

A Guide to Looking

This guide offers a selection of works from our current exhibitions. Look at the included artwork and then use the text to help build a deeper understanding of the artists, their inspiration and process.



LA BELLE
ÉPOQUE

ANDY WARHOL
A LIFE IN POP

BANK OF AMERICA 

Andy Warhol Portfolio: A Life in Pop has been loaned through the Bank of America Art in our Communities® program

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901)

Divan Japonais, 1893

Lithograph on wove paper backed with linen; 31 5/8 x 24 1/8 inches

Courtesy of the Gordon Collection

INSPIRATION

Nothing captures the spirit of La Belle Epoque more than its famous cabarets, including the Moulin Rouge and Divan Japonais, located near the equally famous Montmartre, the city on the hill overlooking Paris, where artists, writers and dancers, shared the bohemian lifestyle with residents from all social classes and professions. As artists flocked to Montmartre's cafes and clubs, artist Henri Toulouse-Lautrec was captivated by the energy, spirit, and exuberance of the life that was far removed from his aristocratic privileged upbringing. He was transfixed by the avant-garde life which is synonymous with its famous cabarets.

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

As a designer for many of the Paris cabaret posters, Lautrec's depictions cannot be separated from our understanding of the time. Like many artists of La Belle Epoque, he was influenced by the art of Japanese prints that had recently entered the Western art market, which featured the delicate outlines, a flattening of the space and bold colors designed to catch the eye of passers-by. These strategies and techniques can be seen in the exhibition's poster of Divan Japonais, one of the many cabarets frequented by Toulouse-Lautrec. Two of the artist's favorite Montmartre stars, Yvette Guilbert (the spectator) and Jane Avril (the performer) are depicted here, alongside Eduard Dujardin, a dandyish writer and frequent nightclub attendee.



SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

No one captured the energy of La Belle Epoque better than Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. The artist, the aristocrat, and the party seeker designed many of the cabarets' famous posters and when we envision the Moulin Rouge, with the fashion, the crowds, the atmosphere, it is all thanks to the work of Toulouse-Lautrec. What other eras or moments are that closely linked to a particular artist's works?

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS

"I have tried to do what is true and not ideal."

"I paint things as they are. I don't comment. I record."

Edgar Degas (1834-1917)

Danseuse Habillée au Repos (Dancer Dressed at Rest), 1896-1911

Bronze, cast by Valsuani Foundry; 17 1/8 inches high

Collection of Carol Conn and Walter Maibaum, New York

INSPIRATION

While Edgar Degas is closely associated with the Impressionist movement, alongside contemporaries such as Mary Cassatt, Claude Monet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, the artist himself strongly discouraged that label, preferring to be referred to as an Independent. Although closely aligned with the Impressionists' interest in the effects of light, and scenes of modern urban living, Degas was also concerned with realism, due in part to his traditional artistic training. As with many artist of La Belle Epoque, Degas was drawn to the cafes, boulevards, shops, cabarets and opera houses of Paris, and with painstaking observation created images that captured the endless varieties of human movement, from the laundress to ballerinas. Degas's interest in and depiction of the Paris ballet is complex, to say the very least. At the time, the ballet had been reduced from its glory in the early 1800s to interludes between opera scenes where patrons (men) could ogle bare legs. Not only had the ballet turned into a kind of cabaret but it also became a front for sex workers. Young girls would come to the ballet, hoping to earn money and help their families. Once there, wealthy male patrons would proposition them, promising them lavish lifestyles, private dance lessons, and good roles, but not without a cost. Degas' depiction of the ballerinas backstage, in the wings, in rehearsal spoke to the dark side of this reality.



TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

Degas turned more toward sculpture later in his career as his eyesight worsened. While he only exhibited one sculpture in his lifetime, a trove of works were discovered in his studio upon his death. Degas was fascinated with how the human body moves. His ballerina paintings, in particular, capture dancers in awkward, uncomfortable, and unusual positions. While *Dancer at Rest* is among the least challenging poses, Degas was known to demand his models remain in place for long periods of time in order to capture every detail of form. Unlike the Impressionists, Degas favored line over color and this can be seen in the energy of the tutu, the musculature of the arms and legs, in addition to the run of the head and neck. Notice the position of the dancer's feet and tilting of her torso. Despite the fraught circumstances of the ballet itself, Degas depicts with great clarity the minute energy inherent in every part of the dancer's body.

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS

"One must do the subject over again ten times, a hundred times. In art nothing must resemble an accident, not even movement."
"One has to plan a painting the way one plans a crime."

SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

Degas's legacy is embroiled in controversy. His constant depiction of women in awkward, unflattering positions has been criticized as misogynistic. His voyeuristic tendencies are hard to ignore as he once told a fellow painter that he wanted to capture scenes, "as if looking through a keyhole." And his virulent anti-semitism, felt most strongly throughout the Dreyfus Affair (for more information see Time Line in hallway between Galleries 2 & 3), alienated him from many. And yet his prolific body of work continues to captivate and delight audiences worldwide. How do we separate the art from the artist?

Édouard Vuillard (1868 - 1940)

La Partie de dames (The Games of Checkers), 1899

Color Lithograph: 14 13/16 x 12 1/16 inches

Courtesy of Theodore B. Donson and Marvel M. Griep

INSPIRATION

While Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec was busy capturing the spectacle of public life in the cafés and cabarets of Paris in the 1890s, Édouard Vuillard turned to the more intimate settings of domestic life. The theme of family was an enduring and vital subject for Vuillard as his work focused on the day-to-day activities of his family, friends and patrons in interior settings.

Vuillard's mother, a seamstress and interior designer, filled their home with patterned fabrics, textiles and decorative objects, many of which appear in his paintings. Seeking community outside his family, Vuillard joined forces with artists Pierre Bonnard, Maurice Denis, and others to form a group that called itself Les Nabis (from the Hebrew for prophet). Les Nabis was a symbolist movement who took inspiration from the French poet Stéphane Mallarmé. The group believed that sounds, colors and words have expressive power beyond their appearance and even beyond their literal meanings. Collectively, they believed in the artist as a "high priest" and "seer" with the power to reveal the invisible.

"To name an object is to do away with three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem which is derived from the satisfaction of guessing little by little: to suggest it, to evoke it -- that is what charms the imagination." - Mallarmé

"Paint not the thing, but the effect which it produces". - Mallarmé



TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

Many of the Vuillard's paintings depict the quotidian passing of time of members of his family and friends in their Paris apartment. Vuillard painted his subjects in small, cropped compositions, almost claustrophobic in their framing. The atmosphere, hushed and muffled, is achieved by integrating the figures into a flattened, patterned composition. In doing so, he treated all the elements in his paintings as equal components of a compositional whole.

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS

"I don't do portraits," he said. "I paint people in their surroundings."

SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

Many of the works in this gallery explore the theme of private, interior spaces. This year many of us have had to spend much of our time at home, a place of safe refuge from the uncertainties of the outside world. How did you spend your time at home this year? Working, cooking, cleaning, crafting, supervising virtual school for family members? What room in your home became a comforting and safe space for you during these challenging times?

Felix Vallotton (1865 - 1925)

La Paresse (Laziness), 1896

Woodcut, 9 13/16 x 12 5/8

Courtesy of Theodore B. Donson and Marvel M. Griep

INSPIRATION

Born in Switzerland, artist Félix Edouard Vallotton, moved to Paris in 1882, where he studied under Jules Joseph Lefebvre at the Académie Julian. Initially producing portraits grounded in the academic tradition, Vallotton's art was inspired by works he observed at the Louvre Museum, by Hans Holbein, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres and Albrecht Dürer. In 1892, Vallotton became a part of a group of artists known as Les Nabis, which included painters Pierre Bonnard, Maurice Denis and Édouard Vuillard.

