



Mabee-Gerrer Museum of Art

Self-Guided Tour

Please help us conserve the art:

- ✓ Don't Touch! The natural oil on your fingers can do permanent damage to artworks.
- ✓ Pictures are allowed, but please turn off your flash.
- ✓ No food or drinks, backpacks or large bags, are allowed in galleries.
- ✓ Stay at least 18" away from artworks and only gesture/point toward the art with your finger.
- ✓ Please use only pencils to write/sketch in the galleries.
- ✓ Please take all cell phone calls outside.

1. Cabinet of Curiosities

The museum was founded in 1919 by Father Gregory Gerrer, a Benedictine monk of considerable artistic talent (he painted the seascape behind you). He was also a collector of art and other interesting objects of ethnological value (like the objects in this case). He used his skills as an artist and art restorer to acquire pieces for the collection.

Cabinets of Curiosities began during the Renaissance in northern Europe. Gentlemen would keep them in their studies and fill them with interesting conversation starters including art pieces, natural history objects, and trinkets from foreign lands.

- ☺ Do you collect anything? What would you keep inside a Cabinet of Curiosities?

2. Pope Pius X

Father Gregory Gerrer, O.S.B.
Oil on Canvas, 1904

Father Gerrer was commissioned by Pope Pius X to paint his official portrait. The Pope appreciated Fr. Gerrer's naturalistic style, saying when seeing the painting, "you captured me warts and all." Many famous artists have been commissioned to paint portraits of past popes, including the Renaissance masters Raphael and Titian. Yet, it is the work of another Renaissance artist, Michelangelo, which is represented in this painting--one of his most renowned architectural works, the dome of St. Peter's Basilica, is visible in the background. Pope Pius X was a very important person for Fr. Gerrer to paint, especially since he was the first Pope to be canonized since the late Middle Ages. A copy of this painting, also done by Fr. Gerrer, hangs today in the Vatican in Rome, Italy.

- ☺ Fr. Gerrer was trained in Italy in a classically-inspired style that had its roots in the Italian Renaissance. Visit the Renaissance gallery to see a portrait done in this same style in 1570-75. It is the *Portrait of Michele Suriano, Venetian Ambassador*, by the artist Tintoretto.

Stand where you can see both works. How are the two paintings alike? How are they different?

3. The Mummy Tutu

332 B.C.E.

Tutu is about 2400 years old. She was mummified in 332 BCE and was 40-50 years old when she died. Tutu's mask looks much younger, but that is because it is an *idealized* image of Tutu. It looks something like Tutu, but all of her minor flaws were ignored by the artist.

To make a mummy, embalmers (priests of Anubis), first removed the brain through the nose. The brain was discarded as the center of consciousness was believed to be in the heart. The internal organs, except the heart, were removed and dehydrated separately. The liver, lungs, stomach, and intestines were placed in canopic jars to be guarded by the four sons of the god Horus. The heart remained in the body to be weighed in the afterlife. The weighing of the heart, the psychostasis, determined the quality of the deceased's life and his/her placement in the afterlife. Then, the body was covered in natron (a salt mixture) and left for 40 days. After the body was dehydrated, it was covered in herbs, oils, and resin, and wrapped in linen. Then, the mask and breastplate were added. Finally, the mummy was placed in a sarcophagus and an outer stone coffin. It was then entombed with much ceremony.

Tutu's mask and breastplate reveal renderings of several Egyptian gods and goddesses, winged scarabs (a symbol of immortality) and other symbols, and prayers for her immortal soul written in hieroglyphics.

- ☺ Pick up a family guide or a Tutu coloring sheet at the front desk. Study Tutu's breastplate. Can you find the god Horus? Can you find an udjat?
- ☺ Tutu isn't the only mummy in this gallery. There are two animal mummies here also. Can you find them? Why do you think the Egyptians mummified animals?
- ☺ There is an ancient mummy sarcophagus near Tutu. Do you think it belonged to her? Why or why not?

4. St. Catherine

Anonymous Italian (15th – 16th century)
Tempera and Gold Leaf on Panel

Most medieval artworks were commissioned by the church or the wealthy members of the aristocracy who were very concerned with the welfare of their souls. Thus, most medieval artworks have religious subjects and purposes. This panel painting was once part of a larger altarpiece. It depicts St. Catherine, a virgin martyr who was killed for not relinquishing her faith in Christ in order to marry a pagan noble. Catherine is shown with the wheel, her attribute and the instrument of her martyrdom.

- ☺ The background of this painting is gold leaf, a symbol of Catherine's divine status and her place in heaven. Can you imagine how this painting might have looked in its original location? The church would have been dark, lit only by flickering candles; the embossed designs in the painting's gold background would have caught the dancing light, causing the gold to shimmer and glow...
- ☺ Is this a realistic representation of Catherine? Does she appear three-dimensional? Does her body appear to have weight? Is there space between you and her?

