

# **Human Connections: You, I and the World SEL tour**

## **Theme: People and their Stories**

Welcome to the Minneapolis Institute of Art Virtual Tour. I am so happy to see you today. My name is Nancy and I will be your guide today along with Debbi who will also be with us. Our tour Human Connections: You, I, and the World, People and their Stories. On our tour today I will invite you to look closely, think deeply, and talk freely about artworks that encourage us to have conversations about feelings, relationships, respect, empathy, self and others, collaboration, cultural pride, and kindness.

I hope I will hear from everyone today on our tour. I love to hear your thoughts and ideas about our art. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers

It would be great if you have a pencil and paper handy to write some responses and to do a little drawing.

Now let's explore feelings in this abstract painting by Yayoi Kusama.

### **Artwork 1**

#### **Yayoi Kusama, Untitled**

Abstract art is not a realistic showing of real objects. Abstract artists use colors and shapes to express their ideas, feelings and emotions.

What do you feel when you look at this artwork?

What parts of the artwork impact how you are feeling?

DRAW – Draw some dots and round circles yourself. How does it feel to draw these shapes? Does it make you feel good? How does it feel to move your arm in circles while drawing? Would anyone like to share their drawing?

What sounds do you think the painting would make? What about the artwork makes you say that?

NEXT SLIDE (DETAIL)

How do the dots make you feel?

What colors do you see?

How do the colors of the painting make you feel?

Yayoi Kusama “princess of polka dots”

She had made art for a long time. Making this style of art helps her feel better when she is feeling stressed out. Making this art helps her manage her feelings. Write down what you can do to manage your feelings.

NEXT SLIDE

Yayoi Kusama also creates rooms full of dots she calls her Infinity Rooms. She used hundreds of lights in mirrored rooms.

PLAY SLIDE Start at 50 seconds and go to the end.

How do you think it would feel to be in one of her infinity rooms?

TRANSITION

In our next artwork we will look at a photograph of people to figure out how we think they are feeling based on what we can see.

## **Artwork 2**

### **Migrant Mother, Dorothea Lange**

What do you see in this photograph? How many children do you see? How are the people related to one another? What do you see that makes you say that?

How do you think the mother feels? What do you see that makes you say that? What do you think the mother is thinking about?

How do you think the children are feeling? What do you see that makes you say that? What do you think the children are thinking about?

How does this photo make you feel?

WRITE – Write down a word that describes how the photo makes you feel. Anyone want to share?

Who is the most important person in the photograph? How did the photographer make her look most important?

### **NEXT SLIDE**

What do you see going on in this photo? What do you see that makes you say that?

What more does this photo tell us about the family?

How does this photo make you feel?

Dorothea Lange story of photo-Dorothea Lange trying to get help for farmers.

Think about things we can do to help people who are hungry or do not have beds or homes. Bring food to food shelf. Do you see people in our community doing things to help others?

Write down one thing people can do to help others in need.

People in tents in the Twin Cities and food insecurity

Many people working to help the homeless in Twin Cities

## TRANSITION

Next, we will look at an image of two women, let's check in and see how they are feeling.

### **Artwork 3**

#### **Between Sisters, Delita Martin**

Look closely, describe what you see.

Look at the woman on the right, what is her facial expression saying? What do you see that makes you say that? Stand up and try posing like this woman crossing your arms and with her facial expression. How does it feel to you?

Let's look at the woman on the left. What is her facial expression saying? Why do you say that? Stand up and try posing like this woman and use her facial expression. How does it feel to you?

How does their body language help show us how they are feeling?

Have you ever experienced this feeling or emotion?

## NEXT SLIDE (DETAIL)

How are these women related to one another?

Why do you think this? How do these women feel about each other?

Do you have people you feel this way about?

What else do you see in the picture that you are curious about? What do you think about it?

How do the circular patterns make you feel about the image? Why? How do the colors make you feel? Why? Delita Martin, the artist says the circles represent the moon and females.

See the stitching around the circles-quilting is a tradition in her family and she honors her family by including this tradition.

Delita Martin combines printmaking, drawing and painting in her artwork to celebrate African American women as icons of strength and community. She also explores the art of storytelling. Martin show these women as important role models in their families and communities. Do you have important role models in your family?

NEXT SLIDE (MENDE MASK)

Martin was inspired by the Sande society of West Africa. The Mende people are an exclusive community of women that prepares Mende girls for their transition to womanhood. This mask was worn by a mature woman as part of an initiation ceremony for young girls entering adulthood. The mask embodies the ideals of physical and moral goodness. The Mende women serve as role models for the young girls, just like the sisters in the previous artwork served as role models.

Quote by Martin, "Wherever two or three women are gathered together there is the spirit and authority of Sande. Women create Sande on the spot where they group together, sharing with one another. This is Sande."

Who are role models in your life? What makes a good role model?

## TRANSITION

Let's look at an ancient sculpture from Mexico to see what it shows us about human connections.

### **Artwork 4**

#### NAYARIT HOUSE GROUP MEXICO 100-400

This clay sculpture from ancient west Mexico is hundreds of years old. Yet, the activity and relationships it shows feel very relevant today. Let's look closely to see what is going on.

What do you see? What details do you notice? What are some of the people doing? What sounds do you suppose you might hear if you were in this scene? Where would you like to be if you were in the scene.

You have noticed that the artist of this sculpture shows people of all ages engaged in solitary and communal or social activities. You see people cooking and eating tamales in what appears to be a house.

Do you have a favorite food or meal in your family?

