

## American Stories



Whitfield Lovell (b. 1959), *Epoch*, 2001.  
Collection of the Flint Institute of Arts, Gift of  
Mr. and Mrs. William L. Richards, by exchange,  
2002.13

Artist Whitfield Lovell likes to collect things. He also likes drawing on walls. In *Epoch*, he made a charcoal drawing from an old photograph of a soldier. Instead of making his drawing on paper, he drew the soldier on a wall from a building that had been torn down. He added books and silk flowers to make a tableau, an artwork that combines two-dimensional art, like a drawing or painting, with three-dimensional objects.

Whitfield Lovell says that collecting things is a way of remembering the past. That's why he likes using old photographs taken in the early twentieth century. His artworks help us remember people who otherwise might have been forgotten.

Each of the artworks Whitfield Lovell makes tells a story. But it's up to us to figure out that story. Who is the soldier in *Epoch*? Was he brave? Was he a good friend? Why were the flowers left in front of him?

The soldier wears a uniform from World War I (1914-1918). At that time, African Americans did not have the same rights as other citizens. Even so, they fought for the United States during the War. Whitfield Lovell wants us to remember these brave men. He has drawn this soldier on the wall of an old house so that we can remember him.



# Portraits & Scenes

In the early days of American history, the portrait was the main form of art. The Europeans who first settled in the New World had little time or use for luxury items such as “fine art,” but portraits were different. They were practical because they told us about the people who posed for them and they could be passed on through time.

John Nash Fowler was a wealthy ship owner and lumberman from Clayton, New York. Around 1854, he hired an artist from Philadelphia to paint this portrait of three of his children. But which three of his children?

Mrs. Ernest C. Schnuck, the granddaughter of Delia, the girl on the left, donated the painting to the Flint Institute of Arts. According to Mrs. Schnuck, the painting shows Mr. Fowler’s three youngest children, Delia, Milo, and Gertrude. However, there is something about the girl on the right. She wears a white dress and a coral colored necklace. There is an open Bible on her lap and there are a lot of roses near her. When a child is shown with these details, it usually means the child has died. But we know Gertrude lived to be an adult.



Unknown Artist, American, 19th century, *The Fowler Children*, c. 1854. Collection of the Flint Institute of Arts, Gift of the Estate of Mrs. Ernest C. Schnuck, 1976.1

Perhaps the girl on the right is an older sister who died in childhood. Notice that Delia and Milo are seated on a bench that looks like it might be in a garden. A vast landscape, complete with trees, hills, and a waterfall is behind the girl on the right. Is this meant to be paradise? Perhaps one day we will find more information that will solve this mystery.



John Sloan (1871-1951), *Buses in Washington Square*, n.d.. Private collection, L2006.1

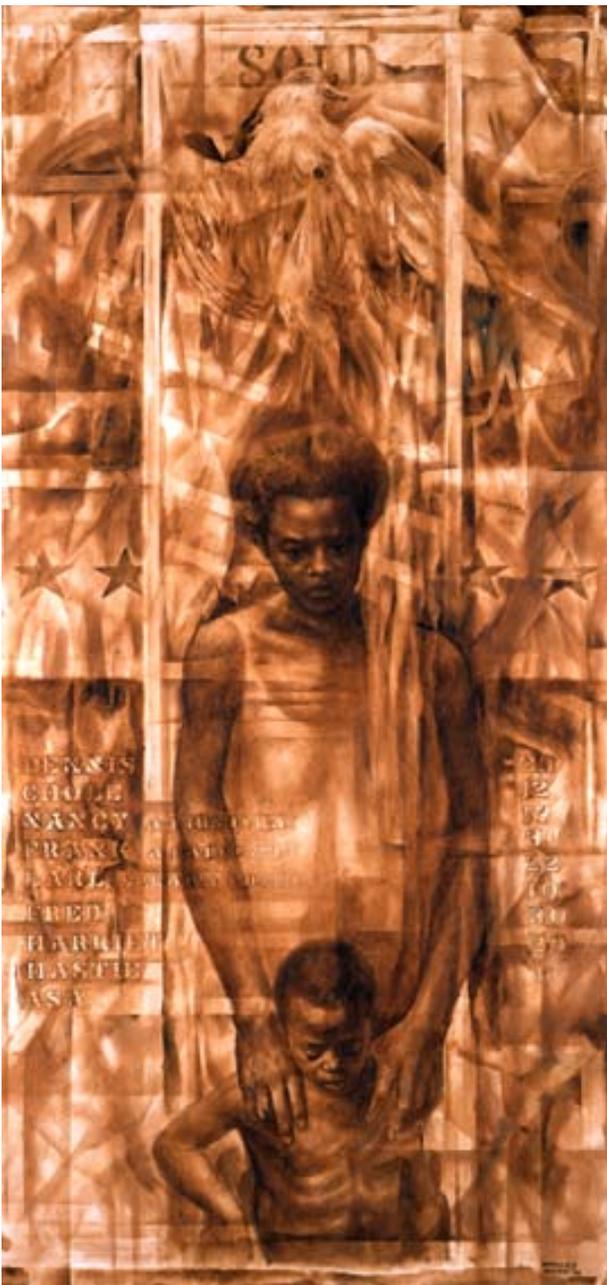
From 1927 to 1935, artist John Sloan worked in a studio that overlooked Washington Square in New York City. *Buses in Washington Square* shows a sunny day on the square. Crowds gather waiting for a double deck bus. Another bus, full of passengers, disappears under a marble arch on the right. People walk through the square. At the lower left, a woman is pulled along as she walks her dog. This painting tells us about city life in the first half of the 20th century.

