Eastman Johnson specialized in themes that recorded and idealized life before the advent of industrialism. His painting owes its appeal to the incorporation of the values of hard work, independence, honesty, and service to the community. In The Woodcutter, Johnson depicts an ordinary man, probably clearing land for his farm, as an heroic figure. The man’s posture is upright, his eyes scan the horizon, and his mastery over his environment is symbolized by his axe and the manner in which he rests one foot on the stump of the felled tree.


Is there an identity that you idealize, patterns of behavior towards which you grow?
One of the top American photographers of his generation, Herb Ritts captured celebrity portraits, nudes, and images of fashion models, developing a distinct style that trod a line between art and commerce. Drawing inspiration from classical artists and the landscape and quality of light on the West Coast, Ritts favored clean lines, strong forms, and striking shadows. He shot supermodels such as Christy Turlington, Naomi Campbell, and Cindy Crawford, and took iconic photographs of Madonna, Michael Jackson, and Arnold Schwarzenegger, often challenging conventional notions of race and gender. Ritts worked on numerous high-profile advertising campaigns in his lifetime, and shot portraits and fashion for Vogue, Vanity Fair, and Interview Magazine. Here, he’s captured the playful side of the world-renowned British artist David Hockney, while he sorts through and hides behind his paintings.
In this tintype photograph, Will Wilson explores themes of identity, agency, and representation. He does so by contrasting a modern photograph of his own making with an historical photograph made by Edward Curtis, whose popular works claimed to ‘accurately’ preserve the identities of ‘vanishing’ Native Americans in the early 20th century. The power Curtis had to represent the subjects of his photographs was the power to shape public perceptions of Native peoples. In the above photograph, Will Wilson changes the dynamic of the artist and his subject. Wilson’s subject, Horse Capture, chooses how he is represented and perceived. Horse Capture looks powerfully at the viewer while holding an iPad, which displays an image of his great, great, grandfather, an image made by Curtis. Wilson’s modern photograph corrects the record perpetuated by Curtis’ historic photograph — Wilson shows that Natives do have the power to represent themselves, and they are still here.

*What power do we have to shape others’ perceptions of us through art?*
According to the artist Peter Jones, “Animals used to talk to us and it was from them that we learned about medicines and food. In our dances of celebrations of these creatures, they would come to life in human form. In most of my work I concentrate on the hands and faces of people as these are the most expressive features of the human race.” This Deer Dancer is part of a series of animalistic figures inspired by oral stories and legends that have been handed down through generations.

Though Deer Dancer is an art object, the sculpture suggests a type of subjectivity, or ability to perceive and participate. How might our art works give a voice to the identities of beings of the nonhuman world?
Regarded by scholars as one of the most important women in the history of America, Abigail Adams advised her husband during the formative years of the American Revolution and the early years of the American republic, shaping, through him, national policy and the American character. Abigail’s husband, John Adams, was an attorney, a member of the Continental Congress, and the second President of the United States. John relied upon Abigail’s learned opinions and good judgment as expressed through her letters, which she wrote while single-handedly raising her children, caring for orphans of war, and managing a farm. Reunited after the war and John’s travels abroad, Abigail continued to exert her influence as First Lady. Her son, John Quincy Adams, became the sixth President of the United States.
The architects of the early American republic drew inspiration from classical Rome. In both nations, citizens elected representatives to serve their interests in a democratic process of lawmaking. These political freedoms were visually represented by the Roman goddess Libertas, who in America welcomed immigrants in the form of the monumental neoclassical sculpture ‘the Statue of Liberty’ (*Liberty Enlightening the World*).

Vibrant folk art painter Bertha Halozan emigrated from Austria to America in 1956. She began painting after suffering a stroke at the age of 62. Her colorful illustrations convey the optimism and appreciation for life that Bertha endeavored to share with the world. In *Statue of Liberty*, Bertha commemorates her arrival in America. Personal symbols are integrated throughout the image, such as Liberty’s pigtails and a girl with a red dirndl dress.