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art & man

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Rembrandt
WORKING WITH LIGHT

REMBRANDT

Man of 100 Faces

The mysterious face peers at us out of the darkness. Sometimes it can hardly be seen above a fantastic costume; at other times it is nearly hidden in shadow. But the magnetic eyes stare right into ours.

The great 17th-century Dutch artist Rembrandt did more portraits of himself than almost any other artist. He used his own face, not because he was so pleased with the way he looked, but because he

wanted to explore human nature and emotions. And his own face was the one he knew best.

Rembrandt van Rijn (pronounced "rhine") was born in 1606 in Leiden, a large city in the Netherlands. During his entire life, Rembrandt never traveled more than 80 miles from his birthplace. But he really had no need to. During the 17th century, the Netherlands was one

1629



Here at 23, Rembrandt was on his own and was just beginning his career as a young artist. His self-portrait shows us not so much the way he looked as the way he saw himself, as a young rebel pushing his way into the world. The heavy, thick swirls of paint were done with the handle of the brush. The dramatic spotlighting from below and the staring eyes heighten the feeling of action and determination.

Self-portrait, 1629. Alte Pinakothek, Munich. Photo by Joachim Blauel.

1640



Eleven years later, Rembrandt had become the most successful artist in Amsterdam. He was so popular that there was a waiting list of people who wanted him to do their portrait. In 1634, Rembrandt had married a wealthy young woman named Saskia, who brought him love, money, and family connections. A confident and proud aristocrat dressed in rich clothes stares out of the canvas at us.

Self-portrait, 1640. National Gallery, London.

1658



Nearly 20 years have passed and great changes have taken place in the artist's life. Saskia and three of their children have died and Rembrandt has spent all his money. Over the years, his work also changed. He became interested in showing peoples' inner feelings, rather than doing flattering portraits. And so his paintings went out of fashion. But even with all these disasters, the artist sits calmly, like a king on a throne, bathed in a rich, golden light.

Self-portrait, 1658. The Frick Collection, NY.

Cover: Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669). Self-portrait (detail), 1659. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Andrew Mellon Collection.

DT:

Can you tell your whole life story without writing down a word? Rembrandt did. Find out how.

of the most important countries in Europe. Dutch ships brought back riches from the East Indies and the New World. These precious cargoes created a large, wealthy group of merchants who were interested in art. The Netherlands' "Golden Age" was the perfect time for an artist of Rembrandt's talent to be born. Son of a miller, Rembrandt went to the local school, then at 14 entered Lei-

den University. Since he showed artistic talent, at 17 he went to Amsterdam to study painting.

Below, and later in this issue, you'll read more about the life and art of this great Dutch master. You'll meet some modern artists who work with light, as well as a young painter who does "old master" portraits. Finally, you'll use light to create an original portrait of your own.

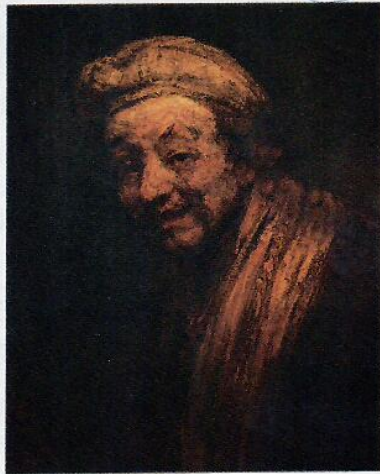
1659



This portrait was done one short year later. All his costumes have disappeared and Rembrandt paints himself in a simple black hat and coat. His new use of light focuses on the only two important areas—his face and hands. The artist's dignity and suffering is reflected in his face, which emerges from the dark background with a warm, haunting glow.

