

## Absolutely Fabulous: Highlights of the Institute's Collection

### Tour Description

View celebrated works in the Institute's world-renowned collections, from an Egyptian mummy to modern painting and sculpture. Whether you're new to the museum or have been visiting for many years, see popular favorites and discover new favorites.

**Tour Objective** This tour introduces visitors to the diversity of the museum's collections by showing them a sampling of our most celebrated objects.

**Means** To accomplish this goal, you should select objects from many areas of the collection (western and non-western); a variety of media (painting, sculpture, textiles, decorative arts, photography, etc.); and works from a range of time periods. With the expansion of the museum and its collection, it is difficult to visit *all* areas. Make decisions for your object list based on the interests of your group. Even on a public tour give yourself some options so you can tailor the tour based on your group. *Your choice of objects should be based upon the age and interests of your audience.* Keep in mind that what constitutes a highlight for an adult may not for a child. If a teacher requests objects that you know don't really appeal to young people, suggest alternate objects that do! On a public tour, be prepared to include objects that will engage a range of age levels and interests, as you may have families in your audience.

If possible, begin your tour with an introduction about the museum itself. A brief description of its collection, architecture and history is a natural complement to a discussion of highlights from the permanent collection.

**Themes** Incorporating a theme into your tour helps your visitors consider the art in reference to a central idea, rather than just as a group of unrelated objects. Because this tour topic (Highlights) is so broad in nature, endless variations on thematic approaches are possible. Be creative and come up with ideas that will entertain as well as educate your particular group. Some suggestions follow:

**What is a Treasure?** The most general and perhaps most obvious theme for this tour is "What is a Treasure?" This theme works well for upper elementary groups and above, and allows you to explore the question of what makes particular objects of art special.

The museum has many objects that are considered treasures. A good way to begin is to ask your visitors (regardless of age) to describe what they

## TOUR DESCRIPTIONS:

Absolutely Fabulous: Highlights of the Institute's Collection believe constitutes a treasure. With your visitors, consider such questions as:

- Is the object the work of a "great" artist?
- Is it a rare example of a type of art?
- Does it demonstrate consummate skill or unsurpassed excellence?
- Is the material of which it is made valuable?
- Does it have special meaning because of its function?
- Does it tell us of a culture or time in which we have no other historical documentation?
- Is it simply an appealing art work?
- Does it stimulate conversation?

While the museum has many "treasures" from which you may choose, we recommend that you consult the *Minneapolis Institute of Art: Handbook of the Collection* to see what museum curators have designated "highlights" and why. But don't feel limited by these selections, especially when developing a Highlights tour for young people.

## Focuses

Highlights of the Museum tours can be developed with many different focuses. This tour can be a variation of many of the other tour topics that we offer, as long as the objects you select qualify as "highlights." Find out as much as you can about your audience in advance to better know what subject will most interest them. The age level and interests of your group will largely determine which theme and objects you select. Be creative!

Here are just a few ideas.

**For first and second graders:** You might select **Animals in Art** as your focus (basically a Safari tour). Select objects from a variety of cultures and media that will stimulate young people to relate the artworks to their own experiences since this is one of their favorite things to do.

**For college art students:** A Highlights tour might focus on techniques and materials. Refer to the How was it Made tour description.

**Religious groups: Art for the Gods:** Select works of art that were made for religious purposes. How are values and beliefs expressed in the works of art from various religions and different parts of the world?