

Masterworks on the Move

American Paintings from Wesleyan College

Sara May Love Gallery

&

Chris C. Nolan

Outside the Box

Zoe Golloway Exhibit Hall

REALISM vs. ABSTRACTION

Artists working in a realistic style focus their work on tangible objects, with subjects such as **still life**, **landscapes**, and **portraits**. These artists attempt to demonstrate what the eyes actually see, including accurate color choices, and brush strokes that reflect the emotions of the scene.



Chauncey Ryder, *Two Figures in a Landscape*

The artworks in Masterworks on the Move fall into the realism category, although some artists are beginning to experiment with **abstraction**, such as Chauncey Ryder's *Two Figures in a Landscape*. Notice the way the figures do not look like people when you are up close.



William Stanley Haseltine, *Laguna, Venice*



Chris C. Nolan, *Pipedream*

Abstract art grew in response to the invention of the camera. Before the camera, painting was used to convey images and people as they were; however, the camera reduced the need for realistic paintings and portraits.

In abstract art, the focus is not the subject matter, but rather an attempt to create aesthetically pleasing and thought provoking or emotive works of art. Many people say abstract art is "art for art's sake." While an artist may render objects, people, ideas, feelings, and emotions, they are not bound to the way they actually appear.



Chris C. Nolan, *Kingfisher*

Chris Nolan's exhibition goal was to experiment with abstract and **non-objective art**—to go beyond the literal and to depict feelings, emotions, and the universal appeal of abstract color, shape, and **composition**.

Questions for Discussion

1. Which painting do you think is the most realistic?
2. Which painting do you think is the most abstract?
3. Can you find a painting that seems realistic, but has an abstract painting style? Look for dramatic brushwork or unique color choices.
4. Which painting is your favorite? Is it realistic or abstract?

Find & Compare



What do you find similar or different about these paintings? What do you think the artists were attempting to convey with these paintings?

*Left: Hugh Bolton Jones, October in the Berkshires
Right: Chris C. Nolan, Forest Floor*

Find & Compare



Which of these paintings do you enjoy the most? What kinds of emotions do you feel when you look at these paintings? Can you see any similarities?

*Left: Sophie Marston Brannan, Mountain Cove
Right: Chris C. Nolan, Mediterranean Sunset*

Glossary

abstract - art that is based on real life, but has been altered so that it no longer looks realistic

composition - the placement or arrangement of visual elements in a work of art

landscape - natural outdoor scenery, such as mountains, rivers, fields, or forests

non-objective - a work of art that does not represent a tangible object; instead it can represent an idea, mood, emotion, or have an appealing composition

portrait - art showing a person or several people

still life - art showing an arrangement of nonmoving objects, such as fruit, flowers, vases, and bottles