Self-portrait, 1659. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

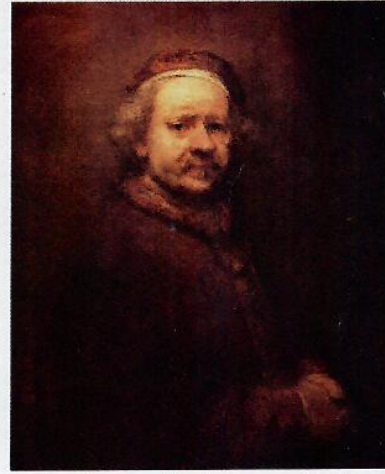
1667



Now compare this portrait to the rest. Does it even look like the same person? And how old must he be? Here Rembrandt is no longer trying to impress anyone. Not only does he wear old clothes, but he has given himself the face of an old clown. He turns and faces the viewer laughing. Is his expression a grin of failure or a defiant smile? Rembrandt hasn't given up, he's just changed once again.

Self-portrait, 1667. Kunstmuseum, Cologne.

1669



As he reached the end of his life, Rembrandt's paintings were regarded as being "unfinished." This self-portrait, done in Rembrandt's last year, is so simple and powerful it expresses only the most important message. The artist is at peace. He looks at us, but is wrapped up in his own thoughts. He is free from all suffering and his face glows from within with a kind of spiritual inner light.

Self-portrait, 1669. National Gallery, London.

Master of Shadows

Discover more about the artist who was “his own sun god.”

Like all of the greatest artists, Rembrandt saw the world in a totally new way. Through his unique use of light and shadow he was able to express the mysteries of the mind and spirit. It is fairly easy to identify a painting by Rembrandt, because he developed a painting style using light and dark that is unlike that of any other artist. There is even a special kind of lighting in photography—where objects in shadow appear to glow with a golden light—called “Rembrandt lighting.”

In addition to his more than 600 paintings, Rembrandt also did hundreds of drawings and prints in which he expressed mood and emotion through light. Both of the works shown on these pages are of the same subject. One (*top, left*) is a sketch done for the etching on the right. (The images are reversed because the etching has been done on a plate, and a print is then made from the plate.) Rembrandt uses *line* to express himself in the drawing, while *light* conveys his message in the print.

Later in his life, Rembrandt became very interested in subjects from the Bible. He felt these stories expressed universal situations and emotions that everyone feels at some time. Saint Jerome was one of the four Fathers of the Church. Because he was very



Rembrandt could suggest a story with just a few lines.

learned and religious, he was usually shown reading the Bible. He was also very kind and was supposed to have pulled a thorn out of a lion's paw. The lion then became devoted to Saint Jerome and never left his side.

In the sketch, Saint Jerome and the lion are the most important elements in the picture. They are done in heavy, quick strokes and the two figures seem as though they are alive and really there. But what about the person in the print on the right? Can you see him very well? Can you tell much about him—what he is wearing? what his face looks like? The background is dark, detailed, and real. The trees, rocks, buildings, and even the lion are all solid and cast black shadows. But Saint Jerome is less real than his surroundings. A ghostly figure bathed in a heavenly light, perhaps he is so absorbed in the Bible, that he seems unconscious of his physical existence and is no longer part of the real world. As in most of his works, Rembrandt uses the contrast between light and dark to suggest his subject's inner feelings.

Rembrandt tells the full story of Saint Jerome and the lion, using *light and shadow*.



