Currents

In Teaching and Learning

ACADEMIC JOURNAL

VOLUME 14 NUMBER 1 SEPTEMBER 2022

WORCESTER STATE UNIVERSITY

REFLECTION

Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge in Humanities Classrooms

—Andrea Korda, Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Vanessa Warne

Andrea Korda, Associate Professor, Augustana Faculty, University of Alberta

Mary Elizabeth Leighton, Professor, Department of English, University of Victoria

Vanessa Warne, Professor, English, Theatre, Film & Media, University of Manitoba

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: korda@ualberta.ca

Abstract

The Getty Museum's 2020 challenge to recreate artworks at home provided a creative outlet for people self-isolating during the early days of COVID-19. It also provided an adaptable model of hands-on learning for instructors seeking experiential learning opportunities for remote classrooms. In this essay, we describe how we adapted the Getty Museum Challenge to hone students' visual literacy and analytical skills, developed pilot assignments to model our versions of the Challenge for students, scaffolded students' learning with historical and contemporary sources, and implemented the Challenge as both an engagement activity and marked assignment across three remote literature and art history classrooms. Advocating for the assignment's adaptability across Humanities courses, we provide sample Challenges (both ours and our students'), learning objectives and prompts, and reflections on the value of visual description and creative collaboration in and beyond the classroom.

Keywords

experiential learning, engagement, visual literacy, close looking, piloting assignments, learning objectives

In the early days of COVID-19, photographs responding to the "Getty Museum Challenge" circulated across Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. The Challenge, issued on Twitter by @GettyMuseum on 25 March 2020, asked followers to "Choose your favorite artwork. Find three things lying around your house. Recreate the artwork with those items. And share with us" (2020). Within a month, *Artnet News* published two articles about "bored people around the world using household objects to recreate famous historical artworks," explaining, "it seems like everyone wants to get in on the action" (Goldstein, 2020a, 2020b).[1] The results may have been ridiculous—with toilet paper rolls, cleaning products, and family pets taking centre stage—but they were also inspiring, modeling close looking and active engagement with art. The Challenge quickly entered remote classrooms, from elementary schools to universities, demonstrating how recreating works of art could contribute to teaching and learning, both in and beyond art history classrooms (Buis, 2020; LaChance, 2020).

In this essay, we discuss how we used the Challenge in three remotely delivered university courses across two disciplines (English and art history) and three institutions. Because our courses focused on 19th-century culture, we asked students to choose a 19th-century painting or photograph, recreate it using readily available materials, take a digital photograph of their recreation, share side-by-side images of the original

[1] *The Getty has recently published a collection of these recreations in Off the Walls: Inspired Re-Creations of Iconic Artworks.*

artwork and their recreation with classmates, and reflect on what they learned from the experience. As a result of this assignment, which ranged in our respective courses from a low-stakes engagement activity to a series of graded assignments, our students improved their close-looking skills and deepened their knowledge of individual artworks. As instructors, we made discoveries of our own. We anticipated that the Challenge would be a fun activity—a way to get students excited about course content, build community in our classes at a time of social isolation, and give students a break from online learning. When we piloted the assignment by making our own recreations, however, we discovered the Challenge's potential to deepen students' knowledge of both 19th-century and contemporary media and material culture through embodied learning. We also realized how an embodied approach to studying historical artworks raises productive questions about identity and visual culture.

In what follows, we share reflections on our assignments and offer recommendations and specific prompts for deepening students' engagement with course content through the Challenge. We also share a useful case study, a series of images by opera singer and BBC broadcaster Peter Brathwaite, that, when taught alongside the assignment, can support students' learning by engaging the representation (or, more accurately, the lack of representation) of groups that have been marginalized in the history of visual art. Energized by our first-hand knowledge of this assignment's value for both art history and literature classrooms, we conclude by reflecting on ways to adapt the assignment for different humanities classes and for both online and face-to-face classrooms.

The Getty Museum Challenge as Embodied Learning

By involving students' surroundings and bodies in novel ways, the Challenge incorporated active, embodied learning into our classes at a time when COVID-19 made field trips and other experiential learning opportunities impossible. Seeking strategies for meaningful engagement, we hoped to move beyond delivering information from point A (our computers) to point B (our students' computers) and instead find ways for students to activate and embody their learning within their own spaces in order to take seriously the role of active bodily engagement in learning processes (Jordi, 2011, p. 187; Kolb, 2015; Michelson, 1998, 2015). We also took inspiration from Matt Ratto's (2011) work on "critical making," an approach that combines critical thinking with "physical 'making'" (p. 253) to make "new connections between the lived space of the body and the conceptual space of scholarly knowledge" (p. 254).

While the study of artwork is obviously the work of art history classrooms, our assignments exemplify how to integrate art across the curriculum—in this case, in different humanities courses. Art historian Christina Smylitopoulos (2021) explains that meaningful encounters with artworks can "advance [students'] skills in looking.… so that students can recognize the distinctions between objective and subjective looking and invite and appreciate multifarious perspectives" (p. 7). In arts-based programs in health sciences, close looking at artworks is used to improve skills in "observation, communication, problem solving, empathy, and the recognition of inherent biases" (Friedlaender, 2021, p. 81). As Smylitopoulos points out, "observation is treated as an uncomplicated ability that most people have, but we know that the various lenses through which we view the world can affect what we see in profound (and subliminal) ways" (2021, p. 9–10). This emphasis on observation is also central to "slow looking," which Shari Tishman describes as "a strategic [pursuit] because it involves the intentional use of observation strategies to guide and focus the eye (2017, p. 8; Lubin, 2017). As we demonstrate, the Challenge offers students opportunities to develop skills in looking and reflecting critically on what they learn through observation—and these skills serve students across various disciplines.

