



U-M
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
MUSEUM OF ART



STUDENT LIFE
EDWARD GINSBERG CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

2020 DEWEY LECTURE: BUILDING A CIVIC TEMPER

With additional support from the
U-M Democracy & Debate Theme Semester



INTRODUCTION

“Ideally, democracy is what would happen between elections.”

Masha Gessen, Journalist

The New Yorker, Sept. 25, 2019

At the precipice of one of the most highly charged US Presidential Elections in recent history, the U-M Museum of Art (UMMA) and the Edward Ginsberg Center offer this Dialogue Deck as a platform to examine and explore social and political norms, values, and beliefs through shared dialogue and reflection.

Each of these images was thoughtfully selected by UMMA and Ginsberg Center staff and faculty, drawing from UMMA’s permanent collection with an emphasis placed on artworks that both directly and indirectly evoke the culture, politics, and history of the USA. We believe that visual art offers a creative platform for exploring complex and difficult issues. Images help to expand our intellectual and emotional capacities, and offer opportunities to describe the world as we see it and imagine how others might see it differently.

This Dialogue Deck, inspired by an existing Ginsberg Center activity, is created in conjunction with the 2020 Ginsberg Center Dewey Lecture, “Building a Civic Temper.” The theme of the lecture is inspired by William James’s 1906 Essay, “The Moral Equivalent of War.” While some of James’s assertions are cause for critique, his primary observation, that we need to focus on building our shared public life, remains more important than ever. We hope you’ll use this deck to create meaningful dialogue and connection with your family, friends, colleagues, and maybe even yourself.



INSTRUCTIONS

How To Use This Deck

Each card displays one image on the front, and two discussion prompts on the back. Each suggested exercise offers a different way of pairing images with prompts for conversation and reflection. While using this deck, you might devise new ways to use these cards, and even more discussion prompts.

Group Exercise Version A (one image for the entire group):

First, lay out all cards image-side up. As a group, choose just one image to discuss. Next, choose another card at random, and flip that card to reveal two discussion prompts. Then, agree on which one prompt you will discuss as a group. Discuss and debrief using the Debriefing Questions card.

Group Exercise Version B (each individual chooses an image):

First, choose one card at random and flip the card to reveal the prompts; agree upon which one prompt you'll discuss. Next, lay out all cards image-side up. Each person chooses one image card in response to the chosen prompt (it's okay if more than one person chooses the same image). Then, discuss and debrief using the Debriefing Questions card.

Group Exercise Version C (choose two images and compare):

First, choose two image cards and lay them side-by-side. Next, choose another card at random, and flip that card to reveal two discussion prompts. Choose which prompt to discuss, and use the prompt to compare and contrast the images. Debrief using the Debriefing Questions card.



INSTRUCTIONS

For Solo Reflection:

Choose two cards at random (one image and one set of prompts); reflect privately on the prompts as they relate to the chosen image. You may also wish to journal about them.

Share:

Share your reflections on social media and tag:

@ummamuseum

@ginsbergcenter

Online Version:

Explore the online version of this dialogue deck at:

umma.umich.edu/dialogue-deck

Find this and other civic learning tools on the

Ginsberg Center's website at:

<https://bit.ly/CivicEngagementTools>



DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS AND FACILITATION

Our unique individual and group experiences and our social identities play particularly powerful roles in shaping our perceptions. Keep this in mind as you discuss the ways in which your political beliefs and identities were formed, and how they impact you today.

Use the following questions to facilitate group discussions after you've completed the group exercise or solo reflection:

What are the common threads in this conversation? How do you make sense of differences?

Everyone looked at the same images, but saw different things in them. We often see this same phenomenon in politics, where two people look at the same policy or issue, and one person sees X while the other sees Y. Have you ever discussed a political topic with a friend, family member or colleague and wondered, "How can we be talking about the same thing on the surface, but seeing it so differently?"

Consult the image information card. How does knowing the title of the artwork or the time period in which it was created change your perspective?



DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS AND FACILITATION

What about this experience compels you to take action? What might you do differently after this conversation?

In what ways might you use these cards in your life or work?

