

# Welcome to Art Adventure

## What is Art Adventure?

Art Adventure is a program that engages students with artworks from the Minneapolis Institute of Art's collection. Through the support of thousands of trained volunteers, Art Adventure brings visual arts into K–6 classrooms across Minnesota and beyond. The program encourages creativity, critical thinking, and global awareness through in-depth explorations of art across various cultures and time periods. Art Adventure is an opportunity for students to experience art up close and personal through reproductions, technology, and touch-and-feel props.

## Who are Picture People?

Picture People bring Art Adventure into classrooms around Minnesota. They are volunteers from the school's community who facilitate discussions about selected artworks, forming a vital link between the museum and children in the schools. Before visiting a classroom, Picture People come to the museum for a training session on the theme and artworks their school will be experiencing that year. They also receive printed background material, learn engagement techniques, and—most importantly—gain knowledge of the original objects they'll soon be introducing to students using reproductions.

## What does the Art Adventure Program do for students?

An evaluation of Art Adventure showed that, in addition to fostering an interest in art, the program fosters five major critical thinking skills. The skills and experiences students gain through Art Adventure will benefit them the rest of their lives.

### 5 Critical Thinking Skills

1. Describe what you see.
2. Notice details.
3. Understand how the parts form a whole idea or artwork.
4. Support interpretations with sufficient reasons.
5. Support opinions or preferences with sound reasons.

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Art Adventure Program  
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# Once You're in the Classroom

## **Relax!**

The information provided in this booklet is intended as background material to help you feel confident when you share artworks with children. Don't feel you have to cover everything. Rather, choose two or three key ideas you think will be compelling. Kids love stories—what stories might you tell? What parallels can you draw to their lives?

## **Be sure everyone can see you and the reproduction.**

Talk with the teacher to understand routines the class follows when gathering for a visitor. Aim for a setup that will get the students as close to the reproduction as possible. Keep the students' eyes on you, too, by making regular eye contact with everyone in the group.

## **Set up the students for successful exploration.**

- Have the children wear nametags so you can call them by name.
- Set your own preferences aside to allow students to form their own opinions.
- Encourage the students to take turns speaking.
- Paraphrase what the students have said to let them know that you have been listening and help clarify each student's statement for the class.

## **Begin each discussion with a moment of silent looking.**

Begin by introducing the lesson, yourself, and the reproductions. Review with the class what a museum is and what you'll be doing with them. You might build suspense by keeping each image hidden. Start by having the students observe the artwork in total silence. Model your expectations by spending time quietly looking, too.

## **Give students time to talk about what they have observed.**

Start with questions like "What's going on here?" and "What do you see that makes you say that?" Be sure to use your finger to point to the part of the picture the child is talking about. Paraphrase his or her words to clarify the observation for others. You'll be surprised how quickly students learn to justify their comments with evidence they can see in the picture! Asking "What else can you find?" or connecting historical content can help generate further comments.

## **Connect your key ideas to the students' observations.**

When the students' observations begin to slow down, use what you've learned about their interests to steer the discussion toward your key ideas. Try to ask questions that will draw connections between what they have said and what you would like them to consider. If they pose questions you can't answer, admit it! Brainstorm ways you might find out together.

## **Keep the age of your class in mind.**

Don't expect young children to be able to focus for longer than 20 minutes. Plan your presentations accordingly. Consider your grade level's ability to understand time—will students understand a date or phrase such as "colonial times" (fifth graders might) or should you stick with "a long time ago" or "about 100 years ago"? Keep in mind that younger children are more likely to accept the abstract than older students, who may want concrete content.

## **Talk to other Picture People.**

Experienced Picture People have great ideas about how to capture the imagination of a class. Don't hesitate to borrow and adapt their suggestions, but remember to bring your own creativity along, too.

# Talking about Art

**These questions encourage students to look closely and find their own meaning and relevance in works of art. This process fosters the development of the five Critical Thinking Skills listed on page 1. Please keep in mind that not every question will work for every artwork.**

**What do you see in this artwork?  
What else can you find?**

This is the best line of questioning to begin conversations with K-2 students. For students who seem ready to dive deeper ask, “What do you see that makes you say that?”

**What’s going on in this picture?  
What do you see that makes you say that?**

You’ll notice this question is different than “What do you see?” “What’s going on?” invites a consideration of relationships and interactions and taps into children’s natural interest to find stories. “What do you see that makes you say that?” focuses comments on the evidence in the artwork and helps kids explain their assumptions.

**How would you feel if you were “in”  
this work of art?**

What would you hear? How might this feel if you could touch it? What path would you take through the picture? What do you see that makes you say that?

**What does this artwork remind you of?**

What would you use this object for? What about this scene is familiar or unfamiliar to you? What do you see that makes you say that?

**What person or object in this picture do you  
think was most important to the artist?**

What are people in the picture looking at?  
Where are there bright colors? What is biggest?

**How would the artwork be different if you  
could make a change?**

What would happen if you changed a color?  
Moved an object or person? Left something out?

**How is this work of art similar to or different  
from another one you’ve seen in this set?**

“Compare and contrast” encourages close looking and reinforces the theme. Get together with your fellow volunteers to coordinate some provocative pairs.

**How does this work of art relate to the  
theme of the set?**

Let the students pull it all together! What connections do they see between the theme and what they’ve noticed and learned about the work of art?

**What do you like most about this artwork?  
Why? What do you like least?**

If you could keep one artwork from this set, what artwork would you pick? Why?

# Using Touch-and-Feel Props

## Why props?

Students normally first encounter the Art Adventure artworks in their classrooms as reproductions. The works of art appear to be two-dimensional and similar in size. Props accompany many of the reproductions to help overcome this limitation. Touching a material similar to the artwork, seeing the technique used to create it, or looking at a photograph in which the object is being used adds another dimension to the experience. The use of props reinforces the understanding of all learners through hands-on experiences.

## How should you use props?

Without careful planning, props will do little but distract your group. Use these helpful tips to lead a successful exploration:

- Present the prop alongside information about an artwork or to help answer a question about the artwork.
- There are a number of ways to use the prop:
  1. Pass the prop around to each student. Give the students a question to consider while they are waiting for the prop and one to consider after they have held the prop.
  2. Ask a single student to come forward and describe how it feels to the whole group.
  3. Hold the prop yourself and walk it around the group for the students to touch or look at closely.
  4. Hold the prop yourself to illustrate relevant parts of the discussion.
  5. Give everyone a chance to examine it more closely at the end of your presentation.
- Clear communication of your expectations is essential to keep the students focused on the activity. Let the students know that they will need to take turns, what they should do if it's not their turn, and how they should treat the props.
- After the students have explored the prop, refer to the experience as you continue the discussion.
- Don't forget to plan how you'll get the props back from the students! Schools are charged significant fees for missing or badly damaged props and reproductions.



