

October Artist: Jasper Johns

Slide 1: Photo of Jasper Johns

Jasper Johns was born in 1930 in Augusta, Georgia, however he grew up in South Carolina. From a young age he knew he wanted to be an artist. He attended college in South Carolina for a time before moving to New York City at the urging of his teachers. He studied at the Parsons School of Design before serving in the army during the Korean War.

Slide 2: Flag (1955)

Jasper Johns became famous for painting ordinary things that people sometimes take for granted like the American Flag. Created when he was 24, two years after he was discharged from the US Army, this painting was the first of many works that Johns has said were inspired by a dream of the U.S. flag.

Slide 3: Detail of Flag

This is a close up of the previous picture. It was created with a technique called Encaustic painting, also known as hot wax painting. It involves using heated [beeswax](#) to which colored [pigments](#) are added. The liquid or paste is then applied to a surface—usually prepared wood, though [canvas](#) and other materials are often used. Johns used this technique quite often.

Slide 4: Target with Four Faces (1955)

Johns was really interested in trying to imagine a new set of possibilities for painting, and did so by playing with the subject matter, by creating paintings that at first glance, don't look any different than the actual objects that they represent. The picture of a target is very recognizable.

Slide 5: Three Flags (1958)

In 1958, at Jasper Johns first solo exhibition in New York City, He dazzled the art world with paintings and drawings of unexpectedly mundane images: targets, numerals, and the American flag. His work emerged at a time when Abstract Expressionism still held sway as the dominant style.

Slide 6: Numbers in Color (1958-1959)

“Take an object. Do something to it. Do something else to it.” This idea is a driving force in Jasper Johns’ art. The pattern here is regular, consisting of 121 rectangles stacked in eleven rows, each with eleven rectangles. The numbers (0-9) seem irregular because of the irregular use and application of color.

Slide 7: 0-9 (1960)

0-9 is a prime example of his popular use of color. Much like his other work, it is simple, the number 0-9 are listed in two rows, one on top of the other, and red, blue and yellow’s different shades are using up the whole canvas. It also shows how Johns took basic things like numbers and made it in to an intricate work of art.

Slide 8: Map (1961)

Johns said that he was interested in "the idea of knowing an image rather than just seeing it out of the corner of your eye." Preserving the overall proportions of the country and the shape of its states, Johns's energetic application of paint alters the traditional map look. This painting invites close inspection because its content is both familiar and imaginary.

Slide 9: Corpse and Mirror II (1974)

Jasper Johns used a distinct arrangement of crosshatched marks, traditionally considered a graphic method of adding depth and volume to an image or conveying the illusion of light in space. Johns first glimpsed this pattern on a passing car, recalling: "I only saw it for a second, but knew immediately that I was going to use it. It had all the qualities that interest me—literalness, repetitiveness, an obsessive quality, order with dumbness, and the possibility of a complete lack of meaning."

Slide 10: Savarin (1977)

Originally designed as a poster for the Whitney Museum's 1977 retrospective exhibition of his work. The motif of the Savarin coffee can appeared in several of Johns' earlier works, both as a life-size, painted bronze sculpture and as a found object added to a painting.

Slide 11: Cicada (1979)

From 1972 to 1982 He used with this cross hatch pattern in his work. This particular piece was created with watercolor, graphite and crayon. His interest in the process of creating art also led to innovations in lithography, screen-printing, etching and woodblock, using such materials as pencil, pen, brush, crayon, wax, and plaster to constantly challenge the technical possibilities of print making.

Slide 12: Jasper Johns (2011)

Johns has received many honors throughout his career, including receipt of the National Medal of Arts in 1990, and the [Presidential Medal of Freedom](#) in 2011. In 2018, [The New York Times](#) called him the United States' "foremost living artist." His works often sell for millions of dollars at auction making him the highest paid living artist.