

Meet the Masters

March Program

Grade 1

People in Art

Tsuguharu Foujita "In the Kitchen"
Gilbert Stuart "The Skater"

Artwork Overview:

Tsuguharu Foujita lived in Paris during the early to mid twentieth century. He belonged to the School of Paris which was not so much an art movement as an umbrella term implying a certain level of professionalism with a modern bent. It has often encompassed all forms of art produced between the two World Wars. Many styles including Neoclassical, late Cubist and Surrealism and Expressionism can be grouped in the School of Paris.

Very little information about Tsuguharu Foujita is available, although his paintings are lyrical and represent a style unlike the popular artists of his time. Japanese influences can be found in the painting "In the Kitchen" with the flat surfaces and almost wood block quality in the outlines of the figures.

"In the Kitchen", this work is an almost doll-like study, resembling an Oriental miniature painting in it's wealth of sharply drawn details. The composition, however, is part Eighteenth-Century Realism and part a fairy tale of children playing at being grownups. The paint is laid on flatly, the drawing is clean and sharp, and the effect is dreamily poetic.

Topics for Discussion:

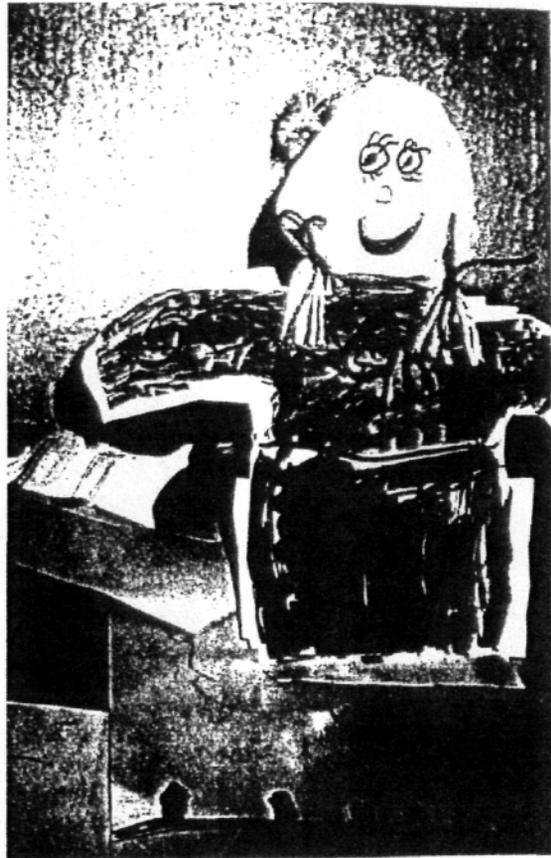
1. People have been subjects of artist's paintings for many centuries. The people in the two prints we are discussing appear to be very different. Can you find differences in each painting?
2. Can you find anything similar in the pictures?
3. Do the children you see in "In the Kitchen" look like real children? Why or why not?
4. Which painting do you like best and why?
5. Can you imagine yourself in the kitchen cooking like the children in Foujita's painting?

Hands-on Art Activity: **Depict Children at Play Using Mixed Media**

Materials: Light Brown Construction Paper 12 x 18"
White Tissue Paper
Cardboard for a base
Crayons
String, yarn, beads, buttons, fabric and found objects
Scissors
Glue
Stapler (to be used by adult only)
Extra Staples

Directions:

1. After discussing art prints with children ask them to think about what activities they like to play (pretend stories can become subjects for this project.)
2. Hand out construction paper, folded in half, with template already traced on it.
3. Have the children cut out figure through both pieces of construction paper.
4. Have the children decorate the figures front and back with crayons.
5. Staple edges of figure leaving top of head, ends of arms, and bottom open (leave 1" on bottom to staple to cardboard base after stuffing).
6. Stuff with tissue.
7. Attach figures to cardboard base with the stapler (staple top of head and close arms after the figure is stuffed).
8. Let children decorate more with pieces of fabric, yarn, buttons, etc. by using glue or stapler (with your help).
9. Make sure name appears on the base.



GILBERT STUART (1755-1828)

Gilbert Stuart spent his youth in Newport, Rhode Island, where he attended a school for poor children. But, as one critic pointed out, "School served Stuart principally as a reservoir of companions he could lead astray." Stuart taught himself to draw and paint at an early age. After a brief stay in Scotland as a young man, he returned to Newport, where he earned a name as a portrait painter. But by 1775, at the outbreak of the American Revolution, Stuart fled to England to try to better his fortune.

