



MARCH 2016

A Woman, a Dog, and a Basket of Fruit

Pierre Bonnard | *Woman with Basket of Fruit*
Pierre Bonnard | *Basket of Fruit*



VISIT THE BMA

and see both paintings by
Bonnard in *New Arrivals*,
on view until May 8, 2016.

Pierre Bonnard (French, 1867–1947). Detail,
Woman with Basket of Fruit. 1915–1918. Oil
on canvas. 27¼ x 15¾ inches. The Baltimore
Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, Bequest
of Frederic W. Cone, BMA 1950.190. © Artists
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At a table in Pierre Bonnard's dining room, we see a woman, a dog, and a handbasket with green stripes. The woman is Marthe, the artist's longtime companion. The dachshund is Marthe's dog, Poucette, and the basket is one of many household items, including serving bowls, vases, pitchers, and dinner dishes, that Bonnard liked to paint over and over again. Here, he has piled the basket high with brightly colored fruit and set it down upon a white tablecloth with room to spare.

Marthe, however, doesn't quite fit into the picture. The top of the painting presses down upon her head and crops off her hair, while the right edge cuts off the tip of her elbow. With pale, unfocused eyes, Marthe gazes out of the picture as if her thoughts are somewhere beyond the frame.

Even more curious: While Martha seems to be seated at the table, her body appears to be all of a piece with the tilted tabletop. If we squint at the white areas of the picture, hints of pink, yellow, and blue disappear, and the tones of Marthe's blouse merge with those of the tablecloth and dinner plates to create a bright, uncluttered backdrop for the fruit basket. Except for the red cuff of her sleeve and the sketchy outlines of her arm on the tabletop, there is nothing to define where her body stops and the table begins. As a final surprise, Poucette pokes her nose into the painting, one more sign of Bonnard's ability to present familiar, everyday subjects in a fresh and unexpected way.

CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS

Bonnard liked to sketch familiar objects and then put them aside and paint them from memory. Do the same with objects that are familiar to you. Consider cropping them or presenting them from an unusual point of view.

Compare and contrast this painting with Bonnard's *The Table*: bit.ly/1XZfqkM
Find the striped fruit basket, and look for Marthe feeding her dog.

Study how Bonnard ties the dog, basket, and woman together with an arc-shaped line that starts with the dog's nose and moves upward across the dark shadow on the tabletop to the green stripes on the basket. The line follows the curve of the basket's handle, meets Marthe's wrist, and ends at her fingertips.

PRINT THE IMAGES ON PAGES 2 AND 3 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.



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Woman with Basket of Fruit

Pierre Bonnard (French, 1867–1947). 1915–1918. Oil on canvas. 27¼ x 15¾ inches.

The Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, Bequest of Frederic W. Cone, BMA 1950.190.

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Basket of Fruit

Pierre Bonnard (French, 1867–1947). 1924. Oil on canvas. 17¼ x 17¾ inches.
The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Anthony W. Deering, Baltimore, BMA 2005.141.
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