

ART CHATS



HAWKS PAVILION

Contemporary Art:
Smith Gallery, H7

Image: Amy Sherald (American, b. 1973), *The Beauty of Change (A Happy Man)*, 2023, oil on linen, 54 × 43 in. (137.2 × 109.2 cm), Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, Museum purchase, gift of The Sherwood Foundation, 2024.1, © Amy Sherald, Photograph courtesy Bill Ganzel, Ganzel Group Communications, Inc.

Study the artwork.

LOOK

Look closely at the figure. What is the first thing you notice in this painting?

Explore the subject's clothing, pose, and expression. Zoom into his tie. See how his hand holds it slightly forward as evidenced by the shadow on his trousers. Mirror his pose as you consider what can be inferred by these details.

Study the colors Amy Sherald used. Think about how the bold blue contrasts with the grayscale of the subject's skin.

Start an artful discussion.

DISCUSS

What do you like about this painting? How do you feel about Amy Sherald's painting style?

What story would you tell about the person in the painting? Who is he? What emotions do you think he's feeling?

Look around the Museum* and select an artist you would want to create your portrait. Why did you choose that artist? What colors, objects, or symbols would you include for viewers to learn about you?

**At school, create a mini museum for the classroom.*

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Amy Sherald was born in 1973 in Columbus, Georgia. Her paintings explore themes of race, identity, and representation by centering Black subjects who have historically been underrepresented in Western portraiture. The artist is known for painting her subjects' skin in grayscale, a choice that encourages viewers to look beyond skin color and focus on each person's individuality. In *The Beauty of Change (A Happy Man)*, Sherald celebrates the sitter's identity and humanity while challenging conventional ideas about portraiture and representation.

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HAWKS PAVILION

Contemporary Art:
Mammel Gallery, H8

Image: Suchitra Mattai (Indo-Caribbean, b. Guyana, 1973), *one*, 2022, vintage saris, the artist's Mother's saris, fabric, and rope net, 126 × 180 in. (320 × 457.2 cm), Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, Museum purchase with funds from the Rose Marie Baumgarten Art Endowment Fund, 2023.4, © Suchitra Mattai

Study the artwork.

LOOK

Move your eyes from left to right and then up to down. Take in the colors, textures, and lines of this tapestry.

How many different colors do you see? Go in closer and name them.

Now step back to take in the whole artwork. Note the three figures in the center with golden halos and black braids.

Observe how the colors are organized. Neutral tones at the top blend into warm colors with cool ones as the bottom, which is trimmed with gold fringe.

Start an artful discussion.

DISCUSS

When did you see the figures in the tapestry? What are they doing?

Note the materials Suchita Mattai used. Why do you think she chose these materials?

Mattai's work is inspired by her family's history of migration and displacement. How do you think those experiences are reflected in this tapestry?

What helps you stay connected to the people, places, or memories that are important to you?

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Suchitra Mattai descends from Indian ancestors who were brought by the British colonial indenture system to Guyana in the nineteenth century. She uses vintage South Asian saris, including some from her mother seen here, to create intricate textile works that draw on personal memory, oral histories, and family archives. Through her art, Mattai seeks to recover overlooked histories and expand our understanding of the past. She often highlights women's labor by incorporating materials and techniques associated with domestic traditions, such as embroidery, weaving, and other fiber arts. Her use of vintage saris also creates connections among women across the South Asian diaspora.

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HAWKS PAVILION

Contemporary Art:
Mammel Gallery, H8

Image: Cannupa Hanska Luger (Mandan/Hidatsa/Arikara/Lakota, b. 1979), *Midéegaadi - Lightning*, 2022, from the series *Future Ancestral Technologies*, mixed media bison regalia, installation dimensions variable, Museum purchase with funds from the Rose Marie Baumgarten Art Endowment Fund, 2026.1, © Cannupa Hanska Luger, Photograph by Shayla Blatchford (Diné), 2025

Study the artwork.

LOOK

Look closely at *Midéegaadi - Lightning*. Figures like this honor the deep connection between Indigenous peoples of the Great Plains and the buffalo, a relative who has provided food, shelter, and teachings for generations.

What details do you notice about the buffalo figure—shape, posture, and texture?

Walk around the work to study it from different perspectives. What visual clues communicate buffalo and lightning?

Start an artful discussion.

DISCUSS

While acknowledging the harm done to the Buffalo Nation during colonization, *Midéegaadi* celebrates the bison's resilience and imagines a future where people and animals live together with respect and balance.

