

FRYE

ART MUSEUM

Guided Artwork Discussion: Grandma Moses

<https://youtu.be/ZDTLGmwOS4>

Thank you for joining us for a virtual here:now Artwork Discussion with the Frye Art Museum. My name is Caroline, and I am the Education Coordinator here at the Frye. I will be facilitating today's digital discussion. While we cannot be together in the galleries, we hope you will still enjoy the opportunity to slow down, look closely, and spend some time with a work from the Frye Collection.

It's always fun to look at art by yourself or invite a friend or family member to join you in this discussion. You might also choose to write down your observations or make a drawing in response. If this is the case, please gather your materials now.

We will begin each artwork discussion by taking a quiet moment to simply look at the work of art and observe. Remember there are no right or wrong answers—it's about what you notice or experience when looking. After you have taken a moment to observe on your own, I will ask some questions to guide your looking and provide information about the artwork before we end.

You can expand or minimize the video on your screen for the discussion. You can also access closed captioning through the settings tool. Take a moment to see what works best for your viewing.

Today's theme is **Winter's Arrival and the Promise of Spring**. The winter is often a time of change, as we welcome a new year and look ahead to the future. Winter can offer its own pleasures, as snow dusts the ground and daylight returns, however slowly. As we explore today's artworks, I encourage you to enjoy these scenes as they are now and imagine how they may change over time.

I am particularly excited that this format allows us to share works from the Frye's collection that we have not previously featured in a here:now discussion.

This is the artwork we will be looking at today. We will take pauses in between each set of questions to give you time to look closely at the artwork and think about your responses. Remember: you may pause this video at any time to spend more time on one of the slides.

To start our discussion, please take 30 seconds to look quietly at this piece. You might start at the top corner of the canvas, moving across and down. You may move close to the screen to see details or step back for a new perspective. Your cursor is a great tool to trace and track details within the artwork.

Thank you for your quiet observation.

We will now move into our guided questions. If you are looking with a friend or family member, we hope you will share your observations, or consider writing down or sketching your answers.

1. There are many things to look at here. What immediately catches your attention? What are the things that you noticed after looking for longer?
2. Imagine you are in this scene. What sounds might you hear? Feel? Smell?
3. Thinking about today's theme, Winter's Arrival and the Promise of Spring, what might this scene look like if the artist painted it during the spring?
4. This artist's work has been reproduced and marketed all over the world. Would you display this artwork in your home? Why or why not?

Thank you for taking the time to share and reflect on your observations. I would now like to share some information on this piece.

Grandma Moses (American, 1860-1961)

Frisky Horses, 1954

Oil on pressed wood

18 x 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

Frye Art Museum, Museum Purchase, 1988.004

Grandma Moses was a pivotal 20th-century folk artist, known for her decorative paintings of rural New England. Born Anna Mary Robertson in 1860, Moses grew up

in Greenwich, New York. She spent 18 years of her adult life managing a farm with her husband, Tom Moses, and raising 5 children. It was then that her family and neighbors began referring to her as "Mother Moses." A hard and practical worker, Moses would joke, "If I didn't start painting, I would have raised chickens."

Moses was in her seventies when she taught herself to paint. She painted simple, brightly colored scenes of country life and exhibited her work at county fairs, alongside her canned fruits and jams. Moses' paintings were on display at a local drugstore when they were purchased by a travelling collector whose support for the artist culminated in a solo exhibition in 1940 called *What a Farm Woman Painted*.

It was in her eighties that Grandma Moses became a superstar. Her fame paralleled the rise of mass media, and Moses' work was reproduced on greeting cards, murals, dinnerware, fabrics, and more. Hallmark purchased the rights to reproduce her paintings on Christmas cards; documentaries and TV shows were made about her life and television interviews were common. Moses was featured on the covers of *Life* and *Time* magazines, and even received an award from President Truman. On September 7, 1960, New York celebrated Grandma Moses Day in honor of the artist's 100th birthday.

Moses created over 1,500 paintings, which were shown in more than 150 exhibitions in the United States and in one-person shows abroad. Moses wrote an autobiography titled *My Life's History*. She passed away at the age of 101.

Grandma Moses' paintings are interpreted as vignettes of a former, idealized American life, and her quintessential scenes continue to be reproduced today.

In *Frisky Horses*, we step into a New England winter setting. Horses pull sleds down country roads lined with cottages and frosted treetops. The familiar ballad of "Sleigh Ride" might even pop into your head as your eye moves across the canvas. Like many of her paintings, Moses' communal scenes include families and children out and about.

Grandma Moses was a visual storyteller with a recognizable compositional style. Her colorful, narrative here shows a communal scene that include families and children finding joy in daily tasks. As Grandma Moses once said, "What's the use of painting a picture if it isn't something nice?"

I wanted to share the cover of Time Magazine, featuring Grandma Moses in celebration of her 100th birthday. Take a moment to look closely at this image.

I'd like to leave you with a question to consider. If you were recognized on the cover of a magazine, what would it be for? What elements would you add to the cover to represent yourself?

Thank you for joining us for a here:now artwork discussion and for being part of the Frye community. We value your support and can't wait to welcome you back to the Museum again soon.