# People and Their Environments

People react to the world around them in everything they do. *People and Their Environments* focuses on six works of art that reveal some aspect of their creator's relationship with the natural and built environment. The objects may have been shaped by what materials were at hand for the artist to use, or a reaction to the uncertainties of the natural world. They may reveal an objective desire to record the look and feel of a place, or a sensuous pleasure in the landscape. They may capture the rapid change of the modern built environment, or the steady constancy of nature's truths. Considered together, the six objects in this set introduce us to various facets of our place in the world.

# Prop Kit Contents

<b>Work of Art</b>	<b>Prop</b>	<b>Replacement Cost</b>
China, Rock garden	Detail from scroll depicting Chinese scholars in a garden (Exalted Gathering in the Green Woods, about 1620, Minneapolis Institute of Art)	\$10
Paul Gauguin, <i>Tahitian Landscape</i>	Photograph of the island Moorea, Tahiti	\$10
Berenice Abbott, <i>New York at Night</i>	Image of New York in 1920	\$10
Canaletto, <i>Grand Canal</i>	Plexiglas grid to demonstrate relative size of boats as they recede into the distance	\$30
Nellie Two Bears Gates, Suitcase	Photograph of display Photograph of the reverse side of the suitcase Sample of beads	\$10 \$10 \$15
Bamana, Mali	Photograph of antelope	\$10
Tyiwara headcrest	Photograph of aardvark and pangolin	\$10
Artwork Reproductions (6)		\$50

Please make sure that you have enclosed all of the items on this list when you return the prop kit. You will be responsible for the cost of replacing any missing or damaged items. Thank you!

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**China, Jiangsu Province, Lake Tai Region, Tang-li  
Rock garden, replica of 1700s garden, tile, rock, and plants  
Gift of Ruth and Bruce Dayton, 98.61.2  
216 x 226 x 528 in. (548.64 x 574.04 x 1341.12 cm)**





## Key Ideas

**The garden was an essential element of the lifestyle of the literati [leh-te-RAH-tee], China's upper class of scholar-officials. This rock garden occupied a small courtyard attached to the study of one such scholar. The study and garden created an environment in which to enjoy the scholarly pleasures of poetry, calligraphy, and painting as an escape from the strictly ordered world of official life. This small courtyard garden served to evoke the wildness of nature, just as a poem or painting might, in his and others' imaginations.**

## The Literati

When this garden was originally built in the 1700s, the tradition of the literati was well established in China. This prestigious class of scholars arose during the Tang [tahng] dynasty (618–907), with the institution of a rigorous civil service examination to select people who possessed the best minds for government positions. After years of study in philosophy, literature, and history, those who successfully passed the examination might become officials of the government. Whether they took an official position or not, the literati prided themselves on their cultivated interest in the arts, especially calligraphy, poetry, and painting.

## An Escape for the Imagination

In their official duties, the literati conformed to the orderly hierarchies of Confucianism at the foundation of Chinese social structure. However, the contrasting philosophy of Taoism [DOW-ism] is at the heart of their scholarly pursuits and their interest in a garden like this one. Whereas Confucianism emphasizes the individual's place in society, Taoism speaks to the individual's unity with the natural world.

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The ideal Taoist was a recluse living in rugged isolation on a mountaintop, at one with the forces of nature. Such hermits were commonly the subject of the literati's poetry and paintings.

## The Scholar and His Garden

Some scholars actually did give up their official duties to live as hermits in the wilderness; others evoked the experience by building gardens within the comfort of their own homes. As Ji Cheng [jee chung] wrote in the *Yuan Ye* [yu-en yeh], a 1634 treatise on the craft of gardens, the purpose of having a garden in the city was "to live as a hermit even in the middle of a marketplace." The traditional Chinese courtyard-style house made it entirely possible to achieve this sense of isolation. The courtyard complex consisted of small buildings clustered around open courtyards, all surrounded by high walls that kept street life far at bay. Some of the open courtyards were devoted to gardens. These gardens could be small little nooks, like this one, or very complex landscapes, with ponds, bridges, and small buildings.

## A Passion for Rocks

Rocks were vital components of any garden, and the more unusual the better. Most of the rocks in this garden are Taihu [tie hoo] rocks from the bottom of Lake Tai. Taihu rocks were particularly desirable among literati. These limestone boulders have been worn away by water and sand over centuries to become complex shapes filled with curves and cavities. The great popularity of these rocks encouraged craftspeople to add to the natural supply by carving rocks to resemble the Taihu boulders and dropping them in the water to age for several years. These "artificial" rocks had much less value among rock connoisseurs, who collected rocks in the same way they might collect art. This garden also includes rocks known as "bamboo rocks" for their tall thinness. The passion for rocks ("petromania") peaked in

the Tang dynasty (618–907) and again in the Qing [ching] dynasty (1644–1911), the period from which this courtyard dates.

## How to Build a Rock Garden

Garden design was an expression of the scholar's personal sensibilities. The *Yuan Ye* manual advises that the garden's design be approached as an artist would approach a painting: "Take the whitened wall [of the courtyard] as the painting paper, and paint it with rocks." Rocks might be configured to resemble a mountain scene. When skillfully arranged, rock clusters suggest the drama of nature.

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For example, a rock balanced so that it is wide on top and tapering toward the bottom to look "dangerous but without risk" was greatly admired. Also praised were rock forms with many holes and surfaces for the viewer to "pass through" in an imaginary stroll through this fantastic landscape. In the past, a mixture of glutinous rice and tung oil was used to bind the rocks together. Great care had to be taken in choosing rocks that fit together snugly and gracefully. Cement is used today, but great skill and care are still required to set the rocks.

## The Meaning of the Rocks

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### **The design of a garden is a means for the gardener's personal expression; likewise, viewers of the garden are expected to bring their own interpretations to it.**

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The design of a garden is a means for the gardener's personal expression; likewise, viewers of the garden are expected to bring their own interpretations to it. A grouping of rocks may remind one of an actual landscape, symbolize sacred mountains, or suggest the rocky island home of a Buddhist deity. Though usually suggestive of mountains, rock formations may also be appreciated as "natural sculptures" of animals, birds, or deities. The plants in a garden can also inspire interpretations. The bamboo in this garden, for example, might suggest the qualities of a noble man—"upright and modest, yielding but never breaking, enduring through winter days."

## Recreating the Rock Garden in Minneapolis

In 1996, the Minneapolis Institute of Art purchased a Chinese scholar's study and attached courtyard garden to be rebuilt in its galleries. Although the primary rocks of the garden had disappeared long ago, the base rocks were still in place. Chinese craftspeople came to the United States to recreate the garden using authentic rocks collected from other abandoned gardens in the Lake Tai region. The craftspeople imagined different kinds of animals as they arranged the rocks; look for suggestions of a lion, a turtle, a dog, or a wild boar among the mountainous shapes. The craftspeople also erected a group of rocks outside the windows of the museum's lobby looking out toward 24th Street.

