

Minneapolis Institute of Art

# Art Adventure

## Sources of Strength



# Mia

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Art Adventure Program  
A program of the Minneapolis Institute of Art—Revised 2024

**This booklet belongs to:** \_\_\_\_\_

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# 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?

# Developing Cultural Fluency

**Cultural fluency, the ability to communicate and interact with people from backgrounds that are different from our own, is more important than ever in our diverse, multicultural world. But how can we achieve cultural fluency? Art Adventure Picture People have a unique opportunity to facilitate discussions about different cultures and human experiences with a diverse group of students. But if these cultures are unfamiliar to us, we may not understand the meanings their art objects hold. As educators, we must understand how our teaching can impact students in their development as scholars, artists, and citizens. For that reason, we've compiled some tips and tools to help you practice cultural fluency in the classroom.**

**The information shared here is only the first part of a larger conversation. We will refine this information annually at the end of the academic year. Please refer to it as needed and let us know how to improve this work in progress.**

## **Mia's collection belongs to everyone**

Mia's collection of more than 100,000 art objects is held in the public trust, which means it is preserved, documented, and displayed for the benefit of the public. As stewards of these artworks, we are committed to making sure they remain accessible to the public for generations to come. We continuously assess the collection and are committed to expanding it responsibly so that it reflects our values of inclusivity and equity. We also realize that museum collecting practices of the past do not always measure up to today's legal and ethical standards. Museums often have histories connected to slavery and the displacement of Indigenous peoples, for example. For these reasons, Mia is committed to addressing diversity and inclusion more directly than in the past.

## **Tips and tools for practicing cultural fluency**

### **Embrace "I don't know"**

If you're asked about an aspect of a culture and you don't know the answer, it's best to say, "I don't know." Do not try to make an educated guess based on what you may know of that culture—or other cultures.

### **Own your mistakes**

Uh oh, you've made a mistake! What to do? First, don't panic. Acknowledge your error. Don't make excuses for yourself—set a personal goal to work on not repeating the same mistake in the future.

### **Avoid cultural appropriation**

Cultural appropriation is the act of adopting or modifying elements of a nondominant culture in a way that reinforces stereotypes or contributes to oppression. It also includes using parts of that culture (dress, music, dance, art, etc.) without permission.

Cultural appropriation can be so nuanced and complex that many people have a difficult time understanding it—and perhaps not realize they are doing it themselves. Below is a brief rundown of cultural appropriation versus cultural appreciation.

### **Appropriation**

Dehumanizes oppressed groups

Takes without permission

Perpetuates stereotypes

Ignores the meaning and stories behind the cultural elements

### **Appreciation**

Celebrates cultures in respectful ways

Asks permission, provides credit, and offers compensation

Elevates the voices and experiences of members of a cultural group

Focuses on learning the stories and meanings behind cultural elements

Here are two tips for avoiding cultural appropriation in Art Adventure classroom art projects:

- Don't use cultural attire as costumes. This can reinforce offensive stereotypes of those in our community.
- When leading art activities in the classroom, don't ask students to replicate the type of artwork they are studying. For example, do not ask students to make an Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) beadwork, a Yoruba crown, or an latmul hand drum. Instead, develop activities inspired by these artworks and students' personal experiences.

### **Points to remember when discussing cultures not your own**

- Cultures are diverse and dynamic, not monolithic. Monolithic thinking is the tendency to view cultures and peoples from a single perspective and set of values. Reducing monolithic thinking requires us to examine our own biases and assumptions and create an environment that celebrates diverse perspectives in all forms.

- When presenting work from Africa, remember it is a continent not a country. Be specific about naming the culture and country of origin for the artwork.
- Be specific when talking about Native American nations and Native American artists' cultural or tribal affiliations. Use the information in your booklets.
- Native Americans are still here. Acknowledge contemporary cultures when talking about Native American tribes or nations.
- If you are uncertain about an unfamiliar word, check your booklet for the phonetic pronunciation.
- Acknowledge multiple worldviews and voices in your classroom discussions. For example, when presenting an artwork from the United States in the 1800s, talk about the diverse perspectives in that historical context (e.g., immigrants, African Americans, Native Americans, women, industrialists, etc.).
- Encourage students to do research and ask questions. Showing genuine curiosity and a desire to grow, learn, and connect is the best way to avoid perpetuating cultural stereotypes.

In the end, don't make assumptions about a culture based on what you know or don't know. Take time to learn about the culture before delving into a classroom discussion. Do what you can when you can as you learn to do better.

### **Learning is a process!**

Now, take what you've learned and practice. There will be mistakes, and that is OK. Making mistakes is a natural and necessary part of the learning process, from childhood to adulthood. If you can notice and correct your mistakes and practice repeatedly, you will gain confidence and proficiency. Add these tools to your toolbox as you continue your lifelong learning about cultural fluency.

# 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.



# Sources of Strength

Life presents many challenging moments. Bad dreams. Fear of the unknown. Hard economic times. Or even physical injury, to name just a few.

How does one find the strength to navigate life's challenges, big or small? For some challenges, people gain strength from their faith, or belief in the power of gods and super-human beings. Other problems are better solved with friends and fellow humans. Sometimes we get strength from the natural world.

The artists from around the globe who made the six works of art in this Art Adventure set all found unique and creative ways to represent sources of strength, some personal, some cultural. Despite their differences, the works of art reveal a constant throughout human experience—that art can play an important role in helping us meet life's challenges.

# Prop Kit Contents

<b>Work of Art</b>	<b>Prop</b>	<b>Replacement Cost</b>
China, Tiger pillow	Ceramic sample	\$20
	Image of African wooden pillow	\$10
	Image of modern pillow	\$10
Dorothea Lange, <i>Migrant Mother</i>	Photographs of <i>Migrant Mother</i> series	\$10
	Photograph of Dorothea Lange and of family 40 years later	\$10
A'aninin, Shirt	Fabric sample	\$15
	Container of beads	\$15
	Photo of man wearing an honor shirt	\$10
Japan, Vajra warriors	Photograph of temple gate	\$10
	Photograph of guardian figure	\$10
André Derain, <i>London: St. Paul's Cathedral seen from the Thames</i>	Portraits of Sir Christopher Wren and André Derain	\$10
	Photograph of St. Paul's Cathedral	\$10
China, <i>Seated Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva (Guanyin)</i>	No prop	—
Artwork Reproductions (7)		\$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**

**Tiger pillow, 12th century, Tz'u-chou ware stoneware with black and tan glaze  
over a white slip under a clear glaze**

**Gift of Ruth and Bruce Dayton, 2000.89.1**

**4 7/8 x 14 7/8 x 7 in. (12.38 x 37.78 x 17.78 cm)**



**Artists made ceramic pillows like this at a time when pillows were thought to impart special qualities to a person during sleep. The tiger has been a powerful symbol in China since ancient times. Imagine how powerful one might feel sleeping on a tiger, gaining its energy and strength.**

## **A Place To Rest Your Head**

A lot of people today are accustomed to sleeping on soft, even fluffy, pillows. But hard pillows and headrests, commonly made of wood, have been used by a wide variety of cultures throughout the world, such as in ancient Egypt, many other parts of Africa, India, and the Pacific Islands. Ancient Chinese texts refer to pillows made of wood or bamboo, and similar ones were used in China into the 1900s.