5. Adoration of the Magi

Giulio Romano (1492-1546)
Oil on Panel

Romano's *Adoration of the Magi* reveals a marvelous procession of kings, dignitaries, and servants who traveled long distances to bestow gifts upon the Christ Child. There is emphasis on the infant as he sits in the center. Invisible lines of sight direct the viewer's attention to the Child. This painting also reveals some other interesting aspects of Renaissance painting. Did you notice something odd about the baby? His head is out of proportion, it is too small, and his face looks too adult. In the Middle Ages, it was common to show the baby as a miniature man (referring to his future destiny), but in the Renaissance, artists commonly depicted him as a plump (often nude) baby, emphasizing his humanity.

- ☺ The camels in this painting look slightly serpentine. Zoos were just beginning during the Renaissance, and were usually kept by and for the aristocracy. This artist probably had never seen a camel and was basing his depiction on others' descriptions.

There are several other oddities in this painting. Can you find them?

6. Esther before Assuerus

Francesco Barbieri
Oil on Canvas, 1630

In the Baroque era, there was a wonderful visual tie between art and theater as artists sought to imbue their paintings with drama. They used heightened chiaroscuro (light/dark contrast), elaborate costumes, and often depicted the most dramatic moment of a story within a stage-like setting, as in this painting of the Old Testament queen Esther. She was a Hebrew who married a Persian King, Assuerus. The King was unaware that Esther was Hebrew and had been unwittingly persuaded by one of his trusted advisors to eradicate the Hebrew people. Esther took her life into her hands by bursting in to the King's chamber, an act for which she could have been executed. This single act of bravery caused a chain of events that led to the saving of the Hebrew people and the execution of the murderous advisor.

- ☺ Do you notice something odd about the clothing represented in this painting? Do the clothes look like they are from the same time and place as the story represented? Why do you think an artist might represent biblical figures in clothing from his own time period?

7. Reflexion

William Bouguereau
Oil on Canvas, 1897

Bouguereau was a member of the National Academy of Arts in France and is well known for his highly-realistic and often sentimental representations. He was also influenced by classicism as is revealed in the subject's classical dress. The most striking aspect of this image is the extreme realism in which the artist represented the face and the hands. However, it is likely the contrast between these tightly-rendered, seemingly three-dimensional elements with the flatter, looser execution of the background that really makes the face and hands "pop" from the canvas.

- ☺ It seems there is a silent story being told here, particularly when one observes the positioning of the sitter's hands. What do you think that it might be?

8. **Autumn on the Hudson**

Jasper Cropsey
Oil on Canvas, c. 1850

Jasper Cropsey was part of the Hudson River School of art. This was not a real school, but a collection of painters who lived and worked around New York. These artists changed the traditional subject matter for American painting. Originally, it was portraits (there are a couple of early American portraits in the gallery across from the Pope); however, the Hudson River School artists made landscape the primary American subject matter. Their choice to depict the great outdoors was part of American Romanticism, when authors, poets, and artists were enthralled with the splendor and beauty of the wilderness. Hudson River School artists would travel west, armed with a sketchbook, making studies of different landscapes and natural elements. Back in the studio, they would combine these elements and landscapes to create idealized paintings of the vast wilderness.

- ☺ When Cropsey exhibited a similar painting in England, the critics there complained that he had exaggerated the colors seen during autumn in North America. Do you think Cropsey accurately rendered the colors in this painting?

9. **June Morning**

William Singer
Oil on Canvas, 1926

In his execution of this landscape, the American Impressionist William Singer was obviously influenced by the pointillism practiced in France, particularly by Seurat. Like Seurat, Singer applied his paint in dots and dashes of color. Up close, the painting makes little sense, but from a distance one's eye blends the dots and a beautiful landscape emerges. However, unlike Seurat, Singer did a bit more color-mixing on his palette, rather than have the viewer's eye mix the color on the canvas.

- ☺ Can you determine the painting's focal point? What did Singer do to indicate that this was an area of emphasis?

10. **As Kids Go**

Sam Gilliam
Mixed media print, 1996

Sam Gilliam is a contemporary artist living in Washington, DC. Gilliam uses a variety of materials to create his artworks. In this energetic piece, he has built up a pleasing variety of textures, a vigorous rhythm, and a melodious arrangement of colors by superimposing hand-made papers and vibrant splashes of paint over an original print.

- ☺ Gilliam's mastery of color has contributed to his being recognized as one of the most important and inventive colorists of the twentieth century.

It has long been appreciated that there is a direct correlation between music and color. Would the color yellow be similar to a high note or a low note? Would the color red be a loud or soft note? What would the color blue sound like? Can you imagine how *As Kids Go* would sound if it were a musical composition rather than a painting?