all of America, and particularly the daily life of New York City.

LINDA: So let's jump into the painting. What are we looking at here? Why did Hopper choose this particular scene and is this characteristic of his work?

MARGI: Well, it's interesting how Hopper had Blackwell's Island brought to his attention. Actually his teacher, Robert Henri, had painted Blackwell's Island in 1900, and Hopper himself made his first image of Blackwell's Island in 1911. So Crystal Bridges' painting is from 1928, so it's a good, you know, more than 15 years later. But it's a subject that really was of interest to him.

LINDA: I think it's fair to say this location doesn't seem very friendly. What can you tell us about Blackwell's Island?

MARGI: In the 1920's when he was [pause] painting the scene, the primary buildings on the island were a penitentiary and a general hospital. It was interesting, New York City decided to use the secluded location to build institutions for both the physically and the mentally needy and they were places of rehabilitation. And so, there was kind of this tri-part complex: Part penitentiary, part mental asylum and part general hospital. And those are the buildings that you see in the painting and those buildings you can still see today. Now, in 1971, the island got another name and it's the name by which most people today are familiar and that is Roosevelt Island.

[End of Stop]

Blackwell's Island, Edward Hopper

Track 2: Hopper's Iconic Style

LINDA DEBERRY: How does this painting, in particular, reflect Hopper's overall body of work? What are some of the characteristic elements of his style that we see here?

MARGI CONRADS: This does have many of the characteristics of his overall style and I think it's interesting to note that this painting was kind of a break out painting for Hopper. In 1928 he already had a wonderful reputation. He was a rising big star, but a couple of things happened that really gained this picture as being an expression of his signature style. And that signature style included things like connecting the recognizable with the anonymous. This painting was shown in New York and most people would be familiar with Blackwell's Island. The flip side is, except for the person in the boat, the buildings, the place looks totally anonymous and uninhabited.

MARGI CONTINUES: And the other thing that he creates is kind of this overall sensation of quiet that is not a relaxed quiet. It's kind of an anxious quiet. Here he focuses on buildings of the dispossessed, sort of the outcasts of society and underscores that feeling of isolation. So here, if you're a viewer that knows what these buildings were used for, it immediately takes you to someplace which is not really a happy picture. And so he creates these tensions by playing off to [pause] oppose . . . what you might see as opposing elements. You know, there's the water and its liquidness and the hard edge architecture. There's nature. There's that beautiful sky and beautiful water versus man-made buildings and bridge. There's light versus dark and there's also the monochromatic sort of a single color versus combinations of color and that's interesting by having the blue of the water and the sky and then you have the many more varied colors in the island and its buildings. 'Cause if you look, even though it strikes you as being kind of dark, if you look, there are wonderful oranges and pinks and yellows that come out.

LINDA: You know, there are some great details in here about the juxtaposition of the light and the dark. I think that's what adds to that sense of foreboding, because it's so light in some areas, dark in others, and you get that feeling of there being this sharp divide, this distance. Like something ominous is about to happen. It's kind of wonderful.

MARGI: It's interesting because Hopper does not paint in an extremely detailed manner, and yet he gives us enough information through shape, light, color, line, that we know exactly what we're looking at.

[End of Stop]

Blackwell's Island, Edward Hopper

Track 3: How Hopper Made this Painting

LINDA DEBERRY: So Margi, can you tell me a little bit about how Hopper worked? What was his process?

MARGI CONRADS: Hopper was an incredibly deliberate painter. He planned his canvases extremely carefully. There was a wonderful remark by a critic when the painting was first shown at the Rehn Gallery in 1929. He said about Hopper's painting: "This is an art of selection, of proper emphasis, of painstaking arrangement." And that is Hopper's art to a "T". Hopper would go out and about and he would sketch out in the city and nature, but he created his paintings in his studio. There were about, at least, five existing sketches that were created before he ever put paint on this canvas and they range from a small sketch of a building to a general composition with color notes to a sketch of the pilot boat to a full compositional study without the boat.