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

Like many of the artists featured in La Belle Époque, Vallotton was inspired by the cultural aesthetics of Japan. When trade opened up in Japan in 1858, artists across Europe gained access to a treasure trove of art, books, textiles and decorative objects. Inspired by the simplification of form, off-kilter compositions, and flat shapes of Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints, Vallotton's works, particularly his wood cuts, became increasingly stylized, with precise use of line and exacting forms.



IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS

“I think I paint for people who are level-headed but who have an unspoken vice deep inside them, I actually like this state which I share.”

SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

Upon first encounter with *La Paresse*, the viewer is met with an innocuous and playful scene of a woman lounging leisurely on a chaise toying with a black cat. The graphic contrast of black and white of the patterned quilt offsets the whiteness of her lithe body. Adding complexity and a somewhat contradictory reading of this seemingly harmless and appealing image, scholars often cite Vallotton's underlying implication to shine “a light on the lust, greed, hypocrisies of the middle class in acerbic scenes characterized by their stark, black-and-white attitude to social mores” (Kelly Grovier, BBC Culture, 5th August 2019).

Georges de Feure (1868-1943)

“Grenade” Settee, ca. 1900

Painted wood and silk/velvet upholstery; 38 1/4 x 47 1/2 x 21 x 18 1/2 inches

Courtesy of Maison Gerard, New York

INSPIRATION

Artist, designer, illustrator, and architect George de Feure’s settee, crafted around 1900, is a shining example of Art Nouveau furniture. Seeking inspiration from the natural world, Art Nouveau was an outgrowth of the Arts and Craft Movement which sought to elevate the status of the decorative arts through superior hand-craftsmanship. Many felt that good craftsmanship had been neglected by the academic traditions which emphasized painting and sculpture over all other forms of art. The rise of industrialization and mass production also spurred the artist’s return to hand-crafted work. The curving lines and organic shapes of Art Nouveau merge nature, design and craftsmanship into flowing, decorative and functional pieces. The style was also influenced by Japanese art which began to flood the Western European art market once trading rights were established with Japan in the 1860s.



TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

“Grenade” (or pomegranate) perfectly captures the essence of Art Nouveau with its curving undulating lines, often referred to as “whiplash” lines, because of both their form and function. Notice the organic shapes created by the lines of the piece in addition to the straight legs that swoop into the center under the seat, the luxurious silk velvet upholstery and the painted wood, all characteristic of the style that captivated the Parisian public at the 1900 Exposition Universelle. Art Nouveau emphasized line over color. The flowing lines serve as a metaphor for the freedom these artists felt from the academic traditions. And chief among them was George de Feure, who abandoned all formal art training after only two years, settling in - where else? Montmartre, - where he blazed his own path and creating posters, theater sets, furniture and paintings in this short-lived style that lives forever in our collective memory.

IN THE ARTIST’S WORDS

“Our roots are in the depths of the woods-on the banks of the streams and among the mosses.” Art Nouveau designer, Emille Gallé

SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

Art Nouveau artists sought to narrow the gap between fine art and applied art. The applied arts are all the arts that apply design and decoration to everyday and essentially practical objects in order to make them aesthetically pleasing. How has modern technology (think 3D printing) either further narrowed the gap or distanced the two?

LOUIS COMFORT TIFFANY (1848-1933)

Tiffany Studios, *New York Pond Lily Library Lamp*, ca. 1905

Leaded glass, bronze, brass

Courtesy of The Neustadt Collection of Tiffany Glass, Queens, New York

Tiffany Studios, *New York Peony Library Lamp*, ca. 1905

Leaded glass, bronze, brass

Courtesy of The Neustadt Collection of Tiffany Glass, Queens, New York

INSPIRATION

Louis Comfort Tiffany was one of the most creative and prolific decorative artists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His father, Charles Lewis Tiffany, was the co-founder of Tiffany & Co, the prestigious silver and jewelry company, and was known in his day as the “King of Diamonds.” Louis Tiffany was exposed to fine design and beautiful craftsmanship from an early age, but as he grew older, he became determined not to follow in his father’s footsteps as a jeweler, and instead followed his own path which led him to a career in the decorative arts and his work in stained glass.

