Welcome to Art Adventure

What is Art Adventure?

Art Adventure is a program that engages students with artworks from the Minneapolis Institute of Art's collection. Through the support of thousands of trained volunteers, Art Adventure brings visual arts into K–6 classrooms across Minnesota and beyond. The program encourages creativity, critical thinking, and global awareness through in-depth explorations of art across various cultures and time periods. Art Adventure is an opportunity for students to experience art up close and personal through reproductions, technology, and touch-and-feel props.

What does the Art Adventure Program do for students?

An evaluation of Art Adventure showed that, in addition to fostering an interest in art, the program fosters five major critical thinking skills. The skills and experiences students gain through Art Adventure will benefit them the rest of their lives.

5 Critical Thinking Skills

1. Describe what you see.
2. Notice details.
3. Understand how the parts form a whole idea or artwork.
4. Support interpretations with sufficient reasons.
5. Support opinions or preferences with sound reasons.

Who are Picture People?

You like being around and talking to children. You're happy to hear their ideas and are curious to know more about them. You think you might like art—or you know you love art! You might be a parent, a grandparent, or a community member with an enthusiasm for kids and the arts.

You're good at and enjoy

- Recognizing the value in others' unique perspectives.
- Learning about people and places new to you.
- Collaborating with other adults.
- Listening to students.
- Sharing information.

Things you don't have to be good at (but might worry are important)

You do not need to:

- Have classroom experience.
- Know about art, art history, or museums.
- Teach students about art historical periods and terminology.
- Know how to make art.

In this role, you will

- Introduce classroom students to a variety of preselected artworks from various cultures, places, and eras.
- Facilitate discussions using open-ended questions and reaffirm what you hear students say.
- Ask follow-up questions to enliven the conversation.
- Communicate with your school's coordinator.

Once You're in the Classroom

Relax!

The information provided in this booklet is intended as background material to help you feel confident when you share artworks with children. Don't feel you have to cover everything. Rather, choose two or three key ideas you think will be compelling. Kids love stories—what stories might you tell? What parallels can you draw to their lives?

Be sure everyone can see you and the reproduction.

Talk with the teacher to understand routines the class follows when gathering for a visitor. Aim for a setup that will get the students as close to the reproduction as possible. Keep the students' eyes on you, too, by making regular eye contact with everyone in the group.

Set up the students for successful exploration.

- Have the children wear nametags so you can call them by name.
- Set your own preferences aside to allow students to form their own opinions.
- Encourage the students to take turns speaking.
- Paraphrase what the students have said to let them know that you have been listening and help clarify each student's statement for the class.

Begin each discussion with a moment of silent looking.

Begin by introducing the lesson, yourself, and the reproductions. Review with the class what a museum is and what you'll be doing with them. You might build suspense by keeping each image hidden. Start by having the students observe the artwork in total silence. Model your expectations by spending time quietly looking, too.

Give students time to talk about what they have observed.

Introduce a key idea, then begin with a question. Each artwork has specific examples. Be sure to use your finger to point to the part of the picture the child is talking about. Paraphrase his or her words to clarify the observation for others. You'll be surprised how quickly students learn to justify their comments with evidence they can see in the picture! Asking "What else can you find?" or connecting historical content can help generate further comments.

Connect your key ideas to the students' observations.

When the students' observations begin to slow down, use what you've learned about their interests to steer the discussion toward your key ideas. Try to ask questions that will draw connections between what they have said and what you would like them to consider. If they pose questions you can't answer, admit it! Brainstorm ways you might find out together.

Keep the age of your class in mind.

Don't expect young children to be able to focus for longer than 20 minutes. Plan your presentations accordingly. Consider your grade level's ability to understand time—will students understand a date or phrase such as "colonial times" (fifth graders might) or should you stick with "a long time ago" or "about 100 years ago"? Keep in mind that younger children are more likely to accept the abstract than older students, who may want concrete content.

Talk to other Picture People.

Experienced Picture People have great ideas about how to capture the imagination of a class. Don't hesitate to borrow and adapt their suggestions, but remember to bring your own creativity along, too.

Talking about Art

Each artwork comes with key ideas and supporting questions. We encourage you to use them. If you want to develop your own, consider these non-specific questions, which encourage students to look closely and find their own meaning. This process helps develop the five Critical Thinking Skills (page 1). Please keep in mind that not every question will work for every artwork. Remember, if you ask a question, first share a key idea.

What do you see in this artwork?
What else can you find?
This is the best line of questioning to begin conversations with K–2 students. For students who seem ready to dive deeper ask, "What do you see that makes you say that?"

What's going on in this picture?
What do you see that makes you say that?
You'll notice this question is different than "What do you see?" "What's going on?" invites a consideration of relationships and interactions and taps into children's natural interest to find stories. "What do you see that makes you say that?" focuses comments on the evidence in the artwork and helps kids explain their assumptions.

How would you feel if you were "in" this work of art?
What would you hear? How might this feel if you could touch it? What path would you take through the picture? What do you see that makes you say that? What might it smell like?

What does this artwork remind you of?
What would you use this object for? What about this scene is familiar or unfamiliar to you? What do you see that makes you say that?

What person or object in this picture do you think was most important to the artist?
What are people in the picture looking at? Where are there bright colors? What is biggest?

How would the artwork be different if you could make a change?
What would happen if you changed a color? Moved an object or person? Left something out?

How is this work of art similar to or different from another one you've seen in this set?
"Compare and contrast" encourages close looking and reinforces the theme. Get together with your fellow volunteers to coordinate some provocative pairs.

How does this work of art relate to the theme of the set?
Let the students pull it all together! What connections do they see between the theme and what they've noticed and learned about the work of art?

What do you like most about this artwork? Why? What do you like least?
If you could keep one artwork from this set, what artwork would you pick? Why?