Maurice R. Robinson, Founder of Scholastic Inc., 1895-1982

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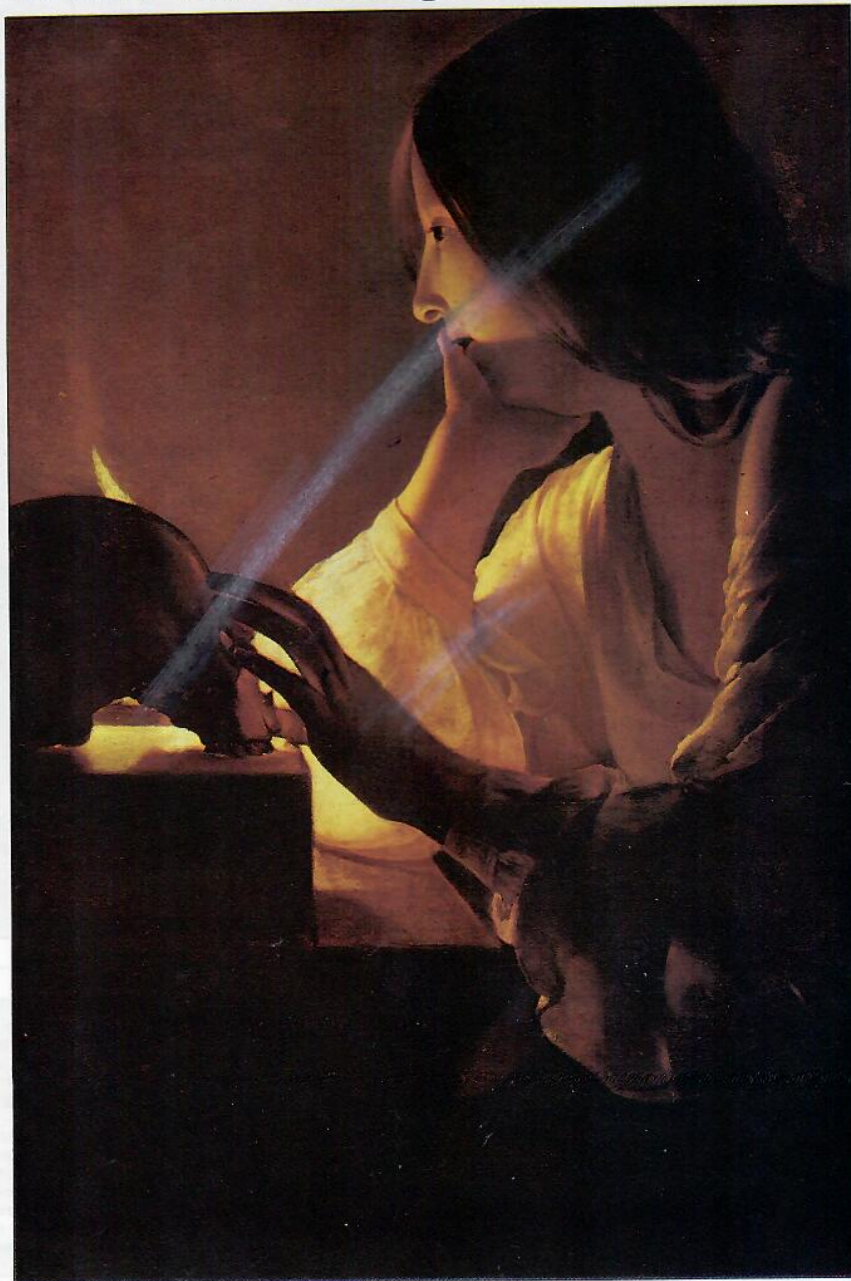
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Mystery People

Read more about the artists who used light to create these three strange portraits.

A Master Rediscovered

For nearly 350 years, the French painter Georges de La Tour was nearly unknown. Today he is considered an important and original artist for his use of dramatic lighting. Georges de La Tour lived and worked around the same time as Rembrandt. Both used a device called "hidden lighting." While Rembrandt's light comes from outside the picture, De La Tour includes and "hides" his light source within his paintings. In this work, a woman sits staring at a skull. We couldn't see her face if it weren't for the light hidden behind the skull. What kind of mood does this type of lighting create? Can you find any examples of Rembrandt's use of "hidden lighting" in this issue?



