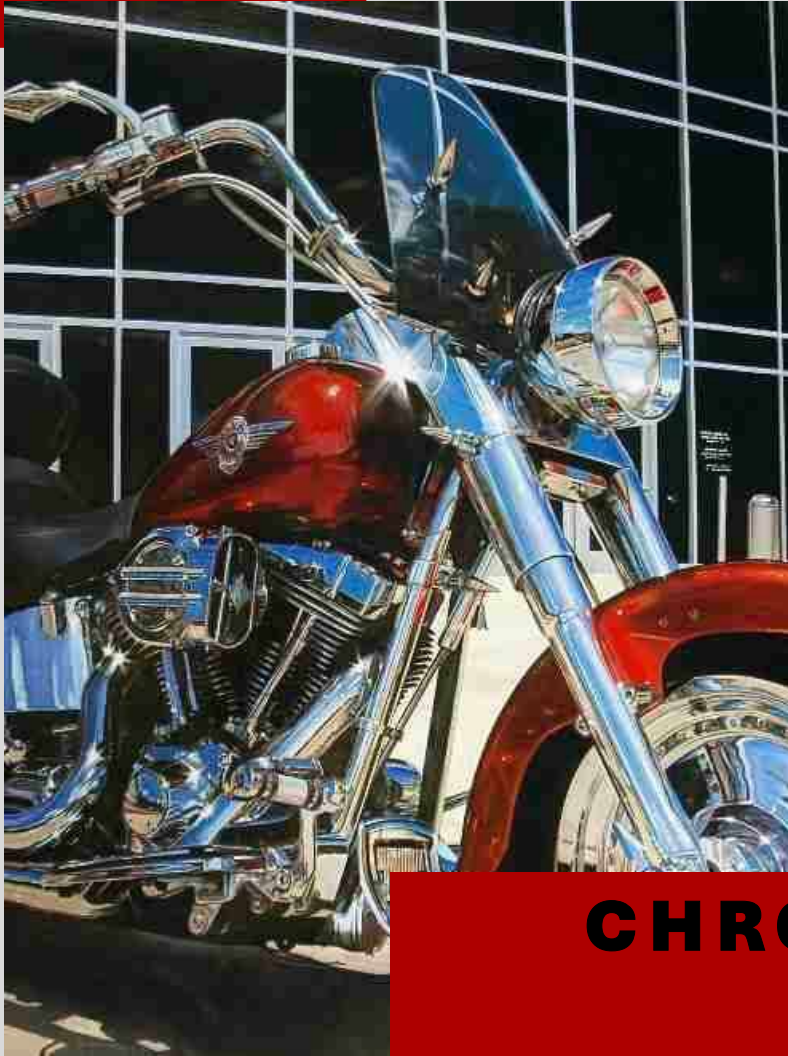


# Huntsville Museum of Art

## Teacher's Guide To



**CHROME:**

**David Parrish**

Huntsville Museum of Art  
March 10—September 8, 2024

# Dear Teachers,

This guide is designed to serve as a classroom accompaniment for *CHROME: David Parrish*.

This guide will include biographical sketches, art historical contextualization, discussion guides, and classroom activities. Classroom activities meet the Alabama Common Core Art Standards – *Create, Present, Respond, and Connect*.

This guide is not intended to be a comprehensive lesson plan but rather a tool to help connect the arts and in-class curriculum. We hope that this guide will inspire discussion and engage students.

Audrey Creel

Docent/Tour Programs Coordinator

COVER IMAGE: David Parrish. *Harley Fat Boy*. 2014. Huntsville Museum of Art.

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## Arts Education Standards

By using various artistic media, students will *create* works of art to accompany the exhibition materials. To fulfill *presentation* requirements, each activity will require that students display research or artwork to inform classmates on various art historical subjects. Analyzing, evaluating, and discussing the various artworks allow students to fulfill the *respond* education standards. Finally, students will fulfill *connection* standards by understanding how various artworks can inform knowledge about culture and history.

## Social Studies

### Kindergarten

K.11: Identify symbols, customs, famous individuals, and celebrations representative of our state and nation.

