

Cultural Encounters/Artistic Exchanges

Tour Description

What happens when groups of people encounter one another and exchange ideas about art and culture? See how Japanese prints affected Impressionist paintings, Romans copied Greek sculpture, and Islamic traders changed the color of Chinese porcelain.

Tour Objective Learn how artistic production is influenced when two or more cultures meet and exchange ideas and aesthetic values. This tour can complement classroom studies in many different areas, such as geography, history, social studies, artistic expression, and art analysis and interpretation.

Means Choose artworks that clearly demonstrate how cross-cultural exchanges have influenced their design, use, and/or manufacture. Encourage viewers to compare and contrast objects based on what they see as a means to discover how ideas have been exchanged and adapted.

Themes

East Meets West When distant cultures meet, whether for reasons of trade, travel, migration, military conquest, or artistic exchange, each takes something away from the experience. Use objects on this tour that show the results of these encounters.

List of objects (currently on view; object information from artsmia.org)

- **Pakistan (Gandhara), *Buddha*, 3rd century, 2001.153.** This work is an example of the earliest sculptural representations of the Buddha. In 330 BCE, Alexander the Great conquered Gandhara (northern Pakistan today), establishing trading links with the Hellenistic world (Greece and Rome), and Graeco-Roman art was accessible to the artists of Gandhara. Graeco-Roman artisans also remained after the armies of Alexander the Great left and made Buddhist art in their own native style, influencing the local artisans and the preferred aesthetic. The *Buddha* blends Buddhist characteristics (half-closed eyes, cranial protrusion (ushnisha), and urna) with Hellenistic features common to the period (stylized coiffure and placid, dreamy facial features found in sculpture such as the *Head of Aphrodite*, 32.15). The *Buddha* also wears a Graeco-Roman toga-like garment. See the Roman *Funerary Relief*, 2008.28.2 for a similar garment.
- **Roman, *Funerary relief*, late 2nd century to 1st half of 3rd century, 2008.28.2.** Rome took control of Palmyra, an oasis city on the Silk Road, located in the Syrian Desert. After the Romans

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took over, the Palmyrans adopted the use of Roman funerary reliefs in their underground tombs.

- **Japan, *People of Many Nations*, 1649, 2015.30.** This handscroll, with stereotypical depictions of other cultures, was influenced by a Dutch map that circulated in Japan, after trade relations were established with various European countries.
- **Nakayama Toshitsugu, *Portraits of a Western Woman and Man*, late 19th century, 2013.29.662/663.** Nakayama Toshitsugu employs traditional Japanese media—ink and light mineral pigments on a hanging silk scroll—with Western painting techniques.
- **China, *Amphora*, late 7th-8th century, 80.59.** The shape of this amphora reflects the contact that China had with Central Asia and the Middle East.
- **Kalabari, *Funerary screen*, late 19th century, 74.22.** The funerary screen is thought to be influenced by two-dimensional images (prints and paintings) of Europeans.
- **James Tissot, *On the Thames, A Heron*, c. 1871-1872, 75.7.** Tissot is influenced by the craze for Japanese prints that swept through Europe following the opening of Japan to trade in 1853. The composition reflects Tissot's understanding of the aesthetics of Japanese design in his use of a high vantage point and the juxtaposition of two separate pictorial elements in compressed space. Could compare to Japanese woodcut prints on display.
- **Netherlands, *Flower Vase*, c. 1700, 2017.9a-d.** Potters in Holland created elaborate multi-tiered vases like this one to showcase colorful blooms. Here, the borders of scrolling lotuses, chrysanthemums, ruyi (scepter heads), and the Chinese character for longevity are copied from decoration on Chinese blue-and-white porcelain vases imported in large quantities in the 1600s. It is unlikely that Dutch craftsmen or customers knew the meaning of these motifs.
- **Mariotto di Nardo, *The Coronation of the Virgin with Five Music-Making Angels*, 1408, 65.37.** The robe that Christ wears has pseudo-Arabic inscriptions on it, indicating the interactions between the Islamic world and its goods with Italy/Europe in the late medieval and early Renaissance periods. See article at <https://www.britannica.com/spotlight/beautiful-gibberish-fake-arabic-in-medieval-and-renaissance-art>
- **Eugène Delacroix, *Convulsionists of Tangier*, 1837-1838, 73.42.3.** Delacroix traveled to North Africa as part of a diplomatic entourage. These travels influenced his work for years, and works like this and *View of Tangier*, 1852-1853, 93.67 focused on exotic (to European eyes) aspects of Moroccan culture. Could discuss the stereotypical depictions common to Orientalism.