Using Touch-and-Feel Props

Why props?

Students normally first encounter the Art Adventure artworks in their classrooms as reproductions. The works of art appear to be two-dimensional and similar in size. Props accompany many of the reproductions to help overcome this limitation. Touching a material similar to the artwork, seeing the technique used to create it, or looking at a photograph in which the object is being used adds another dimension to the experience. The use of props reinforces the understanding of all learners through hands-on experiences.

How should you use props?

Without careful planning, props will do little but distract your group. Use these helpful tips to lead a successful exploration:

- Present the prop alongside information about an artwork or to help answer a question about the artwork.
- There are a number of ways to use the prop:
    1. Pass the prop around to each student. Give the students a question to consider while they are waiting for the prop and one to consider after they have held the prop.
    2. Ask a single student to come forward and describe how it feels to the whole group.
    3. Hold the prop yourself and walk it around the group for the students to touch or look at closely.
    4. Hold the prop yourself to illustrate relevant parts of the discussion.
    5. Give everyone a chance to examine it more closely at the end of your presentation.
- Clear communication of your expectations is essential to keep the students focused on the activity. Let the students know that they will need to take turns, what they should do if it's not their turn, and how they should treat the props.
- After the students have explored the prop, refer to the experience as you continue the discussion.
- Don't forget to plan how you'll get the props back from the students! Schools are charged significant fees for missing or damaged props and reproductions.

Artists' Inspirations

What inspires an artist to create a work of art? *Artists' Inspirations* explores the sources of inspiration for six different artists and examines how their original ideas were then shaped and transformed in the creative process. The six works included in this set provide a glimpse into the ways in which artists from a variety of cultures have channeled their creative spirits. Whether their source of inspiration was the natural world, ancient myths and traditions, or just ordinary objects of everyday life, each artist has shaped those ideas into a unique work of art.

Prop Kit Contents

Work of Art	Prop	Replacement Cost
China, *Jade Mountain*	Sample of carved jade	$40
	Portrait of Chinese ruler	$10
	Scene of Chinese landscape	$10
Georgia O'Keeffe, *Pedernal–From the Ranch #1*	Samples of painted canvas (2)	$30 each
	Photograph of Pedernal Mountain	$10
	Portrait of O'Keeffe	$10
Papua new Guinea, Frieze decoration from a Malagan Ceremony	No prop	–––
Junius Brutus Stearns, *A Fishing Party Off Long Island*	Photograph of shark fisherman	$10
	1816 map of United States	$10
Pablo Picasso, *Baboon and Young*	Photograph of baboon model	$10
	Portrait of Picasso and his son	$10
William Edmondson, *Ram*	Photograph of Edmondson by Louise Dahl-Wolfe	$10
	Portrait of Edmondson carving in his yard	$10
Artwork Reproductions (6)		$50

Please make sure that you have enclosed all of the items on this list when you return the prop kit. You will be responsible for the cost of replacing any missing or damaged items. Thank you!

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China, Asia
Jade Mountain Illustrating the Gathering of Scholars at the Lanting Pavillion
1784, light green jade
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and Gift of the Thomas Barlow Walker Foundation, 92.103.13
22 ½ × 38 ⅜ in., 640 lb. (57.15 × 97.47 × 290.3 cm)

Nature has long been the primary source of inspiration for Chinese artists. So has an admiration of the past. The artist who created *Jade Mountain* followed both of these traditions. The particular event that inspired this artist was a gathering of poets that occurred nearly 1,400 years earlier.

Background

This sculpture embodies the long-standing Chinese cultural values associated with landscape and nature. The landscape theme is rooted in a philosophy of nature that can be traced to Confucian and Taoist beliefs as early as 500 CE. Taoism emphasized harmony with the core laws of the universe. Taoist philosophers taught that the way to spiritual understanding and peace was through contemplation of the beauties and mysteries of nature. Followers of Confucius drew their wisdom from the "natural order of things." From these two philosophies emerged a belief in universal harmony and a desire to live a life in accordance with it.

Seeking to express this philosophy in their work, Chinese poets and painters made landscape a dominant theme, specifically the greatness of nature and its power over humans.

Jade mountains like this one represent the magnificent mountainous landscapes that were highly valued by Chinese philosophers, writers, and artists for over 20 centuries. In effect, they translate the Chinese painting tradition into sculpture.

The Chinese consider jade to be the most sacred and treasured of all precious stones. The word for jade is *yu*, meaning pure, precious, noble, and "right." Its physical characteristics are believed to express the greatest virtues of humankind: soft, smooth, and glossy—like benevolence; fine, compact, and strong—like intelligence; angular, though not sharp or cutting—like righteousness; internally radiant—like faith; pure of sound when struck—like wisdom; and able to be broken, but not bent—like courage.

Jade is not native to China. To get the precious stone, groups often traveled as far as 2,000 miles across the difficult terrain of Afghanistan, Siberia, Tibet, and Burma (today's Myanmar). This piece of jade is from Xinj-iang province, at the farthest west reaches of China. Once found, removing the jade from the mountains proved arduous. Workers laboriously chiseled away the largest slabs, for objects like *Jade Mountain*, from the surrounding rocks.

Mia's *Jade Mountain* was created during the Qing dynasty (1644–1912), the last period of imperial rule in China. The Qing [ching] dynasty ruled through traditional Chinese institutions of government, philosophy, and religion. Its rulers also had great respect for Chinese cultural tradition and sought to preserve the achievements of the past and to encourage the arts of the present. One of the first patrons of scholarship and art was the emperor Qianlong [chee-en long], who ruled from 1736 to 1795. His reign is recognized as one of the most creative periods in the history of Chinese art. Qianlong, who commissioned this piece, was himself an important painter, calligrapher, and poet, and his collection of Chinese paintings of all periods was one of the greatest ever made.

