IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE, WE SUGGEST

- Visiting our Library to read or participate in a program
- Listening to the audio tour (available at Guest Services, or downloadable on your own personal device through iTunes)
- Getting involved as a volunteer or becoming a Member
- Signing up for our eNewsletter: CrystalBridges.org/ENews
- Joining a guided tour, listed below

DAILY 2:30 pm + WED 7:30 pm + SAT 1 pm + SUN 4:30 pm
FAMILY    ARCHITECTURE

CrystalBridges.org
600 Museum Way, Bentonville, AR 72712
Within each work of art at Crystal Bridges lies a story to be told.

This self-guided tour will introduce you to some of the best-loved works of art in the Crystal Bridges collection, provide insights into the stories and the artists, and take you deeper into the artworks themselves.

Additional information about these and other works in Crystal Bridges’ collection is available in the Crystal Bridges app for iPod or iPhone. You may check out an iPod with the app from Guest Services in the main lobby, or download it directly to your own Apple device from the iTunes App Store.

Charles Willson Peale’s George Washington presents the historic American figure as a military commander prior to his service as the nation’s first president. Peale, a prolific artist and personal friend of the Founding Father, served as an officer in the Continental Army under Washington and crossed the Delaware River with him during the New Jersey campaigns in the winter of 1777–78. Washington posed for Peale seven times, from which the artist produced more than 50 portraits during his professional career. In 1779, the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania commissioned Peale to paint a portrait of General Washington to be displayed in the Congressional Hall in Philadelphia. Peale produced a full-length portrait depicting Washington as a victorious commander at the Battle of Princeton. With the successful reception of the grand manner portrait, Peale produced several versions and adaptations for various governmental offices, as well as for the permanent collection of Crystal Bridges was produced for François-Jean de Beauvoir, Chevalier de Chastellux. A French officer and ally to the American cause, Chastellux acted as the principal liaison between the French commander-in-chief and George Washington, resulting in a close friendship with the American general. Unique from other replicas produced by Peale, this version is one of only two that feature the Battle of Yorktown in the background, rather than Princeton: an appropriate revision, for Chastellux served as a major-general under the command of Comte Rochambeau, whose French expeditionary army was instrumental in defeating the English in one of the last major battles of the American Revolution.


Kindred Spirits is a tribute to the American landscape and the men who celebrated its natural splendor. Painted by American artist Asher Brown Durand, the composition depicts Hudson River School founder Thomas Cole and American poet William Cullen Bryant surrounded by the lush wilderness of the Catskill Mountains in New York. Though executed in a highly representational manner, the painting is not an accurate portrayal of a single geographic location; rather it is an idealized representation from memories of natural features the artists would frequent. Commissioned by art collector and New York merchant Jonathan Sturges, Kindred Spirits was presented as a gift to Bryant for his poetic eulogy of Cole, who died at an untimely death from pneumonia in 1848. Sturges requested that Durand capture the friendship of Cole and Bryant as “kindred spirits” — a poetic relationship inspired by the words of English poet John Keats from his work “Sonnet to Solitude.” With sketchbook and recorder in hand, Cole invites his friend and literary counterpart Bryant to partake in the sublime grandeur of nature. Immersed within the wooded sanctuary, the two companions share a mutual appreciation and reverence for the majestic natural setting. A tranquil memorial of his friend and mentor, Durand’s Kindred Spirits is a successful embodiment of the intimate connection Cole and his colleagues shared with the American landscape.
Thomas Eakins's portrait, Professor Benjamin Howard Rand, is a compassionate rendering of a prominent professional whom the artist knew. By providing visuals informing the sitter's profession, life, and personality, Eakins offers an intimate view of his teacher and friend. Seated at an expansive desk, and stirring the raised back of a cat, Rand's attention to his research invites the onlooker to explore an array of objects on the scholar's desktop. Ranging from the scientific and academic to personal and domestic, the detailed and highly represented articles and instruments threaten the composition—asking that the works be appreciated as a perfectly arranged still life as well as a portrait of the professor. Eakins showcases his technical skills as an artist through his convincing simulation of different textures. Highlighted brass instruments contrast against the warm, wooded study. A bright pink rose rests atop a transparent sheet of crinkled tissue paper. The painting offers professional as well as private insight into the chemist's life. Rand was Eakins's high school chemistry teacher. Eakins brilliantly portrays Rand as an individual balanced with both academic intellect and personal emotion. First of his series of full-length portraits of prominent professionals, Professor Benjamin Howard Rand earned Eakins a place at the Philadelphia Centennial's international art exhibition, where it received critical acclaim.

Thomas Eakins, Professor Benjamin Howard Rand, 1874, oil on canvas. Photo courtesy of Philadelphia Museum of Art.

American artist Mary Cassatt portrayed contemporary life from a female's point of view. Her work often illustrated the lives of modern women, with special emphasis on the intimate bonds between mothers and children as well as females engaged in leisure or domestic activities. The only American to have exhibited with the French Impressionists, Cassatt was instrumental in the promotion of the movement in America and served as a major collector. Painted in 1877, the same year she was invited to join the Impressionist circle. The Reader displays her new approach to the Impressionist aesthetic. The thick brushwork, simplified color scheme, and subject matter from everyday life demonstrate Cassatt's embrace of her French colleagues' style. The painting depicts a young woman engrossed in the leisure activity of reading, a privileged pastime enjoyed by Cassatt herself and other women of her social class. A powerful symbol to Cassatt, literacy served as an expression of her strong belief in the importance of women in society. Cassatt was highly involved with women's issues and equality. She was a strong advocate for women's right to vote and supported the pursuit of education. The Reader honors her efforts to ensure that other women would benefit from the same educational and cultural advantages she had experienced.

