THE HUNTINGTON

ABOUT THE OBJECT

British artist Thomas Gainsborough painted an image of a boy wearing a brilliant blue costume. Who is the boy? It is believed to be the artist's nephew, Gainsborough Dupont, who lived with the artist's family and assisted him in his painting studio. One thing we know for certain is that Gainsborough used at least four different blue pigments to create the coloring of the boy's costume. *The Blue Boy*'s outfit was actually a studio prop of Gainsborough's and was featured in some of his other artworks.

Since the painting was acquired by Henry E. Huntington in 1921, this artwork has, for the most part, remained hanging on the walls inside the Huntington Art Gallery. So in 2017, *The Blue Boy* underwent a complete technical examination and conservation treatment.

There were four main stages in the conservation project:

1. Surface cleaning and removal of non-original varnish
2. Structural work on the canvas
3. The in-painting process
4. Preparing *The Blue Boy* for reinstallation

Thomas Gainsborough, *The Blue Boy*, 1770. Oil on canvas. The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens.

More to Explore...

STRIKE A POSE! TAKE A SELFIE!

How would you want to be remembered in a painting or photograph? Would you want to be dressed up in a costume like *The Blue Boy* or would you want to be in your everyday clothes? What items would you include to reflect you and your interests? Would you opt for a formal Grand Manner style full-length image like Gainsborough's artwork or would you prefer a more relaxed, selfie-style portrait, reminiscent of today's trends?

Helpful Terms:

Grand Manner Portrait – A 17th-century portrait style designed by Anthony van Dyck which includes a full-length figure in costume, located in an outdoor setting.

Pigment – A substance, usually finely powdered, that produces the color of any medium. When mixed with oil, water, or another fluid, it becomes paint.

⬆ LEVEL UP

Feeling inclined to make your own portrait? Just grab some items you want to use and decide if you want to hold or arrange them. Once everything is set up, strike your pose. You can take a selfie, have someone take your photo, or use a mirror and draw, paint, or sketch your portrait.

QUESTION CORNER

✦ What items did you include in your portrait? Are they everyday objects in your life or are they symbolic?

✦ What medium did you use to capture your portrait? Photograph? Painting? Watercolors? How did the material you chose affect the overall feel and aesthetic of your portrait?

✦ Is your work reflective of your true self? Or did you enhance the photo to show yourself in a particular way?