The aesthetic practice of recreating works of art is not new; nor is the pedagogical practice of introducing this practice into classrooms. In 2017, Ellery E. Foutch shared her insights on the value of engaging 21st-century art history students in the historical practice of *tableaux vivants* (2017); such "living pictures," or live recreations of artworks, were both popular parlor activities and professional forms of entertainment in the 18th and 19th centuries (see Contogouris, 2019; Jordan, 2019). Foutch re-engaged this practice, asking students to recreate famous early American paintings by working in groups with minimal props. She observes that "the act of researching and performing *tableaux vivants* compels students to look closely, to research works of art, to

Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

think critically, to interpret and create, and to engage in metacognitive and embodied experiences" (2017, p. 1). Foutch provides valuable insights into teaching with *tableaux vivants*, especially how the practice prompts students to "explor[e] systems of power and privilege, identity and representation" (p. 1) while reflecting on "their own bodily experiences and identity categories" (p. 5). For example, one student group worked with a 1796 portrait of George Washington, creating four separate *tableaux vivants*, each featuring a different student in the place of the first American president. The assignment prompted students to critically examine how Washington's identity, authority, and power were conveyed to viewers, to consider how to convey their own identities in their recreations, and to "explor[e] the multiplicity of American identities" (p. 14).

There are many connections between Foutch's pre-pandemic experiments with *tableaux vivants* and our pandemic-prompted adaptation of the Challenge for humanities classrooms. Just as Foutch asked students to study an artwork by embodying it, we asked students to employ their surroundings and their creativity—and their bodies, if they were willing—to engage 19th-century visual and material culture. There are, however, some notable differences between Foutch's students' work with *tableaux vivants* and our students' experiences. Our students worked alone rather than collaboratively or with housemates instead of classmates; they also worked in their homes instead of in classrooms. Created in response to social isolation, the Challenge differs from the *tableau vivant* tradition in emphasizing the limitations of domestic spaces, objects, and housemates. This emphasis is explicit in the Getty's original instructions, which limited participants to three objects, but also implicit under pandemic circumstances, which confined participants to their homes. The pleasure of the Challenge results from making do with what is on hand, a condition that prompts students to look closely—at both their source imagery and their surroundings—as a means of problem solving. Additionally, engaging with their immediate environment as part of "making do" can prompt students to reflect on their own material culture. Viewers, in turn, are challenged to take the imaginative leaps required while viewing the results to read ordinary household objects in terms of artworks—a process requiring active looking and deciphering.

An additional difference between the *tableau vivant* and the Challenge concerns the medium. While Foutch's assignment was designed for live presentation (offering students the option to photograph their *tableaux vivants* and present the photograph in class), remote teaching did not allow live presentations of staged pictures; our students therefore submitted digital photographs of their recreations. In contrast to the practice of *tableau vivant*, students' bodies were not always included in the recreations, and increased attention was given to objects, settings, and differences in medium between the original artwork and the recreated digital image. Embracing the makeshift aesthetic that arose from recreating artworks with digital photography under quarantine conditions, students engaged creatively with their own environments and belongings.

Peter Brathwaite's Getty Museum Challenge

The idea of recreating historical artworks in contemporary terms has been a go-to artistic strategy for centuries. As Dana Katz notes in "The Art of the COVID Copy," "imitating works of art is not a new practice—these modern-day copyists are participating in acts of repetition that date back to antiquity" (2021). Take Edouard Manet's 19th-century painting *Olympia*, which took inspiration from Titian's 16th-century *Venus of Urbino* (which in turn alluded to Greek and Roman sculptures of the Venus pudica) but shocked Parisian audiences by replacing the Venus figure with a contemporary, pale-skinned, urban prostitute accompanied by a Black woman acting as her servant. A more recent example is Kehinde Wiley's painting *Napoleon Leading the Army over the Alps* (2005), which recreates Jacques-Louis David's early 19th-century portrait by replacing Napoleon with a Black man in contemporary dress, including military fatigues and a bandana. Wiley's recreation makes a strong point about the people and cultures that have been subordinated within art history and its narratives (Foutch, 2017, p. 5-6), offering a compelling re-creation and providing a useful starting point for class discussions.

As we pondered how to frame the Challenge for our students, we considered these examples from art history but also took inspiration from the works of Peter Brathwaite and other successful online examples. Brathwaite took up the Challenge in March 2020, posting his results on Twitter with the recurring caption, "Rediscovering #blackportraiture through

Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

@GettyMuseum challenge." Brathwaite explains that he "hadn't seen many recreations of pieces of art with Black people," so he started creating them himself, using his own body in photographs (qtd. in Migdol, 2020).[2] His portraits demonstrate close looking and insightful engagement with identity and material culture and offer striking examples of what might be learned from engaging with the Challenge.

Take, for example, Brathwaite's recreation of a detail from the 13th-century Domesday Book, which mimics the shallow space, linear forms, colors, patterns, and rhythms of the source image (2020b). In addition to modeling command of visual analysis, Brathwaite pushes beyond his source pictures' surface appearances by including meaningful family objects, such as his grandfather's cou-cou stick or his grandmother's patchwork quilt. While these objects are powerful reminders of the material histories excluded from the fine art traditions from which Brathwaite draws, his body inserts Black presence into viewers' engagement with source images created by white European artists. In some cases, Brathwaite also alters his subjects' facial expressions or body positions in order to assert their potential agency and challenge historical power relations. His work demonstrates how the Challenge can contest historical narratives and speak back to artworks that serve as source images.

Brathwaite's most whimsical images make do with anachronistic, and sometimes silly, objects that he has on hand. The caption to his recreation of an 18th-century portrait of Adolf Ludvig Gustave Albert Couschi, a member of the Swedish Royal family originally brought to Sweden as an enslaved person, indicates that Brathwaite had "no chess set in the house" (Brathwaite, 2020a). In the recreation, he replaces chess with Jenga pieces, while the feathered headpiece from the original portrait is recreated with a colander, loofah mitt, and shower poufs. These household objects, combined in an absurd manner, might prompt us to consider the kinds of everyday material objects present in our homes, but they also foreground Brathwaite's creativity in manipulating his environment. Other successful examples work similarly: consider musician Drustan Durman's recreation of John William Waterhouse's *The Charmer* (1911), in which a mustached, toga-wearing man with a lyre perches on the edge of a bathtub, his foot dipped delicately into soapy water where plastic shampoo bottles float; or artist Alana Archer's recreation of Frida Kahlo's self-portrait with parrots, where green plastic bottles of cleaning products replace parrots and a thermometer is swapped for Kahlo's cigarette.[3]

