



Suggested for Grade 3 and up, or the entire family!

An Unfinished Portrait: Making a Good Impression

Have you ever started a project and then left it unfinished?

Many artists have! Look at the unfinished portrait of colonial Boston silversmith Nathaniel Hurd by artist John Singleton Copley below. Museum visitors love this painting because it shows the artist's working method. What parts did the artist focus on and complete? What details were never completed?



Nathaniel Hurd (1730–1778) worked as a silversmith, goldsmith, and engraver. Skilled craftsmen were well respected and often very wealthy.

It is interesting that Hurd is portrayed in his work clothes—no jacket, shirtsleeve rolled up—rather than in more formal clothing reflecting his respected position in Boston society.

Did the painter decide to not finish this portrait, or did Hurd stop the project, not wanting to be seen in this informal way?

John Singleton Copley, *Unfinished Portrait of Nathaniel Hurd* (1729–1777), ca. 1765.
Oil on canvas. Marion Stratton Gould Fund. 1944.2

Nathaniel Hurd belonged to a family of silversmiths, and was a prominent citizen at a time when the city was a hotbed of revolutionary activity. He also knew fellow artisan and future revolutionary legend Paul Revere.

When war with England broke out in 1775, Hurd lost much of his business but stayed active as a firefighter protecting Boston homes and neighborhoods from the British.

For more information about Hurd, Boston, and Copley, see [MAG's *Seeing America* teaching resource](#).

Your chance to finish the painting on the next page!

Finish the portrait of Nathaniel Hurd in your own way!

You can continue with an historical style or update with details from today, as if Hurd was living now.



John Singleton Copley, *Unfinished Portrait of Nathaniel Hurd* (1729–1777), ca. 1765.
Oil on canvas. Marion Stratton Gould Fund. 1944.2

See the next page for the finished version of Nathaniel Hurd's portrait!

Finished Portrait



MAG's unfinished work is dated circa 1765 (means "about 1765"). Around the same time the artist was working on another portrait of Nathaniel Hurd. This one was finished and is now in the Cleveland Museum of Art's collection.

What differences do you notice?

John Singleton Copley, *Nathaniel Hurd*, c. 1765. Oil on canvas. The Cleveland Museum of Art. Gift of the John Huntington Art and Polytechnic Trust 1915.534

Create your own self-portrait!

How will you present yourself in an artwork? Nathaniel Hurd is portrayed with books next to him. What items will you include in your portrait?

More unfinished artworks at MAG

Next time you visit MAG, look for these two other unfinished portraits. What parts are not completed? Why do you think these paintings were never finished?



Left: George Romney, *Eleanor Todd, Lady Maitland (1762–1856)*, after 1782. Oil on canvas. George Eastman Collection of the University of Rochester, 1977.2

Right: Jacob Jordaens, *Portrait of Elizabeth Jordaens, Daughter of the Artist*, ca. 1640. Oil on canvas. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Fred W. Geib, 1974.102