

# VIRTUAL DATE NIGHT

DALLAS MUSEUM OF ART

## CONVERSATION STARTERS



*College of Animals* is one of the more mysterious paintings in the DMA's collection. It was completed by the Dutch artist Cornelis Saftleven in 1655 as a satire about popular pastimes like academic clubs, curio collecting, and romantic poetry; however, many of the exact references are lost to history, only resonating with audiences of Saftleven's time.

Take a moment to look closely at this painting—there's a lot to see and there are a lot of dark areas with hidden details. **Click on the image above to visit our online collection, where you can really zoom in.**

- Which detail are each of you initially drawn to? Why?
- If you had to single out one emotion that you feel when looking at this painting what would it be? What do you see that makes you say that?
- A couple of figures look directly at you, the viewer, as if you interrupted the gathering. For what purpose do you think this group of animals has gathered? Try collaborating on a story about what is happening here.
- If Saftleven was making this painting today in the US, what are some things about American society that he might satirize?



This photograph is part of a series by the American artist Charlie White called *In a Matter of Days*. The series documents a grotesque breed of monsters invading Los Angeles. Each photograph in the series has been digitally manipulated, calling into question which details are real and which are invented. **Click on the image above to visit our online collection, where you can really zoom in.**

- Does this scene remind you of anything you have seen before, perhaps in a movie or TV show?
- The artist creates a sense of unease in this photograph by combining elements of the ordinary and the surreal, peaceful and dangerous. Where do you see examples of each?
- If a photograph is a moment frozen in time, what do you think happened right before this moment and right after?
- Much of White's work reflects on the ideas of fear and monsters; his creatures are a stand-in for the anxieties and internal demons that individuals and societies contend with. What types of universal fears might he be referring to?

Images: Cornelis Saftleven, *College of Animals*, 1655, oil on canvas, Dallas Museum of Art, the Karl and Esther Hoblitzelle Collection, gift of the Hoblitzelle Foundation, 1987.32; Charlie White, *The Inland Empire*, 1999, Lightjet chromogenic print mounted on Plexiglas, Dallas Museum of Art, Mary Margaret Munson Wilcox Fund, 1999.180

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