These make-do items prompt us to dwell in the present—that is, in the contemporary moment of making—rather than escaping into a historical, fantastical space, as the original paintings might. These items also provide evidence of our contemporary material culture, throwing commonplace objects like shower poufs, plastic shampoo bottles, and a digital thermometer into relief against the historical moments of the original paintings' creations. Unsurprisingly, considering the pandemic context, these items speak to contemporary concerns with cleanliness, hygiene, and health, while also underscoring the prevalence of plastics in our homes. Additionally, by stopping short of faithfully replicating items in the original paintings and thereby making explicit the improvisations that were required, these items call attention to the process of representation and the status of pictures *as representations* that are highly contrived. This awareness can prompt productive conversations about why and how particular narratives have come to circulate through images (such as narratives about Black history and identity in the case of Brathwaite's project or about conventions for representing men and women in the case of Durman's recreation) and how our current visual and material cultures can reinforce or challenge such narratives. As Brathwaite explains, "to get inside a painting in this way, to physicalize it, is a really useful way to gain a different perspective on a work of art" (qtd. in Migdol). Brathwaite's inspiring examples made us wonder what kinds of perspectives our students might gain from the Challenge.

---

[2] Brathwaite's work was later featured in the exhibition Visible Skin: Rediscovering the Renaissance through Black Portraiture, funded by the Wellcome Trust and curated by Dr. Hannah Murphy. The exhibition took place on the campus of King's College London, Strand Campus from 10 September 2021 to 18 February 2022, and was also accompanied by an online gallery (https://renaissanceskin.ac.uk/visibleskin/).

[3] Durman's and Archer's recreations can be found here: https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/in-these-quarantine-tableaus-household-items-turn-into-art-history-props.

Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

The Assignment: Adapting the Getty Museum Challenge for Three Humanities Classrooms

Across our three versions of this assignment, we consistently focused on students' analyses and reflections rather than aesthetic success. Indeed, we framed the assignment as an embodied (and hopefully fun) way of engaging with each course's themes and key questions—whether about the role of images and visuality in literature, representations of human bodies in literature and culture, or the history of photography. In cases where the assignment was graded, we clarified that students would not be graded on their image (whether its aesthetics or likeness to the original artwork). We were careful to distinguish between the kind of making employed in our classes (where the emphasis was on the skills of close looking and critical reflection) and the set of skills honed through studio art courses, which we are not equipped to teach. Instead, we encouraged students to pay close attention to the original artwork, prompting them with questions about its contexts of production and aspects of aesthetic representation, such as: *Did you explain why you chose this artwork? Did you provide some helpful background and/or cultural context about this artwork's production? Did you identify and analyze key aspects of the artwork's aesthetic presentation (e.g. its composition, its medium, its size, its finish, its style)?* We also encouraged students' reflections on the process of making their own versions of these artworks and what making taught them about Victorian art as well as differences between Victorian and contemporary aesthetics and representational practices. We posed such guiding questions as: *Did you explain the decisions you made in producing your Getty Challenge? Did you reflect on the process of doing the Challenge and what it taught you about this artwork and/or Victorian artistic practices? Did you make creative links between your Challenge version and the original Victorian artwork?* Orienting students' attention toward differences between the artwork's original aesthetics and context and those of their Challenge version prompted reflections on shifting cultural standards (from family to sexuality and beauty), media forms, and the pleasures of making.

In order to align assignments with courses, we each adapted the instructions so that students engaged with source images related to course materials. In Leighton's course on Victorian fiction, students recreated Victorian paintings as a means of studying the cultural contexts of their readings; in Warne's course on the body in Victorian literature and culture, students recreated Victorian paintings that helped them grapple with how Victorians represented or imagined bodies (human and non-human); and in Korda's class on the history of photography, students recreated historical photographs in order to consider the content of historical photographs and their technological challenges.

Our assignments also differed in their percentage weights across courses, demonstrating that the Challenge can be adapted to different purposes. Warne asked students to share their recreations and reflections during class time in a low-stakes, ungraded presentation that prompted discussion early in the semester and built community in the remote classroom, a strategy that was also taken up by Alena Buis in her "Art in Quarantine Assignment" (2020). Leighton assigned the Challenge as a stand-alone assignment submitted as a video presentation worth 20% of the course grade. In Korda's class, the stakes were raised: students undertook three iterations of the assignment (together totaling 40% of the course grade), completing the Challenge plus a written reflection at the end of each of the course's three units and thus learning from feedback and deepening their reflections in subsequent submissions.

Piloting the Assignment

Before assigning the Challenge to students, we each piloted the assignment and discussed our processes as instructors. We recorded that discussion and shared it with our students to model what productive reflections might entail. Leighton recreated Ford Madox Brown's painting "Take your Son, Sir" (1851–92); Warne, John Everett Millais's painting of Ophelia (1851–52); and Korda, a series of photographs taken by Clementina Hawarden of her daughters (ca. 1859–66). Our attempts at recreating these pictures helped refine our expectations and instructions for the assignment. As expected, the Challenge prompted us to look closely at our source images and undertake visual analysis, but other significant themes also emerged. We considered the roles of technology and collaboration in making and re-making artworks and discussed how the space, objects, and people available for our recreations contributed to our images' meanings, offering fresh insights into

Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

our source imagery or prompting us to reconsider contemporary visual and material culture. Here, we summarize our pilots to demonstrate how our embodied experiences of completing the assignment generated insights that shaped the assignment's learning objectives. In addition to offering examples of what students can learn from this assignment, our summary demonstrates the value of piloting assignments for clarifying and articulating learning objectives.

Close Looking with Brown's "Take your Son, Sir"

Recreating an artwork requires close looking to break down a picture's elements before building them back up again, and we expected this act of close looking to form a significant part of the assignment. Eliza Reinhardt, one artist who has engaged with the Challenge, describes the importance of such visual analysis to her process, which involves "breaking down the painting into shapes, color blocks, studying the composition, and trying to imitate the perspective" (qtd in Barnes, 2021).