### First Grade

1.04: Identify contributions of diverse significant figures that influenced the local community and state in the past and present.

### Second Grade

2.03: Use various primary sources, including calendars and timelines, for reconstructing the past.

# ALABAMA STATE STANDARDS

## Third Grade

3.11: Interpret various primary sources for reconstructing the past, including documents, letters, diaries, maps, and photographs.

## Fourth Grade

4.15: Identify major world events that influenced Alabama since 1950.

## Sixth Grade

6.08: Describe how the United States' role in the Cold War influenced domestic and international events.

6.11: Identify technological advancements on society in the United States since World War II.

## Ninth Grade

9.01: Describe the developments in Italy and Northern Europe during the Renaissance period with respect to humanism, arts and literature, intellectual development, increased trade, and advances in technology.

## Eleventh Grade

11.12: Describe major initiatives of the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson Administrations.

11.15: Describe changing social and cultural conditions in the United States during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.

## Science

### First Grade

1.03: Investigate materials to determine which types allow light to pass through, allow only partial light to pass through, block light, or reflect light.

1:04: Design and construct a device that uses light or sound to send a communication signal over a distance.

### Fourth Grade

4.08: Construct a model to explain that an object can be seen when light reflected from its surface enters the eye.

### Eighth Grade

8.18: Use models to demonstrate how light and sound waves differ in how they are absorbed, reflected, and transmitted through different types of media.

# MEET THE ARTIST



## DAVID PARRISH

David Parrish (1939—2021) was a pivotal figure in the American Photorealist movement. Born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama, Parrish began

painting in the early 1960s after graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Alabama. Originally hoping to be a magazine illustrator, fate led him to become a concept artist for the aerospace firm Hayes International in Huntsville, Alabama. By the early 1970s, Parrish debuted in the New York scene, finding success as a first-generation photorealist. From 1973—1976, he was represented by Sidney Janis Gallery and then moved to Nancy Hoffman Gallery. Then in 1987, Parrish joined Louis K. Meisel Gallery, founded by art dealer and gallery owner Louis K. Meisel, who coined the term “Photorealism.” Together with Meisel and other photorealist artists, Parrish helped define the iconic movement.

Parrish became known for painting elements of Americana. His motorcycle paintings were his early trademark, and during the late 1980s into the 1990s he painted complex, intricate porcelain still lifes of Marilyn Monroe, Elvis, and other pop culture icons. He has been exhibited widely throughout the United States and internationally, including for the first time at the Huntsville Museum of Art in 1977.

# MEET THE ARTIST

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What American art movement did David Parrish help create?
- What do you think “Photorealist” art is?
- What subjects did David Parrish typically depict?

## ACTIVITIES

- Have students look up other first-generation Photorealist artists, Richard Estes, Ralph Goings, Chuck Close, Charles Bell, Audrey Flack, Don Eddy, Robert Bechtle, Ron Kleemann, Richard McLean, John Salt, Ben Schonzeit, and Tom Blackwell. Create a Venn diagram to identify similarities and differences between David Parrish’s artwork and other Photorealist artists’ work.
- David Parrish was originally from Birmingham, Alabama. Encourage students to look up other artists from Alabama. Alabama artists which can be found in the Huntsville Museum of Art’s permanent collection include: Pinky Bass, William Christenberry, Fred Nall Hollis, William Frye, Anne Goldthwaite, Maurice Grosser, Maria Howard Weeden, Dale Kennington, and Wayne Sides.



# WHAT IS PHOTOREALISM?

## Pho•to•re•al•ism

[fō-tō-'rē-ə-li-zəm] noun:

---

1: The quality in art (such as animation or painting) of depicting or seeming to depict real people, objects, etc. with the exactness of a photograph.

2: a movement in painting characterized by photographic exactness of detail.<sup>1</sup>



A photograph is just values. It doesn't have line. When you use the photograph, you are using the values, but you are adding line and space and movement, coming from your own experience.<sup>2</sup>

- Richard Estes



Since the invention of photography in the mid-19th century, artists have used photographs as both tools and inspiration, but it wasn't until the 1960s that a group of American artists became so intrigued by the medium that they developed a style based entirely on photography and often mistaken as an actual photograph.