MARGI CONTINUES: And what the studies do is they tend to capture a moment or the scene but without the mystery part that we feel very deeply in the painting. He may have gone out and sketched all sorts of different things, but when he got into the studio, that actual experience that he had then gets filtered through his eye, through his brain, through his heart to become the picture that we have today. I love what Hopper said when [pause] Blackwell's Island was part of an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1933. And a critic from the New York Times quoted Hopper with saying that he was "seeking something inside me and something outside, 'to personalize the rain pipe.'" And I think that he was able to say in just that short phrase exactly what he was trying to get at in his art, is that he wanted something that was coming from his internal personality but it also was something that was so universal. And I think that that feeling of loneliness, isolation, separation has to do with the temper of the times in which he lived in as well as how he saw himself in the world.

[End of Stop]

Ambulance Call, Jacob Lawrence

Track 1: Painting as Storytelling

LINDA DEBERRY: This image by Jacob Lawrence is so brightly colored. There's bright red, there's yellow, there's blue, there's really hot white in the middle and yet, it's not necessarily a happy picture, it has a real somber look. Can you tell us a little bit about what's going on in this image?

KENTRELL CURRY: Yeah, I'll first start off by saying that Jacob Lawrence is a storyteller. So, what we are seeing here is a scene where we have been placed into a story of something that is already happening. So, what we have here is a man on a stretcher and he's being taken out of this building. This is in Harlem, so you see this physician who is monitoring him as they're moving him out. And you see all these people gathered around for this sort of spectation almost.

KENTRELL CONTINUES: This whole sort of gathering here could be evidence of the amount of time that it took them to get to this scene, it could be evidence of just the number of community members who are already in the area just because the community may have been really close-knit, especially when it comes to health situations.

[pause]

LINDA: One of the things I noticed about this is how angular it is. Everybody is sort of stacked up, you can see everybody's faces, but it's not. . . it's not realistic. It's almost like they're paper dolls, stacked up one behind another. What can you tell me about the style that the artist was playing with in creating this image?

KENTRELL: Lawrence is actually looking at his community in a lot of ways, so you see this sort of juxtaposition between these blacks and browns and these really sort of vibrant colors. This is really Lawrence's attempt to liven up the community and really show people that this is a vibrant community. He actually was taught by a number of people. Charles Austin, I believe, is one of those artists and they speak about how he's such an original in his work and in his design that they don't want to give him these sort of boundaries or sort of academic touches that they are giving some of the other students who are creating at this time. So, you really see Jacob Lawrence exploring his own depiction of Harlem and really exploring his own ideas and interpretations of those scenes.

[End of Stop]

Ambulance Call, Jacob Lawrence

Track 2: A Vibrant Community

LINDA DEBERRY: This would have been a fairly unusual depiction of an African American community. What do you think his message is here? What does he want us to notice?

KENTRELL CURRY: What I think that he's really trying to speak on is that the black community is no different from any other community. You know, he's saying that we all have these same issues. We all go through pain and agony, but we also have happy moments as well. So, you look at some of his other works and you'll see that, he's not only depicting these moments of sadness, but he's also really showing you this wide variety and this wide range of experiences in the black community, and that's actually even evident in the people who you see surrounding the stretcher and this physician.

KENTRELL CONTINUES: You can look at the things that they're wearing, they really show you that the African American experience is not this sort of monolithic thing. You'll see that almost all of the hats are different, the eyes really give you different stories and different feelings and then you add this idea of outfit and color into that as well, and you also see variety there.

LINDA: So these same people that have turned out for this unfortunate accident for this guy might be the same people that showed up at his christening, or his wedding, or his graduation. They're all there in support, one way or another.

KENTRELL: Right, exactly, because community is such an important part for Lawrence. He spent the majority of his life in Harlem actually, so this is the community that has been with him and stuck with him as long as he has been creating, definitely.

KENTRELL CONTINUES: So, if you look at his work, he's always trying to highlight the African American experience but only to equivocate it to the experiences of others who are also living in this same time period.

[End of Stop]

Ambulance Call, Jacob Lawrence

Track 3: Lawrence's Style

LINDA DEBERRY: The figures here seem to be stacked up, or the perspective is funny because we can see the man on the stretcher almost as if we're looking down on him. We also see all the people lined up as if they're standing on stairs. So, is that perspective part of what made Lawrence's work so modern?

KENTRELL CURRY: Yeah, definitely. The perspective is a pretty big part of this sort of modern field that we have here with Lawrence's work, but other things that we can really point out to are the flatness and blockiness of the figures as well as the colors being used in the painting itself. These things would have been Jacob's own sort of exploration into depicting these scenes. You also see that the way that the faces are even being created so that the emotion that you're seeing on the faces is being depicted in a very, sort of, minimal way.