Ceramic pillows began to appear in parts of China in the Tang dynasty (618–906 CE), and a great many were produced in the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE). They have survived in far greater numbers than other types of pillows from the same period because of the durability of the fired clay. Modern scholars initially believed that ceramic pillows were made only for use in tombs, as part of the tradition of providing the dead with ceramic models of household objects for use in the afterlife. But written records and other evidence demonstrate that the ceramic pillows were indeed used for practical purposes as well, though it is hard to tell everyday and tomb pillows apart.

## **The Power of Pillows**

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**Pillows with magical powers appear throughout Chinese folk tales and superstitions.**

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Pillows with magical powers appear throughout Chinese folk tales and superstitions. One tale relates the adventures of a man who would climb inside his pillow to be magically transported to other places. A legendary immortal is said to have used a pile of

three books of Taoist (see explanation on next page) teachings as his pillow to inspire “pure and elegant” dreams. And a medicinal folk recipe called for filling a wooden pillow with herbs and other materials; after a year of use, the recipe promised, “white hair will turn black, new teeth replace those fallen out, and hearing and sight will grow clear.” Some herbalists today still suggest stuffing pillows with particular plants to treat discomforts such as indigestion or high cholesterol.

In *Eight Discourses on the Art of Living* from 1591, writer Gao Lian recommended porcelain pillows for their ability to “brighten the eyes and benefit the pupils.” When night comes, he claimed, “one can read finely printed books” using such a pillow. He scorned softer pillows made of the stalks of plants, leaves, or flowers because “those thus made cause a loss of vitality.” He also acknowledged other practical considerations—porcelain pillows offered a soothing coolness during hot weather. Though this pillow is made of stoneware, a coarser grade of clay than the fine porcelain recommended by Gao Lian, it must have shared that cooling quality.

Even when the user did not expect magical results, a pillow’s decorations often carried symbolic meaning. Narrative illustrations and floral designs might be associated with Taoist beliefs, or popular sayings, stories, and ballads. Sometimes symbolic meaning came from a homophone, a word that sounds the same as the name of the object depicted. Often, artfully calligraphed (calligraphy is an art form of hand writing) poems served as decoration. Whatever the image, its symbolism often carried wishes for good fortune to come to the sleeper through dreams.

## **Tiger, King of the Animals**

The butterfly and floral designs atop this pillow may have had symbolic meaning, or they may simply have suggested the sweet dreams of peaceful sleep. The tiger, however, considered in China to be the mightiest animal on earth, has a clear history of symbolism.

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### **One function of a tiger pillow was to scare off evil influences.**

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One function of a tiger pillow was to scare off evil influences. Children's pillows, often made of cotton or silk stuffed with grain husks rather than ceramic, frequently took a tiger form to protect the child from demons that cause nightmares. (Such pillows are still made in rural regions, and appear as trinkets in tourist markets.) It was not just children who believed that demons caused bad dreams; Taoist priests in the Tang dynasty recommended that beds be at least three-and-a-half feet high, to prevent damp air and nighttime attacks by demons.

## **Tiger, Taoist Symbol of a Universal Force**

The tiger was an important symbol in the ancient Chinese philosophy of Taoism [DOW-ism]. Taoism explains the world in terms of two complementary forces—yin (from the ancient Chinese word for “shady”) and yang (from the word for “bright”). Yin elements include darkness, water, wind, and the earth. Yang elements include light, fire, rain, and the heavens. Yin qualities are passive, while yang qualities are active. According to this philosophy, everything in the universe results from the interaction of yin and yang. The tiger, king of the animals on earth, stands for yin. The dragon, a mythical animal thought to reign over the heavens, stands for yang.

An animal was also associated with each of the four directions of the compass. The tiger ruled the west, the dragon the east, the tortoise the north, and the phoenix the south. Each animal's domain extended to the corresponding quadrants of the sky.

Such associations made images of tigers and dragons popular subjects of paintings at the time this pillow was made. It is tempting to imagine that the tiger's association with the yin elements of darkness and inactivity, as well as the western horizon of the setting sun, made it a particularly appropriate theme for a sleeping pillow.

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### **In Taoist philosophy, the complementary forces of yin and yang balance the universe.**

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## **Ceramics for the Popular Market**

Many of China's most famous centers of ceramic production were organized around the business of the imperial court. This pillow, however, comes from a region of kilns in North China that specialized in the production of goods for popular consumption. Known as Suzhou [TSU-jo] ware, the products of these kilns show a wide range of techniques for surface decoration.

The decoration on this pillow was created using three colors of slip, a mixture of color pigment and watery clay. First the entire form was dipped in white slip, hiding the natural coarse surface of the stoneware. The designs were then painted with orange and black slip. Finally, the whole pillow was covered with a clear glaze before firing.

At the time it was made, Suzhou ware was not regarded as a fine art form but as a common, relatively inexpensive product for everyday use. In later centuries, however, it attracted the attention of Ming dynasty (1368–1644 CE) collectors, who admired anything produced in the Song dynasty, one of China's “golden ages.” The inventive decorations of Suzhou ware continue to captivate admirers today.

## Key Ideas

1. Tigers have played an important role in Chinese culture and art since ancient times.
2. Ceramic pillows were used for every-day purposes and sometimes also found in tombs. This particular pillow was made to be purchased and used.
3. In China, the tiger is considered to be one of the mightiest animals in all the world.

## Suggested Questions

1. Look closely. How did the artist who painted this tiger pillow show its strength? What do you see that makes you say that?
2. Close your eyes if you want. Think about a real tiger. In what ways do you think this pillow resembles a real tiger? What do you see that makes you say that? In what ways are they different? Why?
3. Look closely. Where can you see the artist used his imagination to create this tiger? What do you see that makes you say that? Why do you think the artist exaggerated the tiger's body? What do you see that makes you say that?
4. Imagine you were about to take a nap. How do you think it might feel to sleep on a ceramic pillow? Why? What do you think you would dream about? Why?