Georges de La Tour (1593–1652), *The Repentant Magdalen*, c. 1640. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

The Light of Emotion

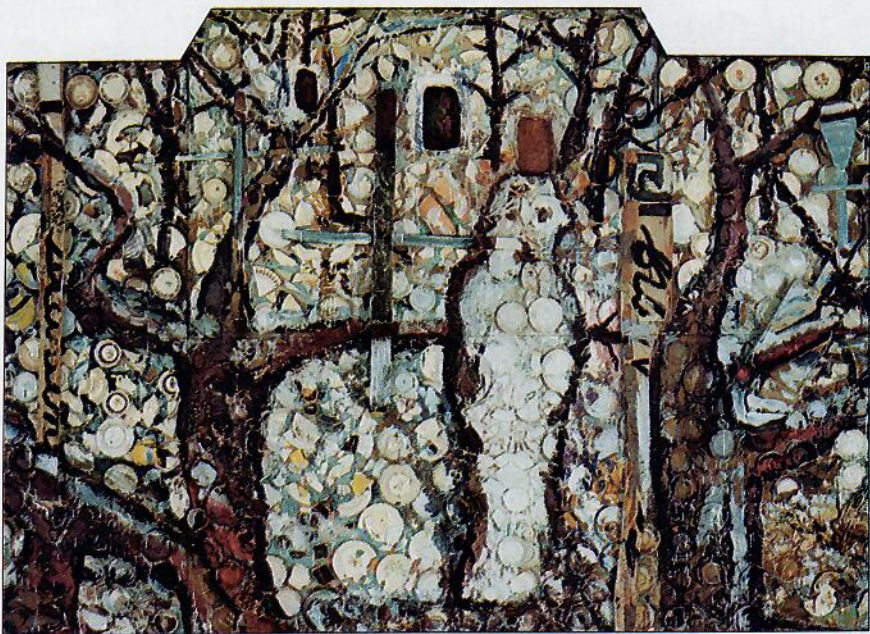
Like Rembrandt three centuries before her, the 20th-century German artist Käthe Kollwitz was deeply concerned about the suffering of ordinary people. The artist lost a son in World War I, and, as she watched Germany move toward another war, her art reflected her feelings. In her very emotional woodcuts, like the self-portrait, right, the light areas are crudely hacked out of a block of wood. Her own figure emerges from the darkness; the sorrowful features are hidden in shadow behind a huge, black, roughly carved hand. An eerie light flashes behind her as if she were in some kind of tunnel.



Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945). Self-portrait, c. 1923. National Gallery of Art, Rosenwald Collection.

A Rising Star

Contemporary artist Julian Schnabel's rise to fame and fortune has been just as fast and controversial as the young Rembrandt's. In just a year or two, Schnabel has become one of the "hottest" new stars of today's art world. Working with mops on materials like velvet or flowered cloth, Schnabel paints enormous dreamlike visions. In *The Student of Prague*, which fills an entire wall, a ghostly figure stands in front of a house, surrounded by sticklike trees. However, the unusual thing about this work is that the entire surface is covered with plates and broken dishes. During the day, the light gleams on the pottery and highlights the rough, wooden crosses that stick out of the painting. Toward evening, everything sinks into darkness, and only the reflections can easily be seen. The painting changes with the light that falls on it, and the final effect has been compared to being inside a nightmare, or a madhouse.



Julian Schnabel (b. 1952). *The Student of Prague*, 1983. Mary Boone Gallery, NY, NY.



September/October 1983



THE NIGHT WATCH

by Rembrandt

art&
man

Masterpiece of the Month: 1

Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669). *Officers and Men of the Company of Captain Frans Banning Cocq and Lieutenant Wilhem van Ruytenburgh (The Night Watch)*, 1642. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

A Glorious Failure

Masterpiece of the Month: 1



The Night Watch (detail), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

The *Night Watch* was said to be the painting that ruined Rembrandt's career. Today it hangs in a place of honor in one of the greatest museums in the world.

When you look at the *Night Watch*, are there two figures that stand out? Rembrandt needed a small, light patch to balance the composition, so he added this strange little girl.

Before 1642, everything seemed to be going Rembrandt's way. He was rich, happily married, successful, and had more orders for paintings than he could do in a lifetime. After 1642, his luck seemed to change. He lost his wife and family, went into debt, and was no longer getting much work. And it was right after Rembrandt painted the *Night Watch*

that a legend began.

