

Program Name: Painting in the Benton Style

Artist: Jean Cook

Special Requirements:

VHS/DVD player; acrylic paints and brushes; palette or palette paper; pencils and drawing paper with drawing board; water containers (one per student); acrylic glazing liquid (Golden brand) - one jar per classroom (optional but saves paint); canvas, canvas panels or gessoed masonite board (at least one per student, 8" x 10" up to 16" x 20"); easels if available

Other programs by this artist:

[-Acrylics as a Diverse Medium](#)
[-Painting with Oils](#)



Workshop Description

What is style? For some, it's the cut and fashion of clothing, chosen to make a personal statement about the wearer. For others, it's the visual motifs used by film directors like Hitchcock. It embodies thought, a choice by an individual to make a statement through an artistic medium.

Missouri native Thomas Hart Benton had, arguably, the most recognizable style of all 20th century American painters. Ignoring the *Modernist* movement, he developed a style that would come to be known as *Regionalism*.

Local artist and teacher Jean Cook guides students through a hands on study of the Benton style.

Students will learn, through application, Benton's philosophy toward his subjects, and how it's essential to understanding his work. Through composition, drawing and painting, they will attain the look and style of Thomas Hart Benton and the Regionalist artists of his time.

Educational Objectives & Standards

Students will:

- Be asked to draw from their own experiences to create a painting in the Benton style
- Study the techniques used in creating his murals at the Missouri State Capitol and the Truman Library

Standards Addressed:

- Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity, and behavior
- Knows how visual, aural, oral, and kinetic elements are used in the various art forms

Artist Bio: Jamie Root



A native Kansan, Jean Cook grew up on the family farm helping with harvests and caring for the family cows, sheep, and horses. Her artwork is inspired by her real-life experiences showing horses, working cattle drives, and traveling to unusual locations around the world.

Her paintings reflect an emphasis on the use of color, light, and shadow to create dimension and depth, developed through her studies at Hutchinson Community College,

the Kansas City Art Institute, private studios, and her work as an engraving artist at Hallmark Cards.

Jean's many artistic achievements include the *American Academy of Equine Arts* "Director's Award" and the "Grand Prize" at the Kansas State Fair. She has been on staff at Johnson County Community College and teaches private instruction for visual artists from her home studio in Paola, Kansas.

List of Resources:

Books:

Benton, Thomas Hart. *An Artist in America*; University of Missouri Press, 1983. ISBN: 082620399X

Edelman, Nancy. *The Thomas Hart Benton Mural in the Missouri State Capitol*; Missouri State Council of the Art, 1975.

Videos:

Thomas Hart Benton. Dir. Ken Burns. Perf. Jason Robards, Jr. 1989.
(There is strong language in some parts of the DVD, which teachers may choose to skip past)

Vocabulary

Acrylic: developed in the 1940s and discovered by artists in the 50s and 60s, it is a combination of three ingredients—powdered pigment, liquid plastic, and water

Cartoon: the composition used to paint the murals was first done as a small drawing. It was upsized by drawing a grid over the cartoon and then transferring square by square to a corresponding grid drawn on the wall.

Egg tempera: a painting medium used by Benton in many of his works; dry pigment is added to egg yolk and water and then ground with a spatula

"Hollow and Bump": a term used to describe one of the techniques used by Benton in creating his compositions

Palette: the set of colors or the board or surface on which the artist lays and mixes the paints

Retarders: acrylics dry as soon as the water evaporates from the paint, which can be a matter of minutes. To extend drying time, retarders can be used to mix with or cover the paints on the palette.

Post-Workshop Activities

1. As a class, design a group mural using issues and happenings at your school or in your local community.
2. Experiment with making egg tempera using egg yolk, dry pigments, and water to better understand the achievements of Thomas Hart Benton's State House murals.
3. Take a field trip to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art or the Harry S. Truman Presidential Museum & Library to see, first-hand, the murals and art of Thomas Hart Benton.

Contact KCYA for more information about this and other programs

816.531.4022
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