## **Suggested Questions**

1. Look closely. What different things do you see in this garden?
2. Chinese craftspeople built this garden with plants and rocks from Lake Tai. What do you think would be most difficult to do? What would take the most time? What do you see that makes you say that?
3. Look closely at the floor of this garden. It is made of many small rocks placed together to make a pattern, or design, on the floor. What designs or patterns do you see?
4. To relax, the owners of gardens like this one would imagine they were tiny and “walk” around the garden rocks, in and out of the holes. What path would you take? How would it feel? Turn and share your answer with your neighbor.
5. What questions would you like to ask the craftspeople who built this garden? What questions would you like to ask the scholar who owned this garden? Would you like rocks like these in your garden? Why or why not?

**Paul Gauguin, France, 1848–1903**  
***Tahitian Landscape*, 1891, oil on canvas**  
**The Julius C. Eiel Memorial Fund, 49.10**  
**26 ¾ x 36 ⅜ in. (67.95 x 92.39 cm) (canvas)**  
**37 ⅛ x 47 x 3 ¾ in. (94.3 x 119.38 x 9.53 cm) (outer frame)**





## Key Ideas

**Paul Gauguin [go-GAN] spent all of his life trying to “return to nature,” first in the French countryside and then in the exotic South Sea islands. Gauguin sought to be among people who lived close to nature. In the artist’s quest to express the true essence of his environment, he developed a style that was not concerned with painting places and things exactly as they appeared in nature, but rather to paint an emotional response to his surroundings.**

## Imagination, Emotion, and Spirituality

Gauguin went to Tahiti in search of a paradise untouched by urban capitalism, which he felt was artificial and spiritually bankrupt. He wanted to find a remote haven where he could live cheaply and work in nature. Like many artists of his time, Gauguin looked to pre-industrial cultures for artistic inspiration and a lifestyle that was believed to be simple and pure. Instead, Gauguin discovered a thoroughly colonized country whose native culture was fast disappearing as a protectorate of France. Ignoring this reality, Gauguin drew on his imagination to reveal the ideal Tahiti.

Rather than simply describe the natural world, Gauguin explored the realms of emotion, imagination, and spirituality. His paintings evoke an experience or idea in which the meanings cannot be literally represented but rather indirectly suggested. In *Tahitian Landscape*, Gauguin depicts this tropical site with simplified drawing, flattened space, and intense color, in a way that expresses feelings such as serenity and joy.

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Gauguin called his style “Synthetism,” because it synthesized observation of the subject in nature with the artist’s feeling about that subject.

## Escape to the Tahiti

*Tahitian Landscape* dates from Gauguin’s first trip to Tahiti in 1891 and reflects the painter’s initial joy and happiness in his new surroundings, despite his disappointment that much of Tahiti had been colonized by the French. He immersed himself in what he believed to be the authentic aspects of the culture. Painted on the island of Moorea, *Tahitian Landscape* depicts a paradise of palm trees, mountains, and grassy meadows. The scene is rare in that it is one of the painter’s few pure landscapes; only a small, single figure and a dog are depicted in the center of the painting. Gauguin was profoundly affected by his new home; it was a respite from the activity, struggle, and tension of European life.

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He once said of his Tahitian paintings that he had been “eager to suggest a luxurious and untamed nature, a tropical sun that sets aglow everything around it ... the equivalent of the grandeur, depth, and mystery of Tahiti when it must be expressed in one square meter of canvas.”

## Forging a Style for Expression

In order to express his highly personal feelings to the viewer, Gauguin developed a style that broke with centuries of artistic tradition. Based on the use of line and color for emotional rather than descriptive effects, this style combined abstraction, motifs drawn from a variety of traditional cultures, symbolism, and an intentionally naïve child-like drawing style to produce sensuous, evocative works. His work laid the foundation for the development of avant-garde art in the early 1900s.

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*Tahitian Landscape*, while more naturalistic than Gauguin's later works, is still an abstract representation of the scene. Gauguin conceived the landscape as a series of flat shapes superimposed one on top of the other and differentiated by color. Repeated shapes in the mountains, trees, and shrubs help to create a decorative effect and a unified composition. Gauguin carefully placed colors to heighten and intensify the beauty that he saw around him—gardenia, hibiscus, bougainvillea, and palm trees set against a backdrop of mountains and blue sky—to create an expression of harmony and calm.

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**The colors have been carefully placed to heighten and intensify the beauty that Gauguin saw around him.**

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## About the Artist

Paul Gauguin was undoubtedly one of the most flamboyant personalities of his day. Born in Paris to a Peruvian mother and a French father, Gauguin lived in Peru until age 7. As a young man, he spent six years at sea with the Merchant Marine and the navy. These early experiences may have stirred the wanderlust that marked his life.

He lost his job in the stock market in 1882; shortly afterward, he left his wife and five children in hopes of finding an unencumbered lifestyle and to pursue his art full time. After sojourns in Brittany, Panama, Martinique, and Arles, Gauguin sailed for Tahiti in 1891. Though he returned to Paris for two years in 1893, he went back to Tahiti and later moved to the Marquesas, where he died in 1903.

## A Legacy of Experimentation

A potter, sculptor, painter, and printmaker, Gauguin had a tremendous impact on the art of the 1900s. Thanks to his tireless experimentation, he has been identified with a range of stylistic movements; he has been called a Post-impressionist, a Symbolist, and a Synthesist. Toward the end of his life, Gauguin wrote, “The painters who reap benefits of this liberty today owe me something.”

## Suggested Questions

1. Looking at this picture, what words would you use to describe Tahiti? What do you see that makes you say that?
2. Gauguin was more interested in recreating the feeling of a place than showing exactly how it looked. How would it feel to be “inside” this picture? How has he painted that feeling?
3. Imagine you are the person walking on the pathway in this painting. What sounds might you hear in this scene? What kinds of things might you smell in the air? Where are you going to on your walk?
4. Gauguin titled this painting *Tahitian Landscape*. What other titles could he have used? Why? Which would you pick and why?
5. If you were to paint a painting of where you live, what time of year would you choose to paint? Why? What colors would you use to paint your picture?