Jade Mountain

Jade Mountain was carved from one of four unusually large blocks split from a boulder found in Central Asia. Weighing 640 pounds, it is the smallest piece from that series, but is considered to be the largest piece of carved jade in the Western hemisphere.

***Jade Mountain* is considered to be the largest piece of carved jade in the Western hemisphere.**

Jade Mountain illustrates a poetry gathering held at Lanting (the Orchid Pavilion) in Shaoxing near Mount Kuaiji [gwi jee] in what is present-day Zhejiang province. There, on March 3, 353 CE, the poet Wang Xizhi [Wong She Jurr] invited 41 of his scholarly friends. Relaxing along the orchid-filled banks of a winding stream, the group consumed wine from cups that floated downstream, contemplated nature, and wrote poems for the occasion. These were later assembled by Wang, who wrote a long poem titled *Prelude to the Orchid Pavilion*. Composed of 324 characters in 28 lines, the poem reflects on the meaning and enjoyment of life and death, the past and the present. Because the Chinese consider calligraphy to be the highest of all art forms, and because Wang was regarded as the greatest of all calligraphers, many copies of his poem were soon in circulation. It has received great attention and respect from artists, poets, and calligraphers in China and Japan ever since.

Jade is very difficult to carve. The skill of the artist is evident in the details of the crisply defined ridges of the hills, the leaves on each tree, the delicate cups floating down the brook, and each tiny figure walking the mountain paths. Equally remarkable is the delicately inscribed calligraphy on two sides of the mountain. The long poem seen on the front is Wang Xizhi's famous preface. Its inclusion here is a reminder of the importance of the past and tradition in Chinese art. On the back is a poem by the Emperor Qianlong. (Translations of both are found at the end of this entry.)

The fact that the artist featured these poems on the sculpture shows how important calligraphy and poetry are in Chinese artwork.

That the artist featured these poems on the sculpture shows how important calligraphy and poetry are in Chinese artwork. As early as the 1000s, scholar, painter, poet, and calligrapher were often the same person. Rulers considered themselves to be the scholarly elite, so it is not surprising that the emperor Qianlong, living in the 1700s, would commission such a work as *Jade Mountain* and compose his own poem for the back. It was not just to remember the historic event of a poets' gathering, or simply a decorative triumph of the jade-carver's art, or yet another copy of the famous poem. Instead, it was a combination of all of these things, uniting in one work the best of the past and the present and embodying for the emperor and other viewers the important virtues of scholarly activity, love of the arts, and unity with nature.

Technique

Qianlong organized palace workshops in several cities to produce jade objects for palace use. The process involved in making large jade mountains like this was time-consuming and expensive. It included eight or nine stages, required several workmen, and took years to complete. Jade, an extremely hard material, is worked slowly by wearing away the jade with an abrasive stone harder than jade, such as quartz dust. At the time, the power for drilling and carving came only from the artist's hands or from a foot treadle that turned a grinding element. The artist's tools were thought to have been wood or bamboo, while the surface was worn down by creating friction between quartz and jade. This type of sculpture, made by carving away or removing stone from a larger piece, is called subtractive sculpture.

About the Artist

Although his name is unknown, the artist who designed and carved *Jade Mountain* must have been an honored and respected member of Chinese society. The creation of any jade object required great skill, patience, and discipline; in addition, the mountain would have called for great scholarship, aesthetic sensitivity, and feeling for life. These qualities make *Jade Mountain* a piece of poetic contemplation, not just technical skill.

Calligraphic Transcription

"Prelude to the Orchid Pavilion," Wang Xizhi:

In the late spring of the ninth year of the Yungho reign (353 CE) a gathering was held at Lanting, the Orchid Pavilion, north of Kuaiji Mountain. The meeting was held to clean and repair the honored graves and all the luminaries came. Young and old alike were gathered together. At this site were steep magnificent mountains of lush forests and elegant bamboo. Here, too, was a clear, rapid running stream, traversing the slope which could be used to float the wine cups. We sat about the banks of this stream. Although lacking the joy of flute and string, a single cup and single poem were sufficient to draw out the deepest emotions. On that day the sky was bright, the air pure and the gentle wind a thing of tranquility. Gazing upward the vastness of the universe could be comprehended; downward one saw the varied abundance of things. All that the mind and eye conceived was best appreciated through the senses. It was a delightful experience! In this generation one is influenced by experiences within his own tiny environment, but one's emotion comes from outside his material existence. Although there are ten thousand moods of fondness and dislike, and a difference between action and non-action, when a man feels joy he is content to know that that feeling may be confined to him alone.

With this acceptance one will never notice the approach of old age. When one is fatigued through thought the feeling is joy, and that emotion will suddenly become a thing of the past. Still, these are the things which excite one's emotions and all achievements and failures are thus transformed and finally come to an end. The ancients stated that birth and death are great events. Such pain! In tracing the course of the emotion involved in building a grave I always feel grieved although I know that birth and death are illusions and that the (legendary) birth of Chi and the demise of Pong are untrue. Our concept of posterity is presently formulated and can be likened to our present view of the past. A sad situation! Therefore, I record and collate all the writings of my contemporaries. Although the occasion may change from this one and although the next generation may be different from this one, what touches one's heart remains the same. Posterity will be inspired by these verses.

Early in the late spring month of the Chia Chen cycle (1784, copied by the emperor).

(Placed above the copy of Wang Xizhi's poem is the seal of Emperior Qianlong.)

On the reverse side of the mountain is another inscription, a poem written by the emperor himself:

The mountain of jade of Yutian was large.

It was carved to represent a literary gathering.

Elders and youth alike comprised the meeting.

The calligraphy was originally fashioned late in the Yungho reign;

And the writing has been authenticated on numerous occasions since then.

It pleases me that this colophon is genuine.

One should ask in this picture,

Who should be considered to be the man of jade?