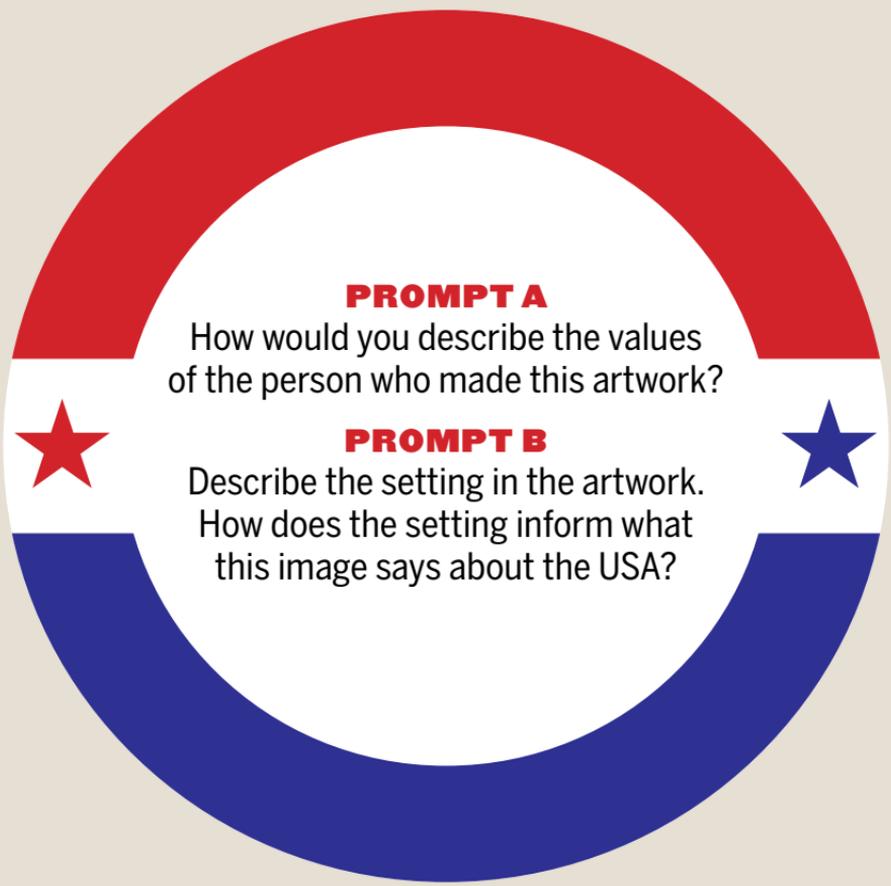
This exercise was designed to explore the idea of building our civic temper—the notion that a shared public life is central to democracy. How does this exercise ask you to think differently about the role of shared public life in our democracy? What fuels your civic life?


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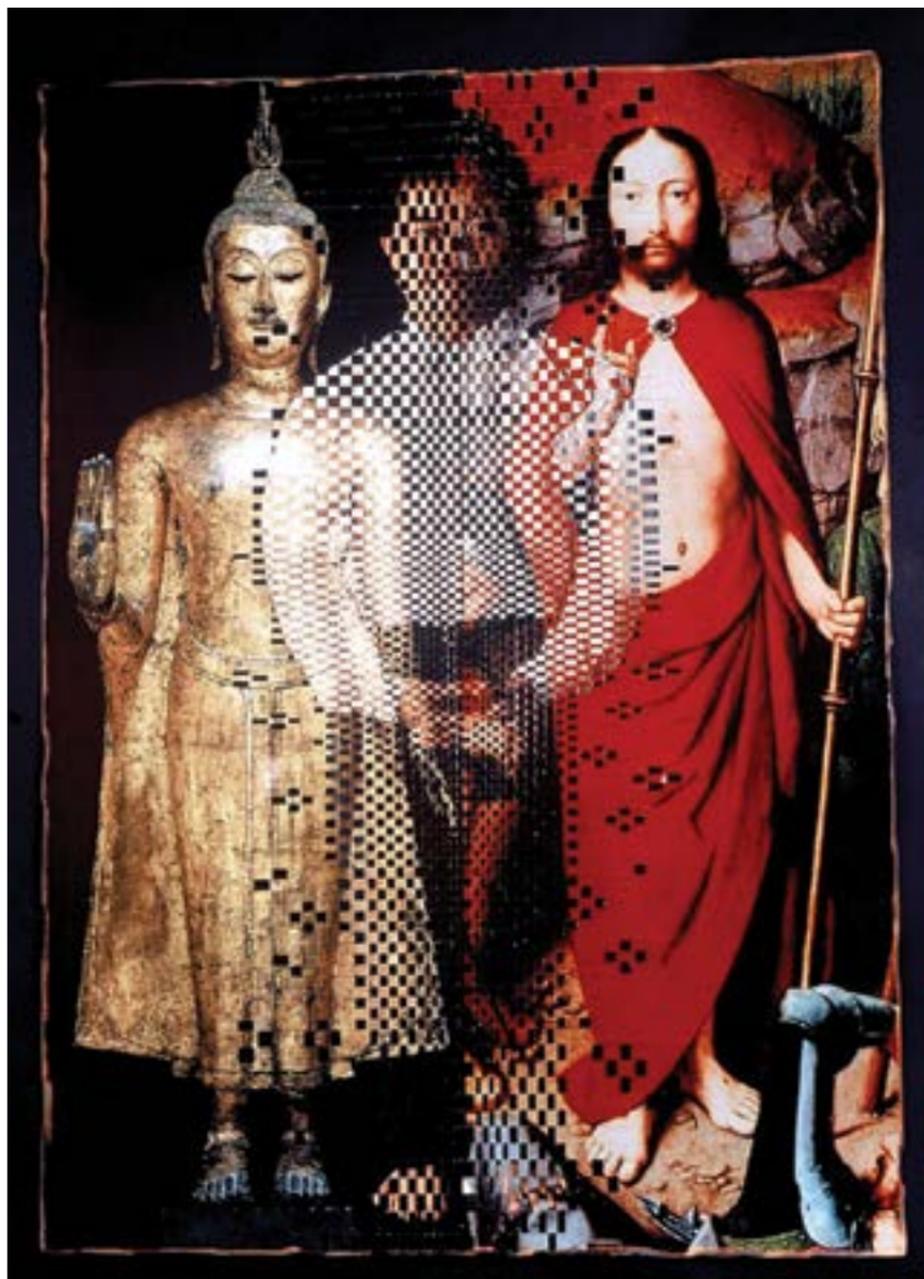


