
Teaching Resource

Audubon to Warhol

Art of American Still Life

October 27, 2015–January 10, 2016



Fishbowl Fantasy, 1867, by Edward A. Goodes



Fishbowl Fantasy

1867

Oil on canvas

30 × 25 1/8 inches, (76.2 × 63.8 cm)

Edward A. Goodes

American, 1832–1910

Collection of Peter A. Feld

Let's Look

- What do you notice first when you look at this painting?
- What words would you use to describe the image? How did the artist achieve that effect?
- How many things can you identify?
- What is the mood of this painting? What do you see that makes you say that?
- What would you investigate more closely if you could step into the room and touch the objects?

Let's Look Again

- If these objects represent a character, who would that person be?
- If these objects tell a story, what would that story be?
- How have your impressions of the artwork deepened or changed since you first saw the picture?

About the Artist

Born in 1832 and living until 1910, Edward A. Goodes witnessed a period of American history that spanned from the first telegraph to the first airplane flight. Goodes was the sixth child of an English tailor who had immigrated to Delaware just three years before Edward was born.

As a young man in Wilmington, Goodes may have apprenticed with a portrait painter. He later moved to Philadelphia to pursue a career as a sign painter and, occasionally, a fine artist. He exhibited his paintings at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, where he was known for marine landscapes, rather than still lifes. During the Civil War, he served as a sergeant in a Union Army regiment of Pennsylvania volunteers. He painted *Fishbowl Fantasy*, one of his few surviving works, two years after the end of the war.

About the Artwork



Every object in Goodes's painting tells part of a story. The crowded fantasy scene is overflowing with clues that hint at characters, setting, and plot. The clues challenge us to weave our own version of the story, inviting us into the world of the cozy Victorian parlor, where images like this one provided entertainment and inspired conversation.

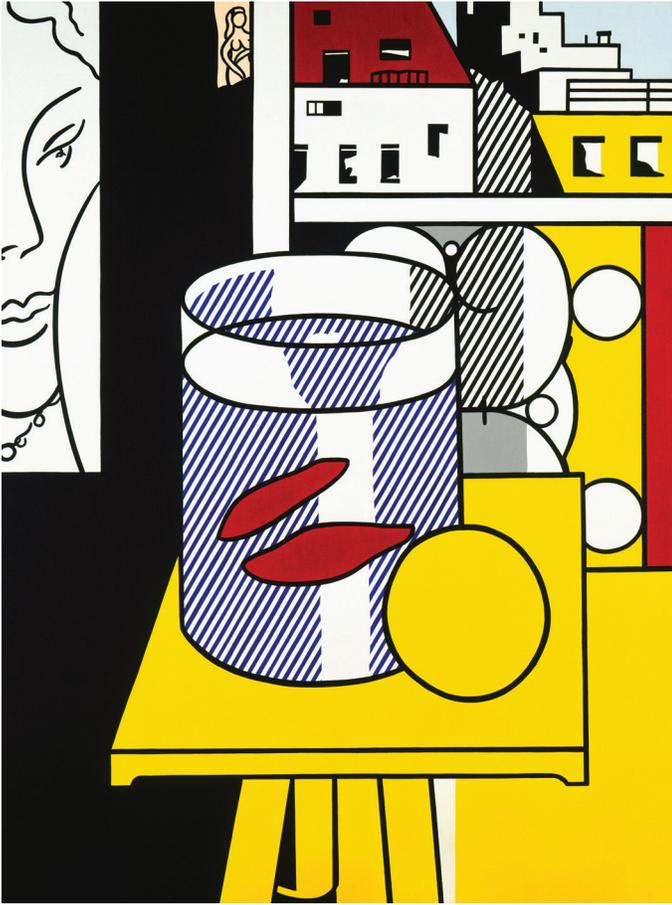
At first glance, the story seems to be a romance. The partly folded letter on pink paper on the tabletop is written from Frank in Philadelphia to "Dear Isabel." The other words are hidden, teasing us with possibilities. Who is Isabel? Looking at her belongings, we can imagine that she's just come in from outdoors. The pink gloves still hold the shape of her hands and lie casually

alongside her fashionable hat, folded fan, and gold cross. Her open pen and monogrammed note card suggest that she has begun to write back to Frank before adding his latest letter to the cherished collection that we see in the unlocked cabinet, tied together with a pink ribbon. Were the flowers and the goldfish bowl a gift from him? If so, they may be sending a message. During this period, Americans often assigned meanings to specific flowers, and bouquets could be used as a language of love.