By imperial decree, the Chia Chen cycle of the Qianlong reign.

Key Ideas

1. The sculptors of this artwork interpreted a real event that took place a long time ago, when a group of poets gathered to share inspiration and write poetry.
2. Jade is the most important stone in Chinese culture. It represents some of China's most enduring virtues: benevolence, intelligence, righteousness, faith, wisdom, and courage.
3. Not only were these artists inspired to make a sculpture; they were inspired by history. To know all of the details seen on *Jade Mountain*, they would have had to know about the famous gathering of poets.

Suggested Questions

1. Imagine you are the size of an ant. Look closely. Take a walk through *Jade Mountain*. Where did you start? Why? How did it feel? What did you smell? What sounds did you hear? Who did you take your walk with? Why?
2. This sculpture shows many poets gathering together to eat, drink, and write poetry. The details are so small! Use your imagination to color *Jade Mountain*. Paint a picture in your mind of what you see for your classmates.
3. These artists were inspired by a story from the past and the beautiful landscape of China. What inspires you? If you could turn your inspiration into an artwork, what would it look like? What materials would you use? Why? What colors would it be? How do they make you feel?

Notes

Notes

Georgia O'Keeffe, United States, 1887–1986
***Pedernal — From the Ranch #1*, 1956, oil on canvas**
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Cowles, 64.43.2
©Georgia O'Keeffe Museum / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
30 x 40 in. (76.2 x 101.6 cm) (canvas)
30 ⅛ x 40 ⅛ x 1 3/16 in. (76.52 x 101.92 x 3.02 cm) (outer frame)

Georgia O'Keeffe looked to the beauty of abstract forms in nature for inspiration for her paintings. Her highly individual style conveys a personal expression of her feeling for the environment and invites viewers to look at nature in new ways.

Background

Georgia O'Keeffe was born in the Midwest and lived many of her adult years in New York. However, it was the American Southwest that she loved and adopted as her home. In 1929, she made her first trip to New Mexico. In the years that followed, she spent several months a year in New Mexico, settling there permanently in 1946.

One day, as she held up an animal's pelvic bone, O'Keeffe caught a glimpse of sky through the hole.

Living in the desert in an adobe house (a house made of natural materials), O'Keeffe was fascinated by the landscape and the animal bones and skulls she collected on her walks. One day, as she held up an animal's pelvic bone, she caught a glimpse of sky through the hole. That glimpse inspired her to paint this image: *Pedernal— From the Ranch #1.*

Pedernal—From the Ranch #1

The Pedernal is a flat-topped mesa (an elevated piece of flat land) that lies southeast of O'Keeffe's Ghost Ranch near Albuquerque, New Mexico. The artist has framed her view of the mesa with the curving shape of an animal's pelvic bone. The Pedernal was one of the artist's favorite subjects.

Like a film director, she focuses our vision through the shape of the bone to lend drama to the Pedernal, contrasting the simple silhouette of the mesa with the curve of the bone. Consider how differently the mesa would appear without the framework of the bone. This telescopic view creates a sense of vast space and endless blue sky punctuated by the flat shape of the mesa.

O'Keeffe drew inspiration from the mountain as she viewed it and simplified and reduced its forms in this painting. She eliminates details and varied textures to give greater emphasis to form and color. Our attention is focused first on the mesa, then on the sky and the bone.

She does not hesitate to exaggerate the proportions of objects. Here the bone takes on monumental proportions because of its placement in the composition. Without some information about the painting, we might not recognize this as a bone. This process, of reduction and simplification of form, is called abstraction.

Color plays an equally important role in O'Keeffe's artwork. She chose the rich primary colors of red and blue not only to reflect the natural environment of the Southwest, but also to convey a warmth and feeling she felt for this land. Likewise, the bones and landscape serve as equivalents of life in the desert, symbolizing this new land she had chosen as her home. This painting may be viewed as the expression of O'Keeffe's love of nature and as a tribute to the vastness of her beloved Southwest.

This painting may be viewed as the expression of O'Keeffe's love of nature and as a tribute to the vastness of her beloved Southwest.

Technique

O'Keeffe was a pioneer of early American modernism. During the years when realism was popular in America, O'Keeffe was experimenting with abstraction, reducing forms in nature to broad areas of color and simplified forms. By experimenting with scale, such as by enlarging the bone, she forces the viewer to see images in new ways.

O'Keeffe is more interested in expressing her feeling for nature than simply describing it.

O'Keeffe is more interested in expressing her feeling for nature than simply describing it. Her experience of drawing while listening to music gave her the idea that line, color, and shape could express beauty. This private vision is the real subject of her work.

About the Artist

When Georgia O'Keeffe died in 1986 at age 98, she was the most celebrated woman artist of the 1900s. Born in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, O'Keeffe was interested in art at an early age and knew by the eighth grade that she would become an artist. Growing up in the Midwest shaped her artistic development. She attended the Art Institute of Chicago before moving to New York City to work as an artist.

O'Keeffe created more than 900 paintings and drawings in her lifetime and was honored with retrospectives (exhibitions that look back on an artist's career) by major museums throughout the United States that honor her long and prolific career. She served as a role model for women artists at a time when men dominated the art world, and remains today a source of inspiration for many artists.

Key Ideas

1. The artist Georgia O'Keeffe was inspired by nature. After living in Wisconsin and New York City, she moved to New Mexico, where she painted this artwork.
2. O'Keeffe found an animal bone while walking in the desert. She used it like a binocular to paint an abstract landscape of the Pedernal, a narrow mesa in northern New Mexico.
3. Color was very important to O'Keeffe. She used it to express herself, her love of nature, and the places she captured in her painting.

