

DIA at Home Drawing Activities

Each of these exercises is meant to inspire your art-making. Take a few moments to visually explore each work of art. Then consider the questions before you begin, to help you picture and sketch out a plan with pencil and paper. Feel free to erase and change things!

1. Grandma's Mantel

For a closer look at the image, [click here](#)



Grandma's Hearthstone, 1890, John Haberle, American; oil on canvas.

Many years ago, this painting was referred to as “fooling the cat,” a technique used by the artist to fool the eye, making it appear as if some of the objects are real. Legend has it that when the painting was in its original location, the house cat would curl up in front of the fire, thinking it would be a warm spot!

- Consider some important things you keep at home that you use every day or have special, personal meaning. Describe them. What do they say about who you are and what you care about?
- Imagine you have a fireplace of your own with a mantel, or shelf, above it. How would you make a fireplace mantel that represents who you are and what you love?

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2. Lily's Portrait

For a closer look at the image, [click here](#).



Something You Can Feel, 2008, Mickalene Thomas, American; rhinestone, acrylic paint, and oil enamel on wood panels

In this portrait, Lily is shown in artist Mickalene Thomas's studio. Thomas demonstrates the power of black women by showing Lily as the strong, confident woman she is. The surface of this artwork is decorated with sparkly rhinestones, beads, and sequins. With the bold patterns and vibrant color patterning the surface's vibrant colors, Thomas took the art of the portrait to a new level.

- Think of someone who is very important to you and has had a strong influence on your life. What specific qualities do they have that have influenced you? How would you represent those qualities in a portrait of them?
- What colors, different materials (fabric, beads, leaves, magazine clippings, etc.) could you include to represent them?

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3. Artist's Studio

For a closer look at the image, [click here](#).



An Artist in His Studio, ca. 1665-1670, Cornelis Bisschop, Dutch; oil on canvas

This young artist is seen in his studio with many of the props an artist would use to practice making human figures. Look around the room and you will see his easel in the background, along with a globe, a skull, some curled paper, and a statue of a young child. This painting has two meanings. It illustrates how an artist from over 350 years ago would stock his studio and these same objects represent the Dutch observance of *vanitas*, a philosophy that says life in this world should be lived simply and purely because you will not be in this life forever.

- Imagine you could design your own art studio. What materials, supplies, and other meaningful objects would you want to keep there and use to create your art?
- How would you represent yourself using these items while working on your art in your studio?

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4. My Vase of Flowers

For a closer look at the image, [click here](#).



Flowers in a Glass Vase, 1704, Rachel Ruysch, Dutch; oil on canvas.

Rachel Ruysch was a master at painting flowers. She created this realistic painting at a time when cameras did not exist. She studied how plants grew, focusing on their distinct characteristics, such as what made a cabbage rose a cabbage rose. She even studied how each flower looked at different stages of freshness, from a new bud to a withering bloom ready to lose its petals. Look closely! This vase of flowers is home to many insects. These same bugs often feed off these same flowers, hastening their decline.

- Visualize some flowers you know well, including their colors, textures, shapes, and other different details, or consider going outside to look at some flowers, blossoms, and other plants growing near you. What details do you notice?
- How would you represent these flowers and plants arranged all together?

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5. My Portrait

For a closer look at the image, [click here](#).



Self Portrait II, 1938, Joan Miró, Spanish; oil on burlap

A portrait is a way to show a person's likeness and can come in many forms. Artist Joan Miró, who was interested in portraying inner thoughts and feelings and the vibrant images of dreams, often used symbols to represent characteristics. For example, in this self-portrait painted by Miró, the suns are thought to reference his eyes because he was known for having large eyes with thick eye lashes and the fish might be his home on the coast of Spain. The black background, traditionally used by many great Spanish artists, is believed to place him with the great Spanish artists who came before him.

- Imagine how you would represent yourself in a self-portrait. What characteristics or values do you have that you would want others to know about?
- What symbols might you use to represent these characteristics or values? How would you make a self-portrait that uses these symbols in place of your face or features?