

FRICK MADISON

Barkley L. Hendricks: Portraits at the Frick (September 21, 2023–January 7, 2024)

Prompts for Looking

Choose:

- Two figures in one portrait by Barkley L. Hendricks
- Two portraits in the exhibition *Barkley L. Hendricks: Portraits at the Frick*
- A portrait from the permanent collection and a portrait by Barkley L. Hendricks

Spend some time looking at each painting or portrait figure, then compare them. Consider the following questions:

- How are the figures posed? What do their poses or expressions communicate to you?
- What does the clothing, jewelry, or accessories of these figures communicate about their identities?
- How does composition—the way figures and other objects are arranged in the painting—impact your understanding of these portraits? What about size or scale?

Questions for Reflection

- Why do we create portraits? What does it mean to be represented in a portrait? Who has typically been represented in Western portraiture and why might it be particularly significant for Black subjects to be shown in portraits?
- What do Hendricks's paintings tell us about the personality or individuality of his subjects? What aspects or details of his paintings communicate identity or personhood?
- The figures in Hendricks's paintings are often silhouetted against monochromatic backgrounds. What effect does this have? How would the portraits be different if he had placed his subjects in specific settings?
- How would you want to be portrayed? Alternatively, thinking of a person you know, how would you choose to represent them in a portrait?
- Is there a portrait in the permanent collection that you think connects to one of Barkley L. Hendricks's works, or feels meaningfully different? What do you see that makes you think that?
- What is it like to see these paintings in the galleries of Frick Madison? What connections might you draw between these paintings and this setting, or between these paintings and other works in the permanent collection?