Tiffany began his career as a landscape painter but by the time he was 24 he had begun to study the chemistry and techniques of glassmaking, with a particular focus on reviving the glassmaking techniques of ancient Rome and the Middle Ages. His major achievement was in developing new methods of glassmaking influenced by ancient iridescent glass and the glowing stained-glass windows of medieval cathedrals. In addition to orientalism, Tiffany’s aesthetic reflected the influence of Art Nouveau, a style popular in the late 19th century, in which nature was the primary source of inspiration, as seen in Tiffany’s elaborate curvilinear designs and opulent coloration, whether realistic or abstracted. Tiffany was fascinated with light, both natural sunlight and light from electric bulbs. Although he was already a success before creating his first lamp, it is the lamps that made him a household word from the 1890s to today.

As the use of electricity increased in homes after 1900, so did the demand for Tiffany shades, whose colored glass helped shield the glare from early bulbs. The windows and shades were designed and constructed in a similar manner. Following a painted design, a worker set hundreds of small pieces of colored glass into a detailed composition bound with copper and lead solder. Tiffany was involved in every stage of the artistic process from preliminary sketches to overseeing the selection and assembly of glass for his finished products.

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

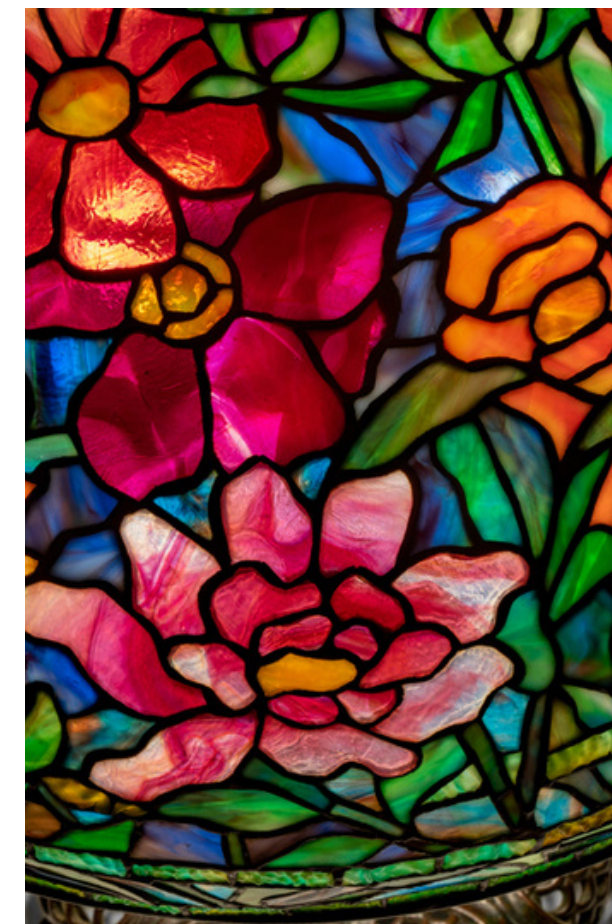
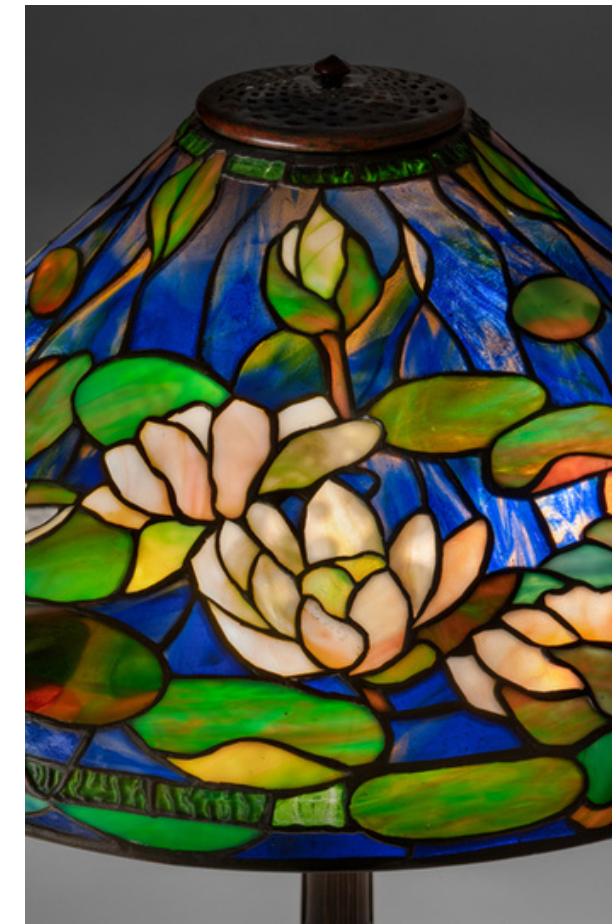
Visitors to this gallery enter a garden of lilies, peonies and daffodils captured in brilliantly colored opalescent glass. The delicate, ephemeral qualities of nature are made permanent in this selection of meticulously crafted stained glass lamps. Inspiration for this work came from Tiffany's love of nature and from the many walks in his garden early in the morning to observe the infinite patterns, colors, and play of light on flowers, leaves and trees.

