



RA

Royal Academy of Arts

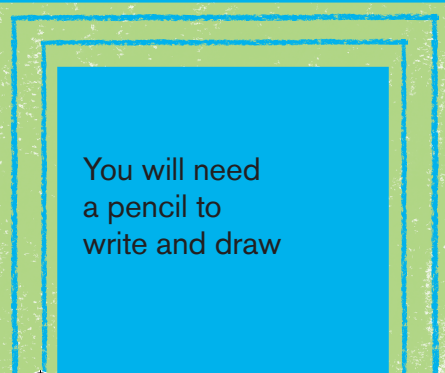
Art Detectives

A guide for
young visitors

Art Detectives are supported
by the Flow Foundation



Jean-Etienne
Liotard



You will need
a pencil to
write and draw



Introduction

Jean-Etienne Liotard (1702–1789) was an 18th-century Swiss artist perhaps best known for his pastel portraits. During his lifetime, he was extremely popular as an artist and could charge large amounts of money for his pictures of fashionable ladies and gentlemen, members of the Royal Family and celebrities, like great actors of the day. Liotard travelled all over the world, including Paris, Vienna and Istanbul (or Constantinople as it was known then). He eagerly adopted different cultures, even wearing long Turkish robes, which he continued to dress in after his return to Europe, earning himself the nickname 'The Turk'!

Let's explore...





Section 1.

Liotard and His Family

Find *Self-portrait Laughing, c.1770*,
Oil on canvas

Liotard painted many self-portraits throughout his life in oil paint, chalk and pastel. This is one of his largest works. Some people have noticed his overly long finger on his right hand, where you might expect to see instead his paintbrush or crayon.

What do you think makes this self-portrait so unusual?

Why do you think artists paint self-portraits?

Choose some words from the selection below that best describe how the artist looks to you in his self-portrait:

Strange Happy Scary Unusual
Old Curious Clever Mischievous





Section 1. (continued)

Find *Marianne Liotard Holding a Doll*, c.1775, Pastel on parchment

Marianne was the youngest of Liotard's five children. Here she is holding a wooden doll in the crook of her arm.

Marianne is holding up a finger as if to say something. Can you imagine what she might want to say?

Both Marianne and her doll are smartly dressed in lace and satin. What similarities can you spot in the costumes of the little girl and her doll?

In the space below, draw yourself holding your favourite toy!





Section 2.

The Levant

Find Woman on a Sofa Reading, 1748–52, Oil on canvas

Liotard spent about four years in Constantinople. During his time there he painted both Europeans visiting the city, and local people. He became an expert in painting Oriental costumes, furniture and customs.

The lady's costume in this painting is very detailed. Can you see the fur lining of her robe, and the pearls in her hair? What other details and patterns do you notice?

When he returned to Europe, Liotard would often clothe his subjects in the same set of fancy dress robes that he brought back with him. Have a close look at the dress the woman in this painting is wearing. Now look around the room. Can you spot another woman nearby wearing the same outfit?

Can you also spot the sofa, or 'divan' that she is lying on shown in another drawing nearby?





Section 2. (continued)

Find *Laura Tarsi*, c. 1741, Watercolour on ivory

You might want an adult
to lift you up to see
this work properly.

This incredibly small miniature (less than 10cm high)
is also extraordinarily detailed.

Looking at it very closely, can you see:

- The ring on Laura's right hand
- The flowers on her turban
- The plaits in her hair

What else can you see?





Section 3.

British Society Portraits

In the case in the middle of the room,
find the box of pastel chalks belonging
to John Russell RA (1745–1806).

This box of pastel chalks is similar to those that Liotard would have used to make his pastel portraits. Pastels are very fragile, but because they are made of pure pigment mixed with a binder like gum, their colours appear brighter than oil paints. They are also dry (unlike paint), which makes them easier to travel with.

Look around the room. Can you match up the same colours of the pastel chalks in the box with the pictures on the walls? Give us some examples, for instance, a bright blue pastel and the coat of actor David Garrick.

[illegible]



Section 4.

Court Portraits

Find *Augusta, Princess of Wales*,
1754, Pastel on vellum

Along this wall we see a series of pastel paintings of the British Hanoverian Royal Family – Augusta, wife of Frederick Prince of Wales, and four of their children: George, Louisa Anne, Henry Frederick and Elizabeth Caroline.

What family similarities can you see in the faces of these five people? You might want to think about the shape of their faces, and features like their eyes and mouths.

[illegible]



Find Archduchess Marie Antoinette of Austria, 1762, Red and black chalk on paper

Here we have another Royal Family, this time the Austrian Habsburgs. Empress Maria Theresa asked Liotard to draw eleven of her sixteen children in black and red chalk. Here we have four of them.

In every drawing, each child is doing something different. Match up the activity described below with each child:

Maria Christina *Winding thread*

Maria Anna *Designing building plans*

Marie Antoinette *Painting*

Peter Leopold *Reading*

You can see beside some of the chalk drawings an image of what the back of the drawing looks like. This is so you can see the watercolour wash on the back (or 'verso'). Liotard would apply watercolour to the back of the page to create more intense areas of colour on the front, like the pink of Marie Antoinette's dress, which he would then work on further in chalk.

Can you guess where he has done the same thing in the other three chalk drawings?





Section 5.

Continental Society Portraits

Find Julie and Isaac-Louis de Thellusson-Ployard, 1760, Pastel on vellum

Here we have the wedding portraits of Swiss couple Julie de Thellusson-Ployard and Isaac-Louis de Thellusson, smiling warmly at each other from one picture to the other. These types of portrait pairings are known as 'pendant portraits' (companion portraits designed to be put next to each other).

How has the artist suggested a relationship between these two people?

Look closely at both pictures. In both, can you spot the 'portrait within a portrait' of the partner of the person shown?





Section 6.

Still-life, Trompe l'œil and Genre Scenes

Find *L'Ecriture*, 1752, Pastel on paper

This large pastel actually has two members of Liotard's family in it: his nephew, and his nephew's nephew!

In this scene, the boy has brought a candle to melt the stick of wax that will seal the letter that the young man is writing.
What colour is the wax?

What is the man using to write his letter?

How has Liotard suggested the light of the candle shining through the boy's fingers?

Where else can you see clever suggestions of light in this picture?



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on your picture at home and send it to us later, you can
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