

Avery to Warhol Self-Guided Tour

Zootopia: Animals in Art – Examine the ways animals have been a recurring subject in art



Barbara Leto
American, b. 1953
Free Sparrows, 1997
Gouache over acrylic on paper
Gift of the Vero Beach Art Club

As you look at this piece, what catches your eye first? What does this 'scene' suggest?

Originally from upstate New York, Barbara Leto became a Floridian in 1968. Leto has subsequently shown her work in many juried fine art shows around the state. She was awarded the Bronze Award at the Henegar Center for the Arts juried show in Melbourne, FL, in 2007.

Here we see three sparrows perched atop an opened cage. Throughout art history specific works, such as this one, seem to invite us to see ourselves in animals. Do you identify with the birds? Are there any

characteristics of sparrows with which you identify? Why do you think she put the sparrows on top of the building, and not flying off into the blue sky or in a tree?

The artist states that, "I offer a mysterious quality in the compositions." One may regard the origami crane inside the cage as such a mystery. What meaning do you give to this crane? Are there other elements of the image that you find mysterious? Although this work was made in 1997, the origami crane may resonate in 2020 as a symbol of hope and healing during challenging times.

A gouache is an artwork made with opaque pigments ground in water, applied as the final layer of paint; it is typically in a white or very light shade.

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Jack Lembeck
American, b. 1942
White Deer, 1981
Acrylic on canvas
Gift of Louis K. and Susan P. Meisel

Jack Lembeck's *White Deer* invites the viewer to ponder a series of ostensible contradictions. Why does the tape on the corner appear to cast shadows? What else is casting shadows? Are we looking at the front or the back of the object? Is it a painting or a collage?

In a muted palette of beiges, grays and yellows, *White Deer* presents a somewhat haphazard layering of realistic and abstract forms. Notice the precise rendering of a male deer

with antlers on the left. The artist has carefully replicated the animal in filet crochet, a craft that was designed to mimic lace. Lembeck calls attention to the deer through its brightness and detailed portrayal. Why is it important for us to pay attention to the deer? Notice the circles with intersecting lines. Are these a scope? Is the deer a target?

Lembeck worked in a style called Abstract Illusionism. This was a brief phase of Abstract Expressionism that combined optical illusion with emotional expression, and had its heyday in the 1970s and 1980s. The *trompe l'oeil* (fool the eye) effect, that is, those parts of the painting where we are tricked into thinking we are seeing three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface, demonstrate Lembeck's interest in optical illusion. Artists often use *trompe l'oeil* and illusion for humorous effect. What is the tone of this painting? Do you perceive an undercurrent of playfulness? Are there any other paintings in the museum that invite you to question its materiality?

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Hunt Slonem
American, b. 1951
*Finches A and
Finches* (diptych),
2000
and *Finches*,
2000
Oil on canvas
Gifts of Guy W.
Clark II

Take a moment to look both images. What do you see here? What strikes you first? How does the

artist suggest the kinds of interaction these birds might have with each other, or with their environment?

Hunt Slonem is an artist who has become known for his love of the exotic and his vast collections of exotica. What collection as he depicted here? Slonem has a studio with many rooms and in some he has finches, who he allows to fly free while he paints. This freedom of mobility allows him to observe the birds as he works.

These paintings are called a diptych which means two pieces that form a whole. When you look at this work how do you perceive the two paintings interacting with each other? Do the painted birds interact with each other? Notice the differences in color and various types of brushstrokes to suggest motion. Do the quick brush strokes make you feel the bird's actions?

Do the birds seem to communicate? Are they telling you something? Are you feeling any differently now having spent time with the Finches?

Hunt Slonem knew that he wanted to be an artist from the time he was in first grade and one of the things he says about himself is "I have to have a certain amount of 'stuff' in place before I begin to paint." Do you think he has enough finches?

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Sharron Quasius
American, b. 1948
Watson and the Shark, 1982
Relief sculpture,
cotton duck over wood
Gift of Mr. and Mrs.
Charles Spahr

Look closely at this work of art. Imagine yourself as a spectator. How would you describe what you see...the people, the setting...what seems to be happening?

Sharron Quasius makes monumental

soft sculptures based on narrative paintings of the past. In *Watson and the Shark*, she chose to recreate the rescue of fourteen year old Brook Watson depicted in John Singleton Copley's famous 1778 oil painting. \Watson had decided to take a dip when a shark attacked and pulled him under three times. Quasius used white cotton duck fabric to stitch the contours and the details of the imagery on her sewing machine, and gave her figures form by stuffing the canvas with polyester fiber. What makes this work so intriguing? Why might Quasius have chosen this medium? What emotions do you see depicted? What feelings are you experiencing?

Since the 18th century, artists have been captivated by the menacing power of the shark. This underwater predator lurks deep and can evoke awe and respect for its ferociousness and power. How has Quasius depicted the shark? What makes the shark realistic? What reaction do you have to the shark? Do you have associations with sharks?

Although Brook Watson lost his leg, he survived this shark attack and went on to become Lord Mayor of London. Why might he have commissioned this painting? What do you think was most memorable for him? What is most memorable for you?