

Harvard Art Museums

Fogg Museum
Busch-Reisinger Museum
Arthur M. Sackler Museum

Video Transcript: *Staff Picks—Kate Smith, Conservator*



Kate Smith
Conservator of Paintings and Head of Paintings Lab

Video still from *Staff Picks—Kate Smith, Conservator*.
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Video Description:

Kate Smith, Conservator of Paintings at the museums' Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, tells us why [October Noon](#) by George Inness (1943.137) is among her favorite works of art in the Harvard Art Museums' collections.

Location: [Gallery 2100](#), *European and American Art, 17th–19th century, Centuries of Tradition, Changing Times: Art for an Uncertain Age*.

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Music Copyright Note: "Algea Tender" by Blue Dot Sessions (www.sessions.blue)

Video Links:

- Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/400735769>
- YouTube: <https://youtu.be/UPufDGcJ1q0>
- Index: <https://www.harvardartmuseums.org/article/staff-picks-conservator-kate-smith-s-favorite-work-of-art>

Video Transcript:

Kate Smith:

(soft music) My name is Kate Smith. I'm a conservator of paintings here at the Harvard Art Museums and I'm here in front of one of my favorite pictures in the collection, *October Noon* by George Innes ([1943.137](#)).

I was an intern here in 2001 and this painting was actually the subject of my research project because I wanted to learn more about 19th-century, late 19th-century American painting, and George Innes is a beautiful example of that time. One of the things I love about this picture is how much you can feel about what he was showing us because of the way he made it. The colors are really bright. There's this really brilliant green and bright blue sky with clouds scutting across. And the leaves are orange, so you know that it's fall. If you live here in New England, you know what that feels like. Or even if you're visiting New England in the fall, you know what that feels like.

There's a tiny suggestion of a person in the center of this field. If you get up really close, is it a man? Is it a woman? There's very little detail. But it's something you can relate to, and that's sort of the first way into the picture is "what's going on?" And you can spend a lot of time thinking about that.

The other thing about Innes that's so interesting is that he makes these pictures that are very sort of realistic. You know what you're looking at. But when you get up close, it all kind of dissolves. And his brushwork is very loose and free and vague.

As a conservator, I spent a lot of my time thinking about how paintings were constructed, and why they look the way they do—what they're made of. And you can see, he just rubbed the paint into it and then he would sort of scumble these other colors on top. So the green comes over the brown and the brown peeks through. And if you get really close, you can see brush hairs from the brush—that he's working so hard at the surface, that the brush kind of comes apart and gets embedded into the paint.

So it feels very much like he just walked away from it, to me. And that's what I like about it, too, is that you can feel his presence and his hand. It's just an exciting picture to stand in front of.