

Artist: Donna Loos (Little Shell, 1931–2018), from the exhibition [Love Letters to the Collection](#).

Artwork: *Family Watch*, by Donna Loos (Little Shell, 1931–2018)

Materials: Chalk, water, paintbrush, yourself

Age range: The whole family!

About this artwork:

During her solo exhibition at MAM in 2009–2010, Loos described work from the **Silhouette Series**: "I tried to keep a blank mind and to paint unconsciously or subconsciously, or rather, to paint the negative space around a shape. I left the shape dark, and then studied the composition for a while, looking for shapes as I would look for shapes in a summer cloud. Later I understood that I had painted my autobiography."



Donna Loos (Little Shell, 1931–2018), *Family Watch*, acrylic on canvas, 2001, 43.75 x 63.5." MAM Contemporary American Indian Art Collection, donated by the artist, copyright the estate of Donna Loos, 2018.14.

Prompt:

The artist called her silhouette series autobiographical. **An autobiography is the story of your own life, told by YOU.** What people or objects are a part of your autobiography? Grab a family member, a special toy, your favorite books, or anything else that is important to describing part of your life story. Once you have decided what you want to include, take your materials (or family members!) outside to the sidewalk.

Steps:

1. **Arrange** your materials on the sidewalk. You can have everything facing the same direction, like Donna Loos' silhouetted figures, or you can choose your own arrangement.
2. Use chalk or a paintbrush and water to **trace outlines** of your family or objects.
3. **Fill in your silhouette** autobiography with more chalk, water, or anything else you might find outside, like leaves, grass, and sticks! Consider how you will create a contrast between the outlines of your silhouettes and the area surrounding them. Donna Loos uses color to contrast the figures in her painting, but you can also create contrast through incorporating different materials or textures.
4. When you are finished, **give your piece a title.** What would you title your own autobiography?
5. **Share** your art on social media using the hashtag **#mamloveletters** so we can repost it! If you want to write a love letter along with your image you are invited to send it directly to the artwork at the email address: FamilyWatch@missoulaartmuseum.org