In the 1960’s, Charles White found some pre-Civil War slave auction posters that advertised rewards for the capture of runaway slaves. They inspired him to create his Wanted Poster Series, which he started in 1969.

In *Wanted Poster Series #17*, a woman and child are in the center of the picture, behind the stars and

stripes of the American flag, and stenciled letters advertising slaves to be sold at auction. They stand beneath a dove and stenciled letters spelling the word "sold."

The artist created the Wanted Poster Series after the lynching of three of his uncles and two of his cousins in the South. As he explained, "Paint is the only weapon [that] I have with which to fight what I resent. If I could write about it. If I could talk I would talk about it ... Since I paint, I must paint about it."



Charles White (1918-1979), *Wanted Poster Series #17*, 1971. Collection of the Flint Institute of Arts, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. B. Morris Pelavin, 1971.43



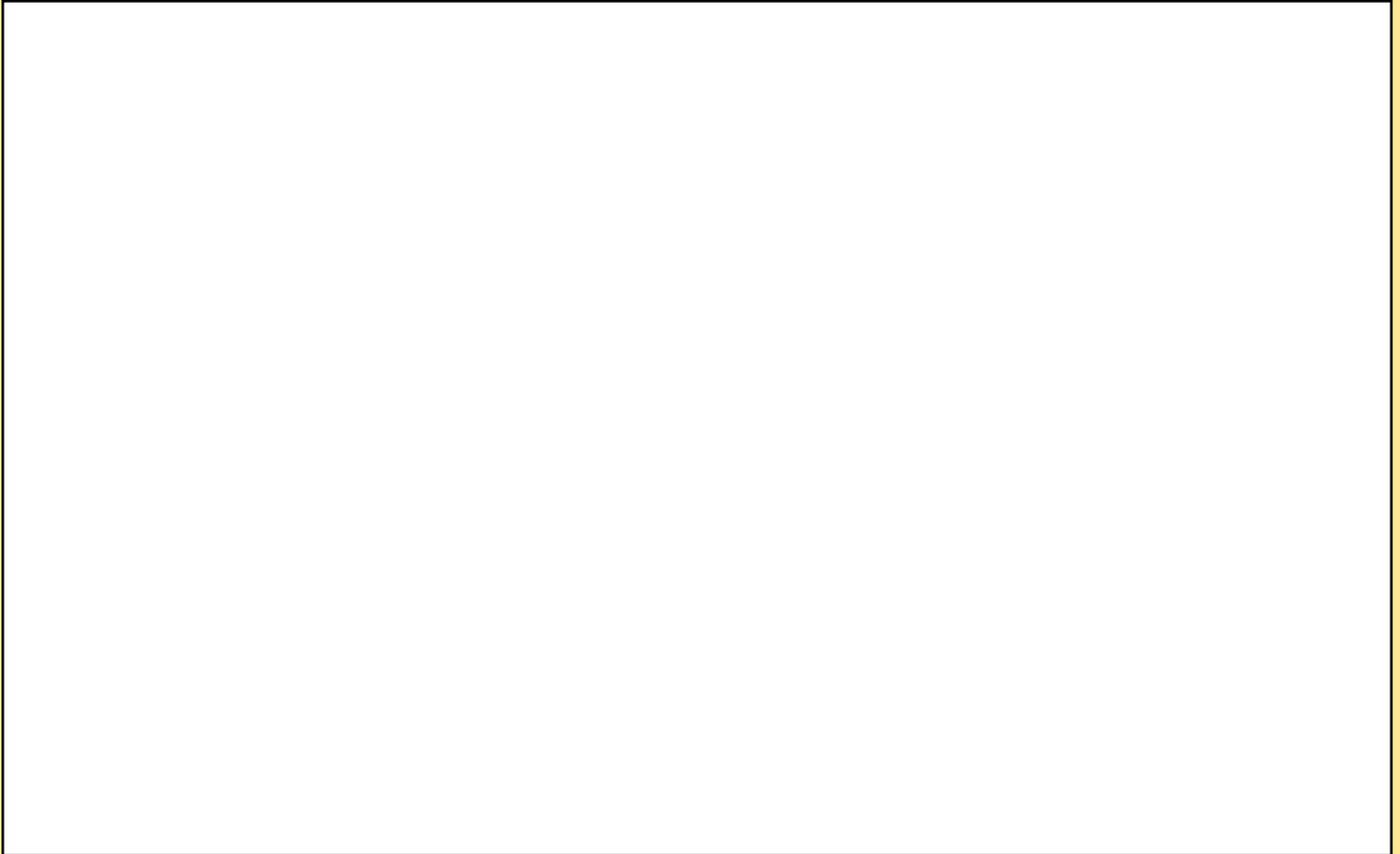
Letta Crapo Smith, American, 1862-1921, *The First Birthday*, 1904. 1967.10

Letta Crapo Smith was born in Flint in 1862. Her grandfather was Henry Crapo Smith, Michigan's first Governor. *The First Birthday* shows a mother and her baby sitting outside under some trees on a sunny day. In 1904, the painting received a Bronze Medal at the St. Louis World's Fair. It was also exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and at the Carnegie Institute International Exhibition. The painting was also the first one by a woman from Michigan to be shown in the Paris Salon, an important annual exhibition held in Paris, France.

**Meet the Artist:**  
**David Petersen**  
A free family program  
March 29, 1 pm

# On Your Own

What story would you like to tell? Use the space below to draw your story. Think about who and/or what you will include in your drawing. When you're done, you can use crayons or markers to add color. Then write your story in the space below your drawing.



Handwriting practice lines consisting of ten sets of horizontal lines. Each set includes a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line, providing a guide for letter height and placement.