## Notes

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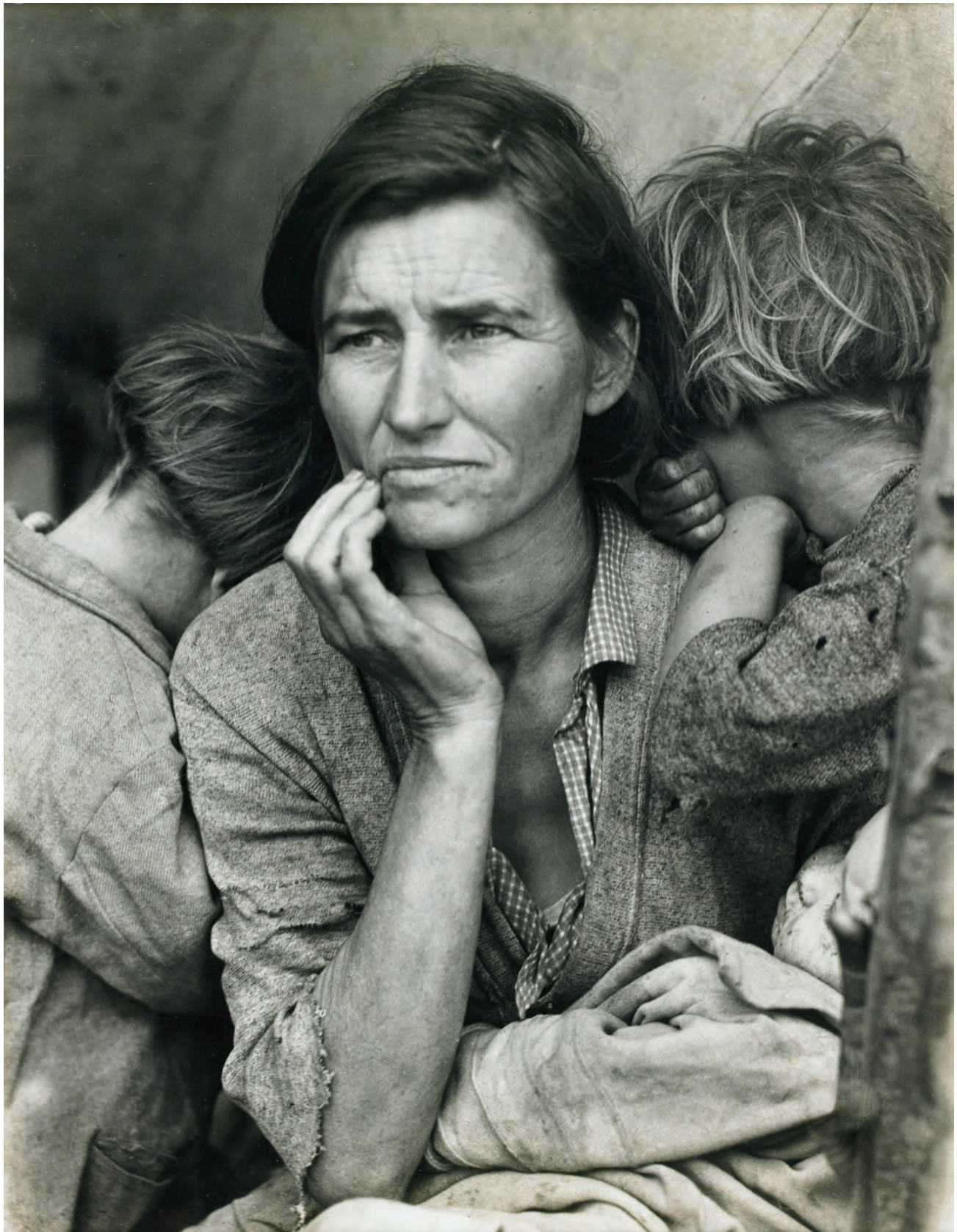
**Dorothea Lange, United States, 1895–1965**

**Depicted: Florence Owens Thompson**

***Migrant Mother, Nipomo, California, 1936, gelatin silver print***

**The Alfred and Ingrid Lenz Harrison Fund, 92.136**

**13 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 10 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (33.81 x 26.19 cm) (image); 13 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 11 in. (35.24 x 27.94 cm) (mount)**





**Dorothea Lange [pronounced Lang] used photography to document the challenging lives of rural workers during the Great Depression. In this photograph of a destitute mother surrounded by her children, Lange captures the dignity and strength of an ordinary woman amid a time of hardship.**

## **Documenting the Great Depression**

The Great Depression of the 1930s had a dire effect on the American people. Beyond the physical realities of mass unemployment and hunger, the basic principles of American life were brought into question. The so-called American dream, which had promised the good things of life to those willing to work for them, had faded. Many writers and artists felt a social obligation to bring the brutal realities of life to their audiences. Their efforts gave birth to a new art form—social documentary. Photography was one of the most effective tools to report and expose the conditions of the 1930s.

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### **The mother’s facial expression, the focal point, is the key to the power of this image.**

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Among the many new agencies established by President Franklin Roosevelt, the Resettlement Administration, later renamed the Farm Security Administration (FSA), was created in 1935. This organization brought financial aid to the thousands of rural workers who were forced to leave their farms because of drought in the central states.

The U.S. government recognized the power of photography as a tool for social change. Dorothea Lange was one of 11 photographers hired by the FSA’s Historic Section to document the condition of rural workers in America. These artists made over 270,000 photographs, providing a pictorial record of America in the 1930s that helped to enlist Congressional and public support for relief projects. *Migrant Mother* is one of the best-known images of the period.

## **Meeting the *Migrant Mother***

Dorothea Lange took this photograph in 1936 at the end of a hard, month-long journey through California, where she was photographing migratory farm workers and their way of life. Having completed her work, she was driving home on a rainy, cold March afternoon when a sign near Nipomo, “Pea-Pickers Camp,” caught her eye. Eager to get home to her family, she continued on, but could not stop thinking about the sign. After driving 20 more miles, she turned around and drove back to the camp.

Lange was drawn to this 32-year-old mother sitting in a dilapidated tent with her children. The woman told Lange that the pea crop had frozen and there was no work. The family was living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields and wild birds the children caught. She had just sold the tires from their car to buy food. Spending less than 10 minutes with the woman, Lange took a series of photographs of her and her children, each time moving in closer to her subject. The last of the series was this close-up picture, titled *Migrant Mother*. Now an icon of the Depression, it has been reproduced in countless newspapers, books, magazines, and films, and shown in exhibitions worldwide.

## ***Migrant Mother* Up Close**

Though the camera is a valuable tool for recording the objective world and providing evidence or authenticity, it is the photographer’s selection of what to include within the frame of its lens at a given moment that determines an image’s effectiveness. In this instance, Lange made certain choices regarding framing and composition to create this exceptional photograph. She chose to concentrate on the mother and her children, taking a close-up, direct view of the figures, who fill most of the space

within the frame. The setting is secondary and rather nonspecific, with only a hint of the tent in the background and the post to the right. The diffused light of the overcast day contributes to the quiet mood.

The arrangement of the figures is balanced and nearly symmetrical. The mother, with her infant close to her body, is at center, flanked by her older children. Though the mother's gaze seems to distance her from the children, a sense of intimacy and strong family bonds are suggested by the huddled figures. Lange's composition draws the viewer's attention to the mother through her central placement and dominant size, and the children's positions and turned faces. The mother's facial expression, the focal point, is the key to the power of this image.

As a reflection of a specific time, the Depression, this photograph conveys the suffering and strength of many women with children who were forced to find migratory work picking peas or cutting lettuce to survive. It also represents the countless poor and homeless whom society had failed to help. As a timeless work of art, it symbolizes motherhood, representing the fundamental role of every mother to nurture, comfort, and protect her children. Moreover, it is a potent symbol of human suffering and privation—and the valiant struggle of the human spirit.

## The Art of Documentary Photos

To photograph the *Migrant Mother* series of pictures, Lange used a Graflex camera that produced a large-format 4 x 5-inch negative, which she favored for its clarity of detail. This camera was larger and more cumbersome than the then-newly-introduced 35 mm cameras. Although Lange developed some of her own negatives in her darkroom—indeed, she preferred to exercise control over her negatives—most of the film for the FSA was developed in the FSA darkroom in Washington, D.C.