PROMPT A

How would you describe the values of the person who made this artwork?

PROMPT B

Describe the setting in the artwork. How does the setting inform what this image says about the USA?





PROMPT A

Why might this image matter to people around you (your friends, family, community)? To your city, nation? To the world?

PROMPT B

What's the hidden story in this image?
What hidden agenda might the image have?





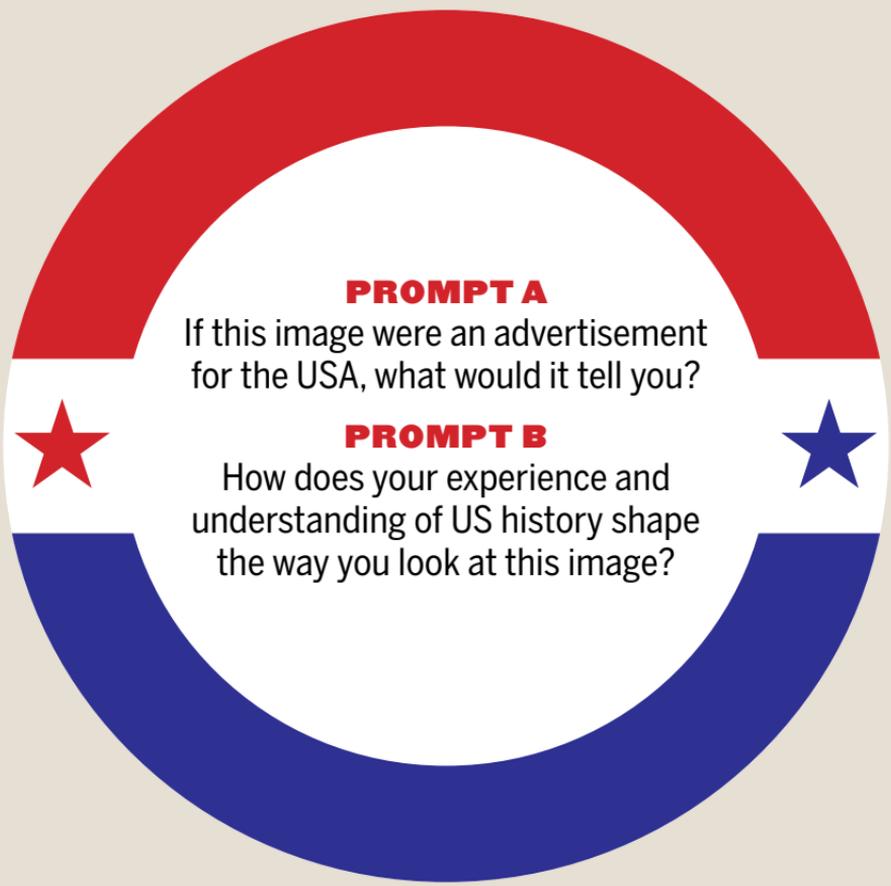
PROMPT A

What story about the USA does this image tell? How does this story intersect with your personal beliefs?

