



Pamela Carroll, *M is for Museum*, 2008, oil on board, 50 x 47 inches, BMOA Permanent Collection 2008.02.02, Commissioned by Bakersfield Museum of Art with a gift from Nancy and Bob Bellue.

A California-based Realist painter, Pamela Carroll depicts everyday objects in her work. Motivated by beauty and exploring the inherent truth of an object, Carroll references the rich history of still life painting and embrace the techniques of the Dutch and Spanish masters of the 17th century. The origins of western still life painting began in ancient Greco-Roman art; this genre allowed for exploration of subject-matter by arrangement, which either celebrated material pleasures, or acted as a symbolic warning of the brevity of these pleasures and of life in general (often called a *Memento Mori*). In modern day, the artist commonly arranges a still life for formal and technical experimentation.

Carroll, who paints from life, spends a significant part of her process searching for and preparing what she will paint. She assembles her objects with a keen awareness to ensure a successful painting, spending hours shifting objects and examining them before even picking up a paintbrush. *M is for Museum* employs *Trompe Loeil*, (a French term meaning “deceives the eye”), rousing the viewer’s experience as they discern the painting within a painting, made apparent by the loose canvas on the top-right of the center frame. Each detail, impeccably painted, fuels the deception; a fly on the right side of the composition, some droplets of red pigment which seem to have fallen from the artist’s palette, and the stone shelf which protrudes in perspective from the composition — jointly contributing to the curiosity of reality’s existence within the scene.



Be the artist and try your hand at building a still life composition following Carroll's artistic process. All you need are objects from around your house and a camera or smartphone!

Collect Objects

Think about what kinds of objects grab your interest. Select objects with varying sizes, shapes and textures. Are you interested in a visually dynamic scene or one with a narrative (if a narrative is desired, consider selecting objects which relate to one another.)? How can these objects together activate your composition?

Construct the Composition

Why do these objects fascinate you? How can these objects come together to create a unique approach to still life? What do you want to convey?

Allow Environment to Play a Role

How can you use the background to emphasize the objects? Does the background color create contrast or unify the scene? Shadows and light play a significant role in compositions. How important will the shadows be in your work? Often, shadows are emphasized to distract from the physical object and highlight shapes within the composition.

Capture the Still Life

Using your smartphone or camera, shoot the still life from multiple angles. What angle catches your eye? Adjust the light sources on your camera to see how mood and tone shift (natural light versus artificial light).



Find objects of different shapes, sizes and textures.



Change the lighting to see how the lights and shadows affect the objects in your composition.



Share your image!

Once you are satisfied with your creation, share your Pamela Carroll-inspired still life on social media so we can see it too! Using Instagram or Facebook tag [@thebmoa](https://www.instagram.com/thebmoa) and use [#thebmoa](https://www.instagram.com/thebmoa) - we will be reposting our favorites!