KENTRELL CONTINUES: You're not being given all of this information about the face, but you're being given enough to really tell you how a person may be feeling. So, it really is modern in those sorts of ways.

LINDA: It's remarkable how much can be conveyed with just a little bit of highlighting in one eye. I noticed that several of the figures only have one eye that we can see, and yet he is able with such minor details to not only give us that feeling of being somber but also to really delineate what these different kinds of people are. We see there's a worker. There's this, seems like, an older woman in the pearls. There's a child, an older man in black in front with all these little tiny details. He's made each one of these figures completely individual even though they're so stylized. It's really a wonderful painting.

[End of Stop]

Little Joe with Cow, Yasuo Kuniyoshi

Track 1: A Variety of Influences

STACE TREAT: So here we are in front of Little Joe with Cow by Yasuo Kuniyoshi, who is a really interesting American artist. I want to ask you though, what you think of this image. What do you see in it?

LINDA DEBERRY: Well, I look here and I see this little boy who seems to be almost protectively touching this cow like, there's definitely a close relationship between the boy and the cow. They both are kind of looking at us a little . . . a little anxiously maybe? A little fearfully and, and also it has this . . . the cow is kind of at a tipped angle. She looks like a child's drawing almost. There's a real flat kind of child-like quality to that.

STACE: This is an image that you can really see multiple influences by the artist. Now, Kuniyoshi was a Japanese American artist, he lived in Japan until the age of sixteen and so most of the art that he saw up until that point was Japanese-style art. And so that kind of influence was very strong. You can see over the back of the cow's back, that landscape that's sort of wistful in the back and then it sharply curves around. You can see some of that Japanese style there, but another thing is that you can see the influence of American folk art.

LINDA: (consenting) Mmmmm.

STACE: This was, often times, itinerant painters that would go from town to town, and they would paint portraits of people, of families, of children.

STACE CONTINUES: And these stylistically tend to be very, kind of, flat, almost like you can see Little Joe as you described him. So, you see these, all these different kinds of influences coming together in this really unique style, that really was specific to Kuniyoshi.

[End of Stop]

Little Joe with Cow, Yasuo Kuniyoshi

Track 2: Born in a Cow Year

LINDA DEBERRY: It's got a kind of a somber look and yet again, like the cow and the boy are so protective. Does he have some relationship to this cow? I mean, is there a story here?

[pause]

STACE TREAT: Well, you got it right on. This actually is one of about sixty works that Kuniyoshi did in his early years depicting cows. He was born in a cow year, according to the Japanese calendar, and he always had this affinity for cows, even though there weren't particularly a lot of them in Japan. But he did spend several years making drawings, sketches, paintings with cows. He went through a cow period, if you will, and this painting is actually the largest painting and the largest cow of his works.

STACE CONTINUES: And it is really interesting how the boy is completely enveloped by the cow. If you look at the paint, the only part that is not subsumed by the cow are his legs that sort of stand in for the cow's front leg, it's almost as if he's coming out of the earth. It's almost like he's planted with the cow, and of course protectively patting the cow there. You've got all these wonderful greens and golds. There's distortions. You've got large seed pods. You've got a really kind of big plant next to a small tree. So, he's doing all the sort of whimsical things in this image.

[End of Stop]

Little Joe with Cow, Yasuo Kuniyoshi

Track 3: Citizen Kuniyoshi

LINDA DEBERRY: Those are very American images, the farming, the whole farming thing and the cow, but you said he was Japanese. Was he . . . did he become an American citizen?

STACE TREAT: Well, actually he didn't and that's kind of a bit of a tragic story. Kuniyoshi came to America when he was sixteen years old and he enrolled in high school in Los Angeles, and his art teacher actually noticed his natural talent and really encouraged him in art. And, Kuniyoshi was desperate to become an American citizen. He believed in the American way of life, he came here to, you know, basically try to seek his fortune. The typical American dream. Part of what the problem was, was American laws did not allow at the time Japanese nationals to become citizens.