The title *Midéegaadi* refers to a pledge of accountability to earth. How might that relate to what you see in the work or in your world?

How do you think this artwork connects the past and future? What story might it be telling about time, responsibility, and connection to the land?

ABOUT THE ARTIST

“The figures of *Midéegaadi* exist throughout time maintaining a pledge of accountability to the land and waters that have sustained the Buffalo Nation and in turn the human beings.” - Cannupa Hanska Luger

Cannupa Hanska Luger (b. 1979) is an enrolled member of the Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold and is Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, and Lakota. Born on the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota, the award-winning artist's work blends creativity, storytelling, and community. Luger uses many materials and methods—such as sculpture, video, performance, and public art—to explore how we care for one another, the land, and our shared future. His art often invites people to take part, helping communities imagine new ways to connect, repair, and move forward. Luger works from his studio in Glorieta, New Mexico, where he develops projects that celebrate Indigenous knowledge, collaboration, and creativity.

ART CHATS



HAWKS PAVILION

Contemporary Art:
Simon Gallery, H9

Image: Michael Goldberg (American, 1924–2007), *To be closely written on a small piece of paper which folded into a tight lozenge might fit any girl's locket*, 1998, oil and oilstick on canvas, 9 ft 2 3/4 in. × 9 ft 7 1/4 in. (281.3 × 292.7 cm), Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, Museum purchase with funds from Omaha Steaks International, the Phil and Terri Schrager Foundation, and Phil Willson, 2003.4, © Michael Goldberg

Study the artwork.

LOOK

Take in the whole canvas. Trace the lines with your eyes and see where they lead. Note the colors and think about which ones you see first.

Look closer, do you notice anything behind the lines? Describe the textures and shapes as you study the canvas.

Take several steps back to see the whole canvas again. Think about how your perspective changed—or not—from looking at it closely.

This painting was inspired by jazz. Play a jazz song and let your eyes wander over the painting.

Start an artful discussion.

DISCUSS

Have you seen a painting like this before? How would you describe this style?

What do you think was on Michael Goldberg's mind while making this painting? What do you think he wanted to express through it?

What kind of music do you enjoy? How might listening to a different style of music change the way you experience this artwork? Try viewing it with different genres playing and compare your reactions.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Michael Goldberg was born in 1924 in New York City and became an important figure in the city's avant-garde art scene during the 1940s and 1950s. Throughout his career, he experimented with a variety of materials and compositional approaches, drawing particular inspiration from improvisational jazz. In works such as *To be closely written...*, layered lines, vibrant colors, and rich textures evoke the spontaneity, rhythm, and energy of the music. Goldberg continued to explore abstraction, technique, and the influence of music in his art until his death in 2007.

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HAWKS PAVILION

Contemporary Art:
Gallery H10

Image: Allison Janae Hamilton (American, b. 1984), *Seven Champions of Peculiar Engagement*, 2020, vintage metal and leather fencing masks, rooster feathers, pheasant feathers, guinea fowl feathers, vintage marble grapes, sola wood, horse hair, metal, and resin, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, Museum purchase with funds from the Rose Marie Baumgarten Art Endowment Fund, 2022.8.a-g, Courtesy of the artist and Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York and Aspen. © Allison Janae Hamilton. Photo credit: Lance Brewer

Study the artwork.

LOOK

Take a minute to look at all seven masks. What do you notice first?

Consider the scale of the middle mask compared to the others. Think about the words you would use to describe its presence.

Stand in front a mask that draws you in. What do you notice after looking a little longer?

Look at all of the textures in this work. Describe as many as you can, and name the materials Allison Janae Hamilton used.

Start an artful discussion.

DISCUSS

Fencing masks are used to protect someone's face during a match. Why do you think Allison Janae Hamilton selected this object? Discuss how something that protects you can also hide you.

How do the masks change when different materials are added to them? What makes you think that?

If you were to create your own artwork, what might you add to it to reflect your environment or story?

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Allison Janae Hamilton creates sculptural and multimedia works that explore mythology, landscape, history, and personal narrative. She began collecting fencing masks after encountering a photograph of Black soldiers from the 369th Infantry Regiment practicing fencing. By transforming these masks with feathers, hair, and other natural materials, the artist creates hybrid figures that connect histories of protection and resilience with imagined futures. The series developed in her New York studio in 2019. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Hamilton relocated to North Florida, where the region's landscapes, textures, and colors began to influence her materials and palette. *Seven Champions of Peculiar Engagement* brings together themes of protection, transformation, and storytelling in a powerful installation.