



Thomas Eakins

July 25, 1844 – June 25, 1916

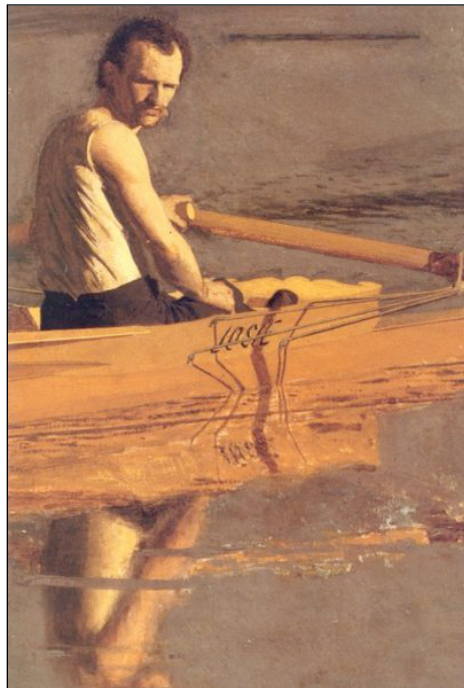
Realist



Portrait by Cedar Kerwin, age 10

Thomas Eakins (AY kinz) has been called the father of American painting. He grew up in Pennsylvania with great approval and support from his father, and like many young artists of his time, traveled to Europe to study art. When he returned, there was a studio waiting for him. By 1876, he was teaching at Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Thomas Eakins was a skilled painter of the human figure. He often painted athletes. His most famous works are of sportsmen rowing long slender boats called racing sculls. At the academy, he taught his students to draw from real life, carefully observing live models. Photography was a popular new invention, and Eakins would often use a camera to plan his paintings, taking a series of photos as someone walked, jumped or ran across the studio. Then he would study the photos to see how people moved.

Eakins was a realist, which means, he painted things as they really were. His attention to detail and the subjects he chose influenced many other great American artists.



Detail from *Max Schmitt in a Single Scull* by Thomas Eakins. View the entire painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art <http://www.metmuseum.org/>

Eakins believed strongly that art students should draw from real life, and that watching live models was a good way to learn about movement. Young artists explore Eakins' technique by creating gesture drawings of a three-panel series of movements.

1,2,3 Gesture Drawing

Materials

Each artist will need –
3 square sheets of drawing paper
pencil and eraser
drawing and coloring tools, optional
crayons, pencils, charcoal, chalk, markers

Process

1. One willing artist will be the model while the other artist (or group of artists) observes and draws. Each artist should have 3 squares of drawing paper, pencil and eraser. The papers can be as large; drawing big is a good artistic experience.
2. Begin by watching the model move from standing up to sitting down on the floor. Watch this movement over and over. Stand up, sit down. Stand up, sit down. The model can move more slowly each time, until the model sits down in ultra-slow motion. Finally, the model will "freeze" three times between standing up and completely sitting.
3. Once the artist has watched the three stages, it's time to draw three one minute quick sketches (called gesture drawings).
 - a. Standing: draw the model standing. Fill the square of paper with the drawing.
 - b. Between Standing/Sitting: Draw the model frozen in a second position between standing and sitting. Draw the second pose on the second paper.
 - c. Sitting: Draw the third and final sketch of the model sitting comfortably on the floor. (The model may need a rest. Holding a pose even for just a minute is hard work.)
4. After the three gesture drawings are done, artists can go back to each drawing and complete it however they wish, adding shading and details, outlining the pencil sketch with charcoal, marker pen or crayon, and coloring areas of the drawing.
5. Display the drawings in a sequence row, like a comic strip or frames of a movie film.

Camera Idea:

A digital camera is a great tool for exploring movement. Quick shutter and continuous recording options allow the camera to take fast paced action shots. Artists can easily capture a series of photos of a movement, freezing action that could not be modeled, such as, jumping off a bench or shooting a basketball. Examine the photos on a computer screen or print them out to use as sources for gesture drawings.

YOUNG CHILD Draw People

Draw all kinds of people or animals in action – doing anything active, like running, sitting, biking, chasing, hitting a ball, or swimming.