

3 Elaine de Kooning, *Michel Sonnabend*, 1951. Oil on canvas.

Elaine de Kooning has been described as having a “blatantly oxymoronic skill set” combining the energetic brushwork and bold palette associated with Abstract Expressionism along with established traditions of portraiture. Take a look at connections between her work and the two other images here.

This portrait of Michel Sonnabend, husband of influential art dealer Ileana Sonnabend, belongs to the so-called Gyroscope or Faceless Men Series. What do you see de Kooning revealing of Sonnabend – and of herself in the process? What do you think of this strategy of making visible?



Franz Kline, *Black Reflections*, 1959. Oil and pasted paper on paper, 1959, mounted on Masonite. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, c. 1503. Oil on wood panel. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Making *visible*

In keeping with the Currier’s commitment to social justice, this self-guided tour invites you to look differently, bringing focus to the unseen and effaced in three works. Feel free to take a *Making visible* response sheet.



1 Jan de Bray, *Banquet of Antony and Cleopatra*, 1669. Oil on canvas.

In this scene enacted by the artist's large family, Cleopatra responds to a wager with Antony about who can produce the most lavish feast. Following a simple meal, she prepares a spectacular cocktail with vinegar strong enough to dissolve her pearl earring, allegedly one of the largest in the Ancient World.

One figure here is often overlooked – the young African boy at the right edge. Recent scholarship suggests he might have been a servant who was hired by de Bray to model for the picture, a then-common practice. Despite the Dutch involvement in the slave trade Africans remained relatively rare in 17th-century Holland, and many were servants connected with the Jewish community.

Given the challenging history here, what information would you like to see featured in the way the museum approaches the painting? Feel free also to re-imagine this scene from the servant's perspective. Your response may be returned to the box in the lobby.



2 Glenn Ligon, *Invisible Man, 2 Views*, 1991. Oil and gesso on canvas.

This pair of images references the opening passage of Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* (1952). Treated as a stereotype rather than an individual, the African American protagonist becomes invisible.

Looking at the stenciled letters up close and considering the images from a distance, how do you think Ligon depicts invisibility?

In becoming “a walking personification of the Negative,” Ellison’s character explains, “you often doubt if you really exist.” Have you ever been made to feel invisible?