PROMPT B

What values of the USA does the image question or critique? What values does it promote?





PROMPT A

If this image were an advertisement for the USA, what would it tell you?

PROMPT B

How does your experience and understanding of US history shape the way you look at this image?



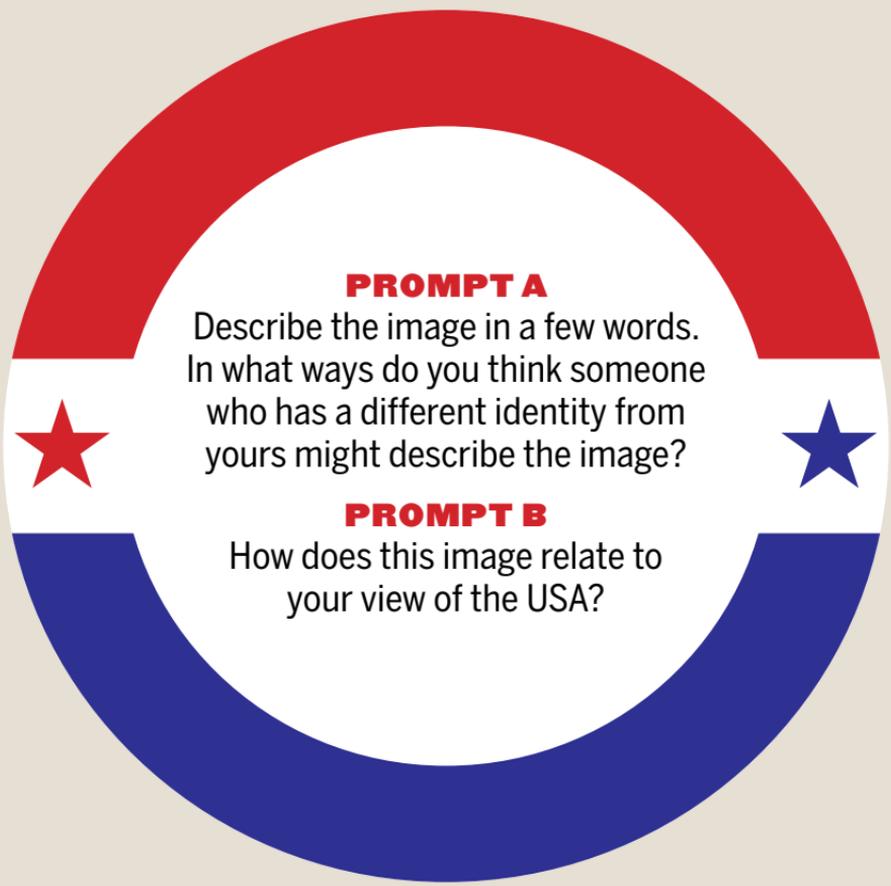
PROMPT A

If this image was on the cover of a book about the USA, what would the title be and why?

PROMPT B

Who is represented in the image and how are they related to each other?
Who isn't represented in this image and why?





PROMPT A

Describe the image in a few words. In what ways do you think someone who has a different identity from yours might describe the image?