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**Lange's unique ability to establish a sense of trust and rapport with her subjects was vital to her photographs' success.**

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Like many documentary photographers, Lange considered herself a social observer committed to an honest, direct, and unmanipulated recording of contemporary events. She wanted to capture her subjects exactly as she saw them, and she produced photographs that are natural and unposed. Lange's unique ability to establish a sense of trust and rapport with her subjects was vital to the success of her photographs. Her subjects felt comfortable enough to be themselves and appear unaffected by the camera's presence. Describing her encounter with this woman, Lange wrote, "There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her, and seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it." Lange's son, Daniel Dixon, has written of his mother's work,

Her approach was instinctive, but also—by necessity—strategic. She never attempted to sneak up on the truth. She waited for the people before her camera to resolve their own minds. She knew that every human face has its own story to tell, in its own time and in its own way. . . .

## About the Artist

Dorothea Lange was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, in 1895. Polio at age 7 left her with a slight limp, which she believed heightened her sensitivity to the challenges faced by other people. After studying photography at Columbia University, she opened her own portrait studio in San Francisco in 1919. By the 1930s, however, she was frustrated by the limitations of commercial portraiture and began to photograph San Francisco street life. Deeply moved by the breadlines of the homeless and unemployed, she gave up her portrait work to concentrate on the victims of the Great Depression. She worked for the FSA until 1942, producing photographs across the country. Her photographs, known for their compassion and humanity, often moved authorities to take action to relieve the suffering of migrant farm families.

## Key Ideas

1. The artist Dorothea Lange was inspired by the challenges people faced during the Great Depression, and she used photography to document and bring awareness to the problems.
2. A mother is holding her infant, huddled with her two older children, in a pea-pickers camp. Because of the drought, they were surviving on food they caught and the remains of leftover crops.
3. Unable to provide basic comforts for her family, the mother worked tirelessly to provide the necessities of shelter, food, and water for her family.

## Suggested Questions

1. This family is going through a difficult time. Look closely. How do you think the mother is feeling? What do you see that makes you say that? We cannot see the children's faces, but we can see how they are standing. How do you think they feel? What do you see that makes you say that?
2. Look closely. The mother in this photograph is a strong woman. How did the artist make her look strong? What do you see that makes you say that? The artist put the woman in the middle of the photograph. Why do you think she did that?
3. Photographs capture moments instantly. Sometimes we pose for photographs. Sometimes photographs are candid, or taken in the moment. This photograph is a little bit of both. What makes it look like a portrait? Why? What makes it look candid? Why?

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**A'aninin (Gros Ventre), United States, North America**

**Shirt, 1890, wool, beads, animal hide, ribbon**

**The William Hood Dunwoody Fund and purchase through Art Quest 2001, 2001.197**

**28 1/4 x 62 in. (71.8 x 157.5 cm)**



**For the people of the Plains Indian nation who made and wore this honor shirt, everything about it—how it was made, the materials it was made of, and how it was used—had importance beyond visual beauty. Such shirts, made to honor men, offered a connection to the powerful traditions of one’s people.**

### **Honoring an Individual, Involving the Community**

On the Great Plains in the 1800s, a man had to earn the right to wear a shirt like this one. He might prove himself to be brave in battle or cunning at raiding horses, a signal of extreme skill. But he also had to be thoughtful and wise. His actions helped his community survive.

A woman of the community stitched the bead-work and sewed the shirt. Elders of the community presented the shirt to the honored man in a sacred ceremony. Sometimes they attached long locks of their own hair (or their enemy’s hair) to the shirt, in place of an animal-skin fringe. The wearer of the shirt literally carried a piece of his community with him when he wore it. If he acted dishonorably in the future, he might lose the right to wear the shirt.

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### **The wearer of the shirt literally carried a piece of his community with him when he wore it.**

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The honored man would wear the shirt on special occasions, with leggings, moccasins, and a head-dress. The decorations on the shirt might invite a retelling of the stories of his actions, which were closely connected to the history of the nation and his community. Just as importantly, the designs and all that they represent offered a model of honorable behavior for the next generation.

### **Shapes and Patterns Rooted in Tradition**

Though no two Plains Indian men’s honor shirts are exactly alike, many have features in common. Decorated bands cross the shoulders and run down the arms of most such shirts. Fringe hangs across the back and the arms, and many shirts have a decorated “bib” at the neck, like this one does.

These features recall the traditions of an earlier time. Plains Indian men did not typically wear shirts of any kind before the 1800s. Instead, they wrapped themselves in robes of animal hide, wearing the fur against their skin. Women made the earliest shirts by sewing two animal skins together. The front legs became the shirt’s sleeves. The skin of the rear legs dangled from the bottom of the shirt.

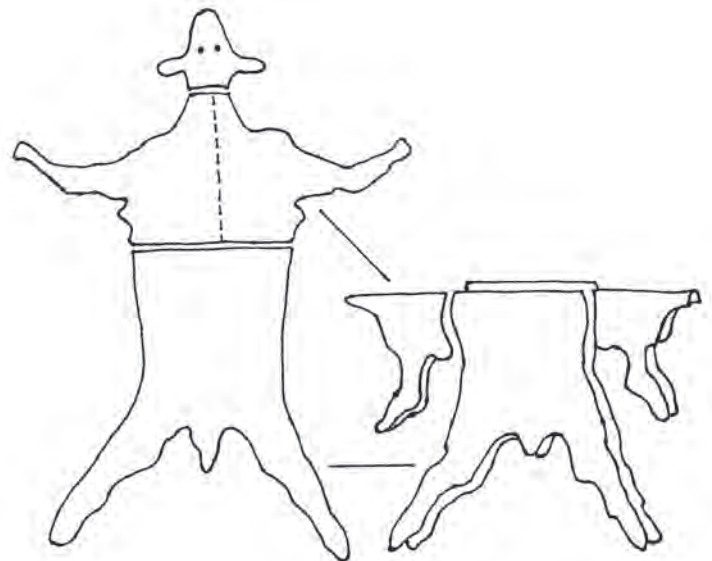


Illustration adapted from Hoa, Kóla! by Barbara A. Hail, The Plains Indian Collection of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, Brown University, 1980.

Some people believe the decorated bands originally covered seams on robes where two pieces of hide were joined together. This decoration was also used on later shirts, even those without a seam. Skin from the animal's head formed the "bib" at the neck of the shirt. These decorations continued to appear on Plains Indians shirts even when the shirt body was made of other materials, such as the wool of this shirt. Sometimes the decoration from a worn-out shirt was cut off and stitched onto a new shirt—which might be the case with this one.

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**What do the patterns on the decorated bands represent? No one knows for certain.**

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What do the patterns on the decorated bands represent? No one knows for certain. The blue-and-white diamonds may stand for eagle feathers, which in nature are white with black tips. Eagle feathers were an important part of a warrior's dress; the eagle was the most sacred animal for Plains Indians. The crossed bars on a white shield may be another symbol of strength. Or these patterns may simply have pleased the artist as she worked, inspired by the shapes she saw around her.

## **A Changing Way of Life**

The traditions of a people change as their way of life changes. The arrival of Europeans to Native lands caused many changes and disruptions to life on the Great Plains in the decades before this shirt was made. Even the way clothing was made and decorated changed.

Europeans introduced the glass beads applied to add color and pattern to this shirt. Traditionally women had crafted these designs using porcupine quills colored with natural dyes. Glass beads from Italy and Bohemia, exchanged with European traders for pelts and hides, offered more colors and were easier to work with. By the late 1800s when this shirt was made, quillwork had almost disappeared from Plains Indian shirts. But artists continued to form the traditional patterns using the new material.

