

## **Anishinaabe to Zapotec: Native Arts of the Americas**

### **Tour Description**

See beautifully decorated garments, feast bowls, and moccasins from North America; sculptures from the ancient ball game of Mexico; and huge gold ear spools from Peru. Explore the art of the indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America, from ancient times to the present.

### **Tour Objective**

To engage visitors in looking at a broad overview of the art of indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America from ancient times to the present, and to give visitors an understanding of the diverse cultures and histories of these peoples.

### **Means**

Select a range of objects from the Americas galleries. For most themes you also will want to show a variety of media and objects used for different purposes.

You may be asked to tour only part of the galleries, such as Mesoamerican art or North American art. (This will be indicated in the “comments” section of your tour confirmation sheet.) Choose objects accordingly. For example, if you are asked to tour only North American art, select a variety of objects from the Mississippi, Plains, Woodlands, Northwest Coast, and Southwest regions.

### **Art of the Americas Galleries**

The introductory gallery (G259) allows visitors to first see objects from the native cultures within our own geographic region, with a focus on Anishinaabe and Dakhóta (Dakota) objects on the east side. On the west side, we have a selection of Southwestern cultures’ objects, along with basketry from various Californian and other native cultures.

The following gallery (G260) features ancient and modern objects from Mesoamerican and Central American cultures on the west side. Displays of North American objects are on the east side.

The final gallery (G261) includes objects from the Lakhóta (Lakota) people and other peoples of the Plains region on the west side. On the east side are objects from Northwest Coast cultures, and Arctic cultures are represented in a display at the southeast corner.

Arranged in this way, the objects are less likely to be categorized according to modern political boundaries. The arrangement also makes it possible to show how much travel, trade and exchange of ideas went on from the earliest times — a key idea to incorporate into your tours!

TOUR DESCRIPTIONS:  
Anishinaabe to Zapotec: Native Arts of the Americas

Throughout the three galleries, contemporary works are included to reinforce the fact that native cultures are living cultures today.

All objects are identified by native names with more familiar given names in parentheses. For example, the peoples many of us know as Navajo identify themselves as Diné. Therefore the label identifies a work as Diné (Navajo).

**Cultural  
Considerations**

It is unfortunate but true that stereotypic, racist language developed over time among non-Native society in regard to Native (and other non-European American) peoples. Along with the privilege of being a docent comes the responsibility to be sensitive and respectful “custodians of culture.” It is important to recognize that certain attitudes, assumptions, and language often are, or can be seen as, pejorative and disrespectful.

Below are some general guidelines to help you feel comfortable talking about the indigenous arts and cultures of the Americas. These guidelines are adapted from an earlier Mia docent training handout, the Smithsonian Institution [http://wintercounts.si.edu/html\\_version/pdfs/guidelines.pdf](http://wintercounts.si.edu/html_version/pdfs/guidelines.pdf), and *Anthro Notes*, Museum of Natural History Publication for Educators (1990). For the complete guidelines, including terms to avoid, please read the Art of the Americas—Cultural Considerations 2017, also posted with this tour description.

- **Strive to portray Native people as real human beings.** Avoid referencing and reinforcing stereotypical, one-dimensional Hollywood “Indian” portrayals (Tonto, Pocahontas, etc.). Consider the complexities of individual and community strengths and weaknesses, achievements and failures, motivations and beliefs.
- **Avoid qualitative assessments of Native or European beliefs, traditions, or lifestyles.** History is, by nature, subjective and represents the needs, beliefs, and viewpoints of the culture to which it belongs. Native and European accounts and interpretations of the same historical events often differ. Use these differences to enrich your discussions, but avoid the temptation to judge each point of view.
- **Emphasize the diversity found among Native American cultures. Avoid making generalizations about all Native Americans.** Recognize regional and cultural differences.
- **Avoid portraying indigenous peoples as peoples solely of the past with fixed traditions and beliefs.** While some Native cultures with ancient origins have not survived, many continue to thrive. Native cultures are dynamic, evolving entities that can adapt to new

TOUR DESCRIPTIONS:  
Anishinaabe to Zapotec: Native Arts of the Americas

conditions, migrate to new areas, and keep control of their own destinies. Like most humans over the course of time, Native peoples have adapted their lifestyles in response to the ever-changing world.

- **Use the most specific language possible when referring to individuals, communities, or cultures.** Refer to the artist by name, if known. Instead of generalizing (e.g., Great Plains Indians), use the specific cultural group's name (e.g., Lakḥóta, Dakḥóta, or Pikuni).
- **Remember that culture and ideas are learned and not inherent according to ethnic background.** Do not single out or make assumptions about Native American students as “experts” on their ancestry and/or the ancestry of all Native Americans. Imagine how ridiculous it might seem to expect a Norwegian-American to be an expert on all of European history and culture. Your use of open-ended questions and a genuine openness to contributions from the audience will create opportunities to share for both Native and non-Native individuals who have expertise and knowledge.