# WHAT IS PHOTOREALISM?

Richard Estes begins experimentation with photorealism, painting *Telephone Booths*.

1

1967

1968

2

Chuck Close paints *Big Self Portrait*, the first work to showcase his photorealist portraiture.

Art gallery owner, Louis K. Meisel, coins the term “Photorealism.”

3

1969

1970

4

The catalog for the Whitney’s 22 *Realists* exhibition becomes the first to use “Photorealism”.

Meisel publishes a five-point definition of Photorealism and Photorealist artists.

5

1972

1972

6

The Photorealism movement gains international attention with the documenta 5 catalog.

Belgian art dealer Isy Brachot coins the term “Hyperrealism,” introducing the second generation of Photorealism.<sup>3</sup>

7

1973

# WHAT IS PHOTOREALISM?

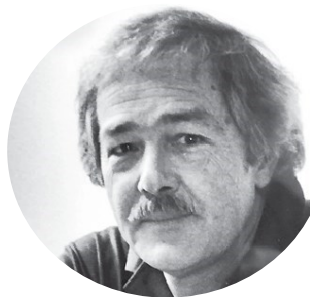
Appropriately referred to as the Photorealists, these artists relied on the camera as a painterly tool, reproducing details seen through the lens of the camera. Photorealists often referenced multiple images to make paintings that are extremely detailed and realistic. Some photorealists emphasized the hyperreal elements of a photograph by depicting every detail, while others recreated the blurring that occurs in photographs with shallow depth of field, while still others experimented with cropping to make paintings that were reminiscent of snapshots.

Artworks by photorealists frequently captured scenes and objects of everyday American life, such as cars, motorcycles, diners, and cityscapes. Artists reveled in the challenge of depicting reflective surfaces, painting chrome, metal, cellophane, neon, and shimmering water.

## Famous Photorealist Artists:



Richard Estes<sup>4</sup>



Ralph Goings<sup>5</sup>



Audrey Flack<sup>6</sup>



Chuck Close<sup>7</sup>



Robert Bechtle<sup>8</sup>

# WHAT IS PHOTOREALISM?



IMAGE ONE

## Looking Closer

The goal of Photorealist paintings is to create the most accurate depiction of an object using paint. Photorealists will carefully mimic an object's every color, shadow, and texture. To accomplish this, artists photograph an object to reference while painting. David Parrish would often take multiple photographs of an object, combining them to create the painting you see today. Occasionally, Parrish would use the same set of photographs to make multiple paintings.

*See Appendix B for image credits.*



IMAGE TWO

Two images on this page are paintings by David Parrish. One is a photograph. Can you tell which one is the photograph? What clues helped you make this decision?

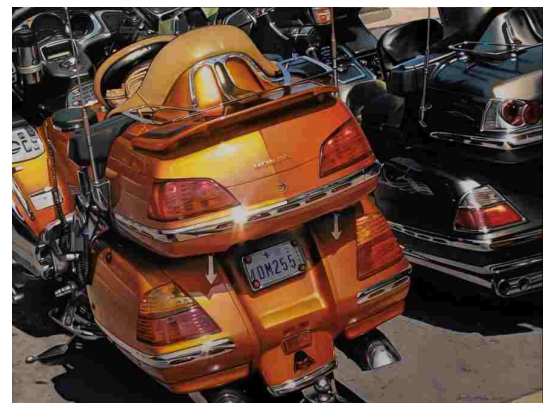


IMAGE THREE

# WHAT IS PHOTOREALISM?

## A Critique of Photorealism

You might find yourself pondering, “If it looks so much like a photograph, why paint it?” You’re not alone. This critique has echoed throughout the art world since the formative stages of Photorealism in the late 1960s, drawing opinions from academics, art insiders, and the general public alike.

