



# WHAT IF?

## FAMILY GUIDES

Scientists, architects, and artists often ask *What If?*

- What if man could fly like a bird?
- What if we could communicate with someone on the other side of the world—in seconds?
- What if a post office could become an art museum?

In 1941, a group of prominent and passionate Santa Barbara citizens asked that question and created the Santa Barbara Museum of Art from what was once a post office.

Today, the Museum is undergoing an exciting renovation project that will increase gallery and public space including new interactive spaces for families.

In both 1941 and today, the answer to *What If?* became *Why Not?*—and that simple question made things happen!

Use these *What If?* Cards to explore the Museum with friends and family. We hope they spark ideas and inspire conversation about the possibilities and power of art, where the only limit is your imagination.

# WHAT IF?





# WHAT IF A PAINTING HELD A SECRET?



This painted portrait of Jane Rouvert is part of a pair. The other portrait is of her husband, Edmond. They were meant to hang side by side.

**Hidden inside this portrait is a smaller painting. Can you find it?**

Look for a tiny locket in Jane's hand, a miniature painting of her Edmond, held lovingly, almost like she is cradling a child.

By including this miniature painting in the larger one, the artist, James Peale, is not only showing the closeness of this husband and wife, but is also making a pun or joke about himself. He was best known as a painter of miniatures, so he is leaving his calling card within this depiction of a loving couple.

**How do we carry around pocket-sized images of our loved ones today?**





The French artist, Claude Monet, painted this scene while looking out of his hotel window at the nearby Waterloo Bridge on the River Thames in London.

**Can you see any boats, people, or buildings?**

Rather than paint every detail, Monet was trying to give us a quick idea of what the day was like—an impression. For this reason he is associated with a group of like-minded painters called Impressionists. The Impressionists liked to paint outdoors to capture the way that sunlight changes the colors we see.

**What colors did Monet use in this painting?**

**When you stand back from the painting, does it get clearer or fuzzier as you move away?**



# WHAT IF A POET COULD BE A KING?



This image is a photographic portrait of a real person, Sir Henry Taylor, taken in the late 1800s when photography was still a new medium. The subject was a poet and playwright and close friend and neighbor of the photographer, Julia Margaret Cameron.

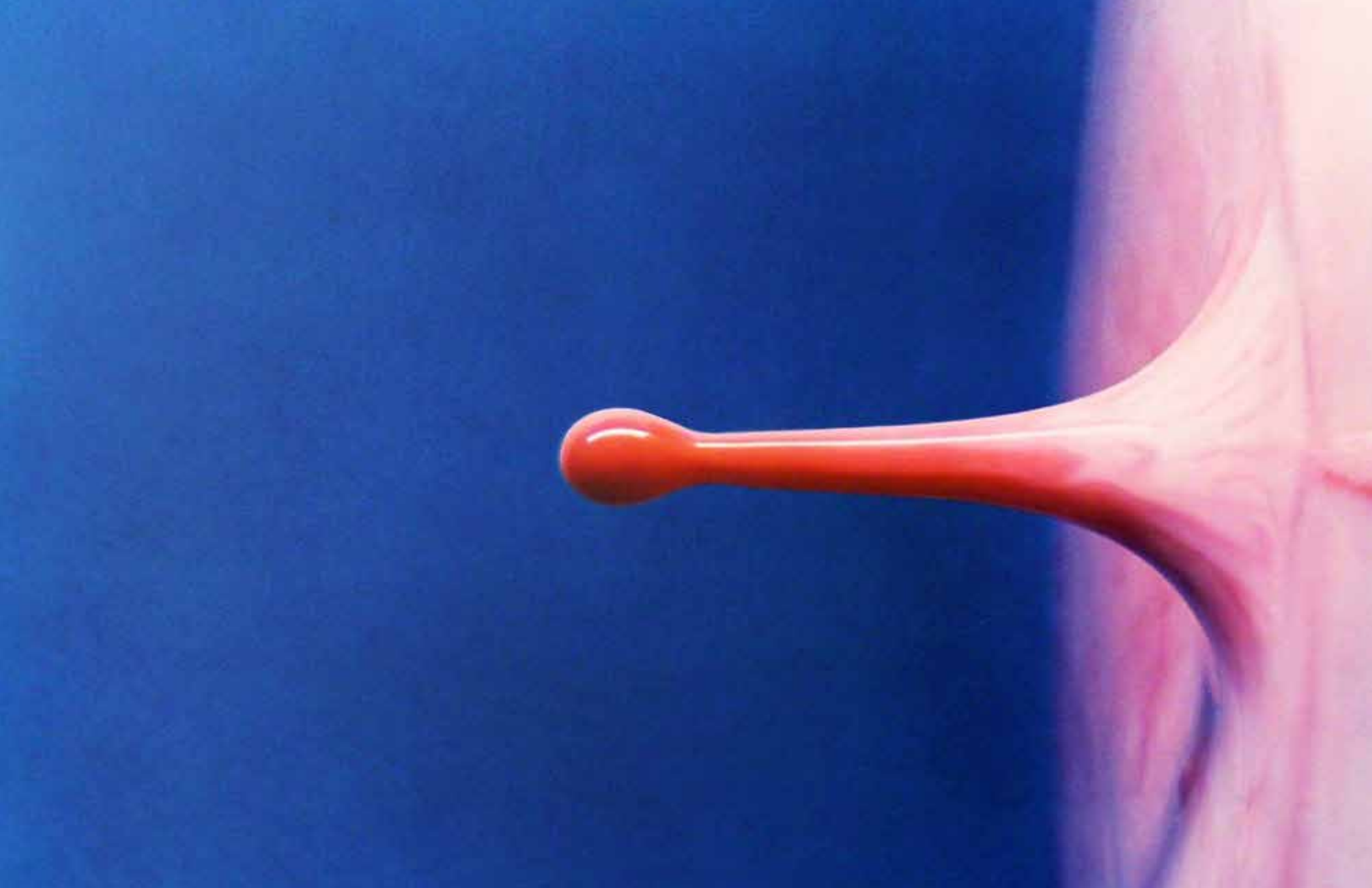
Although he is recognizable as himself (especially by his long white beard!) he is also playing a role, in this case posing as the Biblical King David. Cameron often asked her friends to pose in costume as various biblical and literary characters.

**Have you ever played “dress up” and then photographed yourself in costume? Perhaps for Halloween?**

Cameron went beyond costumes and tried to capture emotion or mood as well.

**What mood does this photograph express? How does it make you feel?**





# WHAT IF ART COULD STOP TIME?



**What is going on in this photograph? What color and motion do you see?**

A drop of red cranberry juice rises out of white milk. The brief close-up exposure, taken at the same speed needed to freeze a bullet, reveals a moment when the two fluids intermix. The photographer, Harold Edgerton, was fascinated with capturing high speed motion that was too fast for the naked eye to see (bullets, liquids, football kicks, smoke, and more.) He made beautiful images but was also interested in looking for new ways to use photography for scientific research.

**What do you use photography for?**

He was not only an artist and scientist, but also a beloved teacher who earned the affectionate nickname “Papa Flash.” Edgerton said about teaching, “The trick to education is to teach people in such a way that they don’t realize they’re learning until it’s too late.”

**Do you agree or disagree?**



# WHAT IF A HOUSE TURNED UPSIDE DOWN?



This sculpture was made by the artist Martin Kersels, to be installed in a specific place in the Museum. It hangs above visitors' heads when they walk through the door at the Museum's Park Wing entrance. Kersels had to balance various objects he found or constructed himself so they would hover overhead. Some seem heavy, while others seem to float like clouds.

## How does it feel to stand under the sculpture?

Kersels said he liked to strike a balance between humor, enjoyment, fun, and anxiety or a little bit of discomfort.

**Does it make you laugh or feel a little bit nervous? What do you think the shapes represent? Do you recognize some of them from daily life? What part of the sculpture surprises you the most? If you had to give it a title, what would it be?**

Kersels called it *Charms*, relating it to good luck charms we might carry for protection, or wear as decoration in a charm bracelet—a way of remembering special events in our lives.

**Do you have a good luck charm or charm bracelet? How is it similar to or different from Kersels' *Charms*?**