**A note on the word “tribe”:** Based on a 19<sup>th</sup>-century theory of social development, a “tribe” is a social formation existing before the development of, or outside of, states. The implication is that “tribes” are less “civilized” than “fully-developed” state-based societies. For many, the term is troubling in that it reinforces racist stereotypes of primitivism, timelessness, and savagery with regard to indigenous peoples. However, complicating matters is the fact that in the United States, “tribe” or “band” is a political designation used by the federal government and by many indigenous peoples to identify themselves. While still commonly heard and accepted by many, it is preferable to avoid using “tribe.” Instead, you could refer to a specific cultural group by saying, for example, “the Anishinaabe people” or “the Anishinaabe.” When in doubt, the term Native American is always appropriate.

Although many objects in the collection were made years ago, many cultures and/or traditions represented in the galleries are still vital today, with over five million Native American people living in the United States alone. **When possible, include at least one contemporary object to show that traditions continue today.**

Following is a list of contemporary objects on display in the Americas galleries (in 2017):

(G259)

- George Morrison, Collage IX: Landscape, 1974
- Keri Ataumbi and Jamie Okuma, Adornment: Iconic Perceptions, 2014

TOUR DESCRIPTIONS:  
Anishinaabe to Zapotec: Native Arts of the Americas

- Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, Survival: Wisdom/Knowledge, 1996
- Allan Houser, Rendezvous, 1981
- Susan Folwell, Why Does He Call Me Caitlyn?, 2015
- Contemporary ceramics (on display in G259)

(G260)

- Emily Arthur, Black Water (with Dark Bird), 2015
- Carla Hemlock, Boomin' Out, 2015

(G261)

- George Morrison, Red Totem I, 1977
- Marion Hunt Doig, Button Blanket, c. 1982
- Arthur Amiotte, 1913 Spring/Summer 1913-Giving Away His Suit, 1990
- Richard Hunt, Transformation Mask, 1993
- Denise Wallace, Necklace with two removable pendants and removable mask ornament, 1987
- Monty Claw, Morning Hummer fan and rattle, 2015
- Dyani White Hawk, Untitled, 2016
- Ernest Whiteman, Untitled, 1991
- Alex Janvier, Turntable Bird, 1975
- Kevin Poirier, Mixed Blood Guy, 2009
- Marcus Amerman, Moonrise over Little Big Horn, 1995

(G261a)

- Frank Big Bear, Untitled (Patti Smith Collage), 2012

TOUR DESCRIPTIONS:  
Anishinaabe to Zapotec: Native Arts of the Americas

**Themes** You can approach these galleries in many different ways, depending on the interests and ages of your group. Consider also including at least one contemporary work in your tour, as many could work within these themes.

**People and Their Environment** Nearly all of the art in these galleries tells something about the relationship of the indigenous peoples of North, Central and South America to their diverse natural environments. By exploring the plant, animal, and other natural images in art works from ancient times to the present, and by studying the materials used to make these objects, you can discuss the respect and reverence many peoples have for their natural environments. You can also discuss how environment affects lifestyle by examining the types of objects a culture produces as well as the materials they use.

**Suggested objects (disclaimer: not all listed items may be on view):**

Pot (Olla), c. 1000-1300, Ancestral Pueblo, 90.106  
Bowl, c. 900-1200, Hohokam, 2004.71  
Cape, c. 1840-1890, Dakhóta, 2007.102.1  
Mask, c. 900-300 BCE, Olmec, 2002.127  
Vessel, c. 300 BCE-200 CE, Colima, 92.85.20  
Cape, c. 1850, possibly Meskwaki (Sac and Fox), 2008.64  
Frontlet, c. 1850, Nuxalk (Bella Coola), 2008.61  
Chilkat dancing blanket (Naaxin), c. 1840-1890, Tlingit or Haida, 47.30.2  
Needle case in the form of a seal, c. 1880-1910, Inuit or Yup'ik, 2014.97.22  
Headdress, late 19th-early 20th century, Tsistsistas (Cheyenne) or Lakhóta, 2015.6  
George Morrison, Collage IX: Landscape, 1974, 75.24

**The Art of Daily Life** The needs of daily life dictated the kinds of objects that the indigenous peoples of the Americas made. They needed clothing, shelter, food containers and utensils, and ceremonial objects. Many of these objects were richly embellished with decoration. Explore a range of objects from all galleries. Look closely at the objects. Discuss the way they look. What kind of objects were made and what was their purpose? What meaning did they have in that culture? How did objects needed for life in ancient Mexico differ from objects needed on the Northwest Coast? Keep in mind that religion and ceremony are a part of daily life.

