THE CLARK CONNECTS

LIVING PICTURES

INTRODUCTION

Can't visit your favorite Clark artwork in person? Make your own personalized version at home! The practice of bringing art to life by posing like the subjects of an image, often referred to as *tableau vivant,* has been enchanting art lovers of all ages for hundreds of years.

> **"TABLEAU VIVANT" IS FRENCH FOR "LIVING PICTURE."**

Nineteenth-century *tableaux vivants* could take the form of theatrical spectacles in which actors dressed up in elaborate costumes to embody famous paintings. Back then, some people also enjoyed staging more informal "living pictures" at home. These days, museums around the world have sparked new interest in this historic pastime by encouraging people to share their recreated works of art on social media. Search the hashtags #MuseumFromHome and #BetweenArtAndQuarantine for inspiration as you get ready to create your own twenty-first century *tableau vivant*!

HOW TO PLAY

Start by browsing the Clark's digital collection to decide which artwork you want to bring to life. Once you've found something to recreate, spend some time looking at it carefully. What colors, textures, motifs, or shapes stand out the most? What do you have in your home (or can find outdoors) that reminds you of this artwork? Will you work with posed people or orchestrated objects? Don't worry too much about matching the image exactly. The point is to mimic the picture, but mostly to have fun making it your own. When you have composed your tableau vivant, it's time to take a photo!

> **WE'D LOVE TO SEE YOUR RECREATIONS!**
>
> **TAG @CLARKART AND USE #CLARKART ON SOCIAL MEDIA.**

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Ready to recreate? Take a close look at *Women with a Dog; View Off Margate, Evening;* and *Various Objects,* and then try your hand at bringing them to life.

<u>Women with a Dog</u> shows a scene that might have been close to home for Pierre Bonnard. In this painting, Bonnard's sister (left), cousin (right), and family dog join three finely-dressed, unidentified figures for some fresh air in the garden.

If you like to play dress-up, this is the *tableau vivant* for you! Whether you prefer a simple blue outfit, a patterned scarf, or an elegant red tie, these five figures offer several fashionable looks to recreate. If you want to capture the overall appearance of the painting, however, what you wear matters less than how you pose and how you compose the scene for your photograph.

The artist has flattened the space between the people in the front and back of the garden, making the three distant figures look closer to the women than they actually are. At the same time, notice how much space the women and their dog occupy. When you take your photo, make sure your frontmost figures and furry friend are very close to the camera.

Pierre Bonnard, <u>Women with a Dog</u>, 1891. Oil and ink on canvas. Acquired by the Clark, 1979, 1979.23.

HOW DOES THE SCENE CHANGE IF YOU TAKE YOUR PHOTO FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE?

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Joseph Mallord William Turner, _View off Margate, Evening_, c. 1840. Oil on canvas. Gift of the Manton Art Foundation in memory of Sir Edwin and Lady Manton, 2007, 2007.8.117.

As he did in many of his later seascapes, Joseph Mallord William Turner experiments with different ways of representing the sea and sky in _View off Margate, Evening_. The big, choppy brushstrokes and overlapping colors make it challenging to get a clear view of details like the woman and two children on the shore or the ghostly boat on the horizon. This style of painting wasn't liked by everyone, though. An art critic once dismissed Turner's stormy seas as "soapsuds and whitewash."

It's your turn for some Turner-style experimentation! Create a textured landscape or seascape using food, bits and pieces from nature, or other unusual materials. (Using actual soapsuds is optional, of course.) You might try to recreate Turner's scene, or take inspiration from his techniques as you fashion your own.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE MOOD OF YOUR LANDSCAPE OR SEASCAPE?
HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM THE MOOD OF TURNER'S PAINTING?

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Louis Léopold Boilly, _Various Objects_, c. 1785. Oil on canvas. Acquired by the Clark, 1981, 1981.1.

Letters stashed under a strained piece of string. An old engraving with its edges tattered and torn. Flowers that look like you could lean in and smell them. With its delicate details, Various Objects is a prime example of _trompe l'œil_ painting, or art that fools your eye into thinking that the objects it depicts are real and right in front of you.

We don't know exactly why Louis Léopold Boilly chose to paint these specific objects. Perhaps he was inspired by the people to whom the letters are addressed, but little is known about them and their relationship to these things.

Seek out your own "various objects" to make a tribute to Boilly's still life. Pin photographs, notes, flowers, and anything else that is meaningful to you to a bulletin board, or place a piece of paper on the floor and lay the objects on top before taking a picture. Want a challenge? Try selecting objects from just one drawer, desk, box, or room in your home.

> ### WHAT STORY MIGHT BOILLY'S OBJECTS TELL?
> ### HOW ABOUT YOUR "VARIOUS OBJECTS"?

OTHER WAYS TO PLAY

Try tag-teaming your _tableaux vivants_ with friends and family.

Choose a group portrait from the Clark's collection and encourage each person to pick their favorite figure to bring to life. Show off your costumes or props on a group video chat. Don't forget to take a screenshot to create a virtual portrait of everyone!

Pick a landscape from the collection, recreate it in your own way, and invite someone else to do the same. When you're finished, compare your interpretations to the original work of art that inspired them. What elements of the artwork did you both recreate in your individual landscapes? What did you each do differently?