

Dressed for the Occasion

Art Adventure Tour
Nov. 5 and 8 class

Dressed for the Occasion		
Nigeria, Yoruba	King's Crown	236
Richard Hunt	Transformation Mask	OFF
Unknown	Armor	340
Vigee Le Brun	Maria Theresia Bucquoi	322
Thailand, Blue Hmong	Ceremonial Skirt	OFF
James van DerZee	Wedding Day, Harlem	OFF

Mia

Agenda

- Dressed for the Occasion set
and discussion
- Guide Q & A
- Small Group Presentation



What's in a label?

Blue Hmong, Laos, Asia,
Ceremonial skirt, 1950–82,
Cotton, polyester, silk; indigo
batik, cross stitch embroidery
and appliqué, Gift of funds
from Mr. and Mrs. John M.
Hartwell, 82.138

Hmong (“free people”)

Oral tradition and archaeological evidence suggest that the Hmong people’s origin was near the Yellow and Yangtze rivers in China. Due to conflict, the Hmong migrated south from China, into Laos, in the 1800s. Known as industrious farmers, the Hmong were among the first people to cultivate rice and to spread this staple throughout Asia. (MNHS)



From 1961 to 1975, “in the shadows of the Vietnam War, the CIA conducted a secret war in Laos that relied on Hmong soldiers to prevent the threat of communism from spreading deeper into Southeast Asia.” (TPT America’s Secret War).

The first Hmong family to resettle in Minnesota arrived in November 1975. The largest wave came after the passage of the US Refugee Act of 1980. Outside of SE Asia, the Twin Cities has one of the largest urban concentrations of Hmong people, with close to 100,000 people here. (MNHS)



Hmong women also create story cloths, often reflecting their life in Laos or memories before the war.

Ka Zoua Lee, Village Story Blanket, c. 1980

CF: Many Hmong people in Minnesota continue to practice their farming tradition. Today, Hmong farmers make up roughly 50% of the growers at metro markets.



Suni Lee, first Hmong American Olympic gymnast

CF: Cultural fluency or sensitivity (Being mindful of your own identity when facilitating discussion, looking at the art using a lens that recognizes past and present inequities, stereotypes or assumptions, and cultural differences)

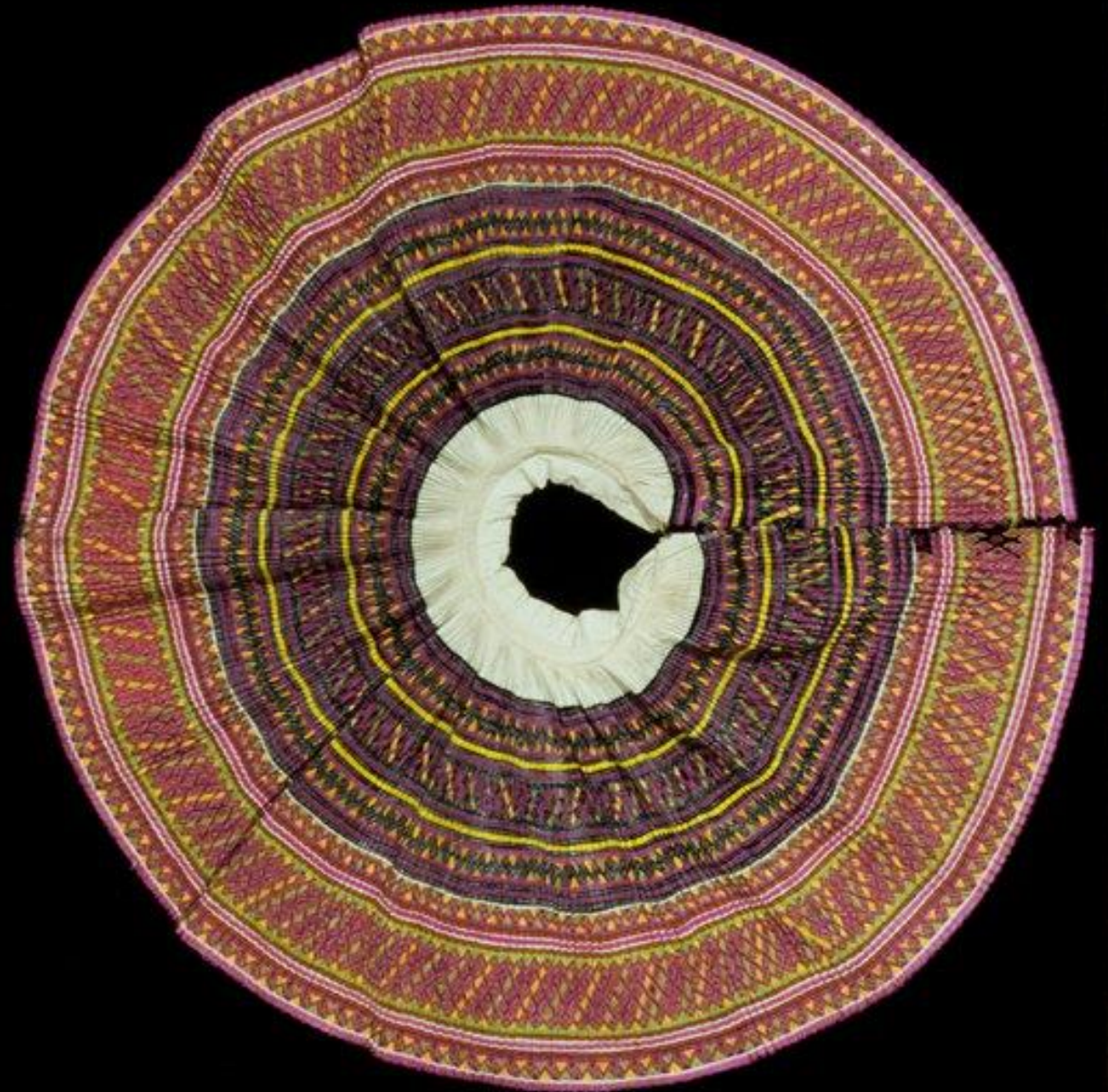
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A Hmong woman made this skirt while living in a refugee camp in Thailand. A relative, living in the Twin Cities, purchased it.