STACE CONTINUES: And so he fought all of his life, he sought to get citizenship and never did. In fact, the law changed the year after he passed away. So, it's a bit of a tragic story, but he always gravitated toward American themes. Kuniyoshi was a very successful and sought-after artist. In fact, in 1947 I believe, or 1948, he was the first living artist to get a retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

LINDA: I did not know that. If he was that popular at the time, why do you think he's become a little obscure? Because this is not an artist that I'm familiar with.

STACE: It's a good question. Part of the problem was World War II, being a Japanese person in the United States, he was on the East Coast in New York, so he didn't actually go to one of the relocation camps like a lot of Japanese on the West Coast ended up in.

STACE CONTINUES: But, he was considered an enemy alien by the US government during World War II, and that did have a very strong effect on him. I think the poignant thing to remember is that Kuniyoshi is such a unique and remarkable American artist, of the time because of his really unique blending of different influences. You've got European masters, you've got American folk art, you've got Japanese style and idiom, and he just puts it all together in this really wonderful way. As we can see here with Little Joe and his cow.

[End of Stop]

Silver Upper White River, Maya Lin

Track 1: Lin’s artwork

LINDA DEBERRY: A lot of people are familiar with Maya Lin because she designed the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. when she was still a student - and you can see an image of that on your device, if you like.

Alejo, can you explain a little bit more about her career and how it developed?

[pause]

ALEJO BENEDETTI: Yeah, so she is definitely best known for the Vietnam Memorial, [in] 1982, she's still a student, and actually the sort of famous story that goes along with it is that she was in class, her professor comes in and says,

ALEJO CONTINUES: "All right there's [an] open call for this memorial. I'm going to do it and I think my students should as well." And again sort of famously Maya Lin enters the competition, beats her professor, and this is the starting point of her career, but she's obviously done lots of work. Up to the present she continues working, and her focus has kind of shifted over the years. She's become very interested in environmental issues, and she still does some sort of large-scale public works, but a lot of the things are in some way tied back to these environmental concerns.

[pause]

LINDA: This is a scale model of the White River which runs just north of Bentonville and up into Missouri. I think there's a good story about how she came to create this work specifically for Crystal Bridges.

ALEJO: Yeah, there certainly is. So we actually asked Maya Lin to come out for a summit that we were having, a big sort of think tank for a number of art world folks. And she flew in and was looking out the window of the plane and saw this sort of bizarre, craggly kind of water system. She lands and first thing she does is -- she's at lunch with with Alice Walton and she says, "Hey you know I saw this amazing water system, what was that?" and she says, "Oh it was the upper White River. It's actually this major water source it runs through Missouri and Arkansas." And Maya Lin said, "I'd love to do a work inspired by that," and so, you know, that's sort of the beginning of it. Many conversations and paperwork later we arrived at a commissioned work, which is really something special.

[End of Stop]

Silver Upper White River, Maya Lin

Track 2: Materials and Installation

LINDA DEBERRY: And how is this made? I understand it's made from reclaimed silver, or recycled silver

ALEJO BENEDETTI: Right.

LINDA: But I can't even imagine how she made this. Tell me what you know about that.

ALEJO: Yeah, so, working alongside a number of her studio assistants, they spread out a large map on the floor of the studio, and then they mapped the actual course of the river so that it's all accurate, and then that's what became the model for pouring in the molten silver.

[short pause]

LINDA: So they must have taken a great deal of time. And why this spot? Why did you choose this place to put it?

ALEJO: She's so interested in the environment. She's so interested in how the environment affects us and how we understand it. [short pause] We had identified this spot where we get natural light coming in from the windows all the time [short pause] and actually, one of the best sorts of experiences for seeing this work is when you're walking through and if the sun is just right and it's playing off the water, you start to see this reflection that sort of dances right along the silver, just like if it was a river that you were seeing from above with the sun sort of dancing on it as well.

LINDA: It's like our water is sort of playing with the water of the rivers.

ALEJO: Absolutely.

LINDA: That's wonderful.

[End of Stop]

Untitled, Joan Mitchell

Track 1: Mitchell's Unique Style

LINDA DEBERRY: Okay, it seems like there's more than meets the eye going on in this particular abstract work. So who was Joan Mitchell and what was she doing?

