

## Art for Mother's Day: Artists and their Mothers

Artists have been painting their parents for centuries. Perhaps because artists paint what (who) they know and love.

The German artist Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) painted his mother, Barbara, in 1490, when she was 39 years old. The painting below is half of the portrait diptych of both his parents.



Dürer later completed this charcoal drawing of his mother when she was 63.



*The Artist's Mother* by Rembrandt (Dutch, 1606-1669) has been called a study in old age. Executed c. 1629, the portrait of Neeltgen Willensdr belongs to a category of paintings known as "tronies". "Tronie" means "face" in 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch. "Tronies" gave artists the opportunity to experiment with facial expressions and lighting. Rembrandt's mother would have been approximately 60 years old when this tronie was painted.



Renoir (1841-1919, French) painted his mother in 1860, early in his career. Marguerite Renoir, née Merlet, was 53 when her son painted her portrait.



Paul Cézanne (1839-1906, French) painted his mother Anne Elisabeth Honorine Aubert in 1867 during his “Dark Period”. His works during this period were characterized by dark colors, including the heavy use of black, and broad strokes made using a palette knife. Mme. Cézanne was 53 when her son painted her. The link below is to a very interesting article about Cézanne.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/cezanne-107584544/>  
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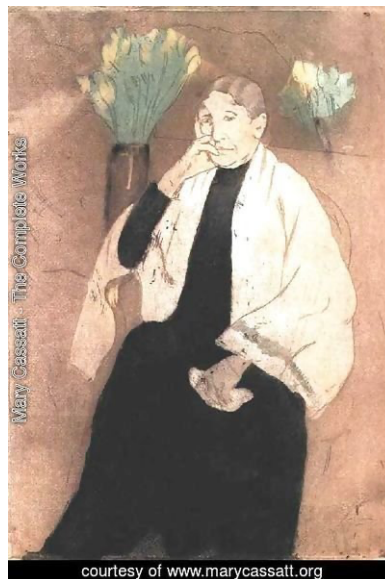
One of the most recognizable portraits in western art is James Whistler’s *Arrangement in Black and Grey No. 1*. Known colloquially as Whistler’s Mother or sometimes the Victorian Mona Lisa, this painting was completed in 1871 when the artist (American, 1834-1903) was living in London. Whistler was a leading proponent of the Aesthetic movement, whose philosophy was based on “Art for Art’s Sake”. Anna Mathilda Whistler, née McNeill was 67 at the time her son completed this portrait.



The American Impressionist artist, Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) painted her mother reading the French newspaper, *Le Figaro*, in 1878. Cassatt, who lived most of her adult life in France, often created images of the social and private lives of women, with particular emphasis on the intimate bonds between mothers and children. Cassatt's mother, Katherine Kelso Johnston, was 62 at the time of this painting.



The painting below is also of Cassatt's mother, aged 73, completed c. 1889.





Édouard Manet (French, 1832-1883) painted his mother in 1863 while she was mourning the death of her husband the prior year. His mother, Eugénie-Desirée Fournier, was the daughter of a diplomat and goddaughter of the Swedish crown prince. She was 52 at the time of this portrait. He later (1880) painted *Mother in the Garden at Bellevue* (aged 69) in the Impressionist style. Manet was a pivotal figure in the transition from Realism to Impressionism.



Georges-Pierre Seurat (French, 1859-1891) was a post-impressionist artist known for devising the artistic techniques of chromoluminarism and pointillism. His favorite graphic medium was conté crayon (compressed powdered graphite or charcoal mixed with a wax or clay base). The picture below is a conté crayon drawing called *Embroidery: The Artist's Mother* (c. 1882-1883). Ernestine Faivre Seurat was approximately 55 at the time of the drawing. The drawing is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC.