[Photorealism has] No alibis, no depth, keeping to the surface of things, examining without emphasis, favoring no one quality.<sup>9</sup>

- Art critic, Thomas Albright

While using photography as a reference might not seem revolutionary, it was—and still is—a topic of controversy amongst many artists who believe that drawing directly from life is the best way to achieve realistic effects. That said, throughout

history, artists have employed tools to enhance realistic effects. Photography and projection have proven to be invaluable sources for artists, enabling them to capture a specific moment and learn how to transpose a three-dimensional image onto a two-dimensional canvas. The camera obscura, an ancestor of modern cameras, was used by visionaries like Leonardo da Vinci and Johannes Vermeer to project scenes onto flat surfaces.



# WHAT IS PHOTOREALISM?

Critics also argued that Photorealism emphasized technical expertise over substance. Prior to Photorealism, artists relied on directly observing life to avoid any distortion inherent with mechanical means. Furthermore, the seemingly banal subject matter in photorealistic paintings—often called Americana—along with painterly techniques contributed to the painting's flatness and perceived emptiness. Yet, within this description lies an element of mystery and allure that captivates many viewers.

Even within highly detailed photorealist paintings, what you see is not the absolute truth. In fact, all forms of artistic expression—whether photographs or paintings—inherently crop, omit, and mislead viewers. Cameras themselves offer various focuses, and manipulation of source images is not uncommon. Artists, like David Parrish, embraced technical and pictorial challenges by depicting photographic peculiarities, such as reflections, chrome, or the effects of light, allowing them to transcend the boundaries of conventional photography.

Photorealism has a unique ability to tap into our memories, especially within the artworks of David Parrish, who immortalized elements, prompting us to reassess space in surprising ways. These images can transport us to a specific time and place or perhaps into the realm of nostalgia. What may have seemed ordinary becomes extraordinary, uncanny, precious, or nostalgic as we gaze upon these artworks.

# WHAT IS PHOTOREALISM?

## Classroom Activity #1

This lesson is modified from the Oklahoma City Museum of Art's resource guide for *Photorealism Revisited*. Through this lesson, students will be introduced to the process of working from a photograph, shading, highlighting, value, and detail.

- Give each student a magazine, and instruct students to select one photograph from which to work.
- Instruct students to use a pencil to draw around sections of the photograph they would like to copy. These sections should be simple to remove from the image (i.e. students should not mark a section for the center of the image).
- Cut the marked sections off from the photograph. DO NOT THROW AWAY THE CUT PIECES.
- Mount the cut photograph on a sheet of drawing paper.
- Using the cut pieces as a reference, instruct students to replicate the image on the drawing paper to finish the photograph. Encourage students to pay attention to shadows and highlights, white space, and value. The more detail that students add, the more realistic the image will appear.<sup>10</sup>

## Materials

- Drawing Paper
- Magazines
- Pencils
- Erasers
- Colored Pencils
- Scissors
- Glue Sticks

# PHOTOREALISM TECHNIQUES

## The Five Principles of Photorealism

In 1972, art dealer Louis K. Meisel published five principles of photorealism to define the technological and visual boundaries of the movement.

01

The photorealist uses the camera and photograph to gather information.

02

The photorealist uses a mechanical or semi-mechanical means to transfer the information to the canvas.

03

The photorealist must have the technical ability to make the finished work appear photographic.

04

The artist must have exhibited work as a photorealist by 1972 to be considered one of the central photorealists.

