

FRYE

ART MUSEUM

Guided Artwork Discussion: Rie Muñoz

https://youtu.be/N41EbY_jBLg

Thank you for joining us for a virtual 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 **By the Light of the Moon**. A fitting marker as we turn away from sunny summer days towards dark cooler nights. The moon remains a constant, acting as a sustaining force of life and light, as well as a source of stories and myth. During our discussion, I encourage you to consider how artists have chosen to depict the moon and how, in turn, the moon impacts what you see and feel. I am particularly excited that this format allows us to share works from the Frye's collection that we have not previously featured in an artwork 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. What elements do you recognize in this artwork?
2. What colors are you noticing in this work of art? How is color being used in this image?
3. This artwork was inspired by a Native Alaskan legend. Do you see a story in this work of art? Any ideas of what might be happening in this scene?
4. The artist's family, friends, and coworkers often describe the cheerfulness and humor of her scenes. Do you agree? How do you feel when looking at this work of art?

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

Rie Muñoz (American, 1921–2015)

Mermaid Legend, 1979

Wool tapestry

65 x 46 in.

Frye Art Museum, Museum Purchase, 1979.025

Marie Evangeline Mounier Muñoz, known as Rie, was an Alaskan regionalist painter known for her joyful scenes of everyday life in Alaska. Born in California to Dutch parents in the 1920s, Muñoz traveled to Alaska as a young adult. She immediately fell in love with the region, where she lived for the remainder of her life.

Muñoz held jobs as a journalist, teacher, museum curator, mother, and artist. Alaskan village life remained central to Muñoz's work – the people, the Native practices, and the landscape. She travelled to and lived in small Alaskan communities to observe and paint. When at home in Juneau, she slept on her windowsill or porch, allowing her to look out over the landscape.

Muñoz insisted on painting a minimum of four hours per day in order to maintain her practice. As her popularity grew, Muñoz sold enough to devote her career solely to painting, making over 100 paintings a year. She held firm beliefs about selling her work, insisting the edition size remain modest and ensuring her art remained affordable to the communities she painted.

Her work has been exhibited throughout the world, most prevalently in the Pacific Northwest. Her paintings have been featured in countless publications, including cookbooks, calendars, and magazines. The Frye collection includes three Muñoz watercolors, one tapestry, and one woodcut. She died in Juneau in 2015 at the age of 93.

The artwork of Rie Muñoz has been described as optimistic, colorful, and playful, words often used to describe the artist herself. Her bright scenes centered on everyday life with a sense of celebration – from berry picking and hanging laundry, to fishing and children playing.

She rendered people in a simple style: little or no shading, round heads, exaggerated curves, dots for eyes. She matched golds and oranges against blue-greens of the Alaskan landscape. While she studied her surroundings in detail, she was most interested in conveying the spirit of the scene. Her paintings are expressionist, described as “more true than real.”

Mermaid Legend is a woven tapestry based on an Inuit legend. In the story, a young girl travels on a walrus-skin boat to catch fish for her starving village. By mistake, she catches a mermaid with golden hair. After the young girl releases the mermaid very

carefully from the net, the mermaid rewards her by filling the lake with fish. Thus, the villagers are saved from starvation.

Muñoz made the design for the tapestry and worked with the renowned Aubusson weaving workshop in France to produce the final tapestry. Aubusson is known for producing the finest tapestries in the world. The work is done completely by hand, including dyeing based on instinct rather than mathematical formula. The weaver works on the reverse side of the tapestry, using a small mirror to check their work. It is said, on average, that a skilled weaver can turn out only a single square yard (9 square feet) of tapestry per month.

Kesler Woodward was a former coworker and friend of Muñoz. He once described the artist's dedication to Alaska: "For [Muñoz], Alaska is a place that is joyous. It's a place full of delight and joy and laughter, and I think that's her real legacy." To close out our discussion, I'd like to ask: How would you describe the place you live? What do you enjoy most about your home?

Thank you for joining us for a virtual artwork discussion. We can't wait to welcome you back to the Museum again soon.