For Leighton's version of Ford Madox Brown's "*Take your Son, Sir*" she began by contemplating the painting's various parts in order to identify household items to substitute in her recreation (Figure 1). The woman and infant, the swaddling cloth, the mirror reflecting the "sir" of the painting's title and producing a halo effect, the green starry backdrop, the woman's white dress and lacy collar, and the unfinished white space of the canvas were all noted as important elements. She soon realized that a significant challenge lay in replicating the original's perspective, which required lining up the photographer with the mirror, the woman, and the man reflected in the mirror. Leighton and her collaborators made several attempts—each time requiring a fresh examination of the original painting in comparison with their results—before realizing that Brown's composition was perhaps fictitious because it required a point of view that they could not replicate (at least not without the convex mirror available to Brown).

Perspective thus became a focus of this Challenge, prompting Leighton to consider not only the location and angle of the man reflected in the mirror but also the focus of the woman in the painting, who seems to be looking less at the man than directly at the viewer. The woman's focus and face proved difficult to replicate. Her face appears paler than her neck and hands, her cheeks' ruddiness set off by the red bow in her hair. Halloween make-up and red ribbon provided ways of mimicking the woman's physical appearance, but her wan, world-weary look and direction of vision were difficult to emulate.

Another discovery Leighton made concerned the swaddling cloth surrounding the baby in the original painting. In one of Leighton's first attempts, she forgot to include the sweatshirt she had prepared as swaddling for the stuffed animal standing in for the baby. Seeing the unswaddled "child" in her recreation alongside Brown's painting drew her attention to the cloth's significance as a visual element framing the baby and a symbolic element suggesting the birthing process due to its resemblance to the vaginal canal. Leighton's example thus demonstrates how the Challenge prompted close looking—not just at the outset of the process but also along the way, leading to discoveries about the original painting that had not been previously apparent.

Rethinking Spaces, Objects, and Poses with Millais's "Ophelia"

As Leighton's example suggests, recreating an artwork in a different space with different objects can lead to insights about the original artwork's spaces and objects. Warne's recreation of Millais's *Ophelia* prompted her to rethink this painting's spaces and objects (Figure 2). While some of the makers who shared recreations of this painting on social media opted to immerse themselves in bathtubs and backyard ponds, Warne decided to reference the water in which Ophelia floats by using towels, sheets, and a tablecloth arranged over a concrete path; to use a curtain for Ophelia's skirts; and to substitute a chain-link fence covered with vines for the painting's woodland setting. Warne had a willing, patient housemate as a photographer, but she noted the patience required of her as the subject of the photographic recreation. Lying on a sheet on cold concrete, she was frequently directed to lift her chin while her collaborator sought the right angle from which to photograph her.

This experience, particularly the sensation of the concrete's coldness beneath her, prompted Warne to reflect on the bodily experience of Elizabeth Siddal, the model for Millais's painting. Siddal (who was also a painter and poet) posed for Millais over a four-month

period. Unlike Warne, Siddal did not remain dry for these sessions; she lay for hours in a bathtub in Millais's studio, the water warmed by candles positioned beneath the bath. After the candles went out during one session, Siddal became ill and required medical treatment (Tate Gallery, n.d.). As Warne looked up at the sky, waiting for her photographer to get the angle right, she reflected on the collaborative event recorded by the original painting and on the working conditions of 19th-century artists' models. She was also struck by knowledge of what Millais's Ophelia sees in her final moments, her gaze directed heavenwards as she sinks. Repeatedly reminded by her collaborator to open her left hand, Warne came to appreciate how the openness of Ophelia's eyes is echoed visually by the openness of her hands, her palms lifted upward, just above the water's surface.

Warne's attention to objects, both those in the painting and those she employed, extended to the distinctive frame surrounding Millais's painting. The squared edges of Warne's digital image differentiated her recreation from Millais's original in ways she had not anticipated, drawing her attention to the importance of Millais's painting's curved upper corners. She chose to digitally insert her image into an image of the original painting's frame, heightening the resemblance between the images and confirming her sense of the frame's importance to this painting's visual impact.

Considering Media Affordances and Visual Conventions with Lady Clementina Hawarden's Photographs

The process of remaking an artwork in a different medium prompts reflection on the affordances of each medium—whether painting, drawing, or photography. Leighton's experience attempting to replicate the fictitious perspective of Brown's painting is one example of painting's particular affordances. While artists use paint to create imagined representations, a key challenge of this assignment lies in recreating imagined objects and settings in concrete ways that can be captured photographically. Often, as in Leighton's example, this process can help us understand more about how the original image was constructed.

Korda's attempt to recreate Lady Hawarden's photographs may appear more straightforward, since both the originals and the recreations were created photographically, but this remediation from albumen prints (printed from wet collodion glass negatives) to digital images calls attention to significant shifts in how photographs were made and circulated from the 19th century to today (Figures 3 and 4). Creating a photograph using Hawarden's wet collodion process required knowledge and skill that exceed those required for snapping a picture on a phone camera today—the process Korda used for her recreations. Glass negatives had to be prepared with wet collodion just before exposure and then developed immediately following exposure, and Hawarden would have performed this work as part of the process of picture-taking (Victoria and Albert Museum, n.d.). Additionally, exposure times were long, necessitating patience on the part of both photographer and subjects, who had to hold still for the exposure's duration. Given these two factors, taking a photograph demanded significant time and effort. Working on her Challenge, which featured four young children, Korda became aware of the extreme difficulty of creating such an image using wet collodion photographic technology.

Korda's photographs also generated discussion about representations of femininity and identity more generally. For the 21st-century children in Korda's photographs, mimicking the 19th-century dress of Hawarden's daughters meant dressing up as Disney princesses: ready-made Disney costumes from these children's closets came closest to the long, full skirts in Hawarden's photographs. Just like digital photography is quick and effortless as compared to wet collodion photography, ready-to-wear costumes call attention to the speed of industrial production and ease of 21st-century shopping as compared to the temporality and labor that would have been involved in creating the Hawardens' clothing. Using these costumes to replicate images of 19th-century domestic life also calls attention to how children's toys and costumes can reinforce outmoded conventions of femininity. At the same time, hints of 21st-century trends, such as the cat ears adorning one child's headband, remind viewers how much has changed since Hawarden's time.