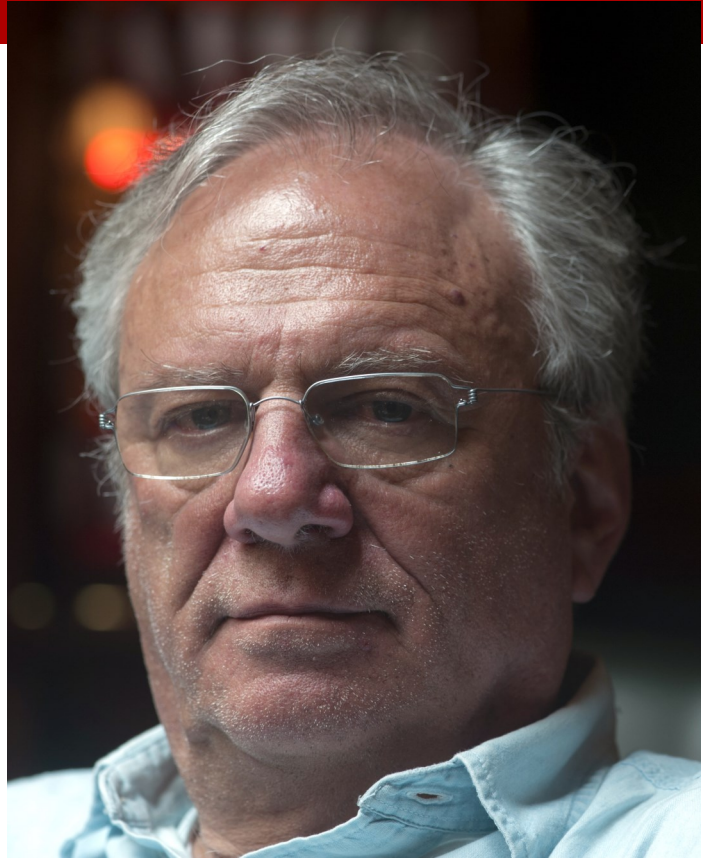
05

The artist must have devoted at least five years to the development and exhibition of photorealist work.<sup>11</sup>



## In the Spotlight Louis K. Meisel

Art dealer Louis K. Meisel is credited with the creation of the term “Photorealism.” He states that his career began as a teenager when he first visited the Museum of Modern Art in 1956.<sup>12</sup> He began working as an art dealer, specializing in contemporary art, in 1967.<sup>13</sup> However, his interest in contemporary art began in 1960, when he began meeting with abstract expressionist artists, such as Mark Rothko, giving him the connections to witness the growth of “New Realism.”<sup>14</sup> His first gallery opened in 1968.<sup>15</sup> As Meisel was witnessing the growth of the New Realism movement, he noticed the development of “Photorealism.”<sup>16</sup> Meisel expressed interest in the Photorealism movement, representing many first generation photorealist painters, including David Parrish. By 1980, Meisel had published his first volume concerning Photorealism, establishing himself as the primary expert in the movement.<sup>17</sup> As the expert in Photorealism and its techniques, Meisel has established a definition and guidelines which still inform Photorealist painters today.



Louis K. Meisel. “Photorealism and the Camera: A Conversation with Louis K. Meisel.” By Kat Kiernan. July 2, 2014. <https://www.donttakepictures.com/dtp-blog/tag/Louis+K.+Meisel>

# PHOTOREALISM TECHNIQUES

## Classroom Activity #2

There are two common techniques to create a photorealistic work of art. The first is known as the “grid method,” in which artists create a grid over the photograph they are copying and work square-by-square to recreate the image.



Bernstein, Fred A. “Chuck Close, celebrated creator of pixelated portraits, dies at 81.” *The Washington Post*. August 19, 2021. Image credit: Astrid Riecken for *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/chuck-close-dead/2021/08/19/35295436-30aa-11ea-91fd->

- Give each student a black and white photograph, a pencil, an eraser, and a ruler.
- Instruct students to place the ruler at the top of the image and make a small mark at every inch. Do the same at the bottom of the page and connect the marks.
- Repeat the second step on the left and right side of the image.
- Give each student a sheet of drawing paper.
- Instruct students to create an identical grid on their drawing paper.
- Carefully copy as much as you can, placing each line, color, and shade in exactly the same position.
- Once the image is complete, gently erase the grid marks.

## Materials

- Drawing Paper
- Black and White Images
- Pencils
- Erasers
- Ruler

*For additional aid in recreating the image, have students complete the values worksheet in Appendix C based on the shades they see in the photograph.*

# PHOTOREALISM TECHNIQUES

## Classroom Activity #3

There are two common techniques to create a photorealistic work of art. The second is known as the “projection method,” in which an artist projects the image directly onto their canvas. This technique has been used for centuries, with artists like Leonardo da Vinci and Johannes Vermeer using a *camera obscura* to project images onto a canvas. To use a camera obscura to project an image onto canvas, the artist would turn the entire room into a camera! This activity allows each student to create a camera obscura as a demonstration.