**Suggested objects:**

Pot (Olla), c. 1000-1300, Ancestral Pueblo, 90.106  
Bowl, c. 1750-1850, Dakhóta (Dakota), 2002.56  
Doll, c. 1900, Anishinaabe (Ojibwe), 74.63.11  
Pair of Moccasins, c. 1900, Anishinaabe (Ojibwe), 2001.196.2A,B  
Figure (woman), Nayarit, 1st-2nd century, 47.2.30

TOUR DESCRIPTIONS:  
Anishinaabe to Zapotec: Native Arts of the Americas

Chocolate Pot, c. 750, Maya, 97.92.6  
Serving Vessel, c. 600-900 CE, Maya, 80.8A,B  
Las vendedoras de flores, c. 1935-1938, Alfredo Ramos Martinez, 84.19  
Feast Bowl, c. 1850, Chahiksichahiks (Pawnee), 89.92  
Pair of Woman's Leggings, c. 1880, Tsistsistas (Cheyenne),  
2003.162.1A,B  
Sketchbook, 1876, William Cohoe, 2008.14.2

**Animals in the  
Art of the  
Americas**

Integrally tied to themes concerning the environment is the use of animals throughout the “Art of the Americas” galleries. Most native peoples of North America consider that humans are an integral part of the universe. They regard themselves equal to, not greater or lesser, than any other element of creation, including animals. The possibilities of this theme are seemingly endless.

**Suggested objects:**

Bowl, c. 1100-1300, Four Mile (Mimbres), 99.70.1  
Dog, Colima, 100-300, 99.57.3  
Vase, c. 450-700 CE, Maya, 2000.195  
Double spout Vessel, c. 900-200 BCE, Paracas, 2002.58.2  
Hacha, c. 600-900 CE, Veracruz, 64.26  
Vessel, c. 1100 - 1200 CE, Guanacaste, 46.3.6  
Vessel, c. 200 BCE - 600 CE, Moche, 44.41.8  
Crooked knife with sheath, c. 1820-1860, Woodlands, 2014.97.16A,B  
Hat, c. 850 CE, Wari, 98.32  
Mask, c. 1850-1900, Inupiaq, 2011.7  
Fighting dagger, c. 1825-1830, Tlingit, 2007.101

**Stories and Art**

Like all other cultures, the indigenous peoples of the Americas have a rich body of stories that explain how the world and all its creatures came into being and other phenomena. Many objects in the galleries reflect the stories that are part of rich oral traditions. Tell the stories and discuss how they are reflected in the objects.

(For some stories, see the Art of the Americas Tour Workshop materials, the “World Mythology in Art” slide set, and the “Surrounded by Beauty” slide set, all available in the guide lounge.)

**Suggested objects:**

Club, c. 1750-1800, probably Anishinaabe (Ojibwe), 2004.103.2  
Keri Ataumbi and Jamie Okuma, Adornment: Iconic Perceptions, 2014,  
2014.93.2  
Figure (Ballgame player), c. 600-750 CE, Nopiloa (Veracruz), 47.2.9  
Yoke, c. 600-900, Nopiloa (Veracruz), 41.72

TOUR DESCRIPTIONS:  
Anishinaabe to Zapotec: Native Arts of the Americas

Chalchiuhtlicue, c. 1200-1521, Aztec, 2009.33  
Sun Mask, c. 1860, Kwakwaka'wakw, 2003.189  
Rattle, c. 1850-1910, probably Haida, 75.55  
Carla Hemlock, Boomin' Out, 2015, 2016.5.20

**How was it  
Made?**

Choose objects made from or embellished with a range of materials: clay, natural pigments, hide, birch bark, wood, quills, beads, paint, plant fiber, cotton, wool, gold, and silver. Along with a discussion of where and how different peoples obtained these materials, explain the basic techniques of coiling, casting, coloring, and firing pottery; tanning and painting hide; quill and bead embroidery; the bentwood technique (Haida box); shaping and etching a design in birch bark; metal casting; etc. How did different environments affect the choices of materials and techniques used? You may also choose to focus on some materials obtained in trade (like beads, cloth, or silver). How did the trade items affect the art of native peoples? Also consider techniques transferred to one culture from another.

Be sure to include a few contemporary objects to show how these traditions continue.

**Suggested objects:**

Poncho serape, c. 1860, Diné (Navajo), 2016.75  
Silver and turquoise jewelry in G259  
Maria Martinez pottery  
Man's Pouch, c. 1900, Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) or Dakhóta, 2000.75.1  
Shirt, c. 1930-1940, Seminole, 2007.102.2  
Pendant, c. 800 – 1100, Veraguas, 63.34A,B  
Vessel, c. 400 BCE - 599 CE, Moche, 44.41.1  
Parfleche, c. 1890-1910, Apsáalooke (Crow), 2004.70.4.1  
Chilkat dancing blanket (Naaxin), c. 1840-1890, Tlingit or Haida, 47.30.2