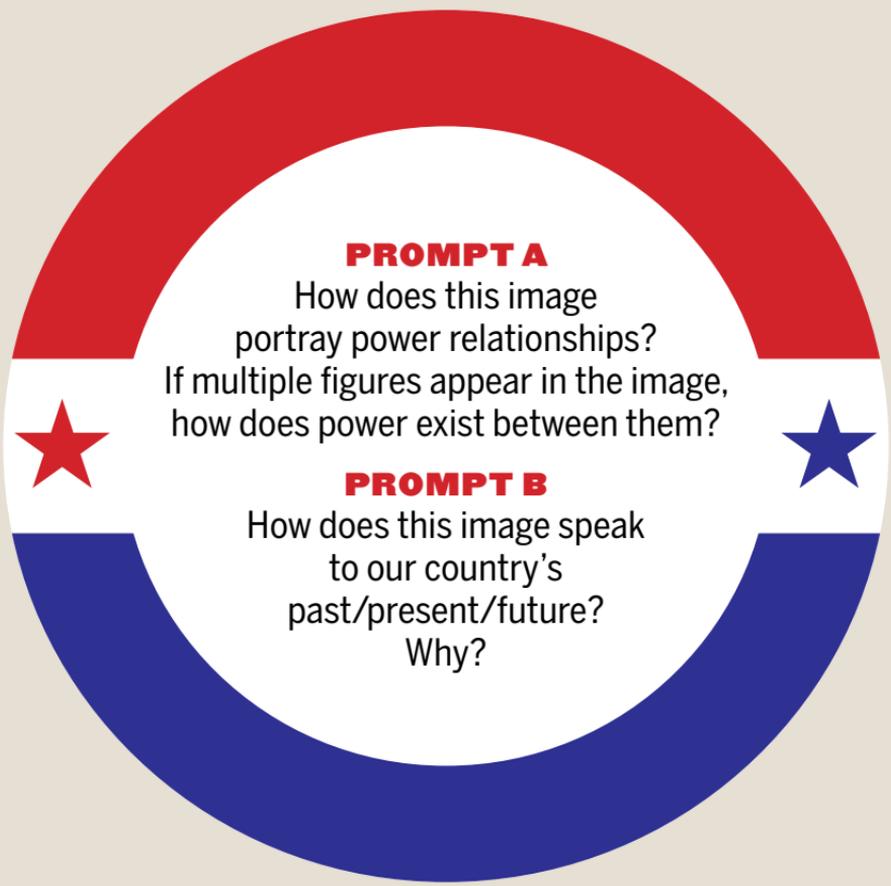
PROMPT B

How does this image relate to your view of the USA?



©2015 The Art of Design with Bruce Springsteen & The E Street Band

©2015 The Art of Design

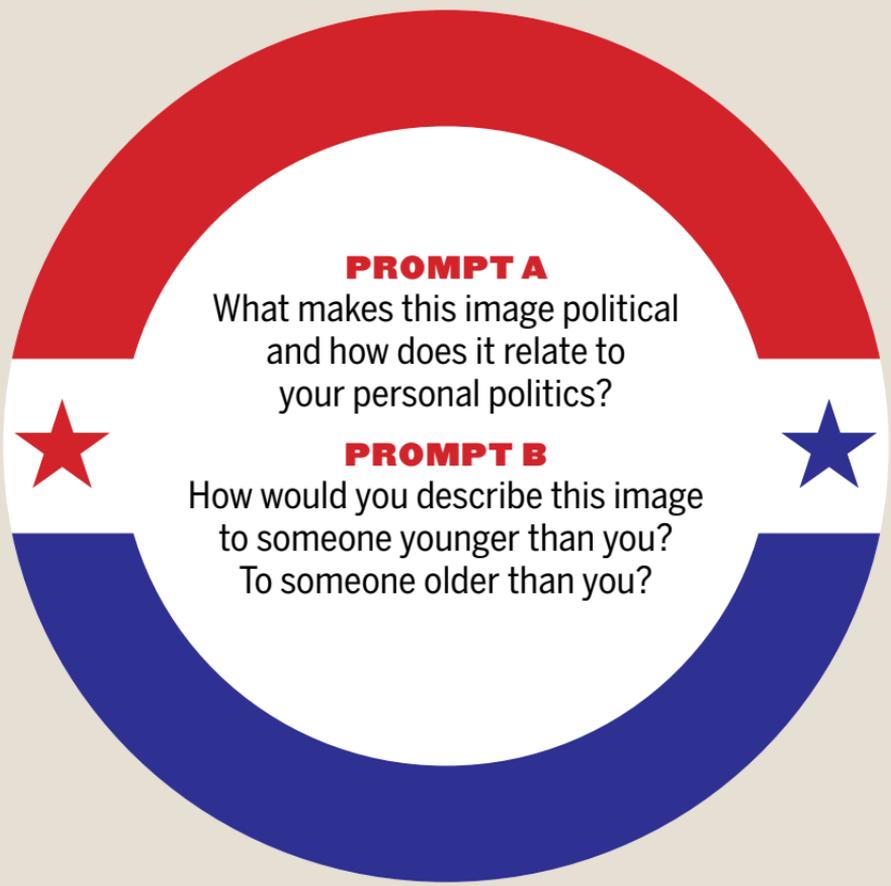


PROMPT A

How does this image
portray power relationships?
If multiple figures appear in the image,
how does power exist between them?

PROMPT B

How does this image speak
to our country's
past/present/future?
Why?



PROMPT A

What makes this image political
and how does it relate to
your personal politics?

PROMPT B

How would you describe this image
to someone younger than you?
To someone older than you?



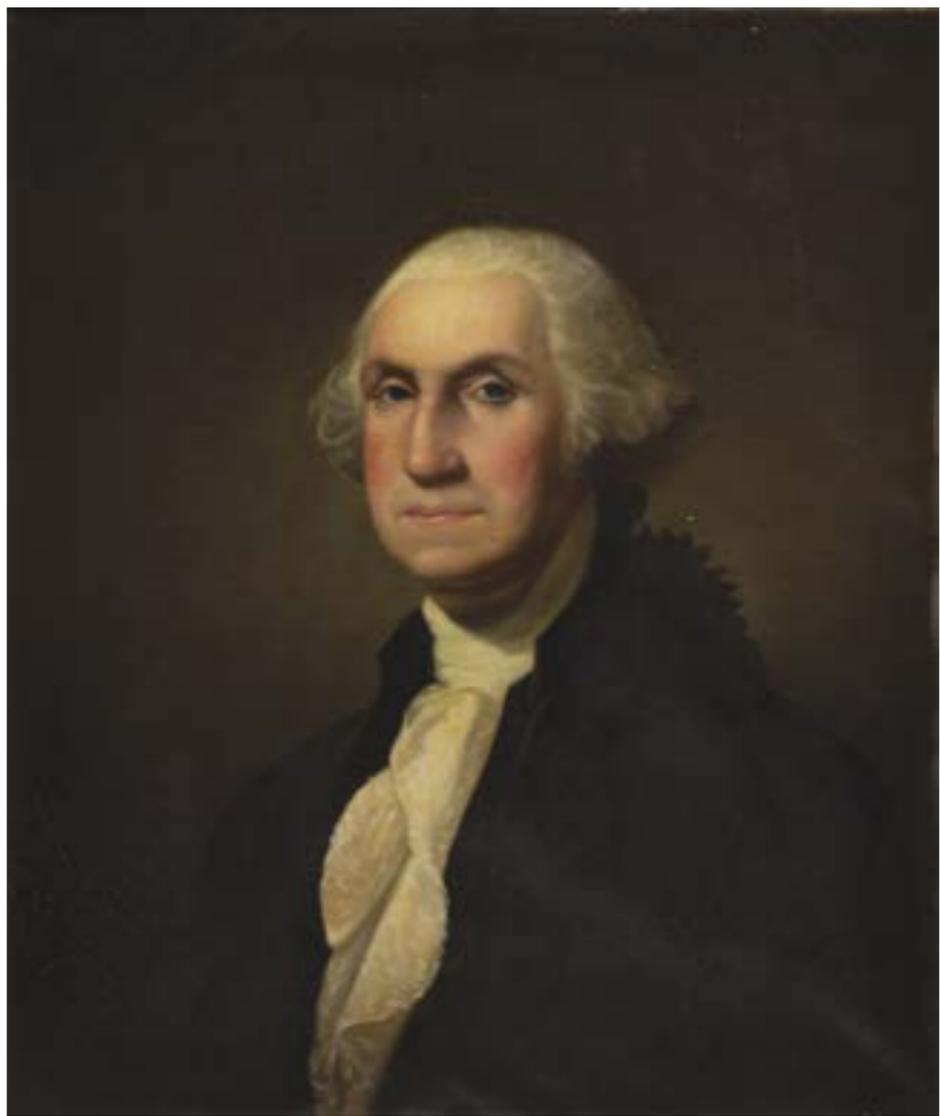


PROMPT A

If this image were an advertisement for the USA, what would it tell you?

PROMPT B

How does your experience and understanding of US history shape the way you look at this image?