It was said that this huge painting of a group of soldiers so outraged everyone in Amsterdam that the painting was immediately hidden, and that some of the subjects were so angry that they refused to pay. The story goes that the *Night Watch* ruined Rembrandt. And for the rest of his life the artist, who was once the most popular painter in Holland, never sold anything again, and couldn't even afford paint.

It was true that the *Night Watch* was very unusual for its time. In 17th-century Holland, most people belonged to some kind of organization—a society, a civic group, a guild—and they liked to decorate their meeting houses with group portraits. Each member would pay an equal share of the fee and they would all dress up, stand in a row, and have their picture painted.

In 1640, 18 members of Captain Frans Banning Cocq's militia company collected 1600 florins. They thought it was about time they had their picture done. Since they wanted the best job they could get, they decided to hire the most popular portrait painter in Amsterdam, Rembrandt van Rijn. They had seen the portrait he had done ten years before of Dr. Tulp and his anatomy class and, although the composition was a little unusual, you could tell exactly who each person in the picture was meant to be. Rembrandt agreed, but when the painting was finished almost two years later, it was not at all what they expected.

Apparently bored with the idea of a typical group portrait (above, right), Rembrandt decided to do something different. Instead of painting the men standing and looking at him, he chose to show them in action—at the moment they had received their marching orders. The scene is one of total confusion. Everyone wears a different uniform—some stand looking puzzled, while most of the fig-



Thomas de Keyser (1596-1667). *The Militia Company of Captain Allart Cloeck*, 1632. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

This is the kind of group portrait that Captain Frans Banning Cocq expected when he hired Rembrandt. He got the *Night Watch* instead.

ures are moving in different directions. The captain, in black, leads his lieutenant, in yellow on the right, forward, while spears poke out from every angle. The figures are so three-dimensional the viewer feels he or she had better get out of the way.

The two men in front were quite pleased with their portraits, but how do you think the man at the right, whose eyes are all we see or the man being squeezed off the left side of the picture felt? And Rembrandt added 16 other imaginary figures—like the little girl on the left with a white bird tied to her waist, the little boy running out of the painting on the left, and a dog barking at the drummer on the right. No one in Amsterdam had seen a portrait quite like this one.

Although reaction to the *Night Watch* was mixed, the artist was paid and the painting was hung in the Amsterdam town hall. Even though Rembrandt's work became less popular, he still sold paintings. And even if he was no longer rich, Rembrandt spent the rest of his life fairly comfortably—with his new family. The *Night Watch* didn't really ruin him.

The actual title of the *Night Watch* is *The Officers and Men of the Company of Captain Frans Banning Cocq and Lieutenant Wilhem van Ruytenburgh*. The figures, who weren't soldiers but members of the civic guard, a social club, were painted standing in a shaded street. The layers of varnish added later to "smooth out" Rembrandt's "unfinished" brushstrokes darkened the painting and critics began calling it the *Night Watch*. When it was recently cleaned, some people renamed it the *Day Watch*.

But, whatever people of the time said and did to the *Night Watch*, a few recognized its worth. "This work will outlive its competitors. It is so striking, so active and so powerful that all the other canvases that hang beside it look like playing cards."*

*Samuel van Hoogstraten, 1678

FEN LEE:

Portrait Painter



Fen Lee, 18, has been painting people for three years. One of her best portraits, "Rojean," is on the opposite page. Fen says that Rojean is the kind of student who is always smiling. Is this the person she has painted?

We learned about Fen through the Scholastic Art Awards and visited her last spring at the High School of Art and Design in New York City. This fall, she is beginning her first year on full scholarship at the School of Visual Arts, also in New York. She plans a career in illustration, while continuing to paint on her own.

How long have you been involved in art?

I was always doodling when I was younger, but it wasn't until I came to this school in the 10th grade that I started getting serious. It had to do with my teacher. He did a lot to build confidence.