Suggested Questions

1. Use your hands to pretend you are looking through binoculars. Look closely. What do you see through the holes? Take your hands down. What was missing before?
2. O'Keeffe used the animal bone like a picture frame. Look closely. If the bone was not in the painting, what else do you think you would be able to see? What do you see that makes you say that?
3. Close your eyes if you want, and picture a warm place. What colors come to mind? What colors do you see when you think of a cold place? Describe the colors you see here. What do you think it would feel like to be in this painting? Why?

Notes

Papua New Guinea, Oceania
Malagan frieze, 19th century, wood, pigment, shell
Gift of Bruce B. Dayton, 85.94
39 x 16 x 5 ¼ in. (99.06 x 40.64 x 13.34 cm)

The images of birds and foliage in this Papua New Guinea sculpture provide evidence that the artist drew his inspiration from nature. He also found inspiration in his culture's traditions and social structures.

Background

New Ireland is one of the largest islands in Papua New Guinea. Tropical rain forests cover much of the island, and a wide variety of birds, reptiles, and sea animals live there. In New Ireland these creatures are symbolic. Society is ordered by two major moieties (groups) [MOY-ah-tee], Hawks and Eagles, and further divided into clans, which are represented by snakes, birds, and fish. The animals correspond to the social structure, while also representing the natural order of earth, air, and sea. In both the culture and art of New Ireland, social structure is viewed as parallel to the natural order.

As in most societies, New Ireland has ceremonies that mark important transitions in life. The celebrations carried out at the time of death are central to the social and artistic life of the community. Known as funerary festivals, these celebrations can last years.

On the northern coast of New Ireland, elaborate sculptures are made for mortuary festivals. Snakes, birds, and fish often appear in ceremonial objects, such as the frieze. A frieze is a long, flat, horizontal sculpture. Called malagan sculptures, they are made for the memorial services, also called malagan, which take place after a person's death.

The animals refer to the clans or social order of society, as well as the natural order of air (birds) and earth (snakes).

Frieze Decoration from a Malagan Ceremony

The subject of this malagan is a favorite theme in New Ireland sculpture: the struggle between birds and snakes. The animals refer to the clans or social order of society, as well as the natural order of air (birds) and earth (snakes). This traditional theme inspired the artist to develop a composition that expressed this struggle and opposition.

Despite knowing the subject, birds and snakes, one must look closely to identify them within the design. Three birds and a snake are interwoven into the foliage without a clear distinction between them. The two white-faced chickens in the center may be identified by their snail-shell eyes and black beaks. The larger chicken hovers over the smaller one. Above the chickens, a slender black frigate bird (a tropical sea bird with long tail feathers) forms the upper edge of the frieze. The frigate bird is engaged in a struggle with a black snake, whose tail is caught in its beak. The snake weaves through the foliage and curves through the beak of the largest chicken.

This design is complex because the sculpture is intended to invite speculation. Chickens (particularly roosters) play an important role in the imagery of religious objects in New Ireland. The feathers of chickens are a prized decorative element. New Ireland artists use very few species as inspiration for their images. The complexity of design is created in part by the patterns formed through color and repetition of lines. The patterns on the foliage are very similar to those on the feathers. The foliage patterns layered on the beaks of the birds blur the distinction between the plants and the animals. In fact, the forms nearly blend together because of the patterning. One bird form flows into another.

Likewise, there is a blurring of the positive space (the birds themselves) and the negative space (the areas between forms). This further contributes to the ambiguous quality of the object.

This sculpture is carved from a single piece of wood. The piercing and hollowing out of the wood around the forms create the various shapes. The basic colors—black, white, and reddish-brown—are applied in sharp contrast to one another, defining certain shapes, such as the faces and eyes of the birds, and obscuring others, such as the bodies of the birds and the foliage.

Horizontal friezes like this one were often placed on poles for display during malagan ceremonies or carried in dance. We don't know the precise usage of this one, but we do know that it was set on something, possibly a pole. It could also have been attached to the head of a standing figure.

The success of a malagan ceremony depends upon the carving, as well as the quality of the food and dance.

The success of a malagan ceremony depends upon the carving, as well as food and dance. By its end, the host's material resources are gone, but that person's status in society is enhanced. In time, the sculptures are allowed to perish but the prestige remains. The sculptures are not just objects but symbols of social cooperation and economic activity of the society in which they are produced.

The sculptures are not just objects but symbols of social cooperation and economic activity.

Technique

Malagan sculpture is made during the first phase of a festival that can last for months or even years. Malagan designs are owned by older male members of a clan. When an individual wishes to host a ceremony to honor a deceased person, he or she must ask permission. The host then commissions a carver and supervises the process.

The traditional method of sculpting a malagan began with the cutting and drying of a tree. On the seventh day, carving commenced with a feast. Prior to 1850, the roughing out of the sculpture was done using an ax with a shell or stone blade, while finer carving was accomplished using pieces of shell. Since that time, nearly all carving, including that of the malagan frieze, has been done with metal tools introduced by Europeans. Likewise, metal drills have replaced those made with shark teeth for piercing. The sculpture was then dried for about two months over fire. Polishing, which is marked by another feast, was done with sharkskin.

At this point, a shelter was built for the malagan. Traditionally, malagan sculptures were painted with pigments made from lime powder, charcoal ash, or vegetable material using a brush made from the stalk of a leaf. This malagan frieze was painted with traditional pigments, but today oil pigments are commonly used. The eyes, made of a sea snail, were placed into the sculpture last. It is this step that empowered the figure.

On the final day of the malagan ceremony, which lasted weeks or months, the shelter was torn down and the sculpture was exhibited. At that point, the malagan sculptures no longer possessed power and were allowed to break down. It is fortunate that this particular frieze has survived.

About the Artist

New Ireland artists seldom make their living solely by art. They engage in other activities, such as farming and fishing, but generally they are people who have both a deeper religious knowledge and specialized skills developed through an apprentice system. Some artists' reputations are renowned from afar (in New Ireland terms, 50–100 miles), and they are sometimes hired to work far from home. New Ireland artists are respected not only for their artistic skills but also as valued members of their society.