- Give each student a cardboard box, a sheet of white paper, and a pair of scissors.
  - Instruct students to cut the white paper to fit the shorter edge of the box.
  - Use tape to adhere the paper to the box.
  - On the side opposite of the white paper, use a pen or pencil to create a small hole in the left center portion.
  - On the right center portion, cut a small one inch by one inch square. This will be the viewing hole. The square should be far enough away from the pinhole to avoid blocking light.
  - Seal the top of the box to ensure that no additional light enters the box.
  - Allow students to experiment with their camera obscura. The camera works best in a dark room, with the holes pointing towards a bright subject.
- ### **Materials**
- Cardboard box
  - A sheet of white paper
  - Scissors
  - Pen or Pencil
  - Dark, heavy tape

# EARLY PHOTOREALISM

Although modernism and abstraction dominated American art in the early twentieth century, many artists turned away from these styles in favor of realism and contemporary depictions of everyday life. In 1961, David Parrish graduated from the University of Alabama, where he studied the style of Abstract Expressionism, the popular art movement of the time. In the 1960s, Abstract Expressionism dominated the art world, but also around this time, a style known as Realism or New Realism emerged in reaction against the use of bold colors and gestural brushstrokes of abstraction. David Parrish's first photographically derived paintings were scenes of men and women in the rural south. However, the influence of color and gestural brushstrokes can still be seen in his early works.



Ca. 1961-1964

Jemimah (Girl in  
Alley)



1964

Cunningham's Store



# EARLY PHOTOREALISM

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What art movement was most popular when David Parrish began creating artwork?
- Do his early works look more like photographs or more like paintings?
- What qualities of Abstract Expressionism do you see in his early paintings? What qualities of Photorealism do you see in his early paintings?

## ACTIVITIES

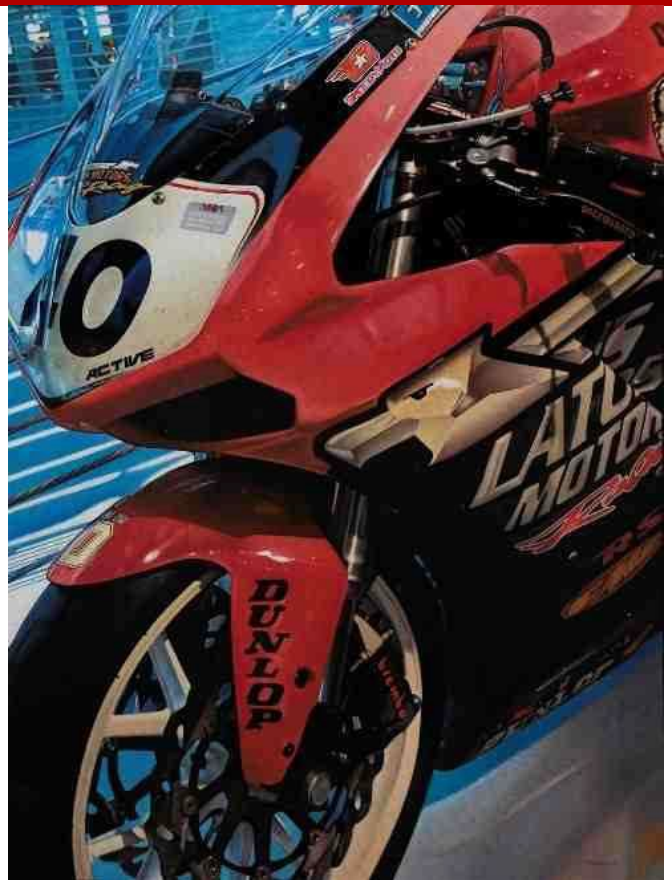
- Have students look up Abstract Expressionist artwork and artists. Divide the class into three groups. Instruct the first group to argue why Abstract Expressionism is the best art movement of the 1960s. Instruct the second group to argue why Photorealism is the best art movement of the 1960s. Instruct the third group to act as the jury and rule on which movement should be declared the best art movement of the 1960s based on the arguments presented in class.

