

Title of Tour: *Esteemed Animals*

Brief Tour Planning Worksheet for Group Tour

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INTRODUCTION: Provide a warm welcome to visitors, introduce yourself, give a general introduction to the museum, and discuss museum rules. Then clearly state the theme and goals of the tour and give a short preview of what will be learned/discussed.

Welcome esteemed guests. Thank you for joining us today at Mia as we explore the theme of esteemed animals in the art of Africa and the Americas.

Ancient cultures from these areas valued and respected animals for a variety of reasons. We will explore these cultures' veneration of animals in two categories. The first is practical, as sources of transportation and food. The second category is as a spiritual bridge to the deified forces of nature. Used this way, animals were seen to refer their divine characteristics to humans. Animals are a special and pervasive feature of the art of both Africa and the Americas. Sometimes animals in this role manifest themselves as composite mythological creatures from the spiritual realm. Animals can also become companion or guardian figures, often seen as vehicles into the afterlife. We will also touch on how wild animals can become endangered specifically because of how much they are valued.

Let's start in eastern Africa around the 10th century. Here we'll take a look at an introduced domesticated animal in Africa.

ORGANIZATION: (Order your 6-8 objects into a logical tour route, both spatially and thematically. Keep in mind the overall theme and think about connections between objects that will facilitate transitions.)

1. Equestrian Figure	83.168	Joan
2. Benin Tusk	56.33	Julie
3. Egyptian Broad Collar	27.42.4	Jennifer
4. Mimbres Bowls	2014.97.1	Terry
5. Underwater Panther Vessel	2004.33	Angie
6. Dog, Colima	99.57.3	Brenda
7. Maya Vase	2000.195	Meg

Alternate #1 Benin (Edo) Water Pitcher, 58.9

Alternate #2 Owl Vessel, 44.41.8

Transitions: (1-2 sentences that make a smooth transition between one object and the next, allowing your audience to make connections and follow the tour more easily.)

Transition between 1 and 2:

We have seen how an introduced animal was used to enhance the importance of its owner. Now let's look at an object made from a native animal of Africa. This animal was, and still is, esteemed for its majesty and intelligence.

Transition between 2 and 3:

We have seen the sculptural depictions of the highly valued horse from Mali and the much admired elephant from the kingdom of Benin. We will now see why Ancient Egyptians used a bird motif to make a stunning piece of wearable art.

Transition between 3 and 4:

We have looked at this broad collar from ancient Egypt with the revered falcon representing the god Horus and his protection of the deceased in the afterlife. Now we'll head to the Americas, to explore the use of animal imagery on Mimbres bowls.

Transition between 4 and 5:

We looked at stylized animals on the Mimbres bowls used as funerary objects. Now we will see how the Mississippian culture used mythological animals in funerary objects.

Transition between 5 and 6:

We've just seen how the Quapaw venerated a mythological creature in part by using its effigy in funerary art. Now let's head across the gallery and look at an animal that was esteemed for its utilitarian and mythological characteristics.

Transition between 6 and 7:

This vase was used by the Maya to make a frothy drink using cocoa. It's decorated with monkeys that were esteemed both for their role in the growing of cacao and also as gods of the arts and writing. In the next case, we'll find a couple of animal figurines that were admired by the Colima culture for quite different reasons.

Transition between 7 and 8:

NA

CONCLUSION: Use your conclusion to summarize the key points of your tour/theme and recall a few of the objects seen. Also give your audience ideas for future learning, identify any new skills the group may have learned on the tour that can be applied in other learning situations/museum experiences, and encourage them to return for further exploration.

Thank you for joining us on our tour of Esteemed Animals of Africa and the Americas. As we have seen, these cultures depicted animals in their art for a variety of reasons: to impress, to educate, to connect the viewer to the greater “life spirit,” even to capture the essence of the animal for use in the afterlife as a guide, guardian, or even to provide sustenance in the next world. The peoples of Africa and the Americas did not see themselves as distinct from the animal world, but instead saw both humans and animals as part of the larger spirit of the divine.