CF: Artist once known!

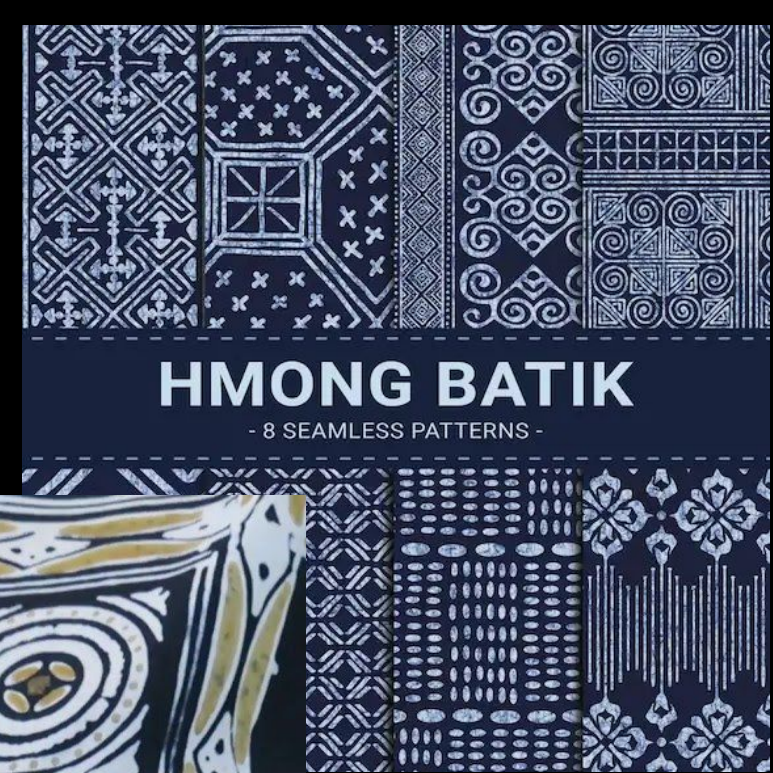
The skirt is accordion pleated, with 9 yards (27 feet!) of fabric.



Hmong culture was semi-nomadic (moving frequently); as a result, their art was made to be easily transportable.

The skirt uses a number of textile techniques: embroidery, applique, and batik.





Notice the tiny stitching and complex designs. The process used in the detail is batik.