**Berenice Abbott, United States, 1898–1991**

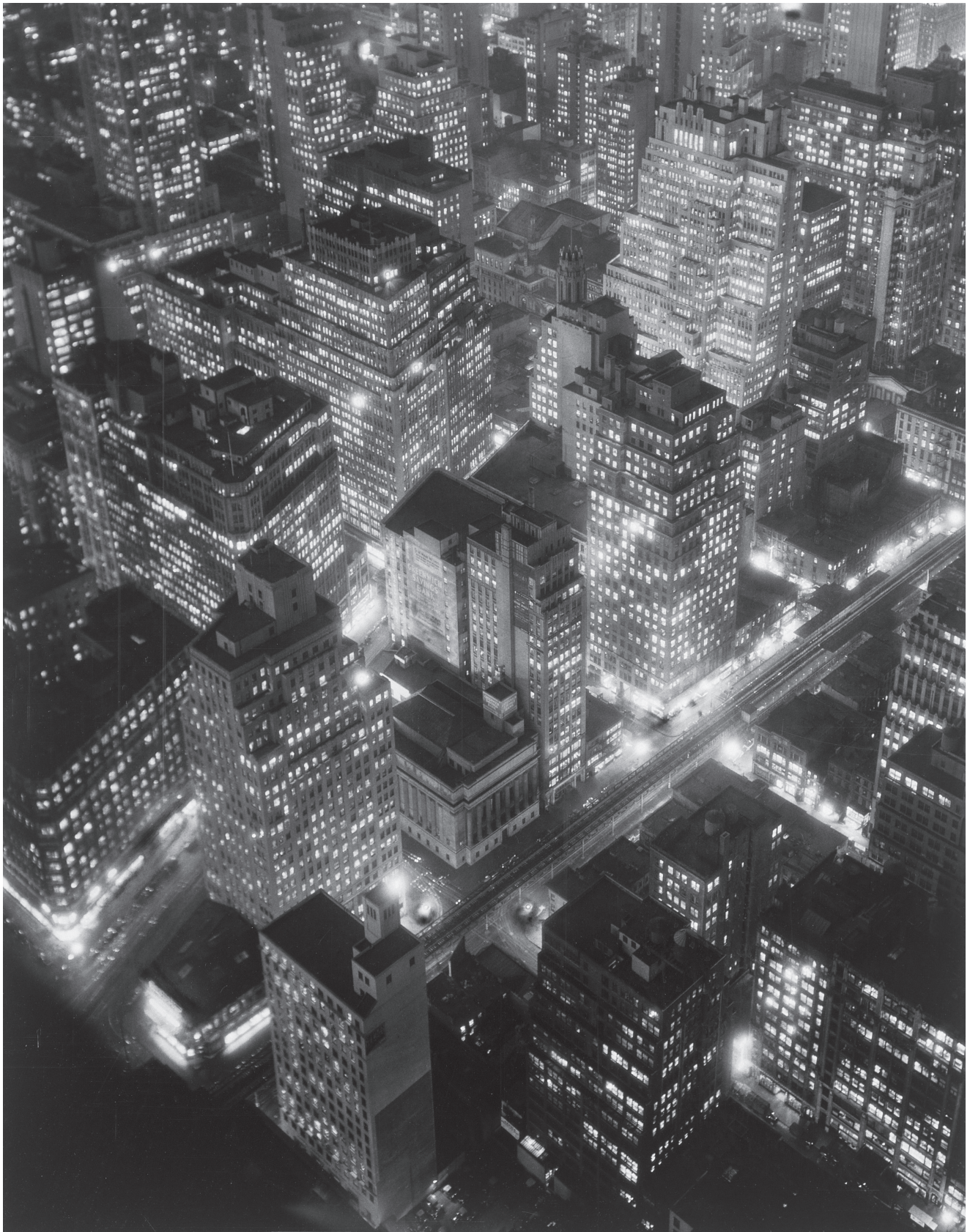
**Publisher: Parasol Press Ltd., New York**

***New York at Night*, 1934, gelatin silver print (printed 1982)**

**Gift of the William R. Hibbs Family, 86.108.37**

**©Berenice Abbott / Commerce Graphics Ltd.**

**9 3/8 x 6 7/8 in. (23.81 x 17.46 cm) (image); 15 x 12 7/16 in. (38.1 x 31.59 cm) (mount)**



## Key Ideas

**Berenice Abbott dedicated herself to photographing the changing environment of New York City in the 1930s. *New York at Night* is one of many photographs Abbott took as a part of a 10-year project titled *Changing New York*. Abbott sought to capture the activity and energy of New York and the people who lived there.**

## Inspiration in Paris

Abbott found her inspiration in the French photographer Eugene Atget [At-ZHEY], whose photographs of Paris documented the city's changing environment at the turn of the century. Abbott met Atget in Paris at the beginning of her career and toward the end of his. Remembering the first time she saw Atget's photographs, she wrote, "Their impact was immediate and tremendous. There was a sudden flash of recognition—the shock of realism unadorned. The real world, seen with wonderment and surprise, was mirrored in each print." Abbott soon opened her own studio and began making portrait photographs. She was talented, successful, and photographed many famous people.

In 1927 she persuaded Atget to pose for a portrait. When she went to show him the prints, she found he had died. Afraid that his photographs would be lost, she purchased all his negatives and prints. In 1929 Abbott went back to America to publish a book about Atget and his Paris photographs. What started as a business trip ended up being a permanent move back to the United States.

## A Changing New York

Abbott was fascinated by the contrast between the old and new ways of life in New York: "The new things that had cropped up in eight years, the sights of the city, the human gesture here sent me mad with joy." She photographed the contrast between the wealthy players of Wall Street and the poor people deeply affected by the Great Depression.

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She was also drawn to the contrast between the old and new architecture. During the eight years she had been in Paris, New York had experienced its second great skyscraper boom. In *New York at Night*, she has captured the contrast between the sleek forms of the new skyscrapers and the decorative ornamentation of the older buildings.

In this photograph, Abbott also emphasizes the contrast between the lights of the buildings and the darkness of the night sky. Abbott had just a few days out of the entire year to maximize this contrast. Only on the shortest days of the year in December would it get sufficiently dark to require office workers to turn on lights. Between 4:30 and 5 p.m. on December 20, 1934, she hung her camera off an upper floor of the Empire State Building. To capture the contrast of dark and light, she calculated the exposure at 15 minutes.



## **The Art of the Documentary Photograph**

Abbott's photographs were both documentary and artistic. Pierre MacOrlan, a writer and friend of Abbott, said the art of documentary photography was capturing contemporary life "at the right moment by an author capable of grasping that moment." Abbott's keen sense of composition allowed her to "grasp" many such moments. We see her artistry in the unusual shift in perspective.

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### **Abbott did not choose to show a city with a typical skyline view, but instead puts the viewer above this vibrant city.**

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Abbott did not choose to show a city with a typical skyline view, but instead puts the viewer above this vibrant city. In this way she succeeds in answering her own question, "How shall the two-dimensional print in black and white suggest the flux of activity of the metropolis, the interaction of human beings and solid architectural constructions, all impinging upon each other in time?"

## **Pursuing a Passion**

Photographing New York was Abbott's passion, and she did it in the face of great odds. Documentary photography was not popularly admired in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and Abbott found it difficult to make ends meet. She was able to devote only one day a week to photographing her city, supporting herself with her portrait photography the other days. When the stock market crashed in 1929, Abbott didn't know how she would pay the rent, let alone continue photographing the city.