Although Hawarden's photographs have often been interpreted as feminist interventions in Victorian femininity—largely due to the labor of Hawarden's photographic work (Raymond, 2017, 26–33; Haworth-

Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

Booth, 1999; Mavor, 1999)—Korda noted that her own photographs of these 21st-century young white girls in princess clothing, all taken and shared with ease, had the opposite effect of reinforcing feminine stereotypes. While recreating artworks can upset the past's visual conventions, the mixing of 21st-century models and historical portraiture is not necessarily progressive. Sometimes, re-enacting historical visual conventions reinforces those conventions—a consequence that instructors must be aware of and take seriously.

Prompting Reflection and Achieving Learning Objectives

Because it is easy to get distracted by the Challenge's visual delights, we recommend providing students with clear learning objectives and questions to help prompt critical reflection and meet those objectives. Piloting the assignment allowed us to clarify our objectives and generate specific prompts for critical reflection. After viewing our students' recreations, reading their reflections, and offering feedback on their work, we refined those prompts further, and we share them here, along with examples of students' work. The reflections we share are based on our students' observations, but in some cases, we have pushed their observations further in our subsequent discussions. In these latter cases, our discussions helped us modify our prompts in ways that we hope will generate deeper student engagement in future iterations of the assignment.

1. Objective: Improve skills in close looking

   Prompt: What visual details in the original artwork became apparent as you worked on your recreation?

Many of our students reported close engagements with their source images, first as they planned their recreations and again when assessing their results. Many noticed new details or nuanced perspectives when they compared the original artwork to their recreations.

One student recreated Philip Hermogenes Calderon's *Broken Vows* (1856), noticing such details in the original as the wedding ring on the woman's finger as well as her black scarf, the lovers' initials carved on the gate, and the ivy growing on the fence and symbolizing a never-ending love contrasted with the dead flower at the woman's feet (Figure 5). The positions and facial expressions of the man and lover beyond the gate became more apparent to the student when she tried to recreate Calderon's image. Limited by pandemic restrictions, she undertook the recreation with a friend, from whom she was socially distancing, along with a dog, who replaced the other woman in the original. The dog refused to wear a substitute for a bonnet and moved a lot, requiring the image-making process to be speedy and making it difficult for her and her friend to retain the positions and facial expressions of the original artwork's figures (whether forlorn, for the woman, or flirtatious, for the man). In a second recreation, she riffed on ways of discovering infidelity, posing as the woman with an iPhone in her hand and imagining finding her lover's profile on a dating app such as Tinder.

Another student recreated Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *A Christmas Carol* (1867), discovering in the process how different areas of the painting feature different kinds of finish, from the high finish on the instrument and clothing to the low finish around the figure's face and hands that looks like blurring and makes the woman seem to glow (Figure 6). In the painting's jewel-toned Christmas palette, warm colors contribute to a rich metallic glow while greens and blue contribute to its nature tones. These observations became apparent only after the student noted that her digital photo flattened the finish and tone, producing an even finish and tone across the entire photo.

2. Objective: Thinking through media affordances

   Prompt: What do you learn about the media involved in this assignment—either the original medium or the medium you used in your recreation?

Changes in technology played an important role in the reflection process for Korda's students, who were tasked with recreating 19th-century photographs with digital tools. An 1845 daguerreotype portrait of a *Daguerreotypist Displaying Daguerreotypes and Cases*, which uses the medium of the daguerreotype to flaunt this novel technology's possibilities, offered a productive example for students' exploration of these changes. In one assignment, the student appears in a pose and costume

Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

that replicate the appearance of the 19th-century daguerreotypist, but the earlier technology is replaced by our current digital technologies: the picture is a digital photograph in full color (though with a subdued palette that recalls the original black-and-white photograph) and smartphones displaying digital portraits replace the encased daguerreotypes, while boxes that once held smartphones stand in for cases on the daguerreotypist's table (Figure 7). Highlighting technological change, the picture also calls attention to the curious similarities between early daguerreotype photographs and today's digital images, which are most often—just like the daguerreotype—encased behind a kind of glass, with a reflective surface that is easiest to see when held in the hand.

Students who chose paintings as their source images commented on what they perceived as liberties the painter had taken with perspective. Students' placement of their smartphones raised questions about artists' positions in relation to their subjects. Students wondered if paintings that had initially struck them as hyper-realistic were painted from life, concluding that the scenarios they depict would have been impossible to create in a studio. A student who selected John William Waterhouse's *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses* (1891; Figure 8) as her source image explained that her work recreating the painting revealed the differences between painting and photography as representational practices. Struggling to put herself, a mirror, her camera, and her collaborator (cast as Ulysses) in relation to one another in ways that mimicked the original painting, she came to see the scene depicted in the painting as a kind of impossibility, an imagined combination of reflections, angles, and interactions.

One student recreated a poster: Frederick Walker's striking black-and-white advertisement for the stage adaptation of Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1871; Figure 9). Attracted to the image's visual economy as well as its drama and suspense, the student admired the poster's use of high contrast graphic design now associated with modern advertising. Recreating a black-and-white poster in digital form and in color underscored the original medium's strategic use of contrast and symbolism. The student produced contrast by wearing a white dressing gown and tablecloth and hanging white lights in the door frame as she was photographed stepping into a dark corridor. Recreating the door that opens into darkness prompted the student to contemplate the door as an in-between space on the edge of reality—as well as the door's function as a common trope in sensation fiction. The exercise of remediating a black-and-white illustrated poster as a color digital photograph thus led to reflections on the symbolic affordances of a high-contrast medium that was not limited to realist representation.

3. Objective: Rethinking spaces and objects

> Prompt: How do the objects or spaces included in your recreation differ from those of the original? What different meanings do these objects or spaces generate and what do we learn from them about our contemporary world?

As the discussion of Leighton's recreation of *"Take your Son, Sir"* demonstrates, recreating an original artwork in a different space with different objects can lead to insights about the spaces and objects present in the original artwork. Additionally, when we replace one space or object with another, this substitution can prompt reflection on how our own environments and material objects re-shape the picture's meaning. Katz describes this kind of reflection as fulfilling "a desire to acknowledge the distance (geographic, temporal, cultural, moral) between the original and the copy"; it is precisely this distance (or maybe lack of distance?) that we want our students to address (2021).