CF: Cultural appropriation

This skirt was made for a New Year festival. Wearing new clothes for the New Year celebrates the good fortune of the past year and is a sign of future prosperity.



Hmong New Year celebration at the Rivercentre, St. Paul. Traditional clothing is still worn today for celebrations.

CF: Avoid the word costume in describing traditional clothing.

CF: For any kind of cultural dress, use the lens of “how do you think a [insert cultural reference] feels when wearing this?”

For associative questions, you can connect to the “special ceremony or event” by asking a question like “Think about your own family or community. What might you wear to a special holiday party?”

The skirt contains such fine detail, students can comment on shapes and colors, as well as think about the practice of sewing.

What ideas do you have for props for this skirt?



Substitutes (check your route before deciding on a sub)

For subs, think through your theme, in consideration of your route, and find an example between stops. Other textiles from South Asia or China might be good subs. But other cultures are also fine to include!

Dressed for the Occasion							
1		2		3		4	
Transformation Mask		Wedding Day, Harlem		Armor	340	Ceremonial Skirt	
King's Crown	236	Armor	340	Maria Theresia Bucquoi	322	Transformation Mask	
Ceremonial Skirt		Maria Theresia Bucquoi	322	Wedding Day, Harlem		King's Crown	236
Maria Theresia Bucquoi	322	Ceremonial Skirt		King's Crown	236	Wedding Day, Harlem	
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Miao, Skirt, 20th century, G210 (above)



Manchu Woman's Semiformal Court Vest, Kangxi period, 1662-1722 (right)



Lakħóta, Dress, c. 1880-1900 (G261)

Resources

[Hmong Timeline](#), from the Minnesota Historical Society

TPT Documentary: [Minnesota Remembers Vietnam: America's Secret War](#)

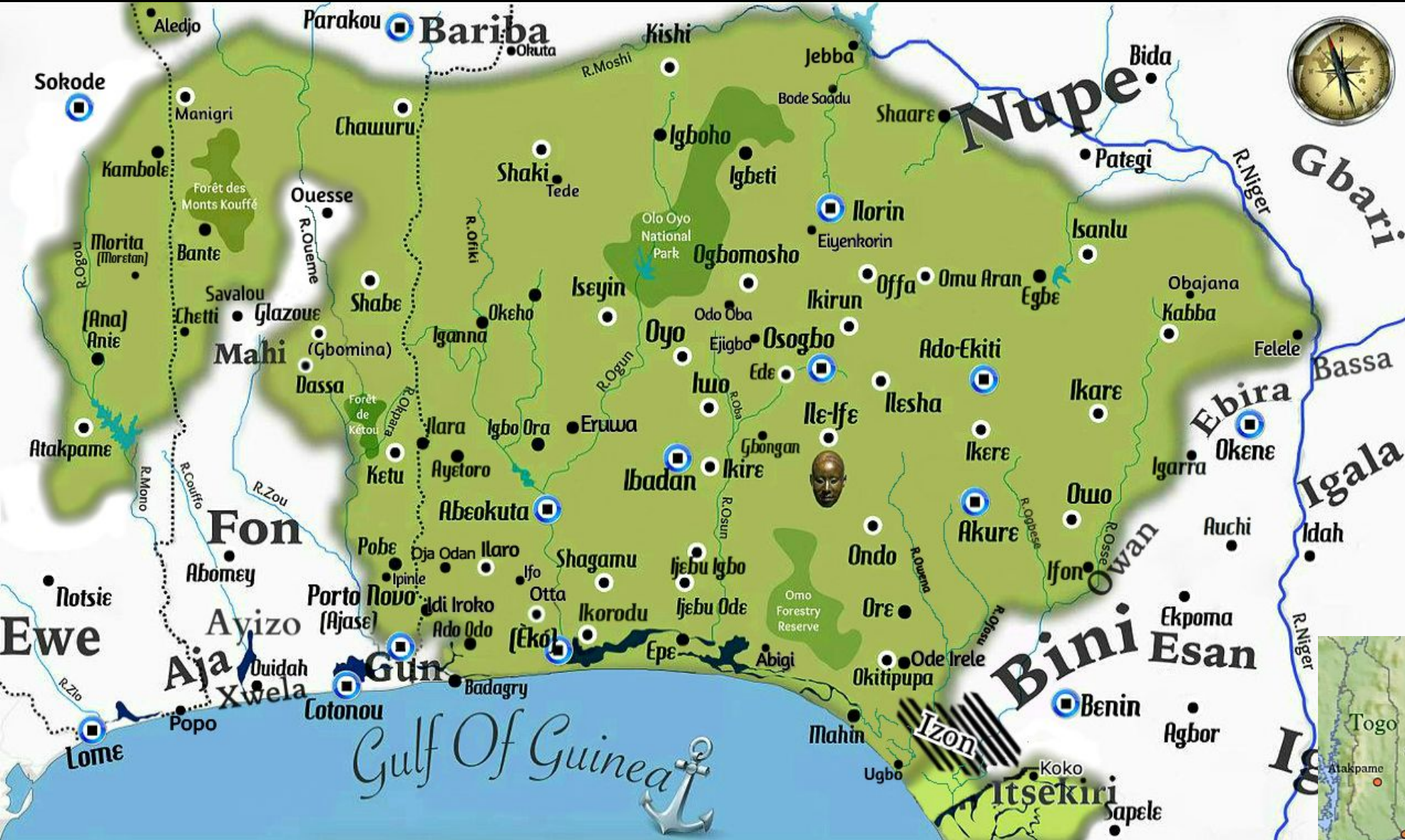
[HmongEmbroidery.org](#): “Intended to educate viewers about the many different types of traditional and modern Hmong embroidery and the meanings attached to many of the motifs commonly used in Hmong embroidered art works.”