LAUREN HAYNES: Joan Mitchell was an artist who was working at this time where different styles were starting to become more prevalent in the United States, and she split her time between New York City and France. So, you can see when you look at a lot of her work, European influences, artists like Matisse and Van Gogh. [short pause] She was part of a school of artists called Abstract Expressionists, artists who were working abstractly, but also with works that were conveying some sort of emotion that you were supposed to get as you were looking at it as well, as what they were thinking when they were creating it.

LAUREN CONTINUES: Abstract Expressionism is known as being a very male-dominated painting style, as many painting styles were at that particular time, and so as a female artist she was able to put her foot, in a way, into that conversation and make her own style and have her own voice present.

LINDA: So what is it about Mitchell's work that's different from other Abstract Expressionists?

LAUREN: You know it's really big work, and you can see it feeling almost chaotic at times, but she has a lot of control. So her work was much more controlled and intentional than we think a lot about Ab-Ex art as well. There is also an importance of landscape and nature in her work, so as you look at it even though it's a very abstract work and you can't [short pause] see what it is and it's called Untitled-so you realize that there's not even a clue in that respect-but you can think about nature and movement when you look at that work.

LINDA: I understand that Joan Mitchell had synesthesia and also an eidetic memory is that true?

LAUREN: I have also heard that, so I think it's a really interesting thing to think about and this idea of her hearing, seeing, and tasting, and experiencing in a variety of ways as it comes out in her work.

[End of Stop]

Untitled, Ruth Asawa

Track 1: Intricate Forms

LINDA DEBERRY: Okay, these hanging sculptures by Ruth Asawa, they're actually made of wire, they're made of metal, but they don't look heavy at all. What is she doing here?

ALEJO BENEDETTI: It is woven metal and so because of that you can actually see that some of these basket forms are actually inside others. So, she's not hiding anything, and she's not trying to make it feel like this very weighty, heavy object. It has all that space in between and you can you can see that when you just look at the object but also when you look at the shadows that are playing on the wall. It's not just a silhouette you can actually start to see all of the very delicate weaving work.

LINDA: Now, there's a story about Ruth Asawa. She has an Arkansas connection, I understand, and not a very pleasant one, but that experience that she had seems to have informed her work in a way.

ALEJO: Absolutely, yeah, so Ruth Asawa was a Japanese-American artist, and when she was a child during World War II, she and her family were sent to an internment camp in California and while she was there, [short pause] horrific time, obviously, but she met some of the Disney animators, and they would have these little classes for some of the kids and encourage them to draw, and this was her first encounter with art making. And soon after she was transferred to an internment camp here in Arkansas at Rohwer relocation camp. But if you look at interviews that she does later in life, she has this amazing spirit and this amazing outlook on life, which is incredible. She says, "Even in the most horrific times, you can find beauty," and something that she does with her work, she's using these cold, hard materials.

ALEJO CONTINUES: She's using metal, but she uses metal in a way that is beautiful and she uses metal in a way that that appears soft and this sort of balancing act that she's able to do-between the hard and the soft and the beautiful and the dangerous-that is really the hallmark of her work. That's what makes it so incredible and powerful.

[End of Stop]

Lunar Rendezvous, Alma Thomas

Track 1: Thomas's Life

LINDA DEBERRY: Okay so this bright colorful work is by an artist that some of us may not have heard of before, Alma Thomas. She kind of got acclaim [for her art] late in life.

LAUREN HAYNES: Alma Thomas was an artist who was born in Columbus, Georgia, but very early in life her family moved to Washington D.C. and that's where she spent her childhood as well as all of her adult life, and she was always interested in arts and connected to art. She took classes as a child; she taught junior high school art for about 35 years, and during all this time she was also making her own work, but not necessarily in a professional way. She wasn't showing or trying to sell, she was really just very much involved with the arts that were happening in D.C. and a very important part of that community.

LAUREN CONTINUES: And then, when she retired from teaching that's when she really dedicated her life to her own art career. And so she became affiliated with a group of artists called the Washington Color School and very much this group of artists were all thinking about color and abstraction in a variety of different ways, and she was sort of on the periphery of that group for a variety of reasons, but also because her style was very unique and she always was thinking about nature and always thinking about what was going on around her.

[End of Stop]

Lunar Rendezvous, Alma Thomas

Track 2: Thomas's Career

LINDA DEBERRY: What can you tell me about her style and her career?