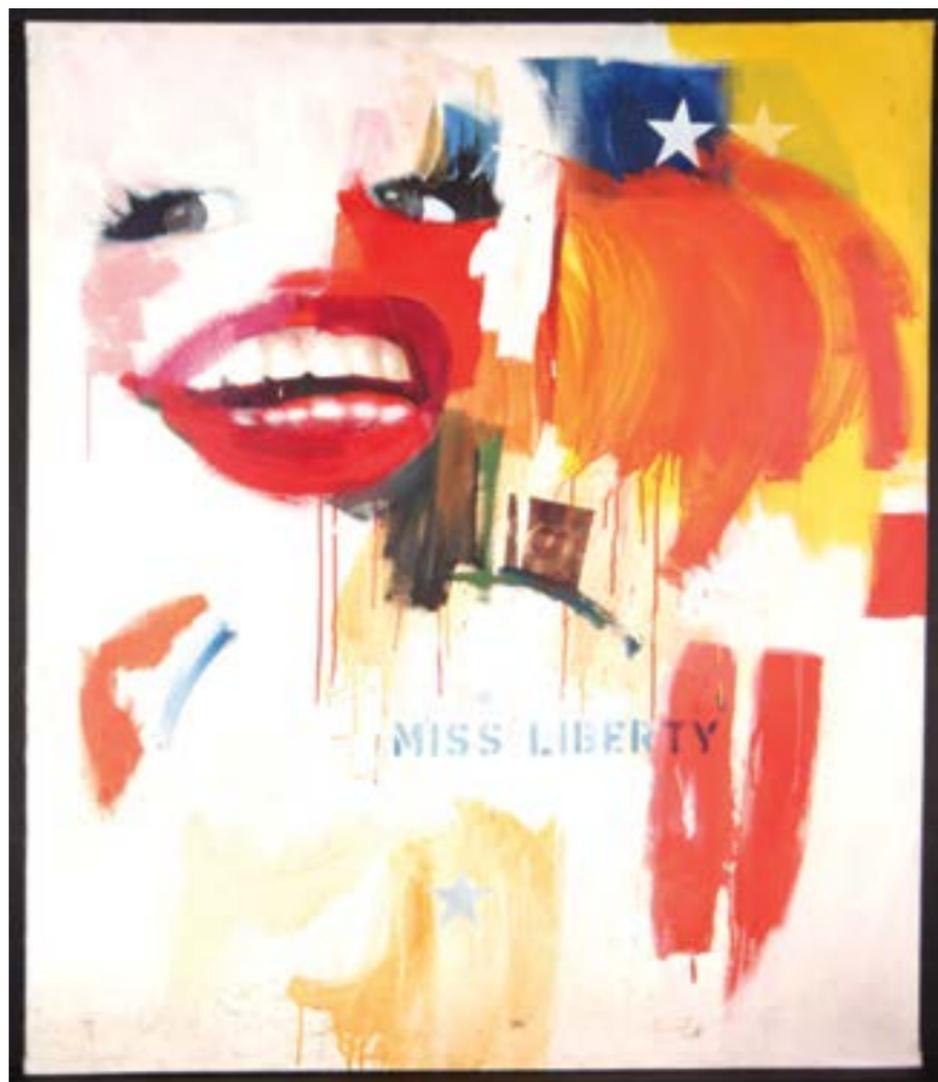


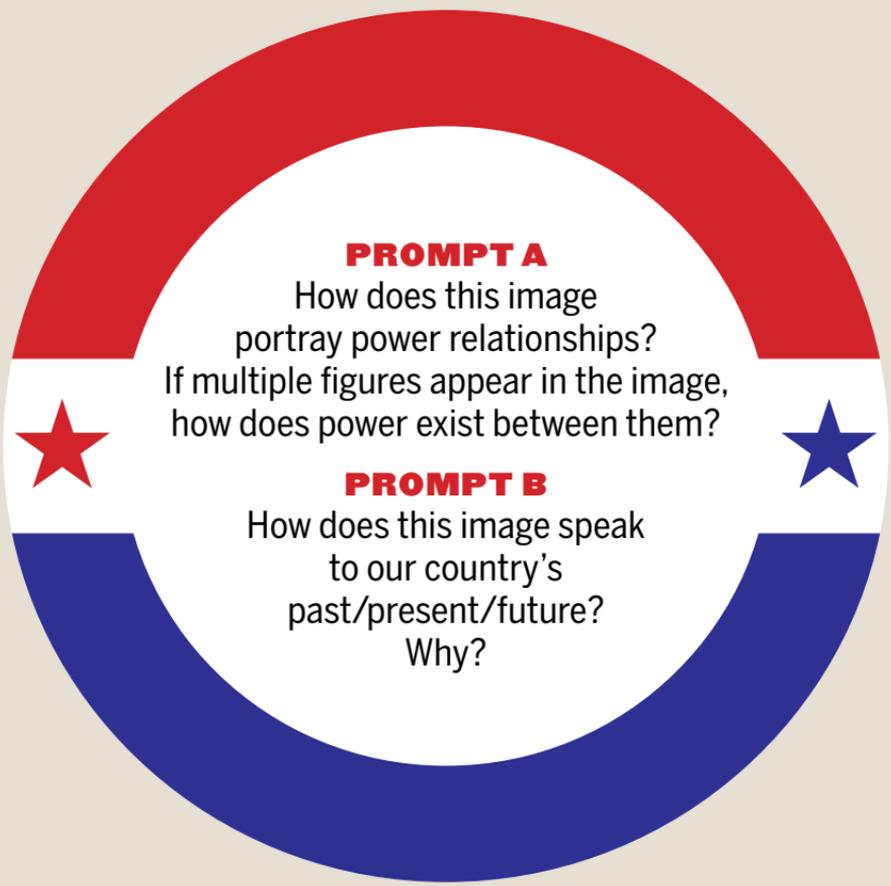
PROMPT A

Why might this image matter to people around you (your friends, family, community)? To your city, nation? To the world?