CF: Artist
once known!

Yoruba, Nigeria, Africa, Crown,
1920, Glass beads, leather,
canvas, wicker, The Ethel
Morrison Van Derlip Fund,
76.29

CF: Africa is a continent, not a country. It is home to thousands of cultural groups. These groups transcend borders of countries.



Yorubaland Map. Wikipedia



CF: Africa is a continent, not a country.

It is home to thousands of cultural groups. These groups transcend borders of countries.

Those borders were drawn in a period of heavy European colonization of Africa.

The king of a Yoruba community (oba) would wear this crown only on the most important ceremonial occasions. In wearing it, he was empowered to connect with his ancestors.

16 beaded birds might symbolize the 16 sons/grandsons of the first ruler, Oduduwa (Oh-DUE-due-a).

Birds also have spiritual significance, perhaps reflecting the king's connection to a spiritual world.





1977. Ariwajoye I is the king and ruler of Ila-Orangun

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CF: Yoruba beaded crowns were and are worn only by kings. Other beaded accessories are also used by priests.



Oba Oluwo of Iwo,
modern king!



The veil is thought to be a protective feature. The crown is empowered with medicine in its peak, so when wearing it, the people in the presence of the king are thought to be protected from the power.

The birds on the crown may also reflect a divine force called ashe (ah-SHAY), the power to make things happen.



CF: For any kind of cultural dress, use the lens of “how do you think a [insert cultural reference] feels when wearing this?”

For associative questions, you can connect to how this reflects the power or status of the king by asking a question like “Think about your own culture. What do our leaders wear to show us their power or status?”

The crown contains lots of colors to identify, as well as birds and the face. While not appropriate for questions that ask kids to freely interpret what they see, you can ask about the patterns, number of birds, etc.

CF: Kids may ask how this came to be in the collection. Don't shy away from discussing the time of colonialism in Africa, age-appropriate (truth is, when things come on to the art market, we sometimes do not know the provenance).

What ideas do you have for props for this crown?

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Resources

From Khan Academy, regarding the Land Scramble in Africa:

[The Berlin Conference](#)

Video from Khan Academy (including another Yoruba crown): [The Power to Look](#)

Want to learn more about African art? Check out [Unit 1: African art, an introduction](#) and [Unit 3: West Africa](#) in Khan Academy.

To learn more about provenance, watch a previously recorded lecture:

<https://ipevolunteers.org/provenance-art-break/>



Far Left: Élisabeth Louise Vigée-LeBrun, Self-Portrait, 1790

Elisabeth Louise Vigée-Le Brun, France, 1755–1842, *Portrait of Countess Maria Theresia Bucquoi, née Parr*, 1793, Oil on canvas, The William Hood Dunwoody Fund, 78.7

Vigée Le Brun became the favorite painter of Marie Antoinette, Queen of France. In 1778, Marie Antoinette invited Vigée Le Brun to Versailles, and Vigée Le Brun painted this court portrait on the left. She went on to paint many more portraits of the queen and her family.



