

Barkley L. Hendricks

American, born 1945

Miss T

1969

Oil on canvas

66 1/8 x 48 1/8 inches (168 x 122.2 cm)

Purchased with the Philadelphia Foundation Fund, 1970-134-1

© Barkley L. Hendricks. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



Let's Look

Describe this woman's pose, clothing, and accessories. What do they tell you about her?

What words would you use to describe her mood?

Where do you think she is standing?

What do you think she is thinking about?

About the Painting

A woman, identified as "Miss T," is dressed in black against a white background with her hands placed behind her back. Even though she averts her gaze out and downward, she has a commanding presence. Her personality and style are evident in both her pose and her clothing. As Barkley L. Hendricks has stated, "How people dress is how they want to be seen by the world."⁶ Miss T wears black bell-bottom pants, fashionable in the late 1960s, and a long-sleeved black shirt. A belt made of thin gold chains sits on her hips and matches the color of her aviator-style glasses. She wears her hair in an Afro, a popular style at the time, and one that suggests her pride in her African American heritage. The background gives us no information about the scene around her, and we are left to imagine where she is standing.

Hendricks painted *Miss T* early in his career, before pursuing his graduate degree at Yale University. While visiting major museums in Europe during a trip in 1966, the artist noticed the lack of black figures in European and American art. When he returned home to Philadelphia, he sought to change this and began making life-size portraits of people of color, such as this compelling painting.

About Barkley L. Hendricks

Born and raised in North Philadelphia, Barkley L. Hendricks is best known for his realistic life-size portraits of confident, stylish individuals, often people of color. He studied painting at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and Yale University before becoming a professor at Connecticut College. Working from both live models and photographs, Hendricks pays particular attention to his subjects' style and attitude, and includes details that speak to each person's individuality, such as a certain pose, accessory, or hairstyle. Combining a traditional approach to painting with his personal experiences, he creates portraits that invite us to get to know his charismatic subjects.



Photograph by Chris Hildreth

Curriculum Connections

Art and Math

Life-Size Portraits (upper elementary through high school)

Create a life-size portrait of yourself or someone you know. Include details that are unique to the person. Working from a photograph, use a grid system to enlarge the image to life-size.

Art

Portraiture (adaptable for all grades)

Compare and contrast the portraits included in this resource: the profiles by Moses Williams, Henry Ossawa Tanner's portrait of his mother, and *Miss T*. What does each artist tell us about his subject? How do the materials and artistic styles of each artist differ? What do they have in common? If you had your portrait made, which artist would you select, and why?

Social Studies

Black Is Beautiful Movement (high school)

Investigate the Black Is Beautiful movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which celebrated the natural beauty of African Americans. When did it begin, and how did the ideas spread? What were the messages? After completing your research, look again at *Miss T* and reconsider your perceptions of her. What new ideas do you have?

Language Arts

Powerful Women (high school)

Read and discuss Maya Angelou's poem, "Phenomenal Woman," written about a decade after Hendricks painted *Miss T*. What does Angelou celebrate about being a woman? How would you describe her voice and the tone of the poem? What similarities and differences do you find between the poem and *Miss T*?

Interview (upper elementary through high school)

Imagine you could interview Miss T. What would you ask her? Brainstorm a list of questions, either individually or as a class, and write the answers that you think she would give.

A PowerPoint slideshow with all of the resource images can be found on the enclosed CD.

⁶ Benjamin Genocchio, "Pop Art Meets Photorealism," *New York Times*, January 27, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/27/nyregion/nyregionspecial2/27artsubct.html?_r=1&