

August 2018 Public Tour: **Telling Stories**

Website tour description:

Gather around works of art to look, listen, and tell your own stories.

These are ideas, suggestions and approaches from which to build your own tour! Choose objects from several of these areas.

Visual Story Telling

Artists have a long tradition of telling familiar stories using symbols and significant details. The artists' specific choices are what brings each story to life in our imagination.

- **Anthony van Dyck's Betrayal of Christ (57.45)** tells a story from the Christian Bible. It's familiar to many but not all. Use visual elements to talk about how Van Dyck has created drama, action, noise. Where is there quiet and stillness? How is our eye drawn there? What is the effect of combining action and stillness in the painting?
- Compare **Barye's Theseus Slaying the Centaur (55.11A,B)** and **Harry Jackson's Stampede (91.150A,B)**. Why do you think the artist chose these particular moments? What does each hero really conquer?
- **Soga Shōhaku's Zen Encounter: Niaohe Daolin and Bai Juyi (2013.29.113, G222)**. What aspects of this 250-year-old story seem modern? How does the artist make each person seem real?

Does it matter who tells the story?

Until the story of the hunt is told by the Lion, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.
– African Proverb

- In **Dear America (2015.57.1, G259)** Tom Jones tells the story of Native American contributions and history in his response to the song "America" using postcard images of native people. For background with images, check his **website**:
http://www.adrianelittle.com/tom/4america_state.html
- **The Dollhouse**, accompanied by an explanatory screen, is located in the first floor McKim hallway. The house's evolving story expands our vision of those living 100 years ago, but also has an impact today. Current events around the Dollhouse started a community dialog about how an African-American maid was portrayed. **Here's an additional reference**:
<https://new.artsmia.org/stories/the-doll-returns-from-difficult-conversations-a-fresh-start/>
- **Roger de la Fresnaye's Married Life (52.1)** invites smiles and discussion. Whose story is this? How would it look if the other person was the storyteller? How would/could the story be told jointly? How would you tell the story of "Married Life" in visual form?
- **William Hogarth's Sleeping Congregation (58.10)** encourages discussion of what makes a good storyteller.

Stories can take on a life of their own

- **Yūji Honbōri's Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva (2012.32A,B, G200)** is constructed with cardboard. The artist uses the material and his creation to re-tell the Buddhist story in contemporary terms. What does the use of cardboard, usually a throw-away material, suggest about Buddhist beliefs?
- In **Poussin's Death of Germanicus (58.28)** an ancient Roman story of murder/revenge idealized heroic stoicism. Is the story of hero as stoic still revered today? Or has it changed? What characteristics do we look for in our heroes today?
- The **Kongo Crucifix (2014.8, G254)** exemplifies how Christianity was absorbed and incorporated into local religious beliefs based on the influence of Portuguese missionaries. How does cultural "encounter and exchange" impact the stories we tell? Have any of your family or traditional stories changed based on the influence of others?
- **Mark Dion's Curator's Office** was created for a 2013 exhibition "More Real? Art in the Age of Truthiness." Use the panel at the entrance to the Curator's Office to create your own detailed "fake news" story of the Mia curator who disappeared, Barton Kestle. Before moving to the room briefly and casually state, "With our next object I will tell a story that is not true." At the room, tell your story with drama and detail. Afterwards, ask visitors how they react to this story. Some will believe what they've been told. **Reassure them that MANY PEOPLE believe this story. It is NOT meant to trick people but rather to show how stories become real to us.** What qualities must a story have to be believable?

Stories of People Behaving Badly

- In **David Teniers the Younger's Temptation of St. Anthony (76.31)**, the saint is shown distracted from his prayers. Describe what kinds of temptations are in the cave with him. What is the appeal of these temptations? How does Teniers make the story amusing and not evoke guilt or fear? What is the importance of humor in a story?

For Adults Only:

- **Platzer's Pleasures of the Seasons: Summer (63.4, G308)** What's going on in this picture? You could pick any of the 4 paintings from this series. Each season's story has a moral, warning people of the consequences of their behavior.
- **Joseph Mbatia Bertiers' Untold Story (2017.24, G236)** uses satire to depict human weaknesses; the chaotic canvas captures people acting impulsively, sometimes with malice or manipulation. In these paintings some of the people are focused on work. What do you think the artist is saying about the dual nature of people? What purpose does exaggeration play in a story? How does satire or humor draw us into a story more than "just the facts, ma'am"?
- Looking for more bad behavior? The exhibition **Love Affairs: The Tale of Genji in Japanese Art** opens August 18. Prince Genji's behavior is exposed by the author, Lady Murasaki, who details the plight of women at the imperial court in 11th century Japan. The tale is Japan's most famous work of literature and said to be perhaps the world's first novel.

Visualizing a Storyline

- **Jan Groth's Linear Tapestries** (also referred to as "woven drawings") are in the Fountain Court (G235). In each tapestry, lines strengthen and weaken as they travel across the weaving. Invite visitors to choose one tapestry and share how the line reminds them of a story in their life. Read more here: <https://robbielafleur.com/2018/04/15/stumbling-on-fabulous-tapestry-due-to-avoidance-of-snowy-spring-sidewalks/>
- **Ahab by Alexander Calder (83.77)** Give viewers a short synopsis of the story of Ahab and the whale from *Moby Dick*. Briefly watch the mobile's movements. What do you see that reminds you of the story?

Shared Stories Create a Relationship

- In the Judaica Gallery (G362), **Harriete Estel Berman's "Eons of Exodus" Seder plate (2009.36A,B)** weaves together stories of history and community...with some modern additions. This excellent **artist's website** includes process and close-up views: <https://harrieteestelberman.com/eons-of-exodus-2008/>
Mid-page be sure to click on [SPARK KQED PBS](#). How do stories change over time? 21st-century African refugees are shown in one scene. Why do you think the artist included them? Share the story behind the addition of an orange. What does this "new" story add to the significance of the plate?
- **Wu Family Reception Hall.** Imagine stories that may have been told and wisdom passed on in this room. Ask visitors on what occasions do they share the hardships and accomplishments of their relatives, family, and friends?