A recreation of William Henry Fox Talbot's photograph "Articles of China" from *The Pencil of Nature* (1843–44) demonstrates the reflective nature of some 21st-century substitutions. The student photographed a bookshelf, just as Talbot had done, and populated her bookshelf with "articles of China." However, as shown in Figure 10, the student's contemporary "articles of China" differ from Talbot's: we see a random selection of 21st-century objects made in China, including a spray bottle, sunglasses, a candle, gloves, a shoe, playing cards, a mug, an action figure, and a ukulele. Pairing these two images calls attention to the differences in household objects owned by the aristocratic Talbot in the early 19th century and a college student in the 21st century, but the pictures can also prompt reflection on an expanding global economy that took shape in Talbot's time. The luxurious, expensive "articles of China" collected by

Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

Talbot were earlier manifestations of this global economy, now characterized by industrial manufacturing and inexpensive items sold at big-box stores.

Another student example, which recreated George Elgar Hicks's *Woman's Mission: Comfort of Old Age* (1862) under the title *Comfort of Quarter Age*, contrasted a scene of Victorian aging and death with a scene of pandemic illness (Figure 11). The student focused on details of domestic comfort, from water jugs and cups to blankets and a small photographic portrait of the sitter on the rear wall (in homage to the original's larger painted portrait). Another student used a stuffed animal to change the emotional impact and gendered power dynamic of a 19th-century painting. Remediating Berthold Woltze's *The Irritating Gentleman* (1874), she transformed the painting's depiction of a train carriage where the painting's title figure leers at a young woman in mourning (Figure 12). Replacing the man leaning over the back of the teary woman's seat with a toy sheep, dressed in a hat and wearing glasses so as to resemble the man in the painting, the student made the harassing, insensitive male figure laughable instead of menacing.

4. Objective: Rethinking social and cultural conventions

   Prompt: What social and cultural conventions or stereotypes are present in the original artwork? How does your recreation challenge or reinforce such conventions? Pay attention to visual details to provide evidence for your answer.

One particularly gratifying aspect of the Challenge is how recreations can speak back to and critique the past's conventions, such as conventions relating to gender roles or sexuality. As Korda's recreation of Hawarden's photographs demonstrates, such critique is not guaranteed when mixing 21st-century models and historical artworks, but several students took up this aspect of the Challenge with great success. For example, a few students recreated the daguerreotype "Portrait of a Woman" (1844), casting themselves as the woman but clearly marking out differences in acceptable codes of femininity between the mid-19th century and circumstances in the present—replacing, for example, the dress with jeans and a sweatshirt. Another student being treated in hospital during the course term recreated a photograph from Jean-Martin Charcot's *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière* (1876–78), through which Charcot documented the appearance of patients diagnosed with hysteria; in the student's example, she takes control of the camera and asserts her own agency to challenge how female patients were treated in the past. Another student recreated four paintings by four artists instead of a single image, explaining that she reproduced different paintings to test her theory that her youth, long hair, thin body type, and identity as a white woman would make it easy for her to embody and resemble a large number of subjects from the 19th-century visual canon, from a newlywed Queen Victoria to Red Riding Hood.

One student's recreation of Joseph Clark's *Mother's Darling* (1884) queered the original, which depicts a mother's devotion to her child, by depicting a pet owner gazing lovingly at their cat and titling this recreation *Parent's Darling* (Figure 13). The student's recreation stayed true to the parent's love and devotion but expands the definition of parenthood for the 21st century, reconfiguring the role through a gender-neutral title and the suggestion that family no longer means married heterosexual parents and children. In the original, as the student noted, the mother wears a wedding band to show that the child was born in wedlock. Replacing the mother's wedding ring with multiple rings on other fingers provided a visual means of conveying changing ideas of parenthood and family. These examples echo Foutch's earlier work teaching with *tableaux vivants* and prompting students to reflect on "their own bodily experiences and identity categories" (2017, p. 5).

Final Considerations

Whether this assignment prompts conversations about selfie culture or historical practices of self-portraiture, about students' admiration of particular artists or frustration with limited or problematic representations of, for example, people of color or people with disabilities, one of this assignment's most rewarding aspects is its generation of discussion. We have discussed the assignment's value for 19th-century art history and literature courses and provided examples of how students engaged with 19th-century art and visual culture. Instructors can adapt the assignment to different areas of interest and various disciplines, however, by focusing

Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

on source imagery from different time periods or that takes up different themes. We imagine ways of adapting the assignment to studies of history, for example, as well as in disciplines such as women's and gender studies or sociology.

Introducing visual creation and reflective writing into classrooms where assessment is normally based on text-based research and scholarly writing, instructors can promote collegial sharing and visual making. Such visual making alleviates pressure on students' traditional academic skills development, allowing them to share work forged through skills they don't necessarily expect to master within the space of one semester. More at ease sharing with classmates their visual creations than essays they had drafted, students engaged in constructive exchanges about this assignment that will, we hope, extend to other arenas of their learning. This assignment also creates opportunities for students who struggle with traditional academic writing and reading to demonstrate their learning in multimodal ways. In this sense, the assignment embraces Universal Design for Learning (see Foutch, 2017, 23; Rose & Meyer, 2002; Meyer, Rose, & Gordon 2014; Tobin & Behling, 2018), which seeks to provide equal opportunities for students with different skill sets to excel.

Though the assignment creates new opportunities for students, it may also pose barriers for students who do not have access to a smartphone, a laptop, or a similar device with a digital camera. More significant barriers exist for students with visual disabilities. With the perspectives of visually disabled people in mind, we direct instructors to scholarship on visual art, accessibility, and pedagogy by Georgina Kleege and Scott Wallin. In "Audio Description as a Pedagogical Tool" (Kleege and Wallin, 2015), they argue for the value of encouraging students to develop the skill of audio describing visual cultural materials, whether or not a blind or low-vision person is a class member. In terms that parallel observations we make about the Challenge's value, they observe that "audio description pushes students to practice close reading of visual material, deepen their analysis, and engage in critical discussions around the methodology, standards and values, language, and role of interpretation in a variety of academic disciplines" (Kleege and Wallin, 2015, abstract). Kleege and Wallin's work emphasizes the benefits of detailed description of visual artworks for both visually disabled and sighted students (and instructors). We would add that thorough description requires the same extended close looking of sighted participants that the Challenge requires—and holds similar benefits, including deepened engagement with elements of an image and the relationship between those elements.

