

## Unveiling Stories

Theme inquiry focus: Unveiling Stories\*

- What's the story?
- What's the human story?
- What's the world story?
- What's the new story?
- What's the untold story?

**Attributed to William Howard, Writing Desk, 1870, yellow pine, tobacco box and cotton crate wood, 2012.11**

- Unique, personal style of William Howard – 70 objects
- Life of sharecropper (once enslaved) on a Kirkwood plantation in Mississippi
- Use of materials at hand
- Handed down from Howard's family

- **What's the story?**

As we unveil the story behind this desk, let's start with the story based on what we see. What does this desk tell about itself, what is the story?

- Over 70 objects adorn this desk – utensils that tell the story of everyday life
- Hand-made by Howard with materials available to him

- **What's the human story?**

What does this desk tell us about William Howard and people who lived on Kirkwood plantation?

- William Howard worked at Kirkwood Plantation in Mississippi as a freed man after the Civil War
- Many freed slaves remained on plantations—as sharecroppers
- U.S. Census of 1870 indicates that Howard was a 65-year-old farm laborer born in Africa. His household included 60-year-old Sally Howard, and 16-year-old Henry Howard, possibly their son, a farm laborer born in Mississippi.
- Kirkwood Plantation had become one of the largest cotton plantations in the state, with nearly 200 enslaved African Americans
- Kirkwood was equipped with its own winery, bakery, and blacksmith shop, typical amenities of the antebellum, or prewar lifestyle of the South, run with materials produced by slave labor
- Desk was handed down to us by his family

- **What's the world story?**

**What's the bigger story being told about the United States of America and the world?**

- The United States at a time of Civil War between the North and South (1861-1865)
- Time of during and after slavery in the United States – enslaved peoples from Africa (Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863, freed more than 3.5 million enslaved African Americans)
- The symmetry and structure of his desk echo the Federal style, popular two generations earlier, that was inspired by classical Greek and Roman art
- Neoclassicism had special significance in the young United States, born of revolutionary zeal for the ideals of Athenian democracy and Roman republicanism.

- **What's the untold story?**

**What do you still wonder about this desk? William Howard?**

- **What's the new story?**

**Why is this desk still important for us to see, to talk about, and to have in our museum?**

\*Unveiling Stories is from Global Thinking Routines developed by Veronica Boix Mansilla, Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education