Left, Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, Marie Antoinette in Court Dress, 1778 and Right, Marie Antoinette and her Children, 1787

Vigée Le Brun encountered many challenges establishing her career as an artist. Women did not have the same access to training as men, so she was largely self-taught. Art academies were open only for men.

Eventually, Marie Antoinette spoke to the King, who decreed that Vigée Le Brun be admitted to the French royal academy. This favoritism would have repercussions.

Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, Self Portrait in a Straw Hat, 1782



“On the night that revolutionaries arrested Louis XVI and his queen in 1789, Vigée-Le Brun fled France and went into exile traveling throughout Europe for 12 years.” (Mia label). Vigée Le Brun went on to have a successful career abroad. The portrait of Countess Bucquoi was painted in Vienna. (The background landscape reflects the scenery along the Danube River.)

The countess' brother commissioned the painting, and it was displayed in his palace.





François Boucher, Portrait of Madame de Pompadour, 1756

Following the French Revolution of 1789, women's fashion became more informal, simple, and natural.

How is Countess Bucquoi's dress more natural than Madame de Pompadour's?



The Countess wears some props (red shawl) that the artist provided. Though placed in a natural setting, this was painted in the artist's studio.



Left, Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun,
Countess Golovina, late 1790s



For an association question, you can could ask “what would you chose to wear if you were having your portrait painted?”

Ask the students to guess how old she is, and follow up with the key idea of how Vigée Le Brun flattered the looks of those she painted--making her a popular portraitist!



Use the gallery with the portrait, comparing to another portrait nearby.

For this portrait, it is fine to ask kids to strike the pose of the Countess. Ask their opinion, thumbs up/down, on whether it feels natural or formal. Follow up, asking them to support their opinions.

What ideas do you have for props for this painting?

Resources

From Khan Academy, [Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, Self-Portrait](#), and

From the National Gallery of Art, a short bio video: [An Introduction to Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun](#) | National Gallery

From Art UK, [Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun: from Rococo to Revolution](#)

“I put my heart and soul into them and tried to see that every picture was better-looking than the person.”

James Van Der Zee

CF: It's important to identify BIPOC artists with school groups. Also show students a picture of the artists, if possible.

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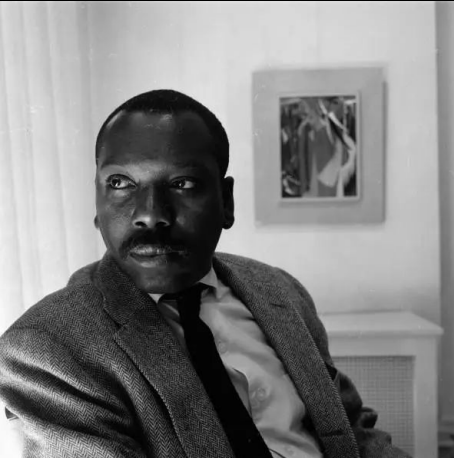
Above: James VanDerZee, Self-portrait taken in 1918.

James Van Der Zee, United States, 1886–1983, *Wedding Day, Harlem*, 1926 (printed 1974), Gelatin silver print (printed 1974), The Stanley Hawks Memorial Fund, 74.36.12, © Estate James VanDerZee

In his 60-year career, VanDerZee provided a visual record of the Harlem Renaissance, “A period of African American literary, artistic, and intellectual activity centered in...Harlem, spanning from the 1920s to the mid-1930s” (MoMA). Harlem was THE place to be!



Clockwise from top left:
Jacob Lawrence, Zora Neale Hurston, W.E.B. DuBois, Bessie Smith, Duke Ellington, Langston Hughes, to name just a few of the key cultural icons of the time.