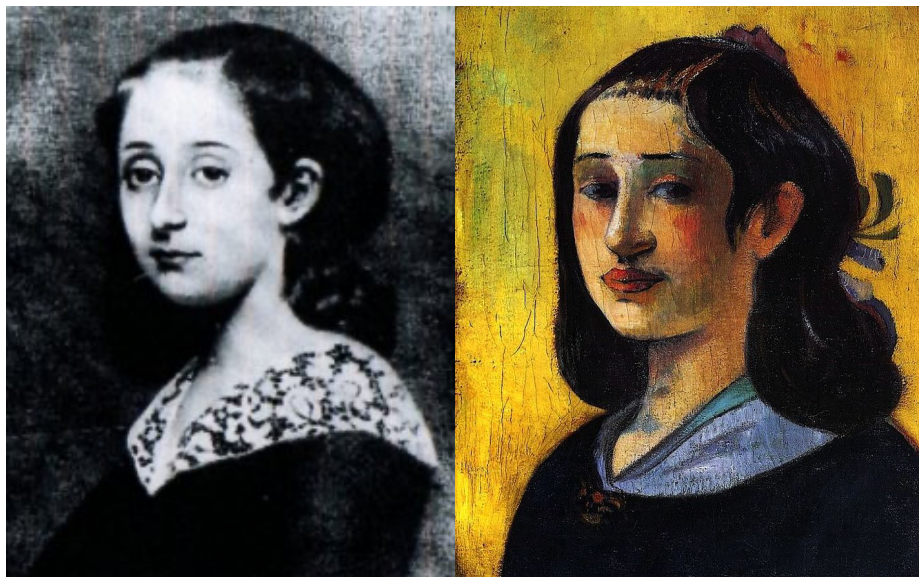
Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (French, 1864-1901) was a painter, printmaker, draftsman, and illustrator, whose immersion in the decadent and theatrical life of fin de siècle Paris yielded an oeuvre of provocative images of modern life. Toulouse-Lautrec painted his mother, the Countess Adele de Toulouse-Lautrec (née Adèle-Zoë-Marie-Marquette Tapié de Céleyran) at breakfast in the impressionist style c. 1881-1883. The Countess was approximately 40 years old at the time of the painting.



In 1888, Vincent Van Gogh (Dutch, 1853-1890), living in the south of France, received a photograph of his mother from his sister. He said, "I'm working on a portrait of Mother for myself, because the black-and-white photograph annoys me so." After completing the picture, the artist expressed his dissatisfaction with the work, writing to his sister, "I don't like Mother's picture enormously." Anna Carbentus Van Gogh was 69 at the time of the painting.



Paul Gauguin (French, 1848-1903) was a Post-Impressionist painter, known for bold experimentation with color. His mother, Aline-Maria Chazal, was half French and half Peruvian. Both Aline and her husband, journalist Clovis Gauguin, were political activists. Due to the political climate at the time, the senior Gauguins fled to Peru for four years (Clovis died during the voyage, leaving Aline and her two children to fend for themselves). The imagery of Peru later influenced Gauguin's work. Aline died at age 46 shortly after her house at St. Cloud was set on fire, as a result of bombardment during the Franco-Prussian war. Below are a photograph of Aline and Gauguin's 1890 portrait of her.





One of the emblematic paintings of the Museu Picasso in Barcelona is Pablo Picasso's portrait of his mother, Maria. Picasso (Spanish, 1881-1973) was a painter, sculptor, printmaker, ceramicist and theater designer who spent most of his adult life in France. He painted his mother frequently, typically in profile, sewing or reading. The Museu Picasso attributes the size of their collection of Picasso's early works to Maria's saving of her adolescent son's drawings and paintings. The pastel portrait of Maria below was painted in 1896, when Picasso was 15 and Maria was 41.



Edward Hopper (American, 1882-1967) is sometimes called the most important American realist painter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His mother, Elizabeth Griffiths Smith Hopper, helped set the foundation for her son to pursue a career in art, continually providing him with supplies and books and magazines for inspiration. Hopper painted the portrait of his mother below c. 1915-1916 (aged 62)



Salvador Dalí (Spanish, 1904-1989) was undeniably the best known artist of the Surrealist movement is Dalí created in multiple mediums: painting, sculpting, printmaking, filmmaking, and performance art. Below are two portraits Dalí painted of his mother, Felipa Domènech Ferrés, the first in 1918 when he was 14 and the second in 1920 when he was 16.



The mother of pop artist Andy Warhol (American, 1928-1987), Julia Warhola, was born Júlia Justína Zavacká in what is now Slovakia. Three years after Warhol moved to NYC in 1949, his mother joined him, living with him until a year before her death in 1972. Warhol and his mother frequently collaborated on his art projects, with Julia contributing her calligraphy to her son's drawings, often as the signature. Julia loved to draw cats and angels. In 1957, she illustrated a book called *Holy Cats*, dedicated to her recently deceased cat, Hester. Below is a silkscreen of his mother that Warhol created in 1974 two years after her death.





Laura Thompson Hockney, mother of artist David Hockney (British, 1937-present), has been a frequent subject of her son's artistic endeavors. Hockney said that he liked to paint those he knew best, and "she was the person I have known all my life". Hockney also said, "It's a very traditional thing to do, I know, painting one's parents, but I think it could be a lot more than just that –their predicament, their lack of fulfillment, the desperate-not- knowing what they could have had out of life. And their relationship with me." Two of Hockney's art works featuring his mother are shown below. The first (1985) is titled simply "Mum". The second (1986) is a photomontage created from 30 separate images.