Rebellious by nature, Stuart scorned formal art training, declaring, "I will not follow any master. I wish to...see [Nature] with my own eyes." But when he failed to make a living in England, he finally sought instruction under the great American painter, Benjamin West. The style of painting popular in Stuart's time — often called the "Grand Style" — required the painter to make his subject LOOK noble and "grand," no matter what his actual appearance. Stuart despised this idea. He once said, "A dressmaker may alter a dress, ...a tailor a coat, but a painter may give up his art if he attempts to alter to please. It cannot be done."

Most artists of Stuart's day considered drawing in line to be essential to painting. But Stuart never learned how to draw! Instead, he used rounded "patches" of paint almost as a sculptor uses clay — to build up and shape the roundness of a cheek, a forehead, or a chin. In Stuart's portraits, the eye is able to travel all around the head, to feel its weight and depth, as well as its expression. Today, art critics agree that one of Stuart's greatest contributions to painting was his method of "modeling" the human head.

Stuart returned to the United States in 1793. His paintings were much in demand and he was generally regarded as the best portrait painter in America. He painted portraits of six Presidents, including three of George Washington. One of these was used for the U.S. one-dollar bill. Despite his great success, Stuart always spent money faster than he made it. He died in poverty in 1828.



About the Painting

"THE SKATER"

Have you ever been faced with a task you were afraid you couldn't do? That's how Gilbert Stuart may have felt about painting "The Skater." He was not used to painting full-length portraits. In fact, critics used to joke that he could not paint the human body below the shoulders! But Stuart surprised everyone with his portrait of William Grant of Scotland.

Some critics say Stuart owed the success of "The Skater" to the Greek god, Apollo! In the National Gallery of London was a cast of a famous Greek statue called the "Apollo Belvidere." Some art historians say Stuart used this statue as the model for his picture of William Grant. They say he first painted Mr. Grant's head in the usual manner. Then he sketched the "Apollo" backwards, by looking into a mirror. This sketch he fitted underneath the completed head. Clothes, skates, and a broad-brimmed hat completed the disguise.

Whatever "tricks" Stuart used to produce "The Skater," the public was delighted. Art critics of Stuart's day agreed that "The Skater" was a "noble portrait, large as life, ...which produces the most powerful effect." "The Skater" was the only work in which Stuart painted his subject in motion.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

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Tsuguharu Foujita

Birth Year : 1886

Death Year : 1967

Country : Japan

Tsuguharu Foujita was born in Japan and studied at the Imperial School of Fine Arts in Tokyo. By 1910 he had received several medals and prizes; the Japanese Emperor even purchased one of his paintings. On a trip to Korea in 1911, he was asked to paint the king. Foujita seemed destined for a career in the Orient until he traveled to London in 1912 and then, in 1913, went to live in Paris. He discovered European contemporary art, much as the French, in the nineteenth-century, had discovered Japanese prints. Foujita had his first exhibition in Paris in 1917 and by 1924 he was one of the most important exhibitors at the Salon d' Automne. In the same year he was elected a member of the Tokyo Academy of Fine Arts for he was the first Japanese artist to free that country's art of its legendary and classic image. Foujita was then selected to decorate the Japanese House at the Cité Universitaire in Paris. He traveled to England, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, and the United States where he had a studio until 1939. He returned to Paris at the outbreak of World War II and remained there until 1941 after which he spent nine years in Tokyo. He then returned to Paris where he continued to paint and occupied himself with charitable functions as president of the Association of Japanese Artists. Foujita died in Zurich at the age of eighty-one and was buried in the cathedral city of Rheims, where he had decorated a chapel after embracing Catholicism.

As one of the oldest members of the School of Paris, Foujita was a friend to [Braque](#), [Picasso](#), and [Rousseau](#), all of whom subtly influenced his style. Foujita bridged the gap between Eastern and Western art in his narrative works, executed in a clear, flowing line and with paint applied in thin, very smooth layers of soft colors tending to grays, mauves, pale ochers, and blacks. Even in the liveliest of his narratives his mood and effects are dreamily quiet, almost timeless in their clarity.



[Tsuguharu Foujita Quai Aux Fleurs](#)



[Tsuguharu Foujita Cafe](#)



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