The bright red wool of the body of the shirt is evidence of another lifestyle change. As European settlers moved westward throughout the 1800s, they forcefully moved Plains Indians off their traditional lands. Europeans also destroyed bison herds, which changed hunting as a way of life, resulting in a scarcity of animal hides for shirts and other purposes. Wool cloth became a popular trade item. Lightweight and warm, the wool made a comfortable shirt. Like shirts made of animal hide, this shirt is not sewn together at the sides. Notice how the white edge of the cloth, where it was held in the factory during the dyeing process, has been incorporated into the design on the bottom edge of the shirt.

## **Living Side by Side**

Honor shirts were an important tradition among many of the nations living on the Great Plains in the 1800s. Each nation had its own style of decoration. This shirt, made on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in Montana in the 1890s, likely reflects the traditions of two nations, the A'aninin [ah-AH-nee-nin] and Nakoda [nah-KO-dah] (commonly known as the Gros Ventre [GRO-vaht] and Assiniboine [ah-SIN-ih-boyn]).

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**Objects such as this shirt continue to provide a connection to the traditions of the past, as well as a touchstone for a contemporary sense of identity.**

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The two groups have shared Fort Belknap Reservation since its establishment in 1888, despite having distinctly different historical backgrounds. At times, in fact, the nations had opposing allegiances. By the time they began to share the reservation, the former adversaries were struggling together to adapt to a starkly different way of life. Their artistic traditions merged to form a new "Fort Belknap" style.

Today the rolling plains of Fort Belknap Reservation are home to about 5,000 people. Despite living together for the past century, both the A'aninin and Nakoda retain independent national identities. Objects such as this shirt continue to provide a connection to the traditions of the past, as well as a touchstone for a contemporary sense of identity.

### Key Ideas

1. A man has to earn the right to receive and wear an honor shirt like this. At the time this shirt was made, men could earn them by performing physical acts, like horse raiding or in battle, but (and still true today) the recipient also needed to be thoughtful, kind, generous, and wise. To this day, Plains Indian artists continue to produce great works of art in an ever-changing contemporary culture.
2. No two honor shirts are alike, but they do share similar characteristics: neckline decoration, fringes along the sleeves and back, and bands of color across the shoulders and arms.
3. A female artist would have sewn the shirt and stitched the beadwork by hand. European trade introduced the glass beads and some of the fabrics to Plains artists. Prior to trade, the artist would have used hide and quills.

### Suggested Questions

1. Look closely. There are many different colors, textures, and patterns on this shirt. Describe them.
2. Look closely. How would this honor shirt make someone stand out in a crowd? What do you see that makes you say that? What are some ways that clothing communicates strength in your community? How so?
3. A group of elders decides who deserves an honor shirt—and sometimes, whose shirt should be taken away. How might a shirt remind you of your duties to your community? How might it influence your behavior?

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**Japan, Asia**

**Vajra warriors, mid-14th century**

**Polychromed Japanese cypress (hinoki) with lacquer**

**Gift of funds from the Regis Corporation, 83.76.1**

**76 x 39 x 28 in. (193.04 x 99.06 x 71.12 cm)**





**This pair of Japanese guardian figures—vajra (vaj-rah) warriors—once flanked the entrance gate to a Buddhist temple compound late in the 1300s. Carved with fierce facial expressions and dynamic gestures to ward against evil, the temple guardians display both strength and energy, qualities admired by the samurai warrior rulers who controlled Japan at the time.**

## **Protectors of the Buddhist Faith**

This powerful pair, called Misshaku Kongo [mee-shah-ku kohn-go]\* and Naeren Kongo [ni-ren kohn-go], originally stood on either side of the main gate of a Buddhist temple to guard the compound against dangerous spirits. Their expressive facial features—bulging eyes, furrowed brows, large noses, tense scowls—would certainly have scared away any evil demons wishing to enter the sacred temple precincts. When paired, these figures are called Ni-o [nee-oh] guardians, which literally means “two kings.” Together these divine figures serve as powerful but benevolent protectors, with compassionate concern for all who are faithful to the Buddha’s teaching or law.

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### **The two figures stand for different kinds of strength.**

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The two figures stand for different kinds of strength. Misshaku Kongo, representing overt (visible) power, bares his teeth and raises his fist in action. He is depicted uttering the sound “a.” Naeren Kongo, representing latent (potential) power, holds his mouth tightly closed and waits with both arms lowered. He expresses the sound “un.” The sounds “a” and “un” are the first and last letters of the Sanskrit (a language of India and Hinduism) alphabet, respectively. Together, these two sounds symbolize the beginning and end of all things and remind those of Buddhist faith of the brevity of life.

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**Misshaku Kongo represents overt (visible) power and is openly aggressive. Naeren Kongo represents latent (potential) might and holds his potential power in check.**

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## **A Time of Warrior Rule**

The vajra warriors were created during an era characterized by constant civic warfare. During the late Kamakura [kahm-ah-ku-rah] period (1185–1333) and the subsequent Nambokucho [nahm-bow-ku-cho] period (1333–92), samurai warriors established a military government that unseated the emperor’s claim to power. The samurai, known for their skill in martial arts, established their political power according to a code called “The Way of the Warrior,” based on bravery and honor. In general, whoever led the ruling clan received the title of shogun, or supreme military commander. The new shogun rulers, who lacked the book learning and refinement of the former courtiers, popularized religion, literature, and art, making them more accessible to the masses. The mighty Ni-o warrior figures became especially popular subjects during this turbulent period.

## **A Dynamic Style for a Dynamic Time**

Though made during the early Nambokucho period (1333–92), these guardian figures exemplify the late Kamakura style (1185–1333). It was an energetic and realistic style developed in response to the popularization of Buddhism under the samurai.

\* Syllables are evenly stressed in Japanese.

The vajra warriors have tremendous physical presence, and the details of their bodies, hands, feet, and faces are quite realistic, if not anatomically correct. Nonetheless, their exaggerated muscles, bulging veins, and somewhat comical expressions make them almost caricatures of strong men. The topknots on their heads give them added height, and their highly patterned rib cages contribute to the effect of power rippling through their broad chests. The flowers over their nipples and the elaborate patterns of circles and lines used to describe their upper bodies are decorative details favored by the samurai. Also decorative are the guardians' robes, which flutter around their thick calves, imbuing each with forceful energy.

The figures were likely carved by craftsmen in an independent workshop that created sculpture exclusively for Buddhist temples. The workshop operated under the leadership of a master sculptor, who was born into a guild of professional sculptors called busshi [boo-she], or "Buddhist masters." In this way, large statues could be produced with great efficiency to meet popular demand.

## **Multiple-block Construction**

Each warrior is constructed from several blocks of fine-grained Japanese cypress, or hinoki [hee-noh-kee], joined together. This inventive technique of multiple-block construction, called yosegi [yo-see-gee], freed the sculptor from the constraints imposed by the dimensions of a single block of wood and enabled him to create dynamic poses on a monumental scale.