Mary Cassatt, The Reader, 1877, oil on canvas. Photography by Robert LaPrell.

Rockwell's Rosie the Riveter celebrates the new and important role of women in the workforce during World War II. The muscular young woman is employed in the production of military hardware and is shown pausing for lunch with her riveting gun and lunch box resting on her lap. Posed before a waving American flag and dressed in red, white, and blue, Rosie proudly displays patriotic badges across the bib of her overalls. Rockwell painted Rosie for the cover of the May 29, 1943 edition of the Saturday Evening Post. Rosie is a powerful reminder of American women's critical contribution to victory during World War II by filling traditionally male jobs left vacant by those who had gone off to fight. Rosie's pose and monumental proportions are a direct quote from Michelangelo's "Isaiah" in the Sistine Chapel, Rome. Just as Isaiah prophesied evidences will be trampled underfoot, Rosie crushes Hitler's Mein Kampf under her all-American penny loafers, reminding viewers that women like her helped defeat the Nazi regime by actively contributing to the war effort. Rosie's portrait was the first widely publicized image of this new heroic type of American woman. The painting traveled on a nationwide tour to generate publicity for the United States Treasury Department's War Loan Drives.

Norman Rockwell, Rosie the Riveter, 1943, oil on canvas. Photography by Dwight Primiano.
Rothko's work evolved from figurative paintings and mythological subjects into fields of color and light. In No. 210/No. 211 (Orange), his experimentations with rectangular planes of translucent color marked his signature style and this associated him with the New York School of Color Field painters. At the height of his career Rothko focused on the influence of color and form on the human psyche. The characteristic translucent effects in his paintings were achieved by applying layers of thinned oil paint in fast and light brush strokes. Rothko then carefully altered specific areas of the orange fields with a brush or sponge to establish precise relationships among the hues. The hazy, feathery edges create an illusion of orange forms floating in an ambiguous space, while evoking a mood of mystery and a sense of calm. The viewer feels something of the sublime spirituality Rothko relentlessly sought. Orange-reds were predominant in his work, representing essential colors of life such as passion, fire, ritual, and drama. Rothko preferred large-scale paintings to make the viewer feel “enveloped within” the work. His main intention was to express “the big emotions—tragedy, ecstasy, doom,” and to elicit from his viewers an intense emotional response. Later in his career he became resistant to explaining the meaning of his work, fearing that words would only paralyze the viewer's mind and imagination.

Mark Rothko, No. 210/No. 211 (Orange), 1960, oil on canvas. Photography by Edward C. Robison III.

Warhol’s Dolly Parton is a glamorous portrait of one of America’s most popular country music stars. Her bright, almost supernatural appearance with the halo-shaped silvery hair and calm gaze elevates her status to that of a goddess or idol. The portrait reminds viewers of Byzantine religious icons with their shiny gold-leaf aureoles and backgrounds. Warhol painted the icons and celebrities of twentieth-century popular culture, turning the banal into objects of devotion. His innovative image-making method challenged the distinctions between commercially produced mass-market images and fine art. The process of creating these iconic likenesses began with close-up Polaroid photographs of his sitter, which he called his “sketches.” He then enlarged the photographic image to the dimensions of a pre-painted, monochromatic canvas and transferred it to the canvas by means of silkscreen. The paintings' standardized format and the regimented process resulted in a series of likenesses that simultaneously defied his sitters and rendered them all equivalent in a flat, exaggerated mass-media imagery style. The vivid colors in this portrait, especially Dolly’s extreme make-up which extends the shape of her eyes and lips, draw attention to the highly constructed world of glamour stars. Portraits like this express Warhol's endless fascination with the theater of life, where divas like Dolly, who was never caught on camera without a full face of makeup, play the lead roles.

Andy Warhol, Dolly Parton, 1985, synthetic polymer and screen print on canvas. Photography by Edward C. Robison III.

Old Self is a portrait of the artist as an old man. He also created a younger looking companion piece—a self-portrait, titled Young Self. Penny explains: “The works are self-reflections alluding to the subjective nature of time, memory, and desire, and how photographic images inform and distort perception and representations of the self.” Besides photography, his art is influenced by his career as special effects makeup and prosthetics specialist in the film industry. To create Old Self Penny carved his self-portrait from a large block of hard foam using digital scans of his body and CNC (Computer-Numerical-Control) milling. Then he made a mold of the carving and cast it in modeling clay to rework and refine the form and surface details. The finished clay figure was then cast in silicone, and Penny painted the defining features of the skin. As finishing touches, he implanted the hair and dressed the sculpture. Penny's goal was to capture a certain mood and expression associated with a moment of time. The result is a detailed, photo-realistic sculpture that invites viewers to examine every wrinkle, hair, and fleshly imperfection. Old Self also reflects his interest in the simultaneous reality and artificiality of high-realist sculpture. Although Old Self seems vividly realistic, its large size and flatness stresses the work’s artificialness.