IN THE ARTIST'S WORDS

"My lifelong quest has always been in pursuit of beauty."

SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

Many of the artists employed at Tiffany Studios were women. Unheard of in the 19th century, women in Tiffany's employment were paid the same wage as men. This policy, progressive at the time, ended when the women became engaged and were asked to take leave from their positions. Known as "Tiffany Girls" the women, most famously Clara Driscoll, were incredibly talented artists and skilled fabricators who were responsible for the design and production of all the lamps depicting flowers and insects.



Andy Warhol (1928- 1987)

Space Fruit: Still Lifes, 1979

Portfolio of six screenprints on Lenox Museum Board, 50/150

Bank of America Collection

Space Fruit exemplifies Warhol's modern approach to the still life genre. With their bright colors, Warhol demonstrates more interest in the images' vibrancy than their realism. His use of shadow and detailed lines gives the fruit more of a realistic quality as they become more nearly three-dimensional. Warhol's series of Space Fruit is a perfect example of the artist taking well-known subject matter and putting a Pop art spin on them. This series marks a shift of Warhol's interest from commercial products to art historical subjects. Warhol takes the same approach to his Space Fruit series as he does to his Flowers series, taking traditional props and isolating each element.

Throughout his career, Andy Warhol worked with assistants and printers to create numerous print portfolios. In 1977, he met printer Rupert Jasen Smith, who worked with him to create the series Space Fruit. These prints demonstrate Warhol's experimentation with the classical tradition of the still life. Still lifes by their very nature are choreographed compositions focusing on shape, color, space and oftentimes symbolism. Warhol was interested in using shadows as a compositional element. He first placed one or more pieces of fruit on a white background, lit the arrangement from an angled position so that shadows were cast onto the white paper and then photographed these compositions. He also used collage and drawing to create the source imagery for the additional screens used in each print. This artwork is an example of a multilayer or multicolor silkscreen print since each color represents a different silkscreened layer. This printing process allowed Warhol endless color combinations within each composition.

Above text courtesy of Bank of America

Something to Talk About

Still life imagery has been a centuries old subject-matter in art, and has been reinterpreted by many artists in varied styles and movements. Why do you think this is an enduring subject matter for artists? What do you think captures their interest?