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When the Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration was formed in 1935 to provide work for artists and craftspeople, she applied for a grant. Abbott later recalled that the day she learned her project was accepted was the happiest day of her life. She was now able to work full-time and get paid to photograph the city she loved.

The job of photographing the city could be strenuous. For this picture, Abbott rejected her smaller handheld camera in favor of a large-format camera, such as Atget had used in Paris. This type of camera, which exposes an 8 x 10-inch negative, was heavy and slow to operate, but the large format gave her added detail and more control.

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### **Abbott took pictures from interesting and sometimes extreme camera angles.**

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Abbott took pictures from interesting and sometimes extreme camera angles. She would position herself precariously high up for a bird's-eye view, or down low to dodge pedestrians for a worm's-eye view.

## **Suggested Questions**

1. It's hard to see things in the dark; how do you know where the buildings are? Which buildings seem closer to you? Which seem farther away? How can you tell?
2. Photographers are interested not only in what they are taking a picture of (the subject), but also in the arrangement of shapes, lines, and colors (the composition). What shapes do you see in this picture? Where do you see places where several small shapes work together to form bigger shapes?
3. Berenice Abbott said, "You are photographing people when you are photographing a city, and you don't have to have a person in it." Where are the people in this photograph? What do you see that makes you say that? Are they "in" the picture even if we can't see them?
4. Abbott wanted to photograph the new skyscrapers of New York because they were changing the look and feel of the city. What would you choose to photograph in your community to show how it looks and feels? Where could you go to get a dramatic view? What might be an interesting time of day to take your picture?
5. What would you ask the artist if she were here?

**Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal), Italy, 1697-1768**  
***The Grand Canal in Venice from Palazzo Flangini to Campo San Marcuola***  
**1740, oil on canvas**  
**Bequest of Miss Tessie Jones in memory of Herschel V. Jones, 68.41.11**  
**24 1/8 x 36 3/8 in. (61.28 x 92.39 cm) (canvas)**





## Key Ideas

**In the 1700s, views of Venice were in great demand by tourists enchanted with its unique beauty and luxurious lifestyle. Canaletto was one of the most successful and popular painters of such views, called *vedute* [vehDOO-tay]. In his detailed, realistic manner he produced painstakingly accurate paintings of his environment.**

## Pride of Place

Topography, the portraiture of places, reached its highest point in Europe in the 1700s. In that great age of building, kings and princes, wealthy merchants, and landed gentry were busy reshaping the cities and the houses in which they lived. Pride in their possessions inspired a demand for a visual record of their achievements, just as personal pride made portraiture a characteristic activity of the time. *Vedute*, or view painting, became an important category of painting, valued most highly for its fidelity to the subject.

The 1700s was also an age of travel. Politically, Europe was passing through a period of comparative stability. Wars had far from ceased, but they no longer involved whole populations; religious differences had eased, trade and industry were expanding, and scientific curiosity was developing. People of means became interested in exploring the manners and monuments of those earlier civilizations, regarded as the foundation of a common European culture.

## The Grand Tour

With its rich classical and cultural heritage, Italy inevitably became the main focus of such travel. A large portion of travelers came from England, then the wealthiest country of the Western world, with an expanded seaborne commerce that promoted travel. The Grand Tour, which included the principal cities and sights of Europe, came to be regarded as an important part of any gentleman's education.

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**The Grand Tour, which included the principal cities and sights of Europe, came to be regarded as an important part of any gentleman's education.**

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From these many travelers came a demand for pictorial souvenirs of the places they had visited and the sights they had seen. Some tourists brought their own artists with them to paint whatever scenes took their fancy. Usually, however, the travelers relied upon local talent, and they wanted scenes of the cities as a memento of their visit.

## Destination Venice

Venice, beyond question, was the main center of cityscapes in 1700s Italy. The city was unique in character and retained its ancient splendor. Its civic and religious ceremonies were unrivaled in magnificence, and a constant round of festivities was a part of the social life in every sphere of society. Venice had an efficient government, which saw to the visitors' safety and health, while its hotels were reputed to be the best in Europe. Venice's many visitors wanted souvenir views of the city, and many skillful *vedute* painters met this demand.

## **A Water Highway**

Canaletto shows us a view of Venice from near the head of the Grand Canal that winds its way through the city. Venice's principal economic highway as well as a fashionable promenade, the Grand Canal was lined with palaces alternating with warehouses and churches. All appear in Canaletto's view.

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### **Canaletto shows us a view of Venice from near the head of the Grand Canal that winds its way through the city.**

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On the far left of the painting is the Palazzo Flangini, begun as a grand nobleman's city home but never completed, due to insufficient funds. Beyond the palace are the walled gardens and water facade of the church of San Geremia. The church is flanked by another waterway, the Canareggio, second only to the Grand Canal in importance. One can just make out, from this angle, where the two join at the corner of the walkway in front of the church. The tower of another church, San Marcuolo, may be seen in the distance, and the view of the left bank of the canal ends with the facade of the Palazzo Vendramin-Calergi.

On the right bank is an anonymous-looking structure originally built as a private home, but by the 1700s it served as a warehouse and headquarters for Turkish merchants in the city. Beyond this are the twin obelisks topping the Palazzo Belloni-Battaglia and the round-arched windows that graced the side facade of Palazzo Bembo. Throughout the scene, gondoliers ply their trade, carrying passengers and merchandise in ornate covered "water carriages" or sturdy business-like scows, or work boats. Canaletto has captured a single moment of time forever, freezing gestures in the middle of expression as though engraving them on the visitor's memory.

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### **Canaletto has captured a single moment of time forever, freezing gestures in the middle of expression as though engraving them on the visitor's memory.**

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## Capturing a View

This painting exhibits Canaletto's mature style. Its carefully delineated portrait of this fashionable section of Venice reveals his early training in perspective as well as his skillful use of the camera obscura for preliminary drawings. The camera obscura was a favorite device of topographical painters; a lens projected the image of a view onto a ground glass screen, which could then be traced and used as the basis for drawing or painting.

## About the Artist

Canaletto began his career as a theatrical decorator, painting scenery with his father and brother for local theaters and for the opera. Early in 1720, possibly inspired by the work of Dutch and Flemish landscapists seen on a trip to Rome, Canaletto began to paint the views of Venice that were to become the major contribution of his art.

Throughout his career Canaletto had a steady market for his work, primarily among English patrons. The British consul at Venice, Joseph Smith, also a publisher and art collector, acted as his agent to some extent and published numerous engravings of his paintings. In 1745 Canaletto went to England, where he remained for 10 years.

After his return to Venice in 1755, Canaletto seems to have painted very little, and what he produced is extremely mechanical in style. So popular was his earlier manner of painting, however, that it was kept alive in numerous works produced by Canaletto's nephew and the school of studio assistants Canaletto had once employed. In this way the Venetian *vedute* remained in demand well into the 1800s.