There's also a lot of competition here. There are so many talented kids. It makes you want to work as hard as you can. Last year I would get to school at 6:30 for the early morning painting class, and stay after school for the afternoon class. At 5:00 I went to work until 10:00 to help pay for all the art supplies. When I got home, I'd fall into bed. I was lucky to get five hours of sleep a night.

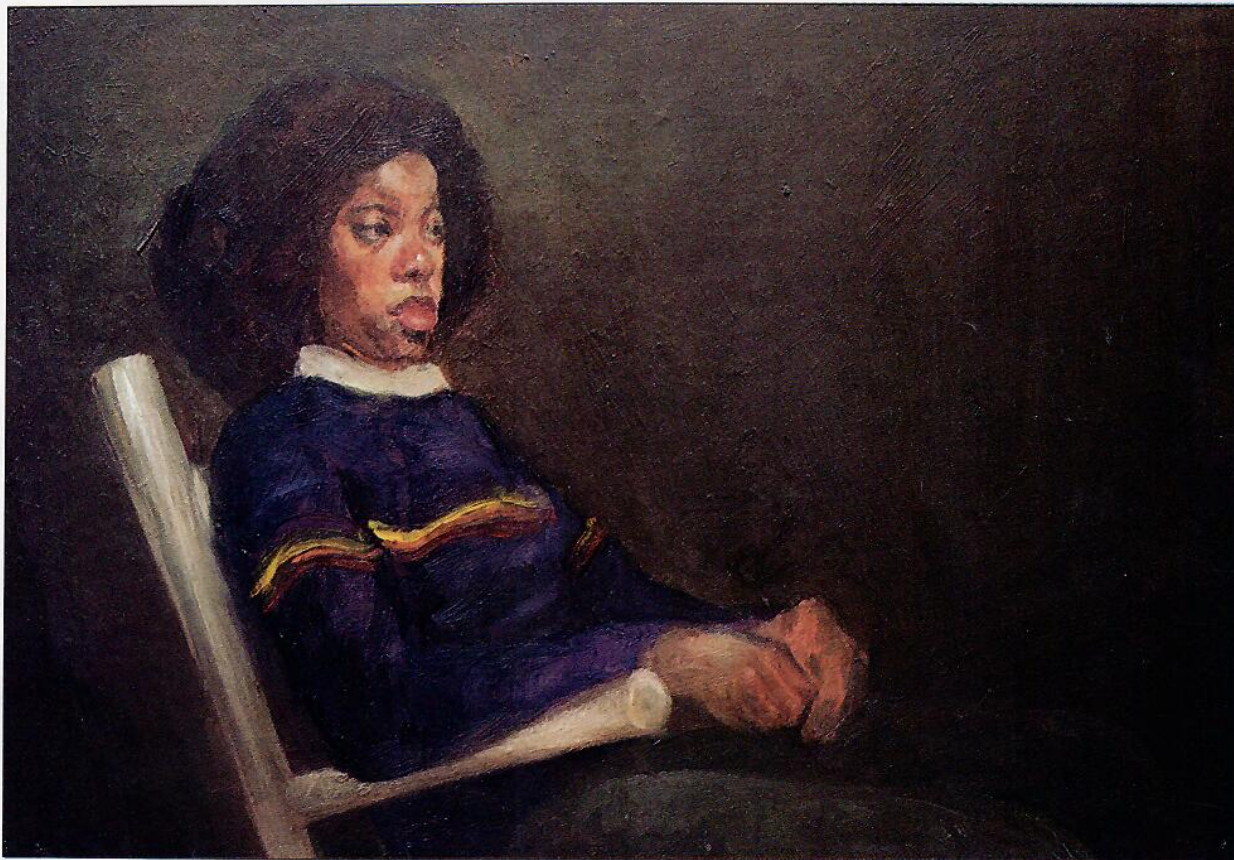
Did your parents encourage you also?

No, because they had the idea that if I went into art, I would starve the rest of my life. See, at the time, I just wanted to be the different one in the family. I figured I'd go by my instincts and do what I'm good at. So I applied to this school.

