



Gallery Hunt: If Your Eyes Were My Eyes

Artists sometimes depict people with their backs to us, the viewers. Often they use this convention to engage us and help us become interested in the story they are telling. Find these individuals in the VMFA's American galleries on Level 2. Use your imagination. Pretend you are each of these figures and that your eyes are their eyes. What do you see in front of and around you? What are you thinking about?

Grade Level:	Adult, College, Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, Grades 9-12, Grades K-2
Collection:	American Art
Culture/Region:	America
Activity Type:	Gallery Guides & Hunts



1

I am a young girl living in New York City in 1906 when working-class children often roamed the streets unsupervised. If your eyes were my eyes, what would you see taking place in this scene? What is going on? What makes you say that? What do you think will happen next?



2

We are a family leaving for a new home. Our travels took place during the Great Migration when six million African Americans fled social and economic oppression in the rural South to find new opportunities in the cities in the North, Midwest, and West. Imagine it is 1927 and you are one of us. What can you see? What might you be thinking about and how might you feel?



3

We are a group of Native Americans painted by Asher B. Durand in 1853 at a time when the United States was considering routes for a transcontinental railway and the country continued to be transformed by the Industrial Revolution. Imagine you are one of us. As we stand looking out over the vast landscape depicted by Durand, what do you see? What might you care most about as you consider this vista? What concerns do you have?



4

It is evening and I am returning home from a long day at work. Imagine you are in my shoes. If your eyes were my eyes, who or what might you be looking for as you approach home? Why?



5

I am a gray pigeon standing in the bright sun of a beautiful courtyard in India. It is about 1888 and American artist Edwin Lord Weeks has traveled all the way to the Moti Mushid, or Pearl Mosque, in Agra, India to paint me in this large, complex scene. If your eyes were my eyes what would you see here? What is going on? What makes you say that? Are you curious to know more?

IMAGES (as details)

1

George Bellows, American, 1882 - 1925 Kids, 1906 Oil on canvas
The James W. and Frances Gibson McGlothlin Collection,
2017.153

2

Archibald John Motley Jr., American, 1891 - 1981 Town of Hope,
1927 Oil on canvas J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for
American Art, 2017.206

3

Asher B. Durand, American, 1796 - 1886, Progress (The Advance

of Civilization), 1853 Oil on canvas Gift of an anonymous donor,
2018.547

4

John Biggers, American, 1924 - 2001 Coming Home from Work,
1944 Oil on canvas J. Harwood and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for
American Art, 2017.204

5

Edwin Lord Weeks, American, 1849 - 1903 The Hour of Prayer at
Moti Mushid (The Pearl Mosque), Agra, ca. 1888-89 J. Harwood
and Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art, 2008.40