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- **Iraq, Bowl, 9th century, 32.32.3.** This is an early example of ceramics decorated with cobalt-blue oxide, a Middle Eastern invention. The decorative technique is thought to have traveled to China on the Silk Road, where the cobalt was applied to porcelain. During the period of Mongol rule in the fourteenth century, technically superior Chinese blue-and-white ware began to be exported to the Middle East. Compare to a piece of Chinese porcelain with blue and white design.

**Regional
Encounter and
Exchange**

Cultures that are in close proximity to one another often see what the other has and blatantly copy it, or adapt designs, technologies, and/or functionality to their own use and aesthetic preferences.

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- **Roman copies of Greek originals, e.g., *The Doryphoros*, 120-50 BCE, 86.6.** Romans saw Greek sculpture, greatly admired it, and made exact copies for display in their own homes and public buildings. In this case, emulation was not considered plagiarism but was the highest form of flattery. Also could use Graeco-Roman, *Torsos*, 1st-2nd century CE, 57.40 and 70.39.
- **Maya, *Maskette*, c. 550-900, 2004.104.1.** Compare to the earlier *Mask* of the Olmec culture, c. 900-300 BCE, 2002.127, also made of jade.
- **Edo, *Memorial Head*, 1550-1650, 2007.13.** Compare to Yoruba *Shrine Head*, 95.84, to explore connections between Ife Kingdom and the later Benin Kingdom.
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/beni_2/hd_beni_2.htm
- **Cyprus, *Votary Figure*, c. 470 BCE, 28.23 or Cyprus, *Head of a Votary*, 600-500 BCE, 28.22.** Cyprus was located in the Mediterranean Sea between the Greek and Assyrian worlds. Compare *Votary Figure* to the figural stance of the Egyptian figure, 58.14 (which influenced Greek Archaic sculpture): rigid, little definition of the body or its musculature, arms held stiffly at their sides, and left leg is slightly extended. But also note a stylistic affinity with Assyria: the Votive Head has an Eastern style helmet; the Votive Figure has curly hair and beard, and is clothed, with characteristics similar to those of the Assyrian Winged Genius, 41.9.
- **Vietnam, *Grain Storage Building, from a model farmstead*, c. 1st-2nd century, 2001.31.6.2a,b.** Vietnam was under Chinese occupation in 111 BCE to 2 CE (part of the Han Dynasty in China), and subsequently adopted the tradition of making model buildings for tombs.