How did you begin painting Rojean's portrait?

Our teacher set up the pose. It was to be for the whole week. The light came from a small lamp above and in front. It's kind of like a stage light and it's always in the same place. We started by blocking in the painting. This means deciding on

Photos by Janet Soderberg



the composition, and how the person will fit on the canvas. For Rojean, I decided to crop her off at the bottom to focus more on her face.

How did you decide on the background?

I was sort of inspired by Rembrandt and the old masters. They would use dark backgrounds and let the edges of the person just fade into the background. So the form is less emphasized, and the face stands out.

How do you know where to put the shadows?

You've got to look at the subject really carefully and see just where the shadows fall. You don't want a flat form. You want things to go in and out. It's very subtle. If you apply the color too dark, it's like a paper cut. You try to avoid harsh edges.

Did you start to see Rojean differently as you did the painting?

Definitely, because every person who goes up on that stand seems more dramatic. And you notice things you never noticed before, because you're studying them so closely: changes in the mouth, where it droops or goes up. Differences in the eyes—especially when the person didn't get much sleep.

Usually models go into a world of their own,

because they have to stay so still. Rojean would look as if she were thinking serious things. I guess what I saw and felt at the moment, that's what I painted. It's hard to describe in words.

Why do you prefer portraits?

Everybody's different and it's so interesting. Peoples' environments, the way they're brought up, the ideas they have about life—you can see it in their eyes sometimes. I just try to tell the truth about what's there. There's no end to what you can know about painting people, because each time you see something different.

Why do you plan to go on in art?

Art is so important—especially now with all the advancement in technology. We need that art spirit to enrich our lives and keep us from becoming too mechanical.

For me, I get great satisfaction out of finishing a painting and knowing I put those hours toward a worthwhile goal.

What is your goal?

I guess to make a mark. I don't want to be just another artist. Like the saying at the School of Visual Arts goes, "To be good is not good enough, when you dream of being great." You want to be remembered.

Creating with Light

Learn how to create an “old master” drawing, using light and shade.

Earlier in this issue, you saw how Rembrandt and three other artists were able to communicate their feelings about people through the use of light. Most of these artists did oil paintings, but in this workshop, you’ll discover that you can use just about any material to create a work of art.

Starting Out

Materials

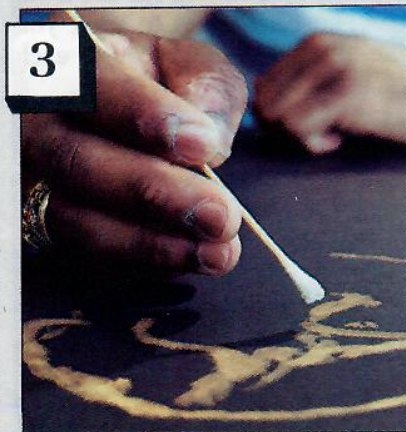
- Bleach
- Q-Tips
- Thin wooden dowels
- Water
- *RailRoad* or matte boards (dark color)



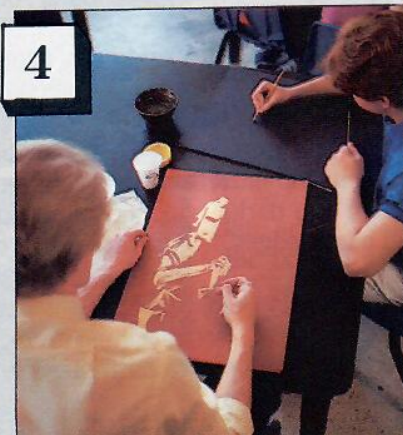
1 Choose an object or costume with very clear darks and lights. Increase highlights with sunlight or 150-watt spotlight.



