

Portraits

Portrait:

An image or work of art that portrays a specific individual or group of people.

They typically reveal elements of the personality of the person and show what they look like.

A portrait might also be made of an animal.

A portrait can be made from any medium.



Robert Henri (1865-1929)

Fergus, Boy in Blue, 1928

Oil on canvas

About the Artist:

Robert Henry Cozad was born in Cincinnati, Ohio. He is considered to be a leader among American artists and was known for his abilities as a teacher and his belief that the artist should adhere to his or her own instincts. He specialized in ethnic **portraits** and paintings of children. He spent his youth between Cincinnati and Cozad, Nebraska, a town founded by his father, John Jackson Cozad. His father, a gambler and real estate developer, was accused of being involved in a shooting. This forced the family to flee to Atlantic City, New Jersey, where they changed their names. Robert chose for his new name a variation of his middle name that would rhyme with the word buckeye and remind him of his Ohio roots. His father was cleared of all charges, but the family maintained their adopted names.

Robert Henri studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and at the Academy Julian in Paris. Upon returning to the United States in the fall of 1891 the artist began teaching art in Philadelphia. He encouraged his students to paint what was real to them. He embraced all classes of people in his painting. He traveled regularly and used the people he met as subjects in his work. Robert Henri died in New York from cancer in 1929.

About the Art:

In search of people that had not been spoiled by civilization, Henri traveled to Ireland's Achill Island. He purchased a house there in 1924 and returned there every summer after, while maintaining a residence in New York. *Fergus, Boy in Blue*, 1928 depicts a young Irish boy and is one of many portraits of children that Henri did in the last years of his life. Wide, clear and colorful eyes help to evoke a feeling of innocence on the part of the young boy. This painting is representative of the many portraits of young children that Henri did in order to support himself.



Discussion Questions:

- What **primary colors** do you see? Do you see any **secondary colors**? **Warm colors**? **Cool colors**? **Shades**? **Tints**?
- What kinds of **lines** are used to make the different parts of Fergus' face?
- What **shapes** do you see? Do the shapes in the painting look flat or three dimensional?
- What is the area of **emphasis** of the painting, or the first area of the canvas that your eye is drawn to? What has Henri done to draw your eye there? Why do you think that is?
- How does this artist feel about the boy he painted? Why do you think this?

Angela Gregory (1903-1990)

La Belle Augustine, ca. 1928
Cast bronze



Discussion Questions:

- This is a bust **portrait**, or one that shows just the chest, shoulders, neck and head. By looking at her face, could you imagine what the rest of her **form** would look like?
- What do you think the **colors** of her eyes and hair would be in real life? What color is her dress?
- Does this person remind you of anyone you know? Why?
- What types of **textures** do you see in this sculpture?
- How was this **sculpture** made?
- What are other means of creating a portrait (photography, painting, drawing)? Why do you think this artist chose sculpture to create this portrait?

About the Artist:

Angela Gregory is noted internationally for her architectural sculptures and portrait busts. Born in New Orleans, Louisiana, Angela Gregory's aspirations to become an artist received a great deal of support from her educator parents. Her father taught engineering at Tulane University and her mother was a well known potter in addition to being an art teacher. Angela attended the same school where her mother taught, a private school for young women in New Orleans. By the age of fourteen she had become very skilled in clay modeling and relief casting. She attended Newcomb College in 1921, a school known for its talented young women artists, where she studied with the German sculptor Albert Reicker. At the age of 22, Angela Gregory received a scholarship to study in Paris at the Parson's School of Fine and Applied Art, which enabled her to travel to France and Italy to develop her skills as a sculptor. After three years she returned to New Orleans to establish a studio. In 1929, when the artist was 25, she was offered a commission to produce a piece of sculpture to decorate the exterior of the Criminal Courthouse of New Orleans. She went on to produce several more commissioned monuments, including eight of the 22 famous men surrounding the exterior of the State Capitol in Baton Rouge.

About the Art:

La Belle Augustine, ca. 1928, is one of Gregory's earliest works and was created soon after returning from her studies in France. The "unfinished" appearance of the work is demonstrated in a surface in which bumps, crevices and folds are obvious. These imperfections or traits give the bust life. The artist followed a traditional sand-cast technique often employed by French artists. Sand-casting is a method of casting metal in a mold made of firmly packed layers of damp sand around a sculpture. The sculpture is removed from the sand and leaves an exact impression for new sculptures to be made.

The subject, a young African-American woman from New Orleans, reflects the artist's sensitive approach to her work. The head is tilted downward, has a distant stare and a quiet expression. These traits along with the soft shoulders create a portrait of a humble and thoughtful young woman. Gregory produced three casts of *La Belle Augustine*. This version is most likely the second or third.

Portraits

COMPARISON QUESTIONS

1. After a careful look at the painting and the sculpture, what can you tell about the children in these portraits?
2. Have you had your portrait made? Was it a painting, a drawing or a photograph?
3. How are the painting and the sculpture different or similar to your portrait experience?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

LANGUAGE ARTS

Imaginary Interview

Materials:

Transparencies of *Fergus*, *Boy in Blue* and *La Belle Augustine*, pencil and paper

Goals/Objectives:

Students will practice developing ideas in written form in this activity. Students will use their imagination and the information they learned about the works of art to organize the interview with *Fergus*, *Boy in Blue* or *La Belle Augustine*.

Procedure:

Ask your students to conduct an imaginary interview with Belle Augustine or Fergus. Project the images of the two portraits on the wall in the classroom. Have them answer the following questions (or develop questions as a class) and present the facts in writing, putting their ideas in a logical order:

- How do you spend your leisure time?
- How do you receive your education?
- What is your everyday dress?
- What might you have for dinner tonight?
- How many people are in the family?
- What chores do you do?
- What does your family do in the evenings?

VISUAL ARTS

Draw Thy Neighbor

Materials:

drawing paper, drawing utensils and space to draw

Goals /Objectives:

After completing this assignment, students will be familiar with portraits and understand the process for developing a portrait. Students will experience drawing from a live model and sitting for a portrait.

Procedure:

1. Discuss the types of portraits presented in the packet and alternative means of creating an image that portrays a specific individual or group.
2. Assign partners. Students take turns drawing each other's portrait. After posing for twenty minutes while one student draws they switch roles. At the end of the drawing sessions students will reveal their work to one another.
3. Turn the classroom into a gallery by hanging student work around the room.