LAUREN HAYNES: A lot of her works, are, though they're abstract, Alma Thomas talks about what it would be like to see her garden from space. She has this great quote about being born in the horse-and-buggy days, but living to see man walk on the moon and so that really shows the span of her life, but also all of the influences that affected her. So this thought about, "Well, what would my garden look like from space?" is something that came up often in her paintings. She was the first African-American woman to have a solo show at the Whitney Museum in 1972 and her work is in the collections of many major museums across this country, and something that is unique about her is that she actually lived to see this happen.

LAUREN CONTINUES: With a lot of artists of her generation particularly women or particularly artists of color, they don't live to see these moments happen.

LINDA: And about how old was she when she sort of was discovered?

LAUREN: She was in her 60s and 70s so all of this was happening when she was sort of in the late stages of life but she was able to be a part of all of it.

LINDA: That's encouraging.

LAUREN: It is. It really is!

[End of Stop]

Our Town, Kerry James Marshall

Track 1: Our Town's Detail

LINDA DEBERRY: In Our Town, Kerry James Marshall depicts children playing in a neighborhood. Can you explain how this image might comment on historical representations of African Americans?

LAUREN HAYNES: The scene depicts what looks almost like a page from a storybook, depicting children playing in what looks like a very idyllic neighborhood setting, and in general and traditional representations this scene probably would have featured white children versus African American children that Marshall puts here and that's a very intentional part of his practice as he's thinking about how African Americans have been represented in art throughout time and really his role as a painter and as an artist is to correct this narrative and show the variety of ways that African-Americans have existed and continue to exist in this country.

LAUREN CONTINUES: The girl in the forefront of the painting, it's almost as if she has a thought bubble coming out from her mind and she's sort of running forward, and I love this because, what is she thinking? You know, what is she running towards? And the bubble almost looks as if it's below this very ornate, large house, so one could possibly think that she's dreaming of this house as a vision for the future.

The more overgrown areas to the left represent a past that could be thinking about slave quarters or also a lot of government housing that people live in.

LAUREN CONTINUES: And the boy, however, who's one of the other figures in this painting, he looks at us, he's looking directly at the viewer and almost in this way that's knowing and skeptical, but they are both looking towards the future, which is something that I find fascinating.

LINDA: Is she giving a black power symbol there with her fist?

LAUREN: You know I think there's a lot of different readings into that, that's a possibility, but she also could just be running, pumping your fists to get momentum, and that's one of the things about this painting, and so much of Kerry James Marshall's work is that the more you look at it the more you can read into it and the more layers that develop and allow you to take different things from the painting as well.

[End of Stop]

Our Town, Kerry James Marshall

Track 2: Our Town's Style

LINDA DEBERRY: There are a lot of layers, a lot of details, there's paint splatters, there's the title Our Town, the banner with the birds. How might we read into why the artist composed the scene with all those details?

LAUREN HAYNES: It's large, and it's an unstretched canvas that's pinned to the wall. A lot of these tapestries that depicted stories that often covered the walls of houses for the upper-class hundreds of years ago and those were also very layered tapestries that were telling complex stories, so as we look at all the elements we can think about this idea of the styles that he's combining and juxtaposing, so there are even graffiti elements into this that are reminiscent of paint splatters that evoke sort of grittier less pristine neighborhoods.

[short pause]

LAUREN CONTINUES: And even as you mentioned we was talking about this title of Our Town, and the fact that he's actually put the title on the painting, brings to mind references of the 1938 play by Thornton Wilder Our Town that was talking about small town America, and then you see that this is a neighborhood so realizing that they're just very many layers to the connections that Marshall's trying to make, in addition to the different styles and layers that he's bringing into the painting.

LINDA: It looks like it originally said "Your Town" and he's painted over that. Are we supposed to read it that way?

LAUREN: I think we absolutely should read it that way.

LAUREN CONTINUES: Because this idea of, as we talked about, traditionally a setting like this you would imagine, you know, white children playing and running and that's saying, so it would be your town, but what he has done and what he continues to do with his work is to shift that narrative a little bit to really say actually this is "Our Town" [pause]-all of our town.

LINDA: All the Black figures in his artwork are just so dark colored. I assume that's intentional?

LAUREN: Absolutely he's very much pushing paint to its limits and really doing something that not many other artists were doing to get this very intentional black, not brown, but black quality to the paint when he depicts African Americans.

[End of Stop]