

Highlights of Mia's Collection for K-5 Learners

- Teachers who select highlights as their topic often want their students to have a general introduction to the museum. You might even want to explain what a museum is and particularly that Mia is a museum for art.
- If you are used to giving Art Adventure tours, a highlights tour will feel very familiar. You will select fabulous, age appropriate artworks that support a theme.
- A few big things to keep in mind!
- Remember to design your tour with your specific age group in mind. Pick and choose what content to share. There is a big difference between K and 5!
- Be sure to include a diverse selection of artworks. Choose artworks that represent gender diversity and cultural diversity, and span time from ancient (back in the day) to today.
- Maps can be helpful.
- Listen actively, tell stories, show pictures of the artists, have fun, make noise and move limbs when it feels right, and show pictures of animals!
- The ultimate goal of your highlights tour is to create a great experience during which learners feel invited to share.
- Make them want to come back to see more with family and friends!

Introduction

Today's tour features a selection of highlights from the collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Art. A highlight is an outstanding or great part of something. For example, the best part of your day is a highlight. Your favorite part of a book could also be called a highlight. These artworks we will see today are just a few of the museum's many highlights.

On our tour today we will look at the artworks together and I will ask you questions to learn about what you see in each and what you think about them. I will also tell you a little bit about them. As we look at the artworks, let's think about what makes each one a highlight. Is it the way it looks? The way it is made? How rare is it? How much someone likes it? Or something else?

ARTWORK 1

Ancient Yoruba, Nigeria, Africa

Shrine head, 12th–14th century, Terracotta

The John R. Van Derlip Fund, 95.84

Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)

1. This highlight of Mia's collection is a portrait sculpture of a royal woman from the ancient city of Ife, located in today's Nigeria in West Africa. A portrait is a type of artwork that shows a person or people and tells something about them. This sculpture is made of clay.
2. Royal people in Ife often had artists create life-like portraits of themselves and family members. Although we no longer know the name of the woman we are looking at, people at the time would have known her and how important she was because of all the details the artist included.
3. The lines on her face, the rings of flesh on her neck, and her hairdo all show she is important.
4. The lines that follow the natural curves of her face might be the shadows cast by a crown with a veil made from beads that hung in front of her face.
5. Some scholars believe that sculptures like this were made by women.
6. Although we don't know the name of the artist it is interesting to think about who might have made it.
7. This head was once on a body.

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. Look closely at this portrait sculpture made from clay. What words would you use to describe this royal woman?
2. How do you think this royal woman feels? What do you see that makes you say that?
3. This portrait sculpture was originally attached to a full body that was also made of clay. Let's figure out how she broke!
4. What do you think would be most important to show in a portrait sculpture of a leader today?
5. What about this portrait sculpture from Ife do you think makes it a highlight?

ARTWORK 2

Jamie Okuma; Designer: Shoes designed by Christian Louboutin, United States, 1963

Adaptation II, 2012, Leather, glass beads, porcupine quills, sterling silver cones, brass sequins, chicken feathers, cloth, deer rawhide, buckskin

Bequest of Virginia Doneghy, by exchange, 2012.68.1a,b, © 2012 Jamie Okuma

Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)

1. Jamie Okuma has applied the ways of making art in her Native American culture (she is Luseño and Shoshone Bannock) to a pair of designer shoes (Christian Louboutin stilettos). Meticulously beaded and quilled, they are like a contemporary version of decorated moccasins. Okuma researches historic artwork and then updates the look (aesthetic) to appeal to contemporary Native tastes and concerns.
2. Okuma began working with beads as a child, creating her own powwow (celebration) regalia (dress and accessories) under the guidance of her mother and grandmother. She continued learning beadwork and, in high school, started to create her first of many beaded miniature dolls. Then she started her own fashion label!
3. In 2012, Okuma began beading a pair of \$900 Christian Louboutin shoes, starting with its signature red-soled heel. She looked at the shape of each shoe to decide the designs that would flow with the curves.
4. Okuma invented her own techniques for beading shoes. Like other Native women in the past who adapted their techniques to new materials, she made new tools to make her shoes. She created her own curved needles to bead onto the curved surfaces. Another innovation was to coat her sewing fingers with liquid latex and setting powder to better grip her needles.
5. The artist flattened porcupine quills and dyed them different colors to create the designs on the top of the shoes. This type of art is called quillwork and requires a great deal of skill. The art of quillwork is often passed down by women to their children and others to keep the technique from being lost.
6. She also used dyed chicken feathers, sequins, and silver cones to decorate the shoes.