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**Parts of the wood, once covered by lacquer, are now exposed, making evident the exceptionally fine quality of the carving.**

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Apprentices and assistants supported the master sculptor by roughly shaping the blocks of wood, helping to carve details, and hollowing out the wood blocks to lighten the structure and reduce the potential for cracking. The wood blocks were joined and the surface of the assembled structure was finished with a curved-edge chisel. Parts of the wood, once covered by lacquer, are now exposed, making evident the exceptionally fine quality of the carving.

Originally, both guardians sported brightly colored paint over a layer of black lacquer. The lacquer, now worn away, was not applied directly to the wood's surface, but rather over a ground of plaster-like glue called gesso. Traces of the whitish gesso are still visible on the sculptures' surface. The bare wood we now see would not have been visible.

## Key Ideas

1. This pair of vajra warriors would have stood outside a Buddhist temple, one on each side of an entryway, to protect the temple from evil spirits.
2. One warrior represents visible power with his fists raised high and his teeth showing. The second warrior represents potential power with his arms at his sides and his mouth shut.
3. The two sculptures would once have been colorfully painted, but now that the paint has worn away we can see the original wood and lacquer sculpture.

## Suggested Questions

1. These two figures were made to protect a Buddhist temple against evil thoughts and actions. What do you see that might make them good protectors? Why? In what ways do their faces tell us they are guardians? What do you see that makes you say that? What about them looks human? What about them does not look human?
2. These two warriors work as a pair. One represents overt power and is openly aggressive. The other represents hidden might and holds his potential power in check. Compare and contrast the two figures. How does each express his power? What do you see that makes you say that? Name all the ways they are alike. Name all the ways they differ.
3. Think of ways that someone can be strong without always showing their power. Describe them.

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**André Derain, France, 1880–1954**

***London: St. Paul's Cathedral seen from the Thames, 1906, oil on canvas***

**Bequest of Putnam Dana McMillan, 61.36.9**

**©Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris**

**39 ¼ x 32 ¼ in. (99.7 x 81.92 cm) (canvas)**

**48 ¾ x 41 ⅜ x 2 ¼ in. (123.83 x 105.09 x 5.72 cm) (outer frame)**



**People find strength in all different ways. For André Derain, it was in painting. A native of France, Derain went to London to paint 50 cityscapes. His favorite spot was along the Thames. This painting depicts the famous St. Paul's Cathedral, designed by Sir Christopher Wren. With its unnatural color scheme and patchy brushstrokes, this painting style is an example of Fauvism. Derain's stylistic decisions give St. Paul's Cathedral great strength over the city of London and prominence in the cityscape.**

## About the Artist

André Derain was born in Chatou, France, in 1880. A western suburb of Paris, Chatou is nestled along the Seine River and home to upper-middle class families. Derain initially wanted to be an engineer, but in 1898 he decided to focus instead on painting, getting formal training at art academies in Paris. Derain also worked in sculpture; his first medium was wood, later stone and clay. Derain was resourceful: while serving in the military during World War I, he created masks out of shells and shrapnel on the battlegrounds, and he often used clay from his own garden for his sculptures. Later in life, Derain worked closely with other artists, serving as an illustrator for their books and stage designer for their plays.

Derain was friends with artists such as Henri Matisse, Paul Cézanne, and Pablo Picasso. His work is most often associated with Fauvism, but he produced artworks in other artistic styles as well. This painting is the last he made as a Fauvist, before moving on to paint more geometric and structured works. He died in 1954, not far from his birthplace, in Garches, France.

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**Fauvism (FO-vism), a term coined by an art critic, refers to *les fauves*, which translates to “wild beasts.”**

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## Fauvism

Fauvism (FO-vism), a term coined by an art critic, refers to *les fauves*, which translates to “wild beasts.” Fauvism was popular from 1898 to 1908, until the stirrings of World War I. The movement was small and consisted of artists with similar interests and aesthetic beliefs, like Derain and Matisse. Fauvist paintings show quick brushstrokes, abstract patterning, and bright, irrational colors; oftentimes the paint was applied to the canvas straight from the tube. Despite the textured brushstrokes and patchwork-like patterns, most Fauvist paintings appear flat, lacking depth in perspective. The majority of Fauvist paintings are still-lives, portraits, and landscapes, like this painting.

## London

André Derain was only 25 when he was commissioned to paint 50 cityscapes of London. His first two trips to London were in March and April, a dreary season without much sunshine. He returned again the following January. His favorite spot to paint from was on the banks of the River Thames, between Charing Cross and London Bridge. For inspiration, Derain visited cultural institutions like the National Gallery, the British Museum, and the zoo. Access to Hindu sculptures and Egyptian and Roman embroideries ultimately motivated him to depict the Thames in a bold new way.

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**For inspiration, Derain visited cultural institutions like the National Gallery, the British Museum, and the zoo.**

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## St. Paul's Cathedral

On the highest point of London sits St. Paul's Cathedral, designed by the architect Sir Christopher Wren. Wren was a famous scientist, mathematician, and architect. His was not the original Anglican church to stand on this land; previous buildings had been destroyed by war or fire. Wren was commissioned to rebuild St. Paul's in 1668, following the Great Fire of London. It took almost 10 years for Wren, church leaders, and the city to agree on plans. The first church service was held there nearly 30 years later, in 1697. A famous landmark and tourist destination, the church still holds regular services and hourly prayers.

### Strength from St. Paul's

Artists often use color and position to highlight an object. The way in which Derain painted St. Paul's Cathedral gives the building power and strength over its surroundings. Centered in the top half of the painting, the dome shoots toward the sky like a triangle. A second triangular shape, made up of sky, surrounds the cathedral. Derain, who did not paint using realistic or natural colors, made the sky orange, emphasizing the importance of St. Paul's. Its physical position above everything else, its unique coloring relative to the other buildings, and its religious and historical significance give strength to the building as well as to those who turn to it for support.

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### The way in which Derain painted St. Paul's Cathedral gives the building power and strength over its surroundings.

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### Technique

Derain went to paint London landmarks as he saw them, but his use of color and approach to brushstrokes were unrealistic and experimental—traits typical of Fauvism. For instance, he painted a sky red or a rowboat purple, likely not their actual colors. To create a sense of depth, he used blue to show that buildings were far away, demonstrating a technique called atmospheric perspective. However, Derain

added a modern twist. As the buildings shift into the background, the vibrant colors of the sky pull forward, flattening the scene. Most of his Thames paintings have a similar framework: the riverbank in a stretched curve, sharp warehouse and building roofs popping up along the horizon, and different types of buildings all painted in the same color scheme and style. Some even include figures waving at the painter or walking along the riverbank.

Derain carried a sketchbook with him, making drawings—or “preparatory studies”—in crayon or colored pencil. While in London, he sketched things like boats and horse-drawn carriages from which to paint later on. Both of his sketchbooks contained drawings of famous works of art from the National Gallery and the British Museum, as well as tourist destinations like St. Paul's Cathedral and the House of Parliament. It is likely that Derain painted most of his cityscapes once he returned to Paris, using his sketchbooks as a guide. In fact, a preparatory drawing of *London: St. Paul's Cathedral seen from the Thames* exists today.

