Still lifes are paintings of things that artists carefully choose and arrange. But are all still lifes truly still? There is often more than meets the eye. Look closely for scenes that are overflowing, toppling, balancing, spilling, or rustling.
What’s Bugging You?

The objects in these paintings may be still, but sometimes there are creatures and critters flying, buzzing, and crawling on them. Look for these creepy crawlers as you journey through the exhibition and check them off as you go.

Feast Your Eyes

Some of these paintings make your mouth water and your stomach growl. Use your imagination to explore with your senses.

• Which still life would taste delicious? Pick a snack from a painting and sketch it on the table below.

• Find something in a painting that smells sweet. Add it to your drawing.

• What noises might you hear in these still lifes? Find something that makes a sound and add it to your picture.

Well done!

You sketched your own still life. Add more objects to your drawing as you journey through the galleries.
Tricks and Treats

Some still-life artists are like magicians who try to trick you into thinking their paintings are the real thing.

With your family, vote on which artwork does the best job fooling your eyes. Compare and discuss your choices:

looks most real because


Still Life at Home

Create a still life as a family. Have each person pick an object and work together to arrange them in an interesting way. Photograph your family still life and share with #philamuseum.

Learn about other Family Programs by visiting philamuseum.org/families.

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Inside, top to bottom: Covered Peaches (detail), 1819, by Raphaelle Peale (PMA: Gift of the McNeil Americana Collection, 2015-1-2); Insect (Honey Bee) (detail), 1817, by Titian Ramsey Peale II (American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia); Field Flowers (detail), 1855, by George A. Beigel (Manocogian Collection); Flower Still Life with Bird’s Nest (detail), 1853, by Severin Roesen (PMA: Purchased with support from the Henry P. Millhenny Fund in memory of Frances P. Millhenny, Mr. and Mrs. Robert L. Millhenny, Jr., the Edith H. Bell Fund, Mrs. J. Maxwell Moran, Maraguerite and Gerry Lernest, the Center for American Art Fund, Donna C. and Morris W. Stroud II, Dr. and Mrs. Robert E. Booth, Jr., Frederic LaValley and John Whiting, Mr. and Mrs. John A. Nyheim, Charlena Sussel, Penelope P. Wilson, the American Art Committee, and with the gift by exchange of Theodore Wiedemann in memory of his wife, Letha M. Wiedemann, 2010-6-1); Roses on a Wall (detail), c. 1877, by George Cochran Lambdin (Detroit Institute of Arts: Founders Society purchase, Beatrice W. Rogers Fund); The Circle (detail), c. 1948, by Walter Tandy Murch (Brooklyn Museum, Dick S. Ramsay Fund 49.7).