Take a Closer Look

In art, artists use a combination of the elements of art (color, form, line, shape, space, texture and value) and the principles of design (balance, rhythm, pattern, emphasis, contrast, unity and movement). Warhol's *Cantaloupes II* combines many of these elements and principles to create a visually striking play on the subject of a still life. He makes sure to incorporate the implied texture of both the rind and flesh of the cantaloupe, as well as the seeds, and a sense of rhythm with the alternating dominant blue shadows and the dominant black ones. Notice how he placed three cantaloupes at a very similar angle, but the angle of the right-most cantaloupe appears to intersect the others. All four cantaloupes are aligned towards the left of the composition, leaving more of the pink empty space towards the right. While simple in subject matter, Warhol has made very deliberate choices in composing this image.

In the Artist's Words

"When I look at things, I always see the space they occupy. I always want the space to reappear, to make a comeback, because it's lost space when there's something in it." Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol from A to B and Back Again*, p 144.

Andy Warhol (1928-1987)

Flowers, 1970

Screenprint on paper, 28/250, 36 x 36 inches

Bank of America Collection

Warhol's Flowers series occupy an important place in the long tradition of floral still-life painting. Critic David Bourdon wrote that Warhol's Flowers appear to float right off the canvas, "like cut-out gouaches by Matisse set adrift on Monet's lily pond." After silk-screening paintings of film stars and the Death and Disaster series begun in 1962, Warhol turned his attention to other photographic images that he could transform into paintings. The Flowers series, with its artificial, acid-colored abstractions of the natural world, appears to contradict Warhol's images of urban tragedy.

The prints in this exhibition were preceded by a series of flower paintings in different sizes, from the miniature to the monumental. These were first shown at the Leo Castelli Gallery in 1964, where they covered the gallery walls almost like wallpaper. The source for the flower paintings was a color photograph by Patricia Caulfield of hibiscus blossoms that appeared in the June 1964 issue of Modern Photography magazine. The prints in the Bank of America collection were produced in 1970 in a portfolio of ten. These were sold commercially to collectors under the name Factory Additions at a slightly lower price than the paintings. Warhol reused images from some of his more successful paintings to create print portfolios, including a set of images of Marilyn Monroe.

Above Text courtesy of Bank of America

Taking a Closer Look

Andy Warhol combined hand-painted backgrounds (in this example the colors of the flowers) with layered silkscreened imagery, combining both the technological and analog. The blocks of hand-painted color contrast with the linear quality of the grass, and we are able to see how Warhol experiments with different color combinations and color palettes. The blocks of color and the outline of the flowers are not perfectly aligned, an example of the “off-registration” Warhol frequently used: imagery was not meant to perfectly align, but instead be printed slightly off.

Something to Talk About

Andy Warhol’s work throughout his career has raised questions of appropriation and copyrighted imagery, and the Warhol Foundation discusses how this *Flowers* series sourced from Patricia Caulfield’s imagery was one such example: “Caulfield saw the initial prints and took legal action against Warhol. Warhol offered her a couple of prints in hopes of settling the dispute, but she declined the offer. They settled and in 1964 Warhol went on to exhibit his flowers at the prominent Leo Castelli Gallery” (The Andy Warhol Museum, www.warhol.org).

Students learning often practice drawing techniques by copying the works of other artists, and artists throughout time have borrowed from each other and been inspired by the works of others. Warhol’s screenprints are altered from the original photos, with regard to color, cropping and flattening of the image. Where do you think the line should be drawn in art with regards to inspiration, appropriation and infringement upon original imagery?

In the Artist’s Words

“The reason I’m painting this way is that I want to be a machine.”

ANDY WARHOL, ART NEWS, 1962

Why do you think an artist would desire to be “a machine”? What are the benefits to creating multiple images?