The steeply pitched roof painted with geometric patterns gives clues to the appearance of the houses of the ancient Nayarit in western Mexico. However, archaeological evidence suggests the ancient Nayarit did not live in two-story dwellings. This leads scholars to conclude this sculpture is conceptual - meaning it represents ideas and beliefs, rather than an architecturally accurate depiction.

The Nayarit believed only a slight barrier separated the realms of the living and the dead. The lower level here is the underworld, where the activities of departed ancestors closely mirror those of the living depicted above.

What does this sculpture and its story say to you about the value of cultural traditions?

The sculpture was placed in a tomb along with food, drink, and other offerings as a means of ensuring the living and the deceased remained connected. The contemporary Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) in Mexico and Central America, when families visit cemeteries to make offerings and feast, sing, and dance with the souls of their ancestors, reflects similar beliefs.

What are some cultural practices that you participate in? How do you tell other people about your traditions? How might you show them in a work of art?

1. How many rooms can you find in this house? Do you think these people have separate rooms for sleeping, dining, preparing food, talking and relaxing? In what ways is this different from your house? Are there any ways in which it is the same?
2. Look at the people in this house. How many do you see? What does each one seem to be doing?
3. Do you think these people are all related? Do they seem relaxed and comfortable with each other? How can you tell?
4. What can we tell about their lives from looking at this work of art? Consider family ties, clothing, what houses were like, food and how it was cooked, furniture, relationship to nature.
5. By looking carefully, can you guess if these people lived in a warm or cold climate? What do you see that makes you say

- that? Do you think the place where they lived had lots of mosquitoes as we do in Minnesota? Why or why not?
6. This sculpture was made in Mexico almost 2000 years ago. What material do you think was used to make it? Where would the artist have found the clay? Why would the clay be reddish in color? Have you ever seen earth that looked red?
  7. How many colors did the artist use to decorate this house model? Since the artist could not buy paints at a store, where do you think the colors came from? (Plants, soil, minerals.) What do you think the artist may have used for a brush?
  8. How do you suppose the Nayarit people cooked their corn or tortillas? In an oven? Over a fire? Have you ever eaten food cooked over a fire? What kind of food was it? Where did you cook it? At home? On a picnic? Camping? At the lake?
  9. Describe what an archaeologist does—digging up things buried long ago that give us clues about how people used to live. This house group and other like it tell us that home and family were important to people living in Nayarit Mexico long ago. What would you bury in a time capsule that would show people in the future about your life and what you like to do?

## TRANSITION

The next artwork required a Dakota artist to utilize a variety of talents to create an incredible artwork that represents an act of kindness, generosity, and honor

### **Artwork 5**

#### **Dakhóta, Cradle board cover**

This is a cover for a cradle board made by a Dakota artist about 140 years ago. It was made to secure the baby in the cradle board. It was a gift for a woman in her family who was expecting a baby.



Let's look closely at the cradle board cover. It is about 2 feet high.

What do you see?

What animals or insects do you see in this cover?

What is it made of?

Explain leather hide, quill work, European beads, all carefully made to honor the baby and mother.

This skill is passed down to children to keep the technique from being lost. Teaching a skill is an act of generosity.

Who has taught you a skill as an act of generosity? Sport, cook

What skills do you have to teach someone else? Minecraft

Any other acts of kindness you can do for someone?

## **TRANSITION**

Let's look at a painting to see what the children are feeling.

### **Artwork 6**

#### **Martin Wong, Polaris**

What do you see going on in this painting? What do you see that makes you say that?

Look at the faces and bodies of the children. How are they feeling?

What are the children doing? Playing marbles? Do you know the game of marbles?

What are constellations? What constellations do you know? The children are among the stars. What color is the background? What color are the children outlined in?

Do you see any twin children in this painting? The artist puts them next to the constellation Gemini that represents twins.

Martin Wong, the artist, was the son of Chinese immigrants to the United States. He said he felt he was of two worlds, feeling of belonging and not belonging.

What do you know about the North Star? It has a gravitational pull that is pulling all the children together in a kind of peaceful and perfect world. Wong dreams of the perfect world where all children and people can get along and all can belong.

## **TRANSITION**

Now, let's look at an artwork with two people in it and use the clues it provides to figure out how we think the two women are feeling.

### **Artwork 7**

#### **Rania Mater, Brigitte and Huguette**

What do you see in this photo?

Do you think the two people are related? What do you see that makes you say that?

#### **NEXT SLIDE DETAIL**

Look at the woman on the left. How does she feel? What do you see that makes you say that?

Please pose like her and make that face. How does her body pose help show how she is feeling?

Any other clues in the photo to tell us how she is feeling?

Have you ever felt like this?

Why might she be feeling like this?

Let's look at the woman on the right. How does she feel? What do you see that makes you say that?

Pose like this woman.

How do you think they feel about one another?

Rania Matar photographs the daily lives of women and girls in the Middle East, the United States and Syrian refugees. She has included many details to help us understand How Brigitte and Hugette are feeling.

TRANSITION

The next artwork is by a Hmong artist who wanted to lift up his community by showing the power of taking action in the face of adversity.

## **Artwork 8**

### **Cy Thao, #48, The Hmong Migration series**

This painting by Hmong artist Cy Thao is part of a series of paintings he made to tell the story of the Hmong people from the beginning of time to the present day in the early 2000s when he finished the series.

Look closely at this painting. What do you see? What is going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that?

How are these people showing that they are proud of the Hmong culture?

What are the ways that these people make their protest peaceful?

What can you do to peacefully push back when you see injustices in your community?

## **Conclusion**

As we wrap up our tour today, let's check in how we are feeling now. What is one word that describes how you feel?

What is one act of kindness you will do today?

We are all connected by our stories and the actions we choose to take. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and feelings today!