## Suggested Questions

1. What could someone who had never been to Venice learn about the city by looking at this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? How is it different from where you live?
2. Artists use a variety of tricks to show distance. What is near us in this picture? What is far away? How can you tell?
3. What might it feel like to be here? What might you hear? What do you see that makes you say that?
4. If you were sending this picture as a postcard from a trip, what would you write on the back?



**Nellie Two Bear Gates, Ínyan Woslál Háŋ (Standing Rock) Lakota  
Suitcase, 1900s, beads, hide, metal, oilcloth, thread  
The Robert J. Ulrich Works of Art Purchase Fund, 2010.19  
12 ½ x 17 11/16 x 10 ¼ in. (31.75 x 44.93 x 26.04 cm) (closed)**



## Key Ideas

**The environment in which we live greatly shapes each of us. It provides us with a shared history, tradition, and culture. Nellie Two Bears Gates applied traditional Native beadwork to a new medium. Through this beaded suitcase, Gates tells the story of a Lakota courting scene and the practice of branding cattle. This artwork represents the many cultures in which Gates lived and worked.**

### Creativity from Confinement

Nellie Two Bears Gates produced this beaded suitcase around 1880 to 1909. By the 1860s, the U.S. government had forcibly confined Native Americans to reservations, internment camps and, later, boarding schools. The reservation era, between 1880 and 1960, was a time of profound cultural upheaval for Native people. While the reservation period suppressed male artistic traditions, depicting war and hunting, women's arts flourished. Confinement and government bans on many traditional activities created a moment in time that allowed women to work on their art. The result was a tremendous blossoming of beadwork by female artists.

Prior to Native people's confinement on the reservation, beadwork was applied to objects created for use and trade within Native communities. With the introduction of new materials by European-Americans, Native artists continued to experiment, creating marvelous hybrid objects. They meticulously embellished objects of many kinds, like this suitcase, with tiny glass beads. Many Plains artists incorporated new motifs, such as American flags and alphabetic inscriptions, with Native motifs and designs, including tipis and depictions of life on the Plains.

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**Beaded bags were created as honor gifts to be given to family and friends to mark a special occasion, such as a wedding, and also made for the European-American markets.**

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Bags are a common medium for beadwork in the Plains tradition. Portable bags were essential for moving camp and became canvases for bead- and quillwork. Beaded bags were created as honor gifts to be given to family and friends to mark a special occasion, such as a wedding, and also made for the European-American markets.

### Tradition and Innovation

New beaded forms were among the many innovative ways Native artists adopt and adapt European-American goods to Native ways of making art. European traders imported beads to America in the 1800s. Early glass beads were so valuable, they were worth a horse. By the middle of the 1800s, beads had become an integral part of Plains art. Beadwork augmented quillwork to decorate traditional Native clothing, utilitarian goods, and ceremonial objects.

Quillwork consists of plaiting together flattened and dyed porcupine quills into bison, deer, or elk hide. Beads, durable and colorful, are more easily stitched onto hide or cloth than quills. Distinct regional or tribal differences in style and technique developed in beadwork, particularly after Native people were confined to reservations. Lakota beadwork of the late 1800s often had a fully beaded background of one color, commonly blue or white.



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**On this suitcase, Gates applied beads to deer hide and then attached the hide to a commercially made leather and metal suitcase.**

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On this suitcase, Gates applied beads to deer hide and then attached the hide to a commercially made leather and metal suitcase. To create the design, glass beads are attached to buffalo or deer hide several at a time by a technique called the lane stitch.

### Lane Stitch

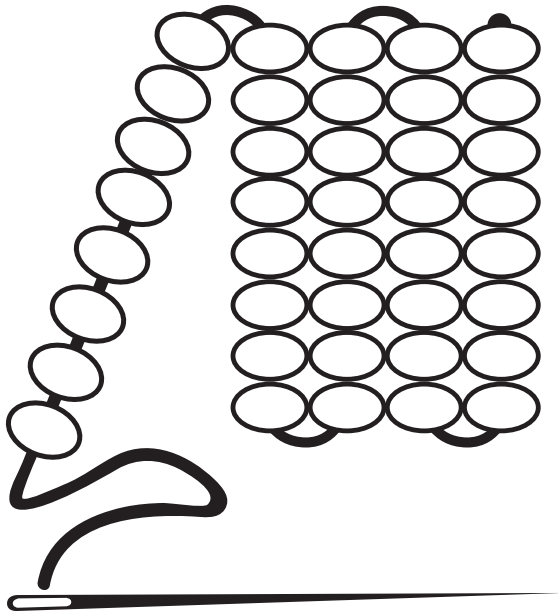


Illustration adapted from "Sioux Style Lazy Stitch Beadwork," by Steve Nimerfro

Originally published in *Moccasin Tracks*, March 1982

To illustrate a story of courtship, Gates uses pictographic conventions usually found on traditional Native painted or drawn works of art. Pictographs are stories told through pictures that had historically been drawn by Plains men. On the Great Plains, men's pictographs usually recorded stories of battle, visionary experiences, hunting, and courting. Women mostly beaded abstract designs, as found atop and on either side of the suitcase. When women did create pictographic imagery, they usually depicted domestic and courting scenes.

### A Story in Beads

One side of this beaded suitcase tells the story of a courtship in two phases. The upper scene shows the suitor with an eagle feather in blue wearing a distinctive pipe bag. He is presenting a gift of many horses, represented by rows of horse heads, to his prospective wife. She stands in a fine red robe beside a row of cooking kettles. The second part of the story appears in the lower half, as a girl in blue leads a gift horse bearing the man's pipe bag to the woman in her camp. Her acceptance of the gift, and the man as her husband, is illustrated by her taking the reins of the horse. She stands beside a rack laden with her handiwork—quilled hides, pipe bags, and beaded blankets. The camp scene, featuring a tipi, depicts a traditional Lakota setting. This tells the story of a union between an accomplished horseman and a woman highly skilled in domestic and fine arts.

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**It is the story of a union between an accomplished horseman and a woman highly skilled in domestic and fine arts.**

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The other side of the suitcase features two cowboys lassoing cattle, both steers with identifiable brands. Gates left no record to explain any possible connection between the two narratives. She was showing the first scene to illustrate reservation life at that moment.

## About the Artist

Nellie Two Bears Gates is considered to be one of the most successful beadwork artists of her time. Born in 1854 in a winter camp along the Heart River in North Dakota, she was given the Lakota name of Gathering of Clouds Woman. Her father, Two Bears, was an Upper Yanktonai chief. Gates began beading at an early age, and she was especially talented in quillwork. Her nickname as a child was Little Thimble. She attended a Catholic boarding school in Missouri and married Frank Gates, a rancher from Standing Rock; reflecting Gates's dual worlds, she was married in both a Catholic church and in a traditional ceremony on the reservation. Through her husband's relationship with Joseph Claymore, Gates met Edith (Ida) Claymore. Gates and Claymore were both accomplished bead workers; indeed, there has been confusion about the creator of this suitcase. It is now attributed to Nellie Two Bears Gates. Frank often gave Joseph pieces by Nellie to sell, which explains the photograph of this suitcase among works by Edith (Ida) Claymore.