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. What do you notice first about these shoes? What drew your attention to that part first? What words describe the heels? What designs or patterns do you see

there? What words describe the designs on the platforms? The tongue flaps?
The sides?

2. How do you feel when you look at these shoes? What about them makes you feel this way?
3. Imagine how the different materials on the shoes would feel if you could touch them. Imagine the texture of the smooth quills, the small round beads, the metal beads, sequins and the feathers. What might they sound like when someone walked in them?
4. If you were going to decorate a pair of shoes to share something about your culture, what materials and designs would you use?
5. What do you think makes Okuma's shoes a highlight?

ARTWORK 3

Olmec, Mexico, North America

Mask, 900–300 BCE, Jadeite, cinnabar

The John R. Van Derlip Fund, 2002.127

Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)

1. This highlight of Mia's collection is a stone mask made a long long time ago (about 3000 years ago). It comes from lands that are part of southern Mexico today.
2. Historians who study the Olmec culture of ancient Mesoamerica think the mask was made as a portrait of a powerful Olmec leader.
3. The surface of the stone is light green with darker speckles. The face appears to be mostly human. Thin red lines make designs all over the green mask. For example, an X outlined in red, crosses over the mouth. There are small circles below each of the four parts of the X. Although it is pretty hard to see, a supernatural human-jaguar face hovers just above the right eye. Other lines appear around the eyes, cheeks, and chin.
4. The mask was likely made for a ceremony of some kind. The Olmec artist sculpted it from jadeite, a very hard stone. Jadeite was very valuable because the Olmec made a symbolic connection between the green color and the idea of life--think about the green color of plants.
5. After carving the lines into the stone, the artist highlighted them with a red powder called cinnabar. These lines might show face paint or tattooing. The rare

materials and symbolic designs, like the human-jaguar, tell us about the ruler's religious and political power.

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. Look closely at the stone mask. What do you notice? What do you wonder about?
2. How do you think this Olmec ruler is feeling? What do you see that makes you say that?
3. Jadeite was very valuable to the Olmec because they made a symbolic connection between the green color and the idea of life--think about the green color of plants. What are some color symbols in your culture?
4. What do you think makes this very ancient Olmec mask a highlight?

ARTWORK 4:

Unknown artist, China

Celestial Horse, 25-220, Bronze with traces of polychrome

Gift of Ruth and Bruce Dayton, 2002.45

Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)

1. This highlight of Mia's collection is a sculpture of a powerful horse. Artists in China made it almost two thousand years ago! Horses like this one were made for big tombs of wealthy people to provide them with transportation in their next life.
2. The sculpture is made from bronze, a type of metal. It was cast into bronze from nine different molds made from clay because it was too difficult to make it in one piece.
3. The horse is mostly green now, except where details that were once painted on the bronze still show, for example on its blue mane. Some red and blue paint on its neck show where the reins used to control the horse were once painted. On its back traces of a saddle still show.
4. This bronze sculpture shows an exceptional kind of horse known as Ferghana because it came from the Ferghana Valley in central Asia. China's Emperor sought out these powerful horses for his army. The Ferghana horses were larger and stronger than other horses and had more energy and could ride longer and faster than the Chinese breeds.
5. The emperor was bringing so many of these horses to China that the Ferghana ruler tried to make him stop!

6. This artwork is called “Celestial Horse,” because these amazing animals were so special they were almost believed to be from another world!

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. Look closely at this special horse. What are some things about this horse that make it so special that it was called a celestial or heavenly horse?
2. Where do you see traces of paint on the horse? What do you suppose these painted areas once showed?
3. How do you think the horse is feeling? What do you see that makes you say that?
4. What do you think makes this Chinese bronze horse a highlight?