Another consideration is that a student could make creative choices that other students find upsetting or that subject the student to scrutiny in ways the student did not anticipate. While we have not encountered this issue in our classes, it is possible that a student could select an image to remediate that could be upsetting or even offensive to some students; a student might decide to appear nude, for example, a scenario that has not featured in the culture of humanities classrooms in the same way that nudity and expectations about nudity in the classroom have featured in fine arts and, to a lesser extent, theatre programs. We also anticipate difficult conversations emerging when students choose artworks featuring outmoded conventions or stereotypes and do not successfully challenge these conventions, as in Korda's recreation of Hawarden's photos. We recommend that instructors receive images directly from students rather than posting them to a discussion board, not in the interest of censorship but to enable instructors to prepare adequately for managing class discussion or to offer content warnings to the class before sharing student work in an online or face-to-face class.

A final consideration running through our students' and our own reflections was the joy emerging from our creative processes as we made discoveries about our source imagery and worked to improve our recreations. Completing the Challenge and sharing our work with one another and our students allowed us to partake in the pleasures of this creative process, while also modeling vulnerability and effort for our students. Leighton, for example, noted her picture's unlikeness to the original but saw this as a strength because it demonstrated to students our emphasis on creative process and reflective work rather than aesthetic results. In the context of remote learning, this assignment gave both instructors and students alike opportunities to get to know one another in different ways—and to see the classroom, even the virtual classroom, as a space of collaborative learning.

Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

Acknowledgements:

We are very grateful to our students at the Universities of Alberta, Manitoba, and Victoria, and to friends and family who collaborated with us on the Getty Museum Challenge. Special thanks go to Hannah Boller, Skye Burns-Kirkness, Beatrice Knight, Maura Knight, Jessie Krahn, Katelyn Luymes, Aoife Marshall, Adelaide Martin, Kasey Morgan, Jane Nederlof, Aideen O'Brien, Kalea Raposo, and Allegra Stevenson-Kaplan. We would also like to thank Benjamin Jee and our two anonymous reviewers for their generous feedback on an earlier version of this essay.

References

Barnes, S. (2021, February 3). Artist teams up with her dog to recreate pawsome versions of famous paintings [interview]. *My Modern Met.* https://mymodernmet.com/eliza-reinhardt-recreating-famous-artwork/

Brathwaite, P. [@PeterBrathwaite]. (2020a, June 1). *#5. Gustaf Lundberg: Adolf Ludvig Gustav Albert Couschi (1775). Couschi was a butler, farmer, lawyer, emissary and member of the* [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/PeterBrathwaite/status/1267380474663571456

Brathwaite, P. [@PeterBrathwaite]. (2020b, July 23). *Anon: Detail from abbreviatio of Domesday Book (c.1241). The man holds on to a capital letter 'I' that decorates the* [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/PeterBrathwaite/status/1286550159393001472

Brathwaite, P. (2021). *Visible Skin.* https://renaissanceskin.ac.uk/visibleskin/.

Buis, A. Art in Quarantine Assignment. *Art History Teaching Resources.* https://arthistoryteachingresources.org/2020/07/art-in-quarantine-assignment/

Contogouris, E. (2019). Gender, race, and nation in *tableau representing Great Britain and her colonies. RACAR, 44*(2), 65–79. https://doi.org/10.7202/1068318ar

Foutch, E. E. (2017). Bringing students into the picture: Teaching with tableaux vivants. *Art History Pedagogy & Practice, 2*(2), 1–23. https://academicworks.cuny.edu/ahpp/vol2/iss2/3

Friedlaender, L. (2021). Crucibles of healing: The enhancing observational skills program at the Yale schools of medicine and nursing. In Smylitopoulos (Ed.), *Artful encounters: sites of visual inquiry* (pp. 81–97). Bachinski/Chu Print Study Collection, School of Fine Art and Music, University of Guelph.

Getty Museum [@GettyMuseum]. (2020, March 25). *We challenge you to recreate a work of art with objects (and people) in your home. Choose your favorite artwork* [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/gettymuseum/status/1242845952974544896?lang=en

Getty Museum. (2020). *Off the Walls: Inspired Re-Creations of Iconic Artworks.* Getty Publications.

Goldstein, C. (2020a, April 2). See 15 Ways bored people around the world have used household objects to recreate famous paintings from art history. *Artnet News*. https://news.artnet.com/art-world/instagram-recreate-famous-artworks-1819776

Goldstein, C. (2020b, April 24). Here Are 27 (More) Ridiculous images of bored people around the world using household objects to recreate famous historical artworks. *Artnet News*. https://news.artnet.com/art-world/getty-challenge-part-2-1843800

Haworth-Booth, M. (1999). The return of Lady Hawarden. In V. Dodier (Ed.), *Clementina, Lady Hawarden: Studies from life, 1857–64* (pp. 110–15). V&A Publications.

Jordan, H. (2019). Hidden life: Reanimating Victorian tableaux vivants in the Rutland Gate album. *RACAR, 44*(2), 92–109. https://doi.org/10.7202/1068320ar

Jordi, R. (2010). Reframing the concept of reflection: Consciousness, experiential learning, and reflective practices. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *61*(2), 181–97. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713610380439

Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

Katz, D. (2021, August 12). The Art of the COVID Copy. *Art Journal Open*. http://artjournal.collegeart.org/?p=15750

Kleege, G., Wallin, S. (2015). Audio description as a pedagogical tool. *Disability Studies Quarterly,* 35(2). http://dx.doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v35i2.4622

Kolb, D. A. (2015). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.