Little thorough documentation of Gates's work exists, with only a handful of her pieces explicitly catalogued. Most of them were gifts given by Gates to family and friends. On the whole, only a very few beaded suitcases exist. All known examples were produced by the Lakota, from either Cheyenne River or Standing Rock Reservation in the Dakotas. This suitcase is considered to be one of the finest. A perfect illustration of resiliency and creativity, Gates's work beautifully blends tradition and innovation.

## Suggested Questions

1. Using the images on the suitcase, create a story. How does it begin, what happens next, and how will it end?
2. Gates created objects that incorporated the traditional and contemporary. In what ways do people today also combine traditional designs with contemporary objects?
3. If you were to decorate a suitcase or backpack with images that told stories about your life and identity, what would you include?
4. Would this be a bag you'd like to own? What would you use it for? What would you put in it?

**Bamana, Mali, Africa**

**Tyiwara headcrest, 20th century, wood, cowrie shells, thread**

**The Marguertie S. McNally Endowment for Art Acquisition, 2012.25**

**24 1/16 x 8 1/2 x 3 in. (61.12 x 21.59 x 7.62 cm) (including base)**





## Key Ideas

**This headcrest honors a legendary being named Tyiwara (chee WAH rah), who taught the Bamana people how to farm a long, long time ago. It was worn in performances that encouraged and celebrated farmers whose hard work allowed them to plant and harvest crops in a challenging environment.**

## Background

Bamana people live in communities across a wide expanse of the West African country of Mali. They share much in common with their neighbors throughout western Sudan and are richly diverse in their beliefs and practices. Much Bamana art relates to traditional cults and associations with long histories in the region. At the same time, many Bamana people are Muslim and do not participate in these traditional associations.

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**Headcrests like this one are key components of lively performances that encourage farmers and honor Tyiwara, the legendary being who taught the Bamana to farm long, long ago.**

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Agriculture is at the heart of many Bamana communities. Because the land is susceptible to drought, religious practices concerned with promoting agricultural success developed over time, including masquerade performances. As more communities have converted to Islam and modernized, some practices, including some masquerade performances, have become less ritually significant.

Headcrests like this one are key components of lively performances that encourage farmers and honor Tyiwara, the legendary being who taught the Bamana to farm long, long ago. Tyi means “work” and Wara means “wild animal,” implying claws and fierceness. Tyiwara, who some believe was half antelope and half human, came down from the skies to teach humans how to plant seeds, tend crops, and harvest. After a few years, however, the people began to take Tyiwara and his lessons for granted. Tyiwara died, and humans began to have difficulties with

their crops. The people buried Tyiwara and vowed to honor him every year.

Bamana social structure includes numerous men’s associations, or societies, including one called Tyiwara. Traditionally, Tyiwara associations, some open to both men and women, taught members all aspects of successful farming and food production, which requires cooperation between the sexes. The men are responsible for taking care of artworks made for ritual Tyiwara performances, including headcrests.

Some rural Bamana people continue to rely on farming to feed their families and communities. For about half of the year, when and if there is sufficient rain for growing, farmers cultivate the low-quality soil. Given the environmental challenges, working the land and yielding harvests is incredibly difficult work and requires super-human strength and stamina. Farming is a highly valued profession.

Through the mid-20th century, performances honoring Tyiwara marked the beginning of the planting season. Today, artists continue to make headcrests for community performances, some of which are still ritually significant. In some communities the men’s associations become theater troupes and perform competitively. Even where the performances carry less religious import than they once had, the farming theme and celebration of productive cooperation remain important.

## Performance

In Tyiwara performances, male and female headdresses appear together, emphasizing the role both sexes play in agricultural work and the all-important cooperation between them. The costumed performers, however, are men. Their headdresses are attached to woven caps. From these flow fiber veils and costumes that hide the dancers' identities and create a powerful physical presence. The dancers, often leaning on large sticks, imitate movements of antelopes to invoke the blessing of Tyiwara.

The headcrests, which come in a wide variety of styles, express many levels of meaning, only some of which we can even begin to understand. The animals on some headcrests are composites of different species of antelope, the strong, graceful animal that embodies the ideal qualities of champion farmers. Other headdresses, like this one, incorporate aspects of various different animals admired by the Bamana for their adaptations and abilities that enable them to thrive in their environment.

Together the male and female characters represent those farmers who possess the highest physical and moral qualities needed to carry out all aspects of agriculture, ranging from clearing the land, tilling the soil, planting the seeds, and tending the plants, in a timely and efficient manner. According to some scholars, the male character symbolizes the sun and the female, the earth. The female headcrests frequently include a baby on her back, which, for some Bamana, represent humans. The flowing fiber costumes can symbolize water. In some performances attendants pour water over the fiber costumes to create the sensation of rainfall. Overall, the performances communicate the rich relationship between the Bamana people and their environment.

## Tyiwara Headcrest

This Tyiwara headcrest incorporates aspects of several animals associated with farming and strength. To honor farmers the artist creatively put together the long horns of an antelope, the rounded, humped body of an aardvark, and the long body of a pangolin.

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**To honor farmers the artist creatively put together the long horns of an antelope, the rounded, humped body of an aardvark, and the long body of a pangolin.**

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Each animal had features valued in Bamana farmers. Farmers had to be strong and energetic like antelopes. They had to be able to dig deep into the earth like the pangolin and aardvark.

The style of this Tyiwara headcrest is abstract, meaning the animals are not shown realistically. Instead, the artist combined aspects of each animal to create a design that emphasizes forms, lines, open spaces, and dynamism. Yet, Tyiwara's snout, eyes, crest, horns, ears, back, and legs are all recognizable. The artist attached a cowrie shell at eye level and an additional decoration, now missing, at the ear. Decorations contributed to the special power of the headcrest as well as to its appearance when in motion.

Imagine the dramatic silhouette of this headcrest with the blue sky behind it. It was the artist's job to make an artwork that everyone in a crowd could see atop the dancer's head as he moved to the rhythm of drums and bent over to mimic the digging gestures of animals, signifying the backbreaking work of farmers.

The complex style of this Tyiwara headcrest tells us that it was produced in the central and southern parts of Bamana territory.

## About the Artist

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**Among the Bamana and their neighbors, artists and craftspeople are very special people. They are not tied to a single community, but rather work across regions.**

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Among the Bamana and their neighbors, artists and craftspeople are very special people. They are not tied to a single community, but rather work across regions. Sculptors, also called blacksmiths, are respected and feared because they have special knowledge of the spirit world and the technologies needed to carve and cast objects. Their knowledge of the source of metal ores, how to control fire, and how to make metal tools and weapons sets them apart. They live separated from their communities.