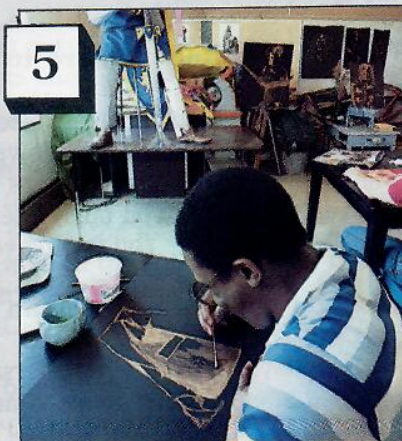
2 Dip Q-Tip in bleach and draw *light areas only* on colored board.



3 By repeating or increasing pressure on the Q-Tip, you create a stronger highlight. (Dilute with water for “middle tones.”)



4 You can create a mysterious effect by putting down the highlights *only*, as solid areas (no lines).



5 Or, show the highlights as textured areas (using thin wooden dowels). And your drawing doesn’t always have to be vertical.



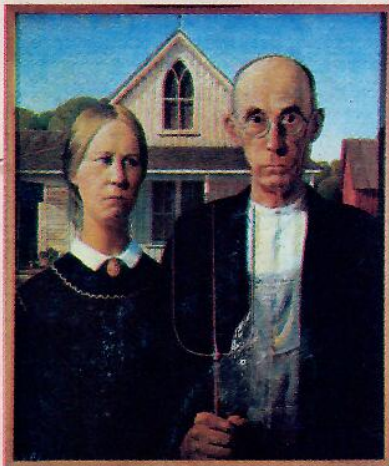
Photos by Richard Hulchings. Prepared by Francis Chauncy, Clayton High School, Clayton, NJ.

Some Solutions

Try bleaching out the whole background, leaving the figure as a black silhouette. Or, like Rembrandt, focus attention on two or three important areas (head, helmet, and sword) by making them lighter. Try using white paint instead of bleach to do the same kind of portrait.

Note:

- Do not get bleach on clothing, mouth, or eyes.
- Do not use brushes. Bleach eats soft bristles.



American Portraits

Many people will probably recognize this portrait of a farm couple, but how many know who painted it? The artist's name was Grant Wood and his *American Gothic*, painted in 1930, became world famous almost overnight. In next month's November issue of *Art & Man*, you can find out more about the "first artist to create something genuinely American." Then perhaps you'll be able to see for yourself the

more than 80 realistic and humorous paintings featured in the first large show of this important American artist's work. *Grant Wood* is now at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City until Sept. 4. It will then go to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Sept 25-Jan. 1, 1984; the Art Institute of Chicago, Jan. 21-April 15, 1984; the M.H. de Young Museum, San Francisco, May 12-Aug. 15, 1984.

English Portraits

A century after Rembrandt created his portraits, several other artists became world famous for their lifelike paintings of people. One of the best known was Thomas Gainsborough, a very popular and successful painter of rich and fashionable society people. A large new show, *Gainsborough*

Drawings, opening at the National Gallery of Art Oct. 2-Dec 4, then traveling to the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth TX, Dec. 17, 1983-Feb. 19, 1984, and the Yale Art Center, New Haven, CT, Mar. 7-Apr. 29, 1984, will allow you to compare Gainsborough's portraits with those by Rembrandt.



Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788). *Study of a Lady for "The Richmond Water-Walk,"* 1780s. British Museum, London.

More American Portraits

Have you ever seen this woman before? She appears in a lot of ads, cartoons, and on TV—usually around Mother's Day. She is the most famous mother of all, "Whistler's Mother." This painting, one of the best-known portraits in the world, was done by American artist James Whistler over 100 years ago. The painting was not meant to be a portrait at all, but a composition using lights and darks. You can see this work, as well as 110 of the most famous 18th- and 19th-century American paintings ever created, in *A New World: Masterpieces of American Painting, 1760-1910*, an exhibition opening at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Sept. 7-Nov. 13. It will then travel to the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Dec. 6, 1983-Feb. 12, 1984, before going to the Louvre in Paris.



James A. McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). *Arrangement in Gray and Black, No. 1. The Artist's Mother*, 1871. The Louvre, Paris.