

M.LiT Tour by Gabriele Routh

Title: Beauty and Vanity

Description: Learn how beauty and vanity are expressed through 21st Century art.

Location: 21st Century Gallery

Introduction: Good evening, and welcome to VMFA! My name is Gabe Routh, and I am participating in the M.Lit. Program here at the museum. *Tell audience Museum Rules.* The theme of our tour this year is Social Trends: Beauty and Vanity. Tonight, I'll be showing you how beauty and vanity have been expressed in art during the last decade.

Modern America is full of beauty and vanity. Our media is full of beautiful fashion, art, and people. In fact, America as well as many other cultures have valued beauty since ancient times. What other forms of beauty can you think of? *Music, magazines, etc.* Let's make our way to the 21st Century Gallery and begin the tour!



Object 1:

a3 blackface #59, 2003
iona rozeal brown (1966-present)
Acrylic on paper
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Lindley Smith
2004.67

Brown has studied at San Francisco Art Institute and Yale University. Based solely on what you see in this painting, what do you think is brown's ethnicity? *African American.* brown is, in fact, a black artist. Her artwork deals with racial issues by blending elements of Black and East Asian cultures.

This piece is from a series of portraits that were inspired by a trip brown took to Japan. This one in particular is based on a form of Japanese woodblock prints called ukiyo-e. She fuses the past with the future in this piece. How does she accomplish this? *By putting the figures in modern clothing.* brown explores the Japanese ganguro (translated to blackface) trend that is made up of teens adopting hip-hop culture and using blackface. brown deals with the issues of race that one encounters in the ganguro trend. Is the ganguro trend an example of beauty and vanity in Japan? *Yes, the youth are influenced by beauty trends in black culture.*

Now let's make our way to a piece that also deals with modern trends using traditional styles.



Object 2:

Green Wave, 2002

Inka Essenhigh (1969-present)

Oil on Panel

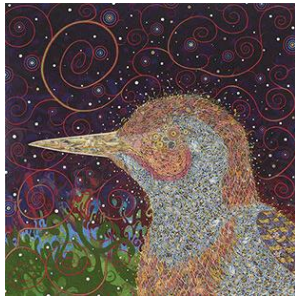
Kathleen Boone Samuels Memorial Fund

2003.4

Essenhigh was born in Pennsylvania and studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York. She uses traditional painting methods, but her work focuses on fantasy and technology in modern society. Her work uses surrealism to get her concepts across to the viewer.

Does this wave appear to be threatening? This piece focuses on a female creature about to be swallowed up by a wave. If you look closely, there is a hand holding back the wave. What do you think the creature is feeling just by looking at the piece? *Maybe fear.* The viewer almost feels sad for her, since she appears to be struggling to free herself.

Now let's move to a piece that focuses on beauty in nature.



Object 3:

Woodpecker, 2008

Fred Tomaselli, (1956-present)

Acrylic, gouache, collage, and epoxy resin on wood

Pamela K. and William A. Royall, Jr. and Sydney and Frances Lewis

Endowment Fund

2009.333

Tomaselli was born in California, but currently lives in Brooklyn, New York. He has an art degree from California State University. He is known for his photo collages mixed with resin. Along with many modern artists, he uses surrealism to portray his ideas.

This work stems from a series of collaged bird pieces that serve as symbols for people. This piece consists of a bird that is made up of flowers, the substance that it needs to live. Why might the artists have done this? *It emphasizes the surreal aspect of the image.* Woodpecker explores Tomaselli's view of nature as an object of beauty. The bird is elegant and stoic, showing Tomaselli's admiration for the animals.

Conclusion: Thank you all for allowing me to take you on this tour this evening. The theme of beauty and vanity has heavily influenced modern art. The artists we have seen tonight each have a different view of what beauty is, as do most people. What other views of beauty can you think of? Art has had a large impact on cultural views on beauty for centuries, and that is no different today. Thank you all for coming, and I encourage you to listen to some of the other M.Lit. tours before you leave