A deeper look reveals that this is not a simple love story. The sheet music almost hidden in the background is for the popular song "Oh! Woo Me Not from My Cottage Home, I Cannot Be Thy Bride." The reflection in the fishbowl, which moves the story out into the wider world, shows two women walking arm in arm. Considering *Fishbowl Fantasy* was painted two years after the Civil War, it seems no coincidence that these women are dressed in blue and gray, implying that one is a Northerner and one a Southerner. They may represent two cousins, Isabel and Bella, who are the lead characters in a romantic novel of the period, *The Hidden Path*, by Marion Harland. In the novel, Isabel, perhaps the woman in blue in Goodes's painting, is a professional writer from Philadelphia who loses the affection of her beloved Frank to a woman of less ambition. Could the bleeding-heart flowers be the final clue that this story doesn't end well?



Still Life with Goldfish, 1974, by Roy Lichtenstein



Still Life with Goldfish

1974

Oil and Manga on canvas

80 × 60 inches (203.2 × 152.4 cm)

Roy Lichtenstein

American, 1923–1997

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Purchased with the Edith H. Bell Fund, 1974-110-1
© Estate of Roy Lichtenstein

Let's Look

- What's going on in this painting?
- What colors do you see? Why might the artist have chosen those colors?
- How would you describe the shapes and lines of this picture? Can you find patterns or connections between them?
- What parts of this painting seem flat and what parts seem three-dimensional? How did the artist create those effects?
- How does your eye move through the painting?

Let's Look Again

- Compare this painting to works by Henri Matisse. How did Lichtenstein transform those earlier paintings?
- Based on what you see in the artwork, what do you think was important to the artist?

About the Artist

Roy Lichtenstein is best known for paintings of comic-strip-style subjects blown up to monumental size and styled to evoke the commercial printing process of the time. The stenciled circles that create color and shading in his paintings were exaggerated forms of the colored dots of ink used in printing, known as Ben-Day dots.

Lichtenstein was born in 1923 and grew up in New York City. He studied studio art as a teenager, and later learned about art history at Ohio State University, where he earned a master of fine arts. Those studies were interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. He was drafted into the army and spent three years in Europe putting his training to use drawing maps.

Lichtenstein experimented with a variety of painting styles, including Abstract Expressionism and Cubism, before he honed his signature style in the early 1960s. He found inspiration in other Pop artists he met, including Claes Oldenburg and Jim Dine. The real breakthrough came from his five-year-old son David, who pointed at a picture of Mickey Mouse and told his father, "I bet you can't paint as good as that." That challenge set the course for the rest of Lichtenstein's career.

About the Artwork

Lichtenstein's *Still Life with Goldfish* isn't simply a painting of a goldfish bowl. It's a painting of a painting of a goldfish bowl. The starting point is the work of French painter Henri Matisse (1869–1954). Matisse had returned again and again to the theme of the goldfish bowl. Lichtenstein used elements from several of Matisse's images, combining them into a single interior scene. Matisse's 1914 [Interior with a Goldfish Bowl](#) shows a cityscape through a window. Lichtenstein probably encountered this painting in his collection of art books, but others he could have visited in person. The close-up view of the bowl, sitting on a rickety table with a piece of fruit, comes from [Goldfish and Palette](#), painted in the same room and in the same year, which now hangs in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Some of Matisse's figure drawings are also included in Lichtenstein's composition, as if decorating the walls of the room.

When asked why he created images based on another artist's work, Lichtenstein answered that it wasn't intended as a parody, clarifying that "I'm making a painting of my particular image of Matisse." Lichtenstein's painting is about his impression of Matisse's paintings, their bold colors, strong forms, and simple geometries. While the hand of the artist is clear in Matisse's work, it is concealed in Lichtenstein's. Taking his cues from new commercial techniques, Lichtenstein hardened his contour lines and applied his paint evenly to remove any evidence of his brushstrokes. He further reduced Matisse's palette to the primary colors plus black and white as though translating the picture into a rudimentary printed reproduction. The forms are processed to flat areas of color, and regular diagonal lines that signify form and shading. The view from the window, of Paris in Matisse's original, is filled in Lichtenstein's work with the blocky skyscrapers of New York City. Lichtenstein transformed Matisse's source material, adapting it to his own time and place, an American world of shiny advertising photography and industrial techniques. He framed the question, "What would a Matisse look like if created by a machine?"

Compare and Connect

- Take a close look at these two paintings side by side. What do they have in common? How are they different?
- Goodes painted *Fishbowl Fantasy* in 1867 and Lichtenstein painted *Still Life with Goldfish* in 1974, over one hundred years later. Connect each work to a timeline of American history. What was happening around the time each artist was working? How are the events, innovations, or spirit of each era reflected in the artwork? What can comparing these artworks teach us about American history and culture?
- How would you compose a still life with a fishbowl? What would your choices say about you or the time you live in?

This teaching resource is based on the Museum's *Audubon to Warhol: The Art of American Still Life* teaching poster.

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