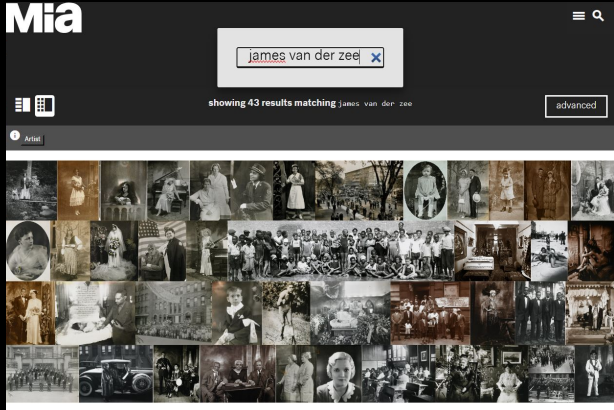


Van Der Zee “ventured out into the neighborhood to service the photographic needs of a middle-class clientele, documenting society teas, athletic clubs, and couples in Cadillacs out on the town.” (MoMA)



What will children notice in this portrait?

Look closely at the bottom left corner. The artist used technology to add a young girl playing with a doll. We do not know why he did it. What might be a reason he added her?



The groom's clothing is typical for the time, and the bride's clothing has modern details: machine-made fabric, shorter hemline, and poofy veil.

VanDerZee sometimes added details on the negative, like fine jewelry, always wanting to show his subjects at their best.



For an associative question, you might ask students about weddings they have seen or been to. How did the fashions compare with what they see in the photograph?

What is similar? What is different?

The photograph calls for close looking to see all the details. Ask the students to comment on what is real in the setting they see, and what is created through painted backdrops.

What ideas do you have for props for this photograph?

Substitutes (check your route before deciding on a sub)

If you can, include another work by a Black artist or with Black subjects that fits within the theme. If not, another BW or color photo with people as a subject could work.



Jordan Casteel, Minnesota, 2020 (G280).
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On loan, Archibald Motley, Nightlife, 1943 (G302) and coming in February, an exhibition of Ernest Cole photographs in the Harrison Gallery.



Resources

From MoMA, a bio, [James Van Der Zee, American, 1886–1983](#)

From BuzzFeed: [He Photographed Harlem's Renaissance. Here's What Those Photos Look Like Today.](#)

From the National Gallery of Art (video, with great info on James VanDerZee):
[Introduction to the Show: James Van Der Zee's Photographs](#)



Richard Hunt, Canada, *k̓a'wakw*), born 1951,
Transformation Mask, 1993, Cedar, pigment, cloth,
string, wood, The Anne and Hadlai Hull Fund, 93.42, ©
Richard Hunt, C.M., O.B.C.





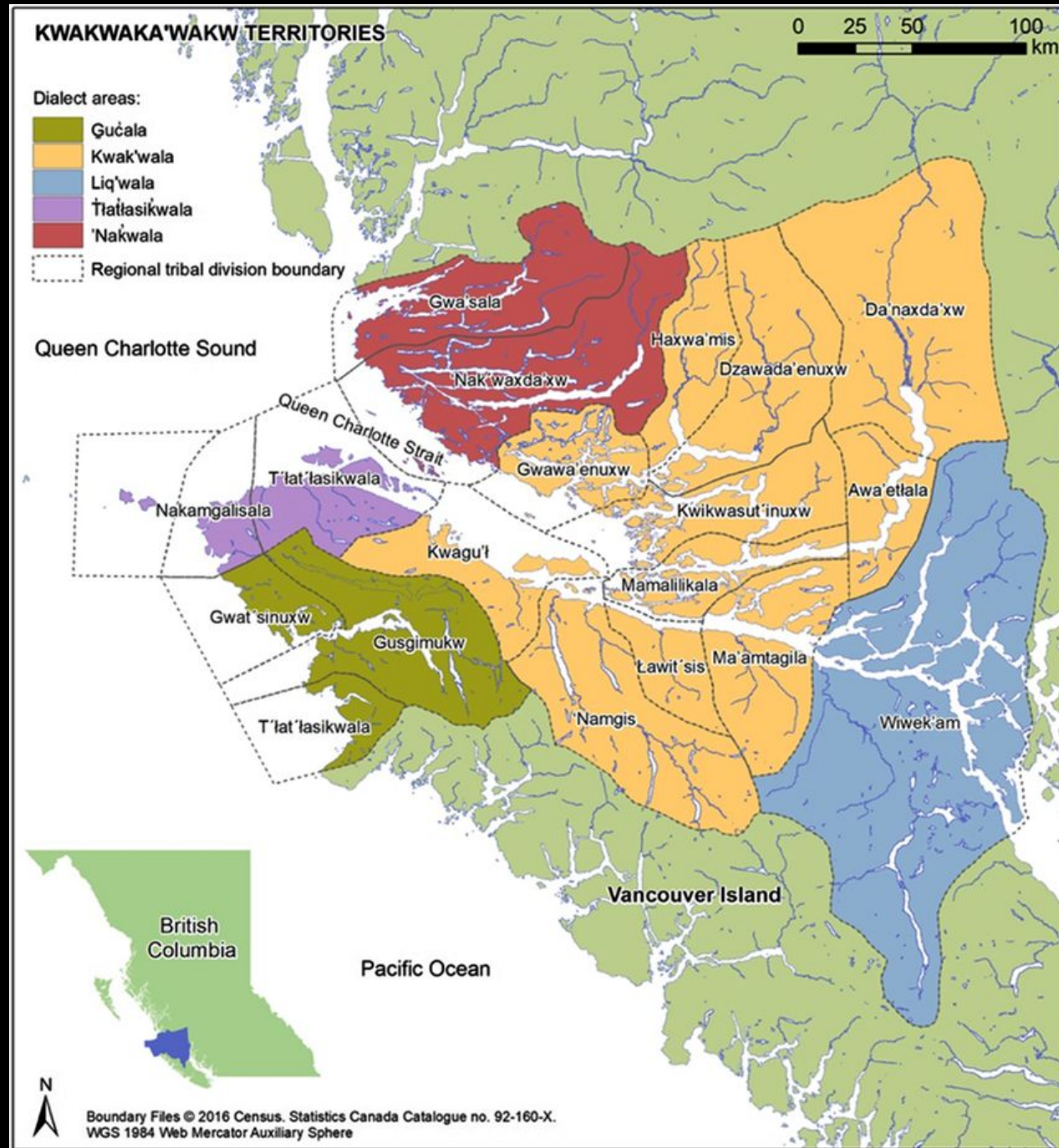
This mask represents Hunt's ancestry. Raven is the main crest of his father's clan. Sisiutl (two-headed serpent, SEE-shoe) is the main crest of his mother's clan.