### **London: St. Paul's Cathedral seen from the Thames**

Derain used two pages, turned horizontally, to create the sketch for this painting; it is the only cityscape he painted with a vertical orientation. The sketch provided Derain with a template from which he could work freely. The painting consists of four sections: riverbank, water, buildings, and sky. Its perspective is distorted, putting the viewer at eye level with the elevated dome of St. Paul's Cathedral. As in much of his work, Derain avoided natural colors and used patchy brushstrokes. This painting depicts a slice of London along the south bank of the Thames, between Blackfriars and Southwark bridges. The curve of the bank hugs a cluster of boats, and two figures stand on the middle two boats. The tips of all six boats point toward St. Paul's Cathedral. Additional boats are docked across the river, and above them are buildings of various shapes and sizes. The front line is orange, dotted with blue windows and doors, beyond which are patches of blue in all

shades, meant to resemble additional rows of buildings. The steeple of St. Paul's Cathedral rises above, surrounded by a warm, bright orange sky.

**Key Ideas**

- 1. The artist André Derain highlighted St. Paul's Cathedral, a place of great strength for many people, in his colorful landscape painting.
- 2. Color and location are used to emphasize various parts of the painting, St. Paul's dome being the focal point.
- 3. Born near Paris and working in London, the artist visited museums, zoos, and other cultural landmarks to find inspiration.

**Suggested Questions**

- 1. Atmospheric perspective is a painting technique artists use to show that things are far away. Look closely at this painting. What buildings do you believe are farthest away? What do you see that makes you say that? How did the artist use color to tell us things are far? What do you see that makes you say that?
- 2. Derain was inspired by the work of others. His trips to the National Gallery and the British Museum exposed him to the art and history of cultures other than his own. What inspires you? Why? Is there a person or place that gives you strength? What about that person or place makes you feel that way?
- 3. Look closely. Imagine you stepped into this painting and stood where the artist did. What sounds might you hear? Why? What scents might you smell? What do you see that makes you say that? Where do your eyes go first? Why do you think you looked there first? What do you still have questions about? Why?

**Notes**

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**China, Asia**

***Seated Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva (Guanyin)***

**11th–early 12th century, wood, gesso, mineral pigments, and gold**

**Gift of Ruth and Bruce Dayton, 98.62a-h**

**38 ¾ x 22 x 13 ½ in. (98.43 x 55.88 x 34.29 cm) (body)**





**Avalokiteshvara is the bodhisattva of compassion. People pray to this Buddhist deity as a source of strength for guidance or during times of need.**

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**Pronunciation guide**

**Avalokiteshvara: “ah-vah-loh-kee-teh-SVAH-rah”**

**Bodhisattva: “boh-dee-SAHT-vah”**

**Guanyin: “GWAHN-yeen”**

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In Buddhism, Avalokiteshvara is the bodhisattva of compassion, who protects all types of people and helps them in their journeys toward enlightenment. This Buddhist deity, depicted in both male and female forms, has personally attained the highest level of enlightenment but has delayed entering paradise to help others on earth. As Buddhism gained popularity throughout China, Avalokiteshvara became known as Guanyin, which means “perceiver of sounds” in Chinese for the ability to recognize cries of suffering of all people. These associations make Guanyin one of the most popular deities to Chinese Buddhists, who might worship a sculpture like this one in the hopes that their suffering would be recognized and for help on the path toward salvation. Avalokiteshvara and Guanyin are the same merciful being, which is why the title of this artwork includes both names. (We’ll use Guanyin from now on for ease of reading.)

There are several types of bodhisattvas. You can identify them in art by their lavish adornment in gold and beaded jewelry and fancy garments like this one wears. These earthly accessories distinguish them from depictions of the Buddha, who is shown in plain clothes and without jewelry. Born a prince, the Buddha appears unadorned to symbolize his renunciation of worldly possessions to help others through his teaching. Bodhisattvas are often shown near natural landmarks, such as rivers and mountains, to reinforce their connections to earth.

In many Buddhist temples across the world, Guanyin is typically represented as male; however, in the altars of private homes, Guanyin is often represented as female. This particular statue depicts the deity as male, made visible through his finely drawn mustache. However, dating from the Tang dynasty (618–907), some representations had feminine attributes. Eventually, many Chinese Buddhists came to worship Guanyin as a female deity. There is much scholarly debate about why this change occurred; many agree that the shape-shifting nature of bodhisattvas allows for this fluidity. It is said that the deity appears to people in a form that’s the most helpful to them, whether female, male, a multi-armed and multi-eyed being, or something else entirely. One theory about the feminization of the bodhisattva draws from the legend of Princess Miao Shan, who became intertwined with Guanyin’s compassionate identity.

Today, depictions of Guanyin as female or male support members of the 2SLGBTQAI+ community’s identification with this deity as a transgender source of strength. In the 21st century, research into transgender figures in history has made Guanyin a subject of particular interest, as transgender people discover the deity’s complex evolution through social media and online.

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**2SLGBTQAI+**

**Once known as members of the “gay community,” this string of initials (or acronym) describes identities across the gender and sexuality spectrums. It stands for 2-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (or Questioning), Asexual (or Ally), Intersex, and a plus sign for greater inclusivity. The terms in parentheses show how the acronym contains multiple meanings depending on audiences.**

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## Technique

The artist of Seated Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva (Guanyin) carved it from wood and assembled it using multiple segments, a technique more popular in Japan and Korea than in China at the time. The use of additional wood blocks allowed for the creation of monumental sculptures, larger than those that could be made from a single tree trunk. Seated in the lotus pose, this sculpture of Guanyin has arms that extend from the body, moving the deity's hands closer to the viewer. Rare in representations of bodhisattvas, it depicts a gesture (or mudra) of discourse, symbolized by thumbs touching middle fingers.

After completing the carving, the artist covered the surface with a clay-like substance, called gesso, over which he applied pigment to paint features onto the face and details on the garments. Additional layers of gold leaf and gold paint embellished the clothing designs. In the sculpture at Mia, Guanyin is shown clothed in robes made to look like silk. The brightness of the pigments has dulled over time, as has the gold detailing of the garments. Look closely to see swirling and geometric designs across folds of the garment. To further enhance the sense of realism, the artist inlaid the eyes with rock crystal, the clearest form of quartz. This bodhisattva also would have once worn a crown, now missing, over the elaborate hairdo.

## Background

The teachings of Buddhism originated in the Himalayas in the late 6th century BCE during the lifetime of Siddhartha Gautama, the "Buddha." Buddhism later became a religion, arriving in China during the 1st century CE. Over several centuries, its popularity rose and fell depending on the support it received from leaders. Many forms of Buddhism existed in the past and continue today.

During the Song dynasty (960–1279), when Mia's sculpture was made, China was among the most advanced places in the world. Curiosity drove China's discoveries in science, art, philosophy, and technology. Chinese culture was noted for its sophistication, in large part driven by its international sea trade and broad exchange of ideas. At the same time, challenges to the ruling powers made it a politically rife period. It coexisted uneasily with powerful rivals to the north: the Khitan Tartars of Manchuria and Mongolia, and the Jurchen of Central Asia. In 1127, the Jurchen took over the Song capital, driving the rulers southward to establish the Southern Song capital at Hangzhou, near modern-day Shanghai.

Realism defined the visual arts of the Song dynasty, a reflection of people's interest in science, learning, and close observation of the world. Song artists also experimented with new techniques. Rich and less affluent Chinese became interested in connoisseurship (the study and appreciation of art), which led to a shared interest in art forms, greater devotion to refined taste, and, ultimately, increased patronage for the arts.