La-Chance, B. (2020, April 22). Casper Students Recreate Famous Art in Response to Getty Museum Challenge (Photos). *Oil City News*. https://oilcity.news/community/2020/04/22/casper-students-recreate-famous-art-in-response-to-getty-museum-challenge-photos/

Lubin, D. (2017). Slow Looking. *History of Art at Oxford University: A blog about History of Art & visual issues.* https://oxfordarthist.wordpress.com/2017/07/26/slow-looking/

Mavor, C. (1999). *The photographs of Clementina, Viscountess Hawarden.* Duke University Press.

Meyer, A., Rose, D. H., Gordon, D. (2014). *Universal design for learning: Theory and practice.* CAST.

Michelson, E. (1998). Re-membering: The return of the body to experiential learning. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 20(2), 217–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037980200208

Michelson, E. (2015). *Gender, experience, and knowledge in adult learning: Alisoun's daughters*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315709291

Migdol, E. (2020, May 27). Rediscovering Black portraiture through the Getty Museum challenge. *Getty Iris Blog.* https://blogs.getty.edu/iris/rediscovering-black-portraiture-through-the-getty-museum-challenge/

Ratto, M. (2011). Critical making: Conceptual and material technology and social life. *The Information Society*, *27*(4), 252–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2011.583819

Raymond, C. (2017). W*omen photographers and feminist aesthetics.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315628912

Rose, D. H., Meyer, A. (2002). *Teaching every student in the Digital age: Universal design for learning.* Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Smylitopoulos, C. (2021). Introduction. In Smylitopoulos (Ed.), *Artful encounters: sites of visual inquiry* (pp. 1–15). Bachinski/Chu Print Study Collection, School of Fine Art and Music, University of Guelph.

Tate Gallery. (n.d.). The Story of Ophelia. *Tate*. https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/millais-ophelia-n01506/story-ophelia

Tishman, S. (2017). S*low Looking: The Art and Practice of Learning Through Observation*. Routledge.

Tobin, T. J., Behling, K. T. (2018). *Reach everyone, teach everyone: Universal design for learning in higher education*. West Virginia University Press.

Victoria and Albert Museum. (n.d.). Lady Clementina Hawarden: an introduction. *Victoria and Albert Museum.*

Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

Figure 1.

Mary Elizabeth Leighton's recreation of Ford Madox Brown's "Take Your Son, Sir", 2021, digital photograph, after Ford Madox Brown's "Take Your Son, Sir", ca. 1852–92, oil on canvas, © Tate, CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported).

Figure 2.

Vanessa Warne's recreation of John Everett Millais' Ophelia, 2021, digital photograph, after John Everett Millais' Ophelia, 1851–52, oil on canvas, © Tate, CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported).

Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

Figure 3.

Andrea Korda's recreation of Clementina Hawarden's Studies from Life, 2021, digital photograph, after Clementina Hawarden's Studies from Life, ca.1864, albumen print, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Figure 4.

Andrea Korda's recreation of Clementina Hawarden's photograph, 2021, digital photograph, after Clementina Hawarden's photograph (untitled), ca.1862–63, albumen print, © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

Figure 5.

Aideen O'Brien's recreation of Philip Hermogenes Calderon's Broken Vows, 2021, digital photograph, after Philip Hermogenes Calderon's Broken Vows, 1856, oil on canvas, © Tate, CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported).

Figure 6.

Kalea Raposo's recreation of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's A Christmas Carol, 2021, digital photograph, after Dante Gabriel Rossetti's A Christmas Carol, 1867, oil on panel, Private Collection. Image Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

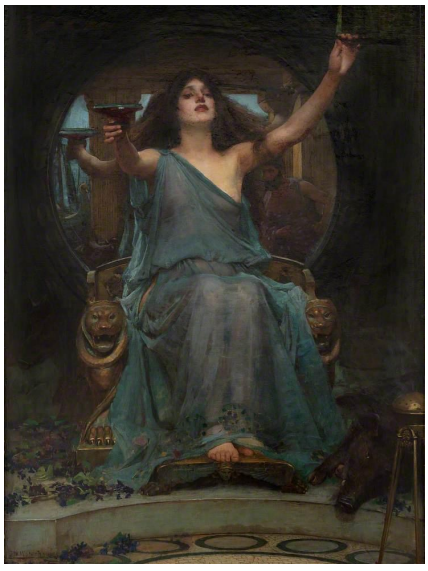
Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

Figure 7.

Hannah Boller's recreation of Portrait of a Digital Photographer Displaying Digital Photos, 2021, digital photograph, after Portrait of a Daguerreotypist Displaying Daguerreotypes and Cases, 1845, hand-colored daguerreotype, J. Paul Getty Museum Open Content Program.

Figure 8.

Kasey Morgan's recreation of John William Waterhouse's Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses, 2021, digital photograph, after John William Waterhouse's Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses, 1891, oil on canvas, © Gallery Oldham, CC BY-NC-ND.



Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

Figure 9.

Allegra Stevenson-Kaplan's recreation of Frederick Walker's The Woman in White, 2021, digital photograph, after Frederick Walker's The Woman in White, 1871, gouache on paper, © Tate, CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported).

Figure 10.

Jane Nederlof's recreation of William Henry Fox Talbot's "Articles of China," 2021, digital photograph, William Henry Fox Talbot's "Articles of China," from The Pencil of Nature, before January 1844, calotype, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, CC0 1.0.

William Henry Fox Talbot, Articles of China, 1844, Calotype, The Met Museum.

Jane Nederlof, Articles of China, 2021, 1241 x 1673, Digital.

Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

Figure 11.

Katelyn Luymes's recreation of George Elgar Hicks's Woman's Mission: Comfort of Old Age, 2021, digital photograph, after George Elgar Hicks's Woman's Mission: Comfort of Old Age, 1862, oil on canvas, © Tate, CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported).

Figure 12.

Jessie Krahn's recreation of Berthold Woltze's Der lästige Kavalier (The Irritating Gentleman), 2021, digital photograph, after Berthold Woltze's Der lästige Kavalier, 1874, oil on canvas, Private Collection. Image Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

Teaching with the Getty Museum Challenge *continued*

Figure 13.

Skye Burns-Kirkness's recreation of Joseph Clark's Mother's Darling, 2021, digital photograph, after Joseph Clark's Mother's Darling, 1884, oil on canvas, © Tate, CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported).