



## OBJECT of the **month**

***November 2021***

### **BEGIN TRANSCRIPT**

Hello, my name is Norma, a Museum Guide at the Dayton Art Institute. Welcome to the “Object of the Month” in which we’ll be looking at a painting *Woman in Green Sweater* by Hughie Lee-Smith, done in 1957.

In looking at this painting, what catches your eye at first glance? Was it perhaps the woman, the stark landscape or something else? For me, it is the solitary figure in a barren landscape. Her expressionless gaze seems to be looking at something in the distance, perhaps beyond the painting itself. The woman is wearing a green sweater and dark skirt. Looking at her skirt and hair, we see movement so perhaps there might be a slight breeze. The shadows of the woman and the three remaining white posts seem to suggest it may be later in the day.

The setting is a beach with the remains of a deteriorating pier. The body of water is essentially flat, indicating little or no movement. The landscape beyond the water is rather languid and indifferent. To the right may be a sandy hill. The white area may indicate a surf on a shallow beach.

Consider all of these elements. What is the tone of the artwork? How would you describe its mood?

The artist, Hughie Lee-Smith was creative from a young age. As early as age 10, he was taking classes at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Later, his advanced coursework was continued at Cleveland School of Art, now the Cleveland Institute of Art and Wayne State University in Detroit.

In the 1950s, Lee-Smith decided to forgo the 1950s Abstract Expressionist movement to instead focus on Social Realism with evocative landscapes that combined Surrealism and social commentary.

There is a bleakness to this artwork that may leave you with many unanswered questions. So, I will let the artist express his style in a few quotes.

“In my case, aloneness, I think, has stemmed from the fact I am black. Unconsciously, it has a lot to do with the sense of alienation... I’ve always felt a need to communicate on an emotional level with people. My paintings don’t tell stories... they are expressing emotion by means of form and color.”

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He realized, later in life, that: “the unconscious influence of the Midwest climate was a key factor in the development of my color scheme... my preferences for cold, dark skies and sparse flat landscapes in my painting is undoubtedly due to the long, continuously grey winters of my youth in Ohio, Michigan and Ontario.”

An interesting fact about Hughie Lee-Smith: he hyphenated his name while in high school to add more artistic panache.

On your next visit to the Dayton Art Institute, I hope you will stop by *Woman in Green Sweater* which is found in the Katy Dicke Gallery of Post 1945 American Art, Gallery 202. For more information, you can explore the artwork in the American category of the museum’s Self-Guided tour, “What is a Masterpiece?” Thank you for listening.

## END TRANSCRIPT

Click [here](#) to access the video presentation.

## FEATURED ARTWORKS\*

J. Edward Bailey III (American, 1923–1982), *Portrait of Hughie Lee-Smith*, about 1975, print on Kodak Polycontrast J double weight paper. Wayne State University Art Collection, MI. Purchase, Rex E. Lamoreaux Endowed Fund, 2014, UAC6294

Hughie Lee-Smith (American, 1915–1999), *The Beach*, 1962, oil on canvas. Smithsonian American Art Museum, D.C. Bequest of Henry Ward Ranger through the National Academy of Design, 2009.28 © Estate of Hughie Lee-Smith/ARS (Artist Rights Society), New York

Hughie Lee-Smith (American, 1915–1999), *Two Boys*, 1968, oil on canvas. Collection SFMOMA, CA. Gift of the Joyner/Giuffrida Collection, 2020.101 © Estate of Hughie Lee-Smith/ARS (Artist Rights Society), New York

Hughie Lee-Smith (American, 1915–1999), *Desert Forms*, 1957, oil on Masonite. Art Institute of Chicago, IL. American Art Sales Proceeds Fund; through prior acquisitions of Charles S. Peterson Purchase Prize and Charles D. Ettinger funds, and Mr. and Mrs. Frederick G. Wacker Jr. Endowment Fund, 2011.334 © Estate of Hughie Lee-Smith/ARS (Artist Rights Society), New York

## MEDIA CREDITS\*

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**QUESTIONS?**  
[edu@daytonart.org](mailto:edu@daytonart.org)