Though Buddhism was not widely supported by China's rulers during this period, some large groups of practitioners continued the Buddhist practice and commissioned highly realistic temple sculptures. Guanyin remained very popular and appeared in a variety of forms, all intended to provide strength to worshippers during tumultuous times.

## Key Ideas

1. Guanyin, also known as Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of compassion, offers people hope when they are in need. The Buddhist deity acts as a source of strength to help people reach salvation.
2. This sculpture was made during a time of political and cultural uncertainty, when many people turned to the bodhisattva for protection and guidance.
3. Guanyin has been alternately shown as both male and female. Some transgender people may identify with Guanyin's transformation from male to female, making this deity a source of strength within the 2SLGBTQAI+ community.

## Suggested Questions

1. Look closely at this sculpture. Begin at the top of the head and move all around. Describe what you see. What colors did the artist use? Do those colors remind you of anything? How might it feel to the touch? What do you see that makes you say that?
2. When this sculpture was made, artists were very curious about science and nature. Their close looking and careful observations of the world made their art appear realistic. How did the artist make this sculpture humanlike? What do you see that makes you say that?
3. Guanyin is a Buddhist deity who helps followers when they are in need. Think of a person who has helped you. What did they do to help? How did that make you feel?

## Notes

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# Art Adventure

## Sources of Strength

1



Tiger pillow  
China

Gallery \_\_\_\_\_

4



*Migrant Mother*  
Dorothea Lange

Gallery \_\_\_\_\_

2



Shirt  
A'aninin  
(Gros Ventre)

Gallery \_\_\_\_\_

5



Vajra warriors  
Japan

Gallery \_\_\_\_\_

3



Seated  
Avalokiteshvara  
Bodhisattva  
(Guanyin)  
China

Gallery \_\_\_\_\_

6



*London: Saint Paul's  
Cathedral seen from  
the Thames*  
André Derain

Gallery \_\_\_\_\_

# Mia



## 2 Second Floor

- **Asia**  
Galleries 200–227, 237–239, 243, 251–253
- **Americas**  
Galleries 259–261
- **Special Exhibition Galleries**  
Target Galleries 258 & 266–274
- **Africa**  
Galleries 236, 250, 254, 255
- **Ancient Art**  
Galleries 240–242
- **MAEP, U.S. Bank**  
Gallery 257
- **Pillsbury Auditorium**
- **Non-Public Areas**
- **Modern & Contemporary**  
Galleries 262–265, 275–277
- **Restaurant (Mezzanine Level)**  
Accessible via the Third Avenue elevator and stairs
- **Non-Public Areas**



## 3 Third Floor

- **Europe & America 1600–1900**  
Galleries 300–337, 350–357, 362
- **Europe 1200–1600**  
Galleries 340–343
- **Modern & Contemporary**  
Galleries 359–361, 367, 369–380
- **Photography**  
Galleries 363–365, 368
- **Prints & Drawings**  
Galleries 315, 316, 344, 353
- **Period Rooms**  
Galleries 318, 320, 325–328, 331, 335–337
- **Event Spaces**  
Reception Hall  
Villa Rosa Room
- **Non-Public Areas**

# Art Adventure Picture Person

## Special Exhibition Voucher

Exchange for 1 adult entry.

No advance reservation needed.

Valid for any special ticketed  
exhibition in Target Galleries.

Expires May 17, 2025.

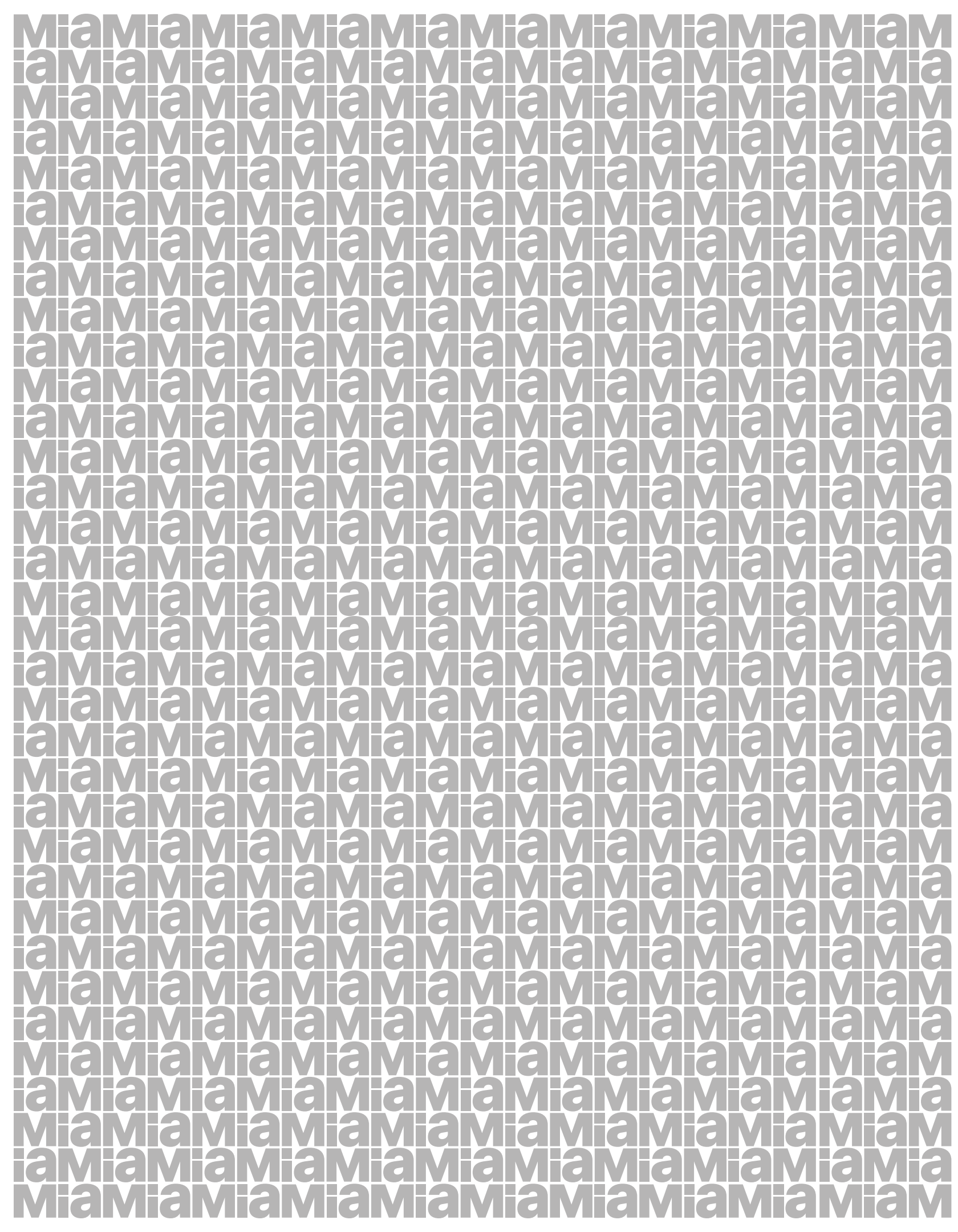
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Mia

Tear out







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