CF: Practice pronunciation of cultural names:
Kwakwaka'wakw (pronounced:
KWOK-wok-ya-wokw)

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Kwakwaka'wakw territories are within Canada today. In Canada, Native Americans or Indigenous peoples are referred to as First Nations peoples.



Map of Kwakwaka'wakw Territories based on U'mista Cultural Society materials 2021 (U'mista 2021, umistapotlatch.ca/notre_terre-our_land-eng.php). Created by Johanna Roto, 2021.



Richard Hunt, above, Vancouver,
right, Wikipedia

“Transformation masks are worn during a potlatch, a ceremony where the host displayed his status, in part by giving away gifts to those in attendance. These masks were only one part of a costume that also included a cloak made of red cedar bark.” (Khan Academy)

Potlatches are still practiced today among Northwest Coast peoples.





From Copyright Photograph 1916 by S.F. Curtis

Photographed by John Andrew & Son

Richard Hunt made the mask to sell, but it is in the same style as transformation masks he made for his family to use in potlatches.

CF: Richard Hunt is part of a living culture, where potlatches take place, and masks are still performed.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=B_yyKdJXlq8



For an associative question, connect to the artist's experience, learning to carve from his father. Think about lessons or skills you have learned from someone in your family or community. How does it feel to learn something new? What are the challenges? What is exciting?

The shapes of the mask are mean to reflect a raven. What shapes do you see that look like a bird? (The inner mask, when open, has the representations of the two-headed serpent, Sisuitl, and a human face.)

What ideas do you have for props for this mask?

Resources

Interview with Richard Hunt: [Master carver Richard Hunt reflects on Thunderbird Park history, friendship with an NHL great, and new LunarFest lantern](#)

From Khan Academy/SmartHistory: [Transformation masks](#)

Video: [Richard Hunt Interview \(from Orcas: Our Shared Future\)](#)

Virtual museum: [Living Tradition: The Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch of the Northwest Coast](#)

Substitutes (check your route before deciding on a sub)

If you can, include another work by a Native American artist that fits within the theme.



Wendy Red Star, Walks In The Dark costume/dress(G261).
Tsistsistas (Cheyenne) or Lakḥóta Headdress (G261) or Keri
Ataumbi and Jamie Okuma, Pocahontas jewelry set (G259)