ARTWORK 5

Suit by Unknown Japanese; Artist: Helmet by Saotome Iechika, Japan, Asia

Red-and-blue-laced Suit of Armor from the Kii Tokugawa Family, 17th century, Iron, leather, lacquer, silk, wood, gold leaf and powder, bear fur

The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund, 2009.60a-s

Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)

1. This fancy suit of Japanese armor is lightweight yet designed to protect the body in close combat. The armor includes many pieces--face mask, forearm sleeves, thigh and shin guards, and bear-fur boots--to help protect the wearer.
2. Even though this suit could be worn in battle, its excellent condition tells us it was probably used only in parades.
3. The suit of armor is made up of hundreds of pieces of lacquered metal and leather. Lacquer is a material made from the sap of trees. Many layers of lacquer were laid on top of each piece! These were all pieced together with colorful silk cords that add to the way it looks. They also make the armor flexible enough to move in it.
4. The suit may have belonged to a feudal lord named Tokugawa Yorinobu (1602–1671). He was the founder of the branch of the Tokugawa family that ruled Japan until 1867.
5. A praying mantis, covered with gold, adorns the helmet and looks like it is about to capture its prey! The helmet is made by a famous armor-maker (armorers) named Saotome Iechika.

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. Look closely at the Japanese armor. There is a lot to see here! What do you notice first? Next? What else do you see? What words (adjectives) describe it best?
2. Look at all the different materials that the suit of armor is made of. Where do you see metal? Fur? Cloth? Silk cord? Leather? Lacquer (a special shiny material made from tree sap)? Many different specialists worked on different parts of the armor. Why do you suppose it was important to make the armor so elaborate? Why might it have required so many different materials?
3. Imagine the man who wore this armor as he put it on piece by piece. How do you think he felt when he had the whole suit of armor on, including his bear-fur boots? How do you think he felt when he moved? Think about the sounds he might have heard when the lacquered metal and leather plates hit each other.
4. Look at the praying mantis on top of the helmet made by the artist Saotome Ichika. What qualities do you see that might make it a good symbol for a feudal lord? The armor also includes images of phoenixes, tortoises, and lions, all symbols of the family's power. What animal would you want to include on an outfit to tell others about your power?
5. What makes this suit of armor a highlight?

ARTWORK 6

Vincent van Gogh, Netherlands, 1853–90

Olive Trees, 1889, Oil on canvas

The William Hood Dunwoody Fund, 51.7

Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)

1. This highlight of Mia's collection is an oil painting of Olive Trees in France. The artist Vincent van Gogh is very famous for his unique paintings, and especially for his colorful pictures of nature. This type of painting is called a landscape.
2. Vincent van Gogh's painting style is very original. No one else painted like he did when he made this over one hundred years ago.
3. Vincent van Gogh was obsessed with painting the Olive Trees. He wanted to show the roughness of the old trees and he wanted his paintings to bring out the smell of the soil.
4. Vincent wrote to his brother Theo about his struggles to tell everything about the trees in his paintings. He wrote: "It's silver, sometimes more blue, sometimes

greenish, bronzed, whitening on ground that is yellow, pink, purplish or orangeish to dull red ochre. But very difficult, very difficult. But that suits me and attracts me to work fully in gold or silver.”

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. Take a close look at the painting. What do you see in this landscape?
2. How do you think Vincent van Gogh was feeling when he painted this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? How do you feel as you look at it?
3. Imagine how these trees might feel if you could touch them. How do you suppose they would feel if you could touch them? Imagine the smell of soil or dirt when you look at this. What do you imagine you can hear?
4. What do you think makes Vincent van Gogh’s painting a highlight?
5. If you were going to make a landscape artwork, what would you include in your painting? What colors would you use?

ARTWORK 7

Hans Ledwinka; Manufacturer: Ringhoffer-Tatra-Werke AG, Czech Republic, 1878–1967

Tatra T87 four-door sedan, 1948 (designed 1936), All-metal construction

Gift of funds from Regis Foundation, 2005.138

Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)

1. This highlight of Mia’s collection is a car! It is a car called the Tatra. This is one of only a few cars in art museum collections.
2. The Tatra was named for a mountain range in eastern Europe.
3. This car has a lot of unusual features. The three-part windshield made it easier for the driver to see. An extra tire was hidden under the rounded hood up front. It was also unique at the time for having its super 75-horsepower engine mounted in the back of the car. The blinkers even flipped out from the sides when the driver signaled a turn. The cover over the rear wheels is called a skirt.
4. When Hans Ledwinka designed this car quite a long time ago, it was also special for how fast it could go! Yet, the Tatra is very rare: only 2000 of this style tatra were ever made.

