

# THE CLARK

## CONNECTS

# SECOND NATURE

## INTRODUCTION



John Constable, *Cloud Study*, c. 1821–22. Oil on laminate cardboard. Gift of the Manton Art Foundation in memory of Sir Edwin and Lady Manton, 2007, 2007.8.58.

Creative. Curious. Careful. These words could describe an artist . . . or a scientist! Both art and science can inspire people to look closely at the world around them. Discover how to examine art like a naturalist—and how to examine nature like an artist—as you explore some scientifically-minded artworks from the Clark’s collection.



Utagawa Hiroshige, *Horikiri Iris Garden*, 1857, Ansei 4, intercalary 5th month. Color woodblock print. Gift of the Rodbell Family Collection, 2014, 2014.16.11.

## GETTING STARTED



Art can show us a little bit about what people from the past understood about animals, plants, and the environment. But that doesn’t mean that every artwork offers an absolute “truth” or can serve as scientific evidence! Instead, art reflects artists’ *interpretations* of life, affected by the times and communities in which they lived, the styles and media they used, and their personal experiences. As you get to know the six artworks in this activity, think about how these interpretations build toward or differ from what we understand about science and nature today.

Albrecht Dürer, *The Rhinoceros*, 1515. Woodcut on paper. Acquired by the Clark, 1968, 1968.265.

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### Biology

Both of the objects below were made by artists who strove to depict animals as convincingly as possible. Ohara Koson excelled at creating detailed, lifelike *kochōga* (prints featuring birds and plants), while Johann Zacharias Quast painted the bugs on this porcelain plate “from nature.”



Ohara Koson, *Nuthatch atop Persimmons* (detail), c. 1910. Color woodblock print. Gift of the Rodbell Family Collection, 2014, 2014.16.20.



Lippert & Haas Manufactory, *Plate* (detail), 1840. Hard-paste porcelain. Acquired by the Clark, 1996, 1996.7.

Practice your natural history skills and exercise your creativity by studying the bugs and bird from these two images as though you were observing them in your own backyard. Pretend that you're writing an entry for a field journal (a notebook scientists use to record their findings) as you answer these questions about the nuthatch or your favorite bug from the plate.

**IMAGINE YOU HAVE ENCOUNTERED THIS CREATURE IN THE WILD.**

**WHAT DO YOU NOTICE? DESCRIBE ITS APPEARANCE IN WORDS AND THEN SKETCH IT.**

**WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEARN ABOUT IT?**

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### Botany

Though trees, bushes, and other flora often appear as background details in landscape art, plants are the main focus of these artworks by John Constable and Anna Atkins. Constable was an artist with an interest in botany, while Atkins was a botanist who photographed plants and flowers with an artist's eye.



John Constable, *Study of a Burdock* (detail), c. 1810–14 or c. 1828. Oil on canvas, mounted on panel. Gift of the Manton Art Foundation in memory of Sir Edwin and Lady Manton, 2007, 2007.8.45.



Anna Atkins, *South America*, 1851–54. Cyanotype. Acquired by the Clark, 2004, 2004.2.

Constable studied real burdock plants while painting *Study of a Burdock* to make it realistic. Notice the tiny bites in the leaves made by hungry insects! The cyanotype process that Atkins used, on the other hand, involved placing a real specimen onto chemically-treated paper. (You can buy your own cyanotype or solar print paper to create this effect at home.) The finished cyanotype preserves the crisp outline but loses the original color of the plant.

FIND A LEAF OR FLOWER FROM A PLANT THAT GROWS NEAR YOU.  
MAKE BOTH A DETAILED SKETCH AND AN OUTLINE OR TRACING OF YOUR SPECIMEN.  
COMPARE YOUR DRAWINGS. WHAT DOES EACH ONE CAPTURE THAT THE OTHER DOES NOT?

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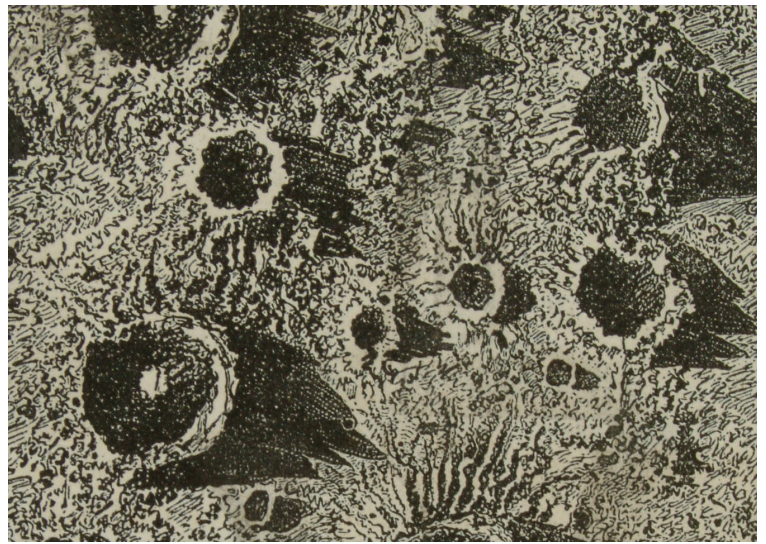
## OTHER WAYS TO PLAY

### Scientific Illustrations

In addition to the Clark's collection of art, our library also contains books and magazines with historical scientific illustrations (images based on scientific knowledge of the time). These two illustrations were made nearly a hundred years before people visited the moon. The artists used evidence from early astrophotography—and a little imagination—to make educated guesses about what it would be like to experience the lunar landscape.



*Lunar Landscape*, in Rev. J.W. Spoor, *Electro astronomical Atlas: Designed for schools, academies, and ladies' seminaries, with explanatory notes, questions and answers*. Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons, and Company, 1874. David A. Hanson Collection of the History of Photomechanical Reproduction.



A. Tissandier Dietrich, *Surface of the Moon*, in *Scientific American: A Weekly Journal of Practical Information, Art, Science, Mechanics, Chemistry, and Manufactures*. New York: Scientific American, 1876, vol. 34, no. 20. David A. Hanson Collection of the History of Photomechanical Reproduction.

LOOK UP SOME CLOSE-UP PHOTOGRAPHS OR VIDEOS OF THE MOON.  
WHAT DID THESE ILLUSTRATIONS GET "RIGHT"?  
WHAT IS MISSING FROM THEM?

You can always experience more nature and art by visiting the Clark. Birds, bugs, plants, and maybe even the moon . . . there's plenty to discover in our galleries and grounds. See you soon!