



NOVEMBER 2014

## A Gentlemanly Pose

John Singleton Copley | *Lemuel Cox*



**VISIT THE BMA**  
and see *Lemuel Cox*  
in the newly renovated American Wing,  
opening on November 23, 2014.

John Singleton Copley (American, 1738–1815).  
Detail, *Lemuel Cox*. 1770. Oil on canvas.  
49 3/4 x 39 3/4 inches. The Baltimore Museum  
of Art: Bequest of Elise Agnus Daingerfield,  
BMA 1944.98

Striking a gentlemanly pose with his hand tucked into his waistcoat, Lemuel Cox presents himself as a self-assured Bostonian. He wears his best woolen coat with fancy gold buttons, a white ruffled shirt, and a waistcoat trimmed with shimmering gold braid. This was not the opulent clothing of Boston's most prosperous merchants, who dressed for their portraits in imported velvets, silks, satins, and brocades. Nevertheless, Cox confidently assumes the posture of a gentleman, leaning to one side with his free hand resting casually on a pedestal.

Cox probably took this pose at the suggestion of the artist, John Singleton Copley, Boston's most fashionable portrait artist during the years before the Revolutionary War. Copley understood that many Bostonians still considered themselves British and craved the handsome English fabrics, silver, and household furnishings that arrived on trading ships in colonial ports. To satisfy their class-conscious yearnings, Copley posed his sitters like the English aristocrats who appeared in engravings imported from the mother country.

Lemuel Cox was an ambitious inventor with an aptitude for mechanics. The same year that Copley painted his portrait, Cox developed a device that simplified the preparation of yarn for spinning. Fifteen years later at the height of his career, he would pursue far riskier challenges as a builder of bridges. His first bridge, successfully spanning the Charles River from Boston to Charlestown, was celebrated with the ringing of bells, the firing of guns, a parade of dignitaries, and a feast for 800 guests. A poem composed for the occasion read in part:

Now Boston, Charlestown nobly join,  
And roast a fatted Ox  
On noted Bunker Hill combine  
To toast our patriot Cox. \*

\* Read more about Lemuel Cox and his career as a bridge builder in America and Ireland in *Lemuel Cox: Bridge Builder and Inventor 1736-1806* by Walter Kendall Watkins at [bit.ly/1wZZxie](http://bit.ly/1wZZxie)

### CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS

Discuss what it means to take a pose. When and why do we pose? For how long? Do we pose only if we expect somebody to be watching? How can small shifts in gesture or body position change the meaning of the pose? Find some photographs of athletes, performers, or workers who posed for the camera. Select one pose and adapt it to make a portrait of yourself, a friend, or family member.

**PRINT THE IMAGE ON PAGE 2 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.**



To comment or register  
for Art-To-Go, email  
[ebenskin@artbma.org](mailto:ebenskin@artbma.org)

For visitor information:  
[artbma.org](http://artbma.org)

Sponsored in memory of dedicated BMA  
docent Ruth H. Singer by her family.



John Singleton Copley. *Lemuel Cox*.

1770. Oil on canvas. 49  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 39  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Bequest of Elise Agnus Daingerfield, BMA 1944.98