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- **China, *Funerary Mask of a Young Woman*, 916-1125, 2002.220.1.** Founded in North China by semi-nomadic Khitans, the Liao dynasty (907-1125) produced a large number of superb gold and silver wares using traditional Chinese metalworking and gilding techniques. Unlike traditional Chinese burial customs, the Liao often used gold or gilt bronze funerary masks in burials of important individuals. It is thought these masks were portraits of the deceased.
- **Japan/China (Traditionally attributed to Muqi Fachang), *Sparrow on Bamboo in Rain*, 15th century, 2015.79.55.** In medieval Japan, the Zen monk-painter Muqi Fachang was the most beloved of all Chinese artists. Japanese Zen monks visiting China met or heard of Muqi, acquired his paintings, and brought them back home to Japan. Within a few decades, the foremost Japanese art collections all contained paintings purported to be by Muqi, although many of them were probably not by Muqi himself. But this did not seem to matter. In Japan, “Muqi pictures... were in high demand as luxury items, and numerous Japanese painters mastered Muqi-style painting and Muqi-specific subject matter. “Muqi pictures” like this one were also sought after for display during tea ceremonies.” Also explore the other objects (see adjacent cases) associated with this painting.
- **China, *Tea caddy named “Drop of Water” (Tamamizu)*, 13th century, 2003.28.1-13.** Traveling Japanese Zen monks returned to their country bearing many prized objects from Song-dynasty (960–1279) China, including artworks like this tea caddy. Small, finely crafted containers originally created to store spices and medicines, tea caddies were used by the Japanese to hold powdered tea in the tea ceremony.
- **Kano School, *Landscape of the Four Seasons*, mid-16th century, 77.50.1-2.** (Could also use other examples of Kano paintings in G221) By the 1500s, Japanese painters had become adept at producing landscapes based on the imagined mountains and rivers of China. They based their works on prototypes produced by famous painters from Chinese antiquity... Stylistically, however, the Japanese approach—particularly that of artists associated with the Kano house—was more decorative, especially when applied to the large format of folding screens. Painters sharply outlined their trees and rocks and textured them with rhythmic patterns of dots and dashes. They also applied washes of gold for dramatic effect.

**Circle of Trade:
Aesthetic
Preferences,
New Technology
and Materials**

Objects acquired in trade, whether finished objects for use or raw materials to be used, can impact and transform the objects and artistic styles of other cultures. At times, artists also drew upon established cultural techniques and styles to craft new objects for trade, meant to appeal to other cultures’ aesthetic preferences.

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- **Swahili, *Door*, mid 19th c., 98.46a-f.** Through contact with India, East African traders saw the ornate floral motifs of Bidri ware—see *Ewer*, 17th-18th century, 82.10.4, or *Rosewater Sprinkler*, late 17th century, 82.10.2—produced by the Mughals in India. They replicated the Islamic love of profuse natural motifs. The door reflects “an ‘international style’ that developed in Zanzibar during the 19th century,” fusing visual styles from mainland Africa, Gujarat, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf.
- **India, *Flower Vase*, 1670-1700, 82.10.5.** Venetian glass was imported to India by Muslim traders, then designed with Indian floral motifs.
- **Ka’igwu (Kiowa), *Dress*, c. 1875, 2017.4.** Shows use of trade items, such as beads and tin cones. Many other objects in the Americas galleries also show use of trade materials.
- **Navajo, *Poncho serape*, c. 1860, 2016.75.** Use of trade materials and adaptation of new garment.
- **Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), *Whimsy*, 20th century, 2005.141.2.** Beading techniques used to craft objects for tourist market.
- **Probably Mesquakie, *Cape*, c. 1850, 2008.64.** Tradition of feathered regalia adapted into a Euro-American garment form.
- **Fon, *Royal Parasol*, mid to late 19th century, 2016.1.** Use of trade cotton.
- **Iran, *Bowl*, 11th-12th century, 50.46.445.** Persians admire porcelain of the Song Period and try to imitate Chinese Dingware.
- **Iran, *Plate*, early 18th century, 86.44.** The plate is from the Safavid period. When commercial ties to China were reestablished during the 1300s, fine ceramics imported from East Asia, particularly blue-and-white, became extremely popular and greatly affected subsequent Islamic styles.
- **Amal Abu’l-Ezz, *Footed Vase with Applied Ring Handles*, 15th century, 84.45.** Syrian or Egyptian object imitates China’s Yuan Dynasty ceramics with its ringed handles, then also attempts to imitate the blue and white decoration of Ming Dynasty porcelain.
- **China, *Oval Dish*, 18th century, 36.7.6 and India, *Antelope Jade Vessel*, late 18th century, 2004.29.5.** Influence of trade on development of jade vessels, both in China and India. Also could use many of the Hindustani or “Moghul” Jades on display in G210. The Qianlong Emperor commissioned versions of Mughal jades from the imperial workshops because he so admired their forms.
- **Turkey, *Plate*, 16th century, 17.54.** On the rim is a stylized wave pattern which is Chinese, while the decoration in the middle is Turkish.

