

You are looking at the painting entitled *Interlude*, by John Koch. Koch painted this large oil on canvas, which measures about 50 inches high by 39 inches wide, in 1963. It is set within a traditional, muted gold frame. This mid-century realist painting depicts the artist and an African American female model in his New York City apartment, taking a break from their work. A white woman in a red housecoat serves a cup of tea to the model. The model—in the immediate foreground of the painting—is posed nude, sitting with her back to us. In the background, Koch has painted himself relaxing on a loveseat with a drink in his hand as he examines his large canvas in progress.

In the center of the immediate foreground, the slender model's back dominates our view. She is seated at the far edge of a daybed, which is draped with a white sheet. The model extends her left arm with her palm and fingertips facing up, prepared to take the cup of tea. Her head is slightly turned to face the teacup. Her straight black hair is pulled back into a French twist and gold earrings dangle from her ears. The model's right hand rests on the edge of the daybed with her arm slightly bent at the elbow. On her back, we see the defined indentations of her spine. The model's narrow waist and the curved top of her buttocks and hips are visible above the folds of the sheet.

In front of the model, in the middle-ground of the painting stands the older woman dressed in a scarlet red, full-length housecoat. She extends a white porcelain teacup and saucer toward the model's outstretched arm. The woman's face is pale and her eyes are downcast as she peers at the teacup. Her mouth is relaxed in a gentle smile. Her graying hair is pulled back and the crisp lines of her robe contrast with the dark colors in the rest of the painting. Just behind and slightly to the left of the woman, a tray with a martini pitcher and white teapot sits on a wooden, pedestal table. A Queen Anne chair stands directly behind the table, and its graceful lines reflect the curves and hues of the model's back.

In the far background, across the apartment's well-polished hardwood floors and to the left of the chair, is an alcove. To the right of the alcove, Koch is seated on a gold-colored loveseat with his legs outstretched to the right. Behind the artist, we eventually notice that

a black-framed mirror fills almost the entire the back wall of the large room. We then perceive that what originally appeared to be behind the sofa is actually the reflection of the opposite side of the room. Reflected in this mirror, we see two tall casement windows with a distant view of what we recognize as the New York City skyline. Also dimly reflected are a table, a lamp, and the curved back of a wooden chair as well as a gooseneck floor lamp and a small corner of Koch's painting Koch in progress.

Our view of Koch is partially blocked by the woman serving tea and by the model's head. He is holding a glass in his right hand, and extends his left arm across the back of the loveseat. He is turned to the right and is gazing at his unfinished canvas. The gooseneck floor lamp, directly in front of his outstretched legs, illuminates both the canvas and a stool holding the artist's palette and brushes. The canvas sits on a large wooden easel facing the artist. Aside from the reflected corner in the mirror, we only see the back of the canvas.

American painter John Koch, who lived from 1909-1978, was a well-known New York City society portrait painter. The painting was a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas H. Hawks.

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