# CARS AND MOTORCYCLES

## Looking Closer

David Parrish frequented the Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum (pictured below) near Birmingham. The museum's collection includes over 1,600 motorcycles and became a reliable source of inspiration for Parrish's motorcycle paintings.

Can you spot the museum's signature architecture in the background of this painting (right)?



David Parrish. '40 Suzuki. 2019. Huntsville Museum of



Interior of the Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum, Leeds, Alabama.

Parrish was drawn to depicting cars and motorcycles due to his appreciation for shape, line, surface, and reflection. His motorcycle paintings are readily identifiable by their close-up focus on the distinctive lines and shapes.

Can you identify lines, shapes, surface textures, and reflections in this painting?

# POP ICONS

By the end of the 1980s, David Parrish began illustrating kitschy (something that appeals to popular or lowbrow taste and is often of poor quality<sup>18</sup>) earthenware objects, like ceramic cookie jars or souvenir trinkets. He enlarged these objects to immense sizes and cropped them in ways that emphasized their plasticity and made their ordinariness somewhat unrecognizable. Although his figurines resembled their models, the composition and way Parrish realistically captured the reflective qualities of the ceramic objects making them unaesthetic and grotesque.



David Parrish. *The Duke & the King*. 1991.  
Huntsville Museum of Art. 2023.07.01.



Wikipedia. "Clark Gable."  
February 20, 2024. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clark\\_Gable](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clark_Gable)

By capturing these famous faces in their most kitschy forms, Parrish created a sense of tragic irony where people in becoming icons also became public property. For Parrish, John Wayne and Clark Gable—the stars in the painting *The Duke & the King*—“long ago gave up any control they had over who they were and what their lives represented.” *Show students the photograph of Clark Gable. Ask students to describe his personality. Show students the painting of Clark Gable as a ceramic. Ask how the interpretation of his personality changes.*

# APPENDIX A: ENDNOTES

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4. Louis K. Meisel Gallery. "Richard Estes." 2024. Photo credit: *Pressing*, 1978. <https://www.meisलगallery.com/artist/richard-estes/>.
5. The Sacramento Bee. "Ralph Goings Obituary." September 25, 2016. Accessed 2024. <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/sacbee/name/ralph-goings-obituary?id=9528393>.
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# APPENDIX A: ENDNOTES

10. Oklahoma City Museum of Art. "Photorealism Revisited: Resource Guide." 2013. <https://www.okcmoa.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Photorealism-Revisited-Resource-Guide.pdf>.
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12. Taylor, David. "Louis Meisel: Art Collector, Photorealism Pioneer, Gallerist, Sagaponack Sculpture Field Owner." May 21, 2022. Dan's Papers. <https://www.danspapers.com/2022/05/louis-meisel-art-collector-photorealism/>.
13. Meisel, Louis K. "Louis K. Meisel." Accessed 2024. <http://louiskmeisel.ag-sites.net/index.htm>.
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17. Meisel, Louis K. "Louis K. Meisel."
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# APPENDIX B: IMAGE REFERENCES

IMAGE ONE: David Parrish. **Goldwing**. 2016. Huntsville Museum of Art. 2023.07.07.

IMAGE TWO: Desktop Nexus. “2002 Honda Gold Wing GL 1800.” Uploaded by Marco\_Ghostly. August 15, 2017. <https://motorcycles.desktopnexus.com/wallpaper/2293094/>.

IMAGE THREE: David Parrish. **Darth Vader Honda**. 2018-2019. Huntsville Museum of Art. 2023.07.10.

# APPENDIX C: VALUES WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet in conjunction with Classroom Activity 2. Instruct students to fill out the values based on the shades found in their image. For example, students should copy their lightest color in the image in the first box.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_

Using different drawing pencils, make a value scale for each grade of pencil. Fill the entire box.



---

Light	Med. Light	Medium	Med. Dark	Dark

---

Light	Med. Light	Medium	Med. Dark	Dark

---

Light	Med. Light	Medium	Med. Dark	Dark

---

Light	Med. Light	Medium	Med. Dark	Dark