

## here:now Artwork Discussion – Exploration: Paintings That Transport You (1)

<https://youtu.be/G-QCY3O6DYo>

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 making 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 **Exploration: Paintings that Transport You**. As we continue to stay home and remain safe, we may find ourselves seeking adventure through a good book or a daydream. I encourage you to let your mind roam as we explore a painting from the Frye Collection.

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 quietly look 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. Is this a realistic scene? What do you see that makes you say that?
2. How is color used in this work of art? How does it make you feel?
3. What time of year might it be? What do you see that makes you say that?
4. If you could step into this painting, where might you go? How would you travel into the canvas to get there?

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

Thomas Hart Benton (American, 1889-1975)

*Chilmark*, 1922

Oil on canvas

20 x 24 in.

Frye Art Museum, Museum Purchase, 1963.003

Thomas Hart Benton was at the forefront of the uniquely American style known today as Regionalism. Born in the late 1800s to a prominent political family in Missouri, Benton began his artistic career at the Art Institute of Chicago before traveling abroad and studying in Paris. After serving in World War I and traveling across the southern United States, he settled in New York City.

Benton's family history and experiences led him to believe that art should express one's surroundings as opposed to abstract ideas. His art focused on capturing American people and history, and he became best known for his large historic mural projects and realistic scenes. *Time* magazine hailed Benton as a champion of national subject matter.

In addition to being a painter, Benton was a prolific lithographer, writer, and teacher. In the mid-1920s, he taught at New York's Art Students League and instructed famed gestural painter, Jackson Pollock. Described at times as difficult and unruly, Benton would often clash with colleagues, eventually rejecting the New York City arts scene and settling back in Missouri.

Benton's paintings sought to capture the essence of American life through his figures or landscape. The painting we are looking at today depicts the town of Chilmark, a small rural community on Martha's Vineyard off the south coast of Massachusetts, where Benton and his family spent time.

Stale air and thick, hot pavement crowd Benton's Chilmark, a town at rest yet threatened by an oncoming storm. Molded masses of land, roads, farm buildings, and distant mountains look more like playdough and colored bits of putty than architecture and rolling hills. Here, rural America is pulsating with life, yet endangered by urban development, which lurks just around the corner.

For our final conversation, close your eyes and think of a place you like to visit or have visited in the past. What is your favorite part about that place? Share with the person you are watching with, write it down, or sketch it out.

Thank you for joining us for a here:now artwork discussion. We can't wait to welcome you back to the Frye again soon.