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- **China, Charger for the Islamic market, 19th century, 2004.261.14.** When the Silk Road reopened in the 14th century, the Muslim merchants who came to China found the small plates and bowls there unfamiliar and unsuitable to their needs. They wanted larger dishes that reminded them of the elaborately-decorated tableware of their homeland. Once developed, the dishes became the major export from China to the Middle East during this time. Large plates, modeled after Islamic platters of metal or glass, were of special interest. See also China, *Plate with man riding an elephant for the Indian market*, c. 1785, 95.98.76 and other examples in G209.
- **China, Wallpaper in the MacFarlane Room, 67.58.7 (with other examples of Chinese export porcelain).** The wallpaper was hand-painted in China in the late 1700s or early 1800s, and exported for display in rooms like this one represents, a parlor in the home of a wealthy New England merchant.
- **Jacobus Halder Adriaesensz, Garniture of Vases, c. 1764, 2000.270.1-5a,b.** In Europe, the inability to discover the formula for porcelain led manufacturers to emulate it in the development of tin-glazed earthenware.
- **Examples of Chinoiserie and Japonisme in French and English porcelain** (various examples on display, by Grand Salon).

**Religious
Encounter and
Exchange**

The introduction of new religions or religious practices, whether voluntary or forced, has a marked effect on objects associated with those practices.

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- **Vietnam, Tripod Incense Burner, 14th c., 2003.961.** Adopting practices of Confucianism and ancestor worship from the Chinese.
- **Kongo, Crucifixes, various dates, 92.36, 2014.8, 2015.62.45.** The Kingdom of Kongo became Christian in late 1400s, and icons were made to reflect the new religion. The crucifix was the foremost of these icons, a potent symbol of the new faith that happened to mirror the indigenous “cosmogram,” a cross-like symbol conveying the Kongo concept of a two-way passage between the worlds of the living and dead.
- **Ethiopia, Diptych icon, about 1700, 2009.39.2.** Reflects the depiction of Mary and Christ child in Santa Maggiore Church in Rome, from imagery dispersed by Jesuit missionaries.
- **Baga, Drum, early 20th century, 2011.8.** Horse may be wearing Islamic amulets, evidence of contact with Muslim traders.
- **Ligbi, Do mask, 1925-1950, 2013.32.** Mask has Qur’anic board integrated in its form, used in a dance to mark the end of Ramadan.

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- **China, *Daoist (Taoist) Stele of Five Deities, 722, 2003.30.*** As religious Daoism evolved during the Six Dynasties and Tang period (c. 4th-8th centuries), a sculptural tradition developed that was closely modeled after contemporary Buddhist prototypes.
- **China, *The Buddhist Guardian Mahabala, 16th century, 2004.131.1.*** The theme and compositional elements of this expressive painting relate to Tibetan style Buddhism which was popular in China during both the Ming and Qing dynasties.
- **Japan, *Wisdom King of Awe-inspiring Power, second half 13th century, 2013.29.1a-g.*** These guardian gods came from India along with Esoteric Buddhism (Daiitoku being derived from the Hindu death god Yamantaka), though it's not known in which temple this Daiitoku was originally housed.
- **Unkoku Tōeki, *Landscape of Summer and Autumn, from a triptych of Bodhidharma and Landscapes of the Four Seasons, 1620s, 2013.29.793.3.*** At the center of this Japanese triptych of hanging scrolls is a portrait of Bodhidharma, known as Daruma in Japan, the Indian patriarch of Zen Buddhism credited with transmitting Zen from India to China in ancient times. At right and left are images of China—dramatic mountainscapes with Buddhist temples and gnarled old pine trees perched on the peaks, along with motifs representing all four seasons.
- **Show several different interpretations of Buddha, bodhisattvas, or Buddhist guardian figures.** Discuss how recognizable attributes are combined with clothing, accessories, stylistic and facial features unique to a particular region.