Key Ideas

1. Malagan friezes are used for memorial services, as a way to remember and represent the dead.
2. The artist was inspired by his community's traditions and belief systems.
3. Birds and snakes are popular themes in art from New Ireland. The birds represent air, and the snakes represent earth.

Suggested Questions

1. There are four animals on this wooden frieze sculpture. Look closely. Work together and see if you can find all four. How many eyes do you see? How many heads? How many birds are biting the snake?
2. Which animals on this frieze can fly? Besides air and earth (ground), where else can animals live? Which animals live there? How do they get around?
3. These animals are familiar to New Ireland artists. They inspire artists to create. You live in the Midwest. If you could carve a frieze, what Midwestern animals would you use to represent earth, sky, and water? Why?

Notes

Junius Brutus Stearns, United States, 1810–85
***A Fishing Party Off Long Island*, 1860, oil on canvas**
Gift of the Regis Collection, 78.26
37 x 54 ½ in. (93.98 x 138.43 cm) (canvas)

Junius Brutus Stearns's passion for fishing inspired him to develop unique paintings that combined portraits with detailed scenes of this leisure activity.

Background

Attitudes toward the American landscape changed significantly during the 1800s. Previously, the vast, untamed wilderness had been something to fear. For many settlers, clearing the land for farming and building brought a sense of comfort and control, which made the unknown seem less threatening. European Americans began to view the spectacular landscape with new eyes and sought to preserve, record, and experience its wonders.

While wilderness preservation efforts were under way, authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau penned their accounts of the outdoors, and artists of the Hudson River School, including Thomas Cole, Frederic Edwin Church, and Asher B. Durand, romanticized the countryside on canvas.

The general public, increasingly fascinated by the discovery and exploration of remote areas, craved a sense of engagement with nature. Fishing was one outdoor activity that could be both adventurous and leisurely.

The general public, increasingly fascinated by the discovery and exploration of remote areas, craved a sense of engagement with nature.

As fishing became popular, it also became a subject for artists. Junius Brutus Stearns combined his skill of painting portraits with his enthusiasm for fishing to create memorable genre [Zhan-rah], or everyday, scenes.

The area of Long Island shown in *A Fishing Party Off Long Island* was known for shark fishing. Three types of shark—blue, mako, and thresher—inhabit the waters off the Long Island coast, and shark fishing remains a popular sport on Long Island today. The season runs from June to October, with tournaments for the most avid fishermen.

A Fishing Party Off Long Island

The men pictured in it have not been positively identified. They may be fishing companions of a possible patron, a Mr. Hone (who may have commissioned the work), or they may have been friends of the artist. In Stearns's obituary, seven men were mentioned as his close friends, one of whom was president of the Oceanus Boat Club.

A Fishing Party Off Long Island presents a contrast to the artist's typical charming, quiet river-fishing scenes. The setting is the open water of Long Island Sound, with distant sailboats gliding past and seagulls soaring overhead. In the foreground, seven men occupying two boats have caught what looks like a blue shark, a common catch in this area, and are working to pull it in.

The reflection of red shirts in the water hints at blood and danger.

With their fishing equipment at the ready, and bracing themselves in anticipation of the struggle ahead, the men appear excited yet composed. The size of the fish would seem to bring more drama and excitement than is portrayed here. The reflection of red shirts in the water hints at blood and danger.

Technique

Stearns painted his fishing scenes in the recently developed style called Realism. Works in this style were true to the natural world and often incorporated commonplace people, places, and events. Genre scenes, depictions of everyday life, gained popularity among artists and the public. Fishing scenes were in high demand.

The positioning of the men and the lack of expression on their faces were probably intended to allow viewers to recognize each person in this portrait.

Stearns's unusual combination of genre painting and portraiture set him apart from fellow artists interested in fishing. In 1850 he began painting fishing pictures that included children, and by the time he produced *A Fishing Party Off Long Island* in 1860, his style was fully developed. The positioning of the men and the lack of expression on their faces were probably intended to allow viewers to recognize each person in this portrait. As an artist knowledgeable about fishing, Stearns rendered the fishing equipment and the fish in great detail.

About the Artist

Junius Brutus Stearns was born in 1810 in Arlington, Vermont. He enrolled as a student at the National Academy of Design, in New York, around 1838. After exhibiting at the school and studying in London and Paris, he settled in the New York area, where he remained for the rest of his life.

Stearns is best known for a series of history paintings chronicling the life of George Washington, but he was also among the foremost painters of fishing subjects in the 1800s. Although little is known about his life, he seems to have been a fishing enthusiast. His membership in the Oceanus Club of New York, his bequest of his fishing gear to his sons, and his numerous fishing scenes all point to his passion for the sport.

Key Ideas

1. The artist was inspired by one of his favorite activities: fishing.
2. When Europeans first came to America, the large, untamed wilderness both frightened and excited them. They were curious and wanted to explore.
3. The men are about to catch a blue shark, but their faces do not show the excitement or fear expected from such a catch.

Suggested Questions

1. Look closely at the fishermen. How do you think they feel? What do you see that makes you say that? How would you feel? Why? Why do you think the artist chose to paint them with those emotions?
2. The men are about to catch a shark. Look closely. What else is going on in this painting? What do you see that makes you say that?
3. If you were that close to a shark, show me what you would look like. Would you be scared? Why or why not?

Notes

Pablo Picasso, Spain, 1881–1973
***Baboon and Young*, 1951, bronze**
Gift of funds from the John Cowles Foundation, 55.45
©Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
21 ½ x 13 ⅛ x 24 in. (54.6 x 33.3 x 61.0 cm)

Pablo Picasso was inspired to create *Baboon and Young* by the toy cars belonging to his son. Picasso thought, with their undersides placed together, that the toy cars looked like a baboon head. This sculpture demonstrates how, with creativity and inspiration, anything can be transformed into a work of art.

