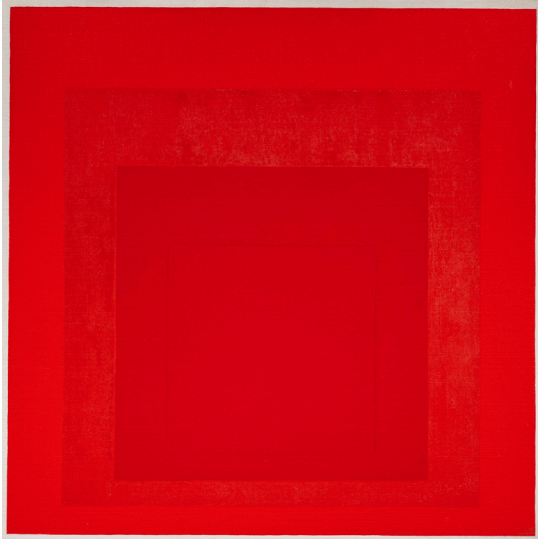


# Norton Simon Museum

---

## Creative Play

A self-guided tour through the Museum for teachers and their students



***Homage to the Square/Red Series,  
Untitled II***

1968

Josef Albers (American, 1888–1976)

Oil on masonite

32 x 32 in. (81.3 x 81.3 cm)

Norton Simon Museum, Gift of the Artist

© The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/  
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

LOCATION: Southwest Wing

### Background

Artist and art teacher Josef Albers was interested in how colors can appear to change, depending on their surroundings. Here Albers explores the color red by painting different sizes of nested squares in different shades of red.

### A Closer Look...

This painting plays with how the viewer sees the color and experiences the squares. It could look like a stack of different-sized blocks, one on top of the other, or the squares can seem to sink into each other, like a tunnel into the painting.

### Activity

- Albers once said that if you say the word “red,” and there are 50 people listening, the 50 people will each be thinking of a different kind of red—from dark like a cherry to bright like a tomato. Which words would you use to describe the reds in *Homage to the Square*?



### **Exotic Landscape**

1910

Henri Rousseau (French, 1844-1910)

Oil on canvas

51¼ x 64 in. (130.2 x 162.6 cm)

The Norton Simon Foundation

LOCATION: Southwest Wing

### **Background**

Henri Rousseau, a self-taught artist, created paintings of fantastical jungles and wild animals without ever leaving France or seeing an actual jungle. Instead, he was inspired by his visits to botanical gardens, the Paris zoo, the dioramas he saw at the Paris Natural History Museum and images from books and magazines.

### **A Closer Look...**

Rather than a realistic picture that gives a sense of depth, space and shadow, Rousseau's imaginary scene of monkeys swinging from a tree, playing and eating fruit in a lush, tropical landscape is relatively flat, like a theater set or a collage. Rousseau painted crisp lines to define each leaf, flower and animal and to create patterns throughout the scene.

### **Discussion**

- If you look closely, in the upper left of the painting, a mysterious creature hides behind the branches of a tree. What do you think it is? What is it doing?



### ***Portrait of a Young Noblewoman***

1593

Alonso Sánchez Coello (Spanish, 1531/2–1588)

Oil on canvas

48<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 39<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (123.8 x 101.0 cm)

Norton Simon Art Foundation,

from the Estate of Jennifer Jones Simon

LOCATION: Northeast Wing

### **Background**

Rather than focusing on the personality of the sitter, portraits of nobility from the 1500s and 1600s often displayed their wealth, values and position in society through their elaborate dress. In his paintings, Coello recorded the fashion trends and expensive costumes of the nobility of 16th-century Europe.

### **A Closer Look...**

Here, we see a 14-year-old noblewoman with flowers in her fancifully arranged curly red hair and lavish gown. She wears an open, high-collared white gown with diagonal slits, which reveal slivers of its red lining, with a matching red corseted bodice and skirt, and fitted striped sleeves, all of which appear to be trimmed with gold stitching. A stiff lace collar called a ruff frames her young face atop this elaborate, and heavy, costume. With her right hand, she grasps one of several gold and beaded necklaces reaching down to her waist, a reference to her wealth, while her left hand rests on a Bible, a sign of her modesty and faith.

### **Discussion**

- Imagine wearing these heavy layers of clothing, paired with a starched white collar and heavy, long chains around your neck. How would it feel? How would wearing this outfit affect how you ate your meals? How you walked? How you played?



### ***Interior with a Dordrecht Family***

c. 1656

Nicolaes Maes

(Dutch, 1634-1693)

Oil on canvas

44 ¼ x 47 ⅝ in. (112.4 x 121.0 cm)

The Norton Simon Foundation

LOCATION: Northwest Wing

### **Background**

Nicolaes Maes, a student of [Rembrandt](#), painted scenes of everyday life, religious scenes and portraits. These portraits were once displayed in people's homes the way we display family photos in our homes today, but they also served the bigger purpose of showing the family's status and values to visitors to the home. Through modest dress, formal poses and a tidy home, family portraits displayed how the family was a model for order and discipline.

### **A Closer Look...**

Here, a mother sits across from her husband, who is standing with his right hand over his heart, a gesture of his commitment to his marriage. Between them, two children hold a basket of apples and grapes, and the eldest holds out a red fruit to the baby in her mother's lap. Symbols of the family's wealth and faith can be seen in the expensive fabric of their clothing, the blue and white porcelain along the shelf on the right and the view of Dordrecht Cathedral outside the window.

### **Discussion**

- How would you describe the facial expressions of the family members? How would you pose and express yourself in a photo with your family or loved ones?