People come from long distances to commission works from renowned artists. This said, artists do not publicize their services since their work is closely tied to the spirit world. When carving an object, the blacksmith is inspired by a spirit and, therefore, does not claim sole authorship of the final sculpture.

## Technique

The sculptor who made this headdress carved the complex figure from a solid piece of wood. His tools included sharp knives and a cutting tool, called an adze, which is kind of like an axe, but with its blade positioned perpendicular to its handle (like a hoe). He created the form by cutting away the wood. Next, he cut many small marks to create an uneven surface that reflects the sunlight when in motion.

## Questions

1. Look closely at the Tiywara headcrest. Name the different animal features you see. Look at the prop showing the pictures of the antelope, pangolin, and aardvark. Which parts of the headcrest do you think were inspired by each of these animals? What do you see that makes you say so?
2. Imagine you could wear this sculpture on your head securely attached to a cap. Then imagine bending over as though you were digging in the dirt for a long time. If possible, stand up and make the movements that you would use to imitate digging with your aardvark snout. How would you show that you are as strong as an antelope?
3. The Tiywara headcrest was made for a performance honoring farmers who had to overcome many environmental challenges to successfully grow food for their communities. What kinds of challenges do you think farmers in Minnesota face?

# Glossary

## Abstract

Art in which the artist is more concerned with manipulation of the formal elements and principles of art than with naturalistic representation. Recognizable references to original appearances may be very slight.

## Balance

The equal distribution of visual weight in a composition. When this equilibrium (generally between the left and right halves) is not present, the viewer senses a certain vague uneasiness or dissatisfaction. The simplest type of balance is SYMMETRY, sometimes called “formal” balance, in which shapes are consciously repeated in the same positions on either side of a central axis. The second type of balance is ASYMMETRY or “informal” balance, in which balance is achieved with dissimilar objects that have equal visual weight or equal eye attraction.

## Color

The pigments used to create a visual illusion or design. Color has hue, value, and intensity or saturation. HUE is the name for the actual color, whether it is red, azure, or citron. VALUE refers to the lightness or darkness of a color, achieved by the amount of white or black added to it. INTENSITY refers to the relative purity of a particular color, its BRIGHTNESS or DULLNESS.

*Colors are divided into three categories:*

1. PRIMARY colors—red, yellow, blue—from which all other colors are mixed;
2. SECONDARY colors—orange, violet, and green— each made by mixing two primaries;
3. TERTIARY colors, which comprise the rest of the mixed color wheel. Hues are called COMPLEMENTARY when they appear opposite each other on the color wheel. Mixing complements together dulls them; placing complementary colors next to each other intensifies the brightness of each.

There are two basic ways that color is used in painting: as LOCAL color, reproducing the colors seen in nature (green grass, blue sky, red apples); or as ARBITRARY or NONLOCAL color, which ignores natural color for aesthetic or emotional reasons.

Colors may have any number of visual properties. BRIGHT colors are more noticeable to the eye and tend to advance in a composition. DULL colors tend to recede.

Similarly, WARM colors—red, yellows and oranges— normally advance while COOL colors—blue and related hues—recede. In addition, color may be used to help establish a certain mood in a painting.

## **Cityscape**

A painting, drawing, or other depiction of urban scenery. Although figures or other objects may be included in a cityscape, they are of secondary importance to the architectural setting.

## **Composition**

The arrangement of forms in a work of art.

## **Contrast**

The use of opposing elements (colors, forms, lines, light and dark) in proximity to produce an intensified effect.

## **Gesture**

A movement that shows an idea or a feeling.

## **Landscape**

A painting, drawing or other depiction of natural scenery. Although figures or manmade objects may be included in a landscape, they are of secondary importance.

## **Line**

The most familiar of all the elements of art, line is capable of infinite variety and is able to convey all sorts of moods and feelings. A major characteristic of line is its DIRECTION: a HORIZONTAL line implies quiet and repose; a VERTICAL line, strength and solidity. Both are stabilizers and tend to reduce any feeling of movement. DIAGONAL and SPIRAL lines are used to suggest movement and change.

## **Linear**

Painting characterized chiefly by forms and shapes that are precisely defined by line. (Contrast with PAINTERLY.)

## **Motif**

A decorative design or pattern.

## **Organic**

Made of materials coming from living things.

## **Perspective**

A system of representing three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface so that they look as if they were really being viewed from a given point. There are a number of different methods for indicating perspective, the two best known being LINEAR PERSPECTIVE and AERIAL PERSPECTIVE. Linear perspective renders depth through a scientifically arrived at series of actual or implied lines that intersect at a vanishing point on the horizon to determine the relative size of objects from background to foreground. AERIAL or ATMOSPHERIC perspective renders depth by changes of form, tone, or color with the recession of objects into background.

## **Painterly**

Painting characterized chiefly by qualities of color, stroke, and texture rather than line. The Impressionists often worked in a painterly style.

## **Portrait**

A representation of a person. Portraits can exist in any medium and can be full length, three-quarter length, half length, or show only the head and shoulders of the sitter (BUST). With the aid of the imagination or a mirror, an artist may execute a SELF-PORTRAIT.

## **Realism**

Art in which the subject is presented as closely as possible to the way it is seen by the human eye.

## **Shape**

A visual form that can be classified as GEOMETRIC or regular (squares, circles, triangles, etc.), and ORGANIC or free-form (irregular, natural shapes).

## **Space**

Several art forms are THREE-DIMENSIONAL (having height, width, and depth) and physically occupy space: ceramics, metalwork, weaving, and sculpture to name a few. All others begin with a TWO-DIMENSIONAL surface and may then create the illusion of space or depth. The degree of illusion may vary greatly from artist to artist and period to period. Generally speaking, until the mid-1800s most art aimed at creating a “window” into a simulated, three-dimensional world.

## **Texture**

May refer either to ACTUAL texture, the tactile quality of the surface of the work of art, or to VISUAL or ILLUSIONARY texture, the tactile appearance of the objects depicted.

## **Value**

The degree of lightness on a scale of grays running from black to white.

# Art Adventure

## People & Their Environments

### Self-Guided Tour

1



Tyiwara headcrest  
Bamana (Mali)

Gallery \_\_\_\_\_

4



*Tahitian Landscape*  
Paul Gauguin

Gallery \_\_\_\_\_

2



*New York at Night*  
Berenice Abbott

Gallery \_\_\_\_\_

5



Rock garden  
China

Gallery \_\_\_\_\_

3



*The Grand Canal in  
Venice from Palazzo  
Flangini to Campo  
San Marcuola*  
Giovanni Antonio  
Canal (Canaletto)

Gallery \_\_\_\_\_

6



Suitcase  
Nellie Two Bears  
Gates

Gallery \_\_\_\_\_

# Mia