Background

Little separation existed between Picasso's life and art. In 1914, he was inspired to create a bull's head from a bicycle's handlebars and seat. In 1951, when he created *Baboon and Young*, he was still envisioning works of art in everyday objects.

His relationships with friends and family also became a source of inspiration for his art.

His relationships with friends and family also became a source of inspiration for his art. In 1951, Picasso had reason to celebrate parenthood. Late in his life, he had become a father again with the birth of his son, Claude, in 1947, and daughter, Paloma, in 1949. He was inspired during the years that followed by his children and the idea of parenthood. He often expressed the theme of parenthood in his art with representations of both humans and animals with their young.

Baboon and Young

Baboon and Young is constructed of several different objects and materials, including the toy cars that form the head of the baboon. The cars are clearly visible even though they are no longer present, because our sculpture is a bronze casting of the original creation. More difficult to detect are the other objects incorporated to form the rest of the body.

Without the original to look at, we can only guess what each object actually is. What resembles a ceramic jug (or perhaps a ball) forms the torso of the baboon. The jug's handles might form its shoulders. The tail and backbone consist of either a metal slat from a shutter or a car spring. More importantly, though, is that we see a depiction of a baboon rather than a combination of "found objects." This fact testifies to the artist's ability to transform ordinary objects into a work of art.

The combination of "found objects" and textured hand-built areas of plaster or clay produces a rich surface. The massive proportions of the parent's body and feet sharply contrast with the infant's tiny body. In this way, Picasso has shown us how protective and tender the parent baboon is with its baby. The sculpture is a touching celebration of parenthood, which Picasso felt at this time of his life.

The sculpture is a touching celebration of parenthood, which Picasso felt at this time of his life.

Technique

Picasso has combined several materials as well as various objects in this work of art. Plaster, which was molded in a bowl and textured with a knife, forms the furry neck. The baboon's arms, buttocks, legs, and feet as well as the baby were modeled freehand in clay or plaster. Finally the sculpture was cast in bronze using the lost-wax process.

This type of sculpture, constructed from various materials or "found objects," is called assemblage.

This type of sculpture, constructed from various materials or "found objects," is called assemblage [AH-sem-blazh]. We also refer to it as additive sculpture, built by adding material rather than revealing by carving away. Picasso established this technique in 1914 and continued to experiment with it throughout his life. The technique had great influence on future generations of sculptors.

After Picasso assembled the objects and modeled the rest of the figure from plaster and clay (see prop), the sculpture was ready to be cast in bronze through a process called lost wax. First, a plaster mold was made of the original sculpture. A coating of wax was applied to the inside of the mold. This created a wax replica of the original. The wax was then covered with a coat of plaster and silica. When heated in an oven, the wax melted, leaving a thin hollow space. Molten bronze was poured into the form while still hot, filling the space once occupied by the wax. When the bronze cooled, it hardened. The outer mold was removed, the inner core was shaken out, and the bronze was dipped in acid for cleaning.

About the Artist

Born in 1881, Pablo Picasso was said to have drawn before he walked. By age 13, he was more skilled as an artist than his father, who taught at a local art school. At 19, he left Spain to try his art in Paris, where he spent most of his life. His art was marked from the beginning by great creativity and constantly changing styles.

His art was marked from the beginning by great creativity and constantly changing styles.

Picasso was one of two artists to develop the revolutionary style called Cubism, which incorporated the idea that things could be shown from multiple points of view at the same time; the other artist was George Braque. During the decade of his experimentation with Cubism, he developed the technique of collage. Scraps of paper, rope, labels, and other found materials were arranged and glued to canvas. It was not uncommon to find Picasso picking through rubbish looking for something to inspire him. He was still being inspired by "found objects" in 1951, when he created *Baboon and Young.*

Over his long lifetime, Picasso explored unlimited possibilities of creativity, never committing himself to any one style, and often returning to the themes and styles of his early years. His innovative genius has made him one of the most inspiring artists of the 1900s.

Key Ideas

1. The artist Pablo Picasso was inspired by everyday objects and love for his family when he created this sculpture.
2. Many everyday objects appear in this sculpture, an example of how anything can be turned into a work of art.
3. We do not know for certain what all of the objects are, because this is not the original. This is a bronze copy of the original sculpture, which was made of plaster.

Suggested Questions

1. Take a moment to look around the sculpture. The baboon's head is made by attaching two toy cars together. What other objects might the artist have used? What do you see that makes you say that?
2. Look closely. What words would you use to describe the relationship between this parent and baby? How does Picasso express that? What do you see that makes you say that?
3. Think about someone you love and care for. How do you show them you love them? How does that make you feel?

Notes

William Edmondson, United States, 1874–1951
***Ram*, 1938–42, limestone**
The John R. Van Derlip Fund, 2013.56
17 ¼ × 24 × 6 ½ in. (43.82 × 60.96 × 16.51 cm)

William Edmondson's remarkable sculptural career arose from humble beginnings in Tennessee. With little education and no formal art training, Edmondson in time earned international acclaim as one of the greatest stone carvers of the 20th century and the first African American artist to have a solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. Inspired by religious faith and a deep connection to his community, Edmondson created his charming, expressive sculptures, which he called "miracles," from recycled limestone building materials.