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. Look closely at the Tatra to see what makes it special. There is a lot to look at. What about this car stands out for you? What words would you use to describe the car?
2. If you were going to design a car with special features, what would you include? Why?
3. What do you think makes the Tatra car a highlight?

ARTWORK 8

Beauford Delaney, United States, 1901–79

Untitled, 1954, Oil on raincoat fragment

Gift of Jacques and Solange du Closel, 2003.106, © Estate of Beauford Delaney / Derek L. Spratley, Esq., Court Appointed Administrator

Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)

1. This highlight of Mia's collection is a modern painting by American artist, Beauford Delaney. This type of painting is called abstract because it is all about the paint, colors, and lines and how they express feelings.
2. The artist signed his name, the year he made the painting and the place where he made it--Paris--in the lower right corner.
3. Beauford Delaney painted this artwork with all its swirls of line and color, a few months after moving from New York city in the United States to Paris, France. He was living in a new place, and started painting in a new way! When he lived in New York City he painted pictures that showed the city and its people.
4. As a gay Black American, Beauford Delaney faced a lot of discrimination in the United States. Paris was a more tolerant place, where he believed he would be treated with kindness and respect. His new sense of freedom might be one reason Delaney tried a new way of painting.
5. Delaney filled his new paintings with bright colors, unusual shapes, and bold lines. He even experimented or tried different ways of putting paint on the canvas. Look closely for areas where you think he might have painted with a flat tool called a palette knife, his fingers, or even squeezed colors right out of the paint tubes!
6. The winter when Delaney painted this was hard for him. Cold temperatures in Paris hit a record low, and his studio was unheated. When a friend gave him a

nice warm coat, he cut up his old coat so he could paint on it! If you turn over this painting, you can even see the outline of a pocket.

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. Look closely at this painting. The surface of the painting is mostly covered by many different colors of paint. Where do you see swirling green lines that appear to move on the surface? What other colors do you see? Look for areas in the painting where the artist Beauford Delaney made colors by mixing thick, white paint with all the colors.
2. How do you think Beauford Delaney felt when he made this? What do you see that makes you say that?
3. Abstract art is often made to make viewers like you feel something too. How do you feel when you look at this painting?
4. If you made an abstract painting, what kind of feelings would you want to show? What colors would you use to show these feelings? What kinds of lines would you make?
5. What do you think makes Beauford Delaney's abstract painting a highlight?

ARTWORK 9

Kusama Yayoi, Japan, 1929

Untitled, 1967, Oil on canvas

The John R. Van Derlip Fund, 2010.7, © Yayoi Kusama

Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)

1. Yayoi Kusama's painting is an abstract artwork. It is called abstract because it is all about the paint, colors, shapes, and lines and how they express feelings. The painting does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction of something you might actually see.
2. Some people see things that remind them of nature in Kusama's painting. The marks in this abstract painting, including to spots and the web-like lines Kusama calls infinity nets, can mean many different things to many different people.
3. Yayoi Kusama has made art for a long long time. She still makes art today! She made artworks in this style over 50 years ago to help her feel better when she was feeling very stressed out. Making these marks helped her manage her feelings.

4. What makes Yayoi Kusama's painting a highlight?

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. Look closely at this painting by Yayoi Kusama. What do you see? What are you wondering about?
2. What do you feel when you look at this artwork? What parts of the artwork impact how you are feeling? (Ask for a couple of students to share their responses)
3. Imagine this abstract artwork could make sounds. What sounds do you think it would make? What about the artwork makes you feel that sound? Take several responses and invite everyone to share their sounds together.
4. If you have pencils and paper, draw some of these shapes for a moment. If not, draw them with your finger in the air. Look closely and continue to feel the painting while hearing a little bit about the artist and the artwork.
5. Yayoi Kusama has made art for a long, long time. She made artworks in this style to help her feel better when she was feeling very stressed out. Making these marks helped her manage her feelings. To yourself, think about what you do to manage your feelings when you are feeling stressed or out of control.

Conclusion

Thank you for looking at and sharing your thoughts about so many highlights of the collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Art. If you had to pick one highlight from today's tour as your favorite, which one would you pick? Why? Which one would you pick as your second favorite? I hope you will come back to Mia often (the museum is free!) to see these and the many other highlights we did not get to see today.