

## BAM-AT-HOME

### WOMEN IN AMERICAN IMPRESSIONISM: THREE MASTERWORKS FROM THE SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM

#### ART-MAKING 1: BLIND CONTOUR SELF-PORTRAIT

The Impressionists were fascinated by capturing simple, fleeting moments – color, light, and movement. Blind contour drawing is an excellent way to train the eye to draw what it really sees, rather than what it thinks it sees. When making a blind contour drawing, the eye is not watching the hand as it draws on the paper. This exercise practices focusing on what you see. The final drawing may be unusual and look nothing like your reflection, and that is completely okay! It will be an impression of your face.

#### Supplies

pencil  
paper  
Mirror



1. Set up a mirror so you can see your reflection while you draw.
2. Pick a point in your reflection as a starting place. As your eyes follow the outlines of the shapes of your face, move the pencil on the paper without stopping to look at it. Stay focused on the outlines of your reflection. Try drawing the entire outline of the shapes of your face without lifting your pencil off the paper.
3. For an added challenge, poke your pencil through a paper plate before you draw so you can't peek at your hand and paper.

#### **Share your artwork with BAM!**

Email: Emily Nadel, Curator of Education  
([emily@boiseartmuseum.org](mailto:emily@boiseartmuseum.org))

Include: Name, Grade, School

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#### ART-MAKING 2: FOUND-OBJECT PALETTE

##### Supplies

small bag or container for collecting

found objects

paper, cardboard, or light colored fabric

colored pencils, markers, crayons, paint, embroidery thread – whatever you have available.

1. Practice thinking like an Impressionist. Looking for interesting colors and objects that interact with light in unique ways, walk through your house, or an outdoor space near your home, and gather objects (leaves, petals, pebbles, grasses, etc.) Arrange your collected objects. You do not have to use everything you collected, and you may find you need to go gather more objects.
2. Using this arrangement as inspiration to create a 2D artwork. Use whatever supplies and materials you have available. Perhaps you make a painting transforming the objects into representational shapes and forms on a piece of cardboard, or collage magazines into a representation of your arrangement.



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#### ART-MAKING 3: IMPRESSIONIST PORTRAIT

As an art movement, Impressionism emphasized the techniques of recording the effects of sunlight on objects and using short, broken brushstrokes and bright colors. In the late 1800s, various American artists traveled to France to study and paint. Those who returned to the United States continued to paint in the style of Impressionism. They adapted the techniques they learned in France to American urban and rural scenes, views of household interiors, and people.

#### Supplies

pencil

paper, cardboard

colored pencils, markers, crayons, paint, embroidery thread – whatever you have available.

1. Select a space in your home, or in an outdoor space nearby – seek out natural light.
2. Pose your subject in a fluid, natural manner. Perhaps they are reading on a couch, or painting their nails sitting on the floor, or snuggling with a sleeping pet.
3. Quickly and lightly sketch the scene. Consider a cropped composition and a unique viewpoint that offers interesting angles.
4. Using loose, swift strokes, add color to the paper. Colored pencils, paint, marker, etc. will all work for practicing this Impressionist application of color.
5. Finish your portrait with your signature.



Childe Hassam, *Tanagra (The Builders, New York)*, 1918, oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Gellatly, 1929.6.63