A small embroidery hoop hangs down from the top of this artwork, reading “B de M, in pleasant remembrance, FS 1923.” This painting represents the relationship between the artist, Florine Stettheimer, and her friend Baron Adolph de Meyer, a photographer.

Florine painted many portraits of her friends throughout her career, often in theatrical spaces that gave hints to the identities of her subjects. Here, she has included a camera draped in black lace, representing Adolph’s career as a photographer. Around the time of the painting, he accepted a new job as a fashion photographer in Paris, France. Florine included a red robe trimmed with black-spotted white ermine fur, a style similar to robes worn by European royalty. This hints to Adolph’s noble rank of “Baron”—though historians do not know if he was nobility or if that was just what he liked to call himself. Adolph is dressed in the fashion of the time, wearing a fitted black jacket with blue lapels and cuffs, a pink vest, a white collared shirt, a narrow black tie, and pale blue pants. With his hands on his hips, he leans on a fold black stand holding a bouquet of flowers under a cloche, or glass dome. A blue curtain hangs from the left side of the scene, while a black curtain covered with small birds frames the right side of the canvas. Highlighted by a beam of light, Adolph appears as though he is posing on a stage, ready for his close-up.

In addition to painting portraits of friends and life in New York City, Florine often hosted gatherings for artists, writers, and other creators in her apartment. These meetings were called salons, where friends, like Adolph and painter Georgia O’Keeffe, would gather to talk about their work, get support from other artists, and learn from one another.

Classroom Activities

- Florine made this artwork in response to Adolph moving to Paris, so she would have something to remember their friendship and time together in New York City. Invite students to brainstorm what gift they would give to a friend leaving to go on a journey or starting a new part of life. Students can write or draw their gift, then break into groups to share their work in a “salon” like Florine and her friends.

- Florine helped the viewer learn more about the subject of her artworks by including objects, clothing, and settings that speak to the identity of the person she painted. Ask students what objects, activities, or places they would include in their own portraits to let someone learn about them. Have students create a list of five things they like to do and five words that describe them. Then, invite students to write or draw a self-portrait, including some of the things from their list.

Print the following page for your students.
Baron de Meyer, Florine Stettheimer