Humble Beginnings

William Edmondson was born in the early 1870s to formerly enslaved parents in Davidson County, near Nashville, Tennessee. His father died when Edmondson and his five siblings were young. His mother supported the family by working in the fields. She raised her children with an emphasis on respect, frugality, and simplicity, characteristics reflected in the artist's life and sculpture. Edmondson began working as a teenager to help support his family and received only a minimal education. He worked as a farmhand, a racing groom, and railroad worker. After suffering an injury on the railroad, Edmondson worked for a women's hospital, where he served for 25 years as an orderly, fireman, and handyman. In the early 1930s, during the Great Depression, he lost his hospital job but found work as a stone mason's helper. It was here, where he learned to cut and place stone, that he developed his skill as a sculptor.

Artist's Inspirations

When he was well over 50 years old, Edmondson began his career as a sculptor by carving tombstones in his backyard. When building and masonry projects waned during the Depression, Edmondson made funerary sculpture to sell to members of his segregated Edgehill black community, charging just a few dollars. Working from a shed he built, he carved exclusively from limestone reclaimed from city demolition projects. He made his own chisels from old railroad spikes. Edmondson cut his figures directly from the limestone, chip by chip, without preliminary drawings. With physical strength and unlimited patience, he filled his yard with sculptures of animals, angels, and human figures that he called "miracles."[1] For his ability to sculpt, Edmondson credits divine inspiration born of his deep Christian faith. He said, "…I looked up and in the sky and right there in the noon daylight, He hung a tombstone out for me to make."[2]

For his ability to sculpt, Edmondson credits divine inspiration born of his deep Christian faith.

About the Artist

William Edmondson has been described as an old-fashioned Southern man and labeled as quaint or simple. Far from simple, the charming wit and humanity he intuitively expressed in his work attracted sophisticated followers in the contemporary art world. About five years after he began sculpting, Edmondson was introduced through a neighbor to photographer Louise Dahl-Wolf, a fashion photographer on assignment for *Harper's Bazaar*. She took dozens of photographs of Edmondson at work, which she brought to New York and to the attention of Alfred Barr, the director of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Soon afterward, in 1937 Edmondson was the first African American artist to be honored with a solo exhibition at MoMA. Although he was completely self-taught, his artworks embody many modernist art principles.

Edmondson's minimalist style and high degree of design have been compared to Amedeo Modigliani, John B. Flanagan, and other trained contemporary artists. His competence and skill as an artist continues to be acknowledged internationally.

***Ram*, like most of Edmondson's sculptures, is confined to the dimensions of his limestone block, which he bought cheaply or salvaged.**

Ram

Edmondson felt his art was a calling from God, and his subjects often reflected his Christian faith. *Ram* is a characteristic work. The ram is a religious and cultural reference to the Old Testament Biblical story of Abraham and a ram given in sacrifice to God. The ram is also symbolic of the New Testament story of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, who is traditionally shown carrying a ram. Although Edmondson could read very little, he would have been familiar with these stories as a devout member of his community's United Primitive Baptist Church.

Ram, like most of Edmondson's sculptures, is confined to the dimensions of his limestone block, which he bought cheaply or salvaged from demolished buildings, streets, or sidewalks. It is likely carved from discarded curbstone, which measure a few feet wide, 3 to 4 feet long and 6 to 8 inches thick. Rather than being restricted by the boundaries of the block, Edmondson creates a sense of monumentality by keeping the volume and mass of the original block while still capturing the simple essence of his subject. With a rectangular body and strong edges, *Ram* emerges from the curbstone.

Taking a minimalist approach, Edmondson uses the most eloquent and efficient means to create his figures. Except for the animal's stride with legs in motion, *Ram* is perfectly symmetrical in shape and delineation of detail. The outlines of the ram's eyes, nose, and mouth are all shallowly carved into the stone as if drawn onto the figure. His round, curled horns and leaf-shaped ears are reduced to simple geometric shapes. The ram's rough-cut wooly coat reveals the marks of Edmondson's creative process of chipping away the stone with chisel and hammer. With its compact form, lack of detail, and visible nature of the stone—without polish or finish—Edmondson's *Ram* is the definition of modern abstraction.

Edmondson's Legacy

Despite his talent and respect within the artists' community, Edmondson did not seek fame. He never received large sums of money for his work, and he appears to have struggled financially during the final years of his life. Edmondson's artistic career lasted for only about 15 years, during which he created about 300 sculptures. He stopped sculpting in the late 1940s because of poor health. He died in 1951 at his home in Nashville and was buried at Mount Ararat Cemetery (today Greenwood West). Today, artists, critics, and collectors recognize Edmondson as one of the greatest modernist sculptors of the 20th century.

Today, artists, critics, and collectors recognize Edmondson as one of the greatest modernist sculptors of the 20th century.

Key Ideas

1. The artist William Edmondson was inspired by his faith and his community.
2. He was a self-taught sculptor who used found objects to create simple forms with great skill.
3. Growing up in poverty with formerly enslaved parents, the artist had to leave school to work to help support his family. He did not begin sculpting until he was over 50 years old.

Suggested Questions

1. A ram is an adult male sheep. Look closely. What words would you use to describe this ram? What do you see in this sculpture that makes you say that?
2. The sculpture is considered to be minimalist in style, which means it is made with very few details. Which details has the artist included to tell us this figure is a ram? What details has he left out that he might have included?
3. This was inspired by the artist's faith and community. What inspires you? Why? If you could make a sculpture about your inspirations, what would you make? Why? Where would you put it? Why?

Notes

1 p.349. Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists from 1792 to Present*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1992

2. p. 353. Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists*

Minneapolis Institute of Art

Art Adventure

Artists' Inspirations

Self-Guided Tour

1

Jade Mountain
China

Gallery ________

4

A Fishing Party Off Long Island
Junius Brutus Stearns

Gallery ________

2

Pedernal—From the Ranch #1
Georgia O'Keeffe

Gallery ________

5

Baboon and Young
Pablo Picasso

Gallery ________

3

Frieze from a Malagan ceremony
Papua New Guinea

Gallery ________

6

Ram
William Edmondson

Gallery ________

Mia

Tear out

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