PROMPT B

What's the hidden story in this image?
What hidden agenda might the image have?





PROMPT A

How does this image
portray power relationships?
If multiple figures appear in the image,
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How does this image speak
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Why?





PROMPT A

What story about the USA does this image tell? How does this story intersect with your personal beliefs?

PROMPT B

What values of the USA does the image question or critique? What values does it promote?



COMPLETE LIST OF DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- 1 How would you describe the values of the person who made this artwork?
- 2 Describe the setting in the artwork. How does the setting inform what this image says about the USA?
- 3 Why might this image matter to people around you (your friends, family, community)? To your city, nation? To the world?
- 4 What's the hidden story in this image? What hidden agenda might the image have?
- 5 What story about the USA does this image tell? How does this story intersect with your personal beliefs?
- 6 What values of the USA does the image question or critique? What values does it promote?
- 7 If this image were an advertisement for the USA, what would it tell you?
- 8 How does your experience and understanding of US history shape the way you look at this image?
- 9 If this image was on the cover of a book about the USA, what would the title be and why?
- 10 Who is represented in the image and how are they related to each other? Who isn't represented in this image and why?



COMPLETE LIST OF DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- 11 Describe the image in a few words. How do you think someone who has a different identity from yours would describe the image?
- 12 How does this image relate to your view of the USA?
- 13 How does this image portray power relationships? If multiple figures appear in the image, how does power exist between them?
- 14 How does this image speak to our country's past/present/future? Why?
- 15 What makes this image political and how does it relate to your personal politics?
- 16 How would you describe this image to someone younger than you? To someone older than you?

INFORMATION ABOUT THE ARTWORKS

1 **Doug Webb**

Liberty Renewed

1980–90

Serigraph on paper

Gift of Jack A. and Noreen Rounick

2004/2.43

2 **Dinh Q. Lê**

Interconfined

1994

Chromogenic prints, linen tape

Museum purchase made possible by the University of Michigan Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Director's Acquisition Committee, 2018

2018/2.89

3 **Danny Lyon**

John Lewis in Cairo, from “*Memories of the Southern Civil Rights Movement*”

1962, printed later

Gelatin silver print on paper

Gift of Thomas Wilson '79 and Jill Garling '80

2014/2.319

4 **Jacob Lawrence**

Builders (The Family)

1974

Screenprint on paper

Gift of Dr. James and Vivian Curtis

1997/1.532

5 **Rodney Alan Greenblat**

Christina's World

1989

Screenprint on paper

Gift of Jack A. and Noreen Rounick

2004/2.42

6 **John Stanley**

Mount Hood from The Dalles

1871

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mrs. Edith Stanley Bayles and the late Mrs. Jane C. Stanley

1940.426

7 **Garin Horner**

A Secret that Brings Prosperity and Wealth (detail)
2016
Archival pigment print on paper
Gift of the artist
2017/2.119

8 **Russell Limbach**

Reviewing Stand, from
“*The American Scene, Series 2*”
1904–35
Lithograph on paper
Museum Purchase
1935.26

9 **Kara Walker**

One of five prints from the suite
“*The Means to an End—A Shadow Drama in Five Acts*”
1995
Aquatint and etching on light cream Somerset Satin wove paper
Museum purchase made possible by the Jean Paul Slusser Memorial Fund
1996/2.4.5

10 **Colin Campbell Cooper;
Gilbert Stuart**

George Washington (1732–1799)
1800–1895
Oil on canvas
Bequest of Henry C. Lewis
1895.71

11 **Charles Kezar**

Miss Liberty
1960–61
Acrylic on canvas
Gift of the Nathan T. Whitman Trust
2004/2.20

12 **Garry Winogrand**

New York City
1970; printed 1978
Gelatin silver print on paper
Gift of Stanley T. Lesser, A.B. 1951, J.D. 1953
1981/2.65.5

To learn more about the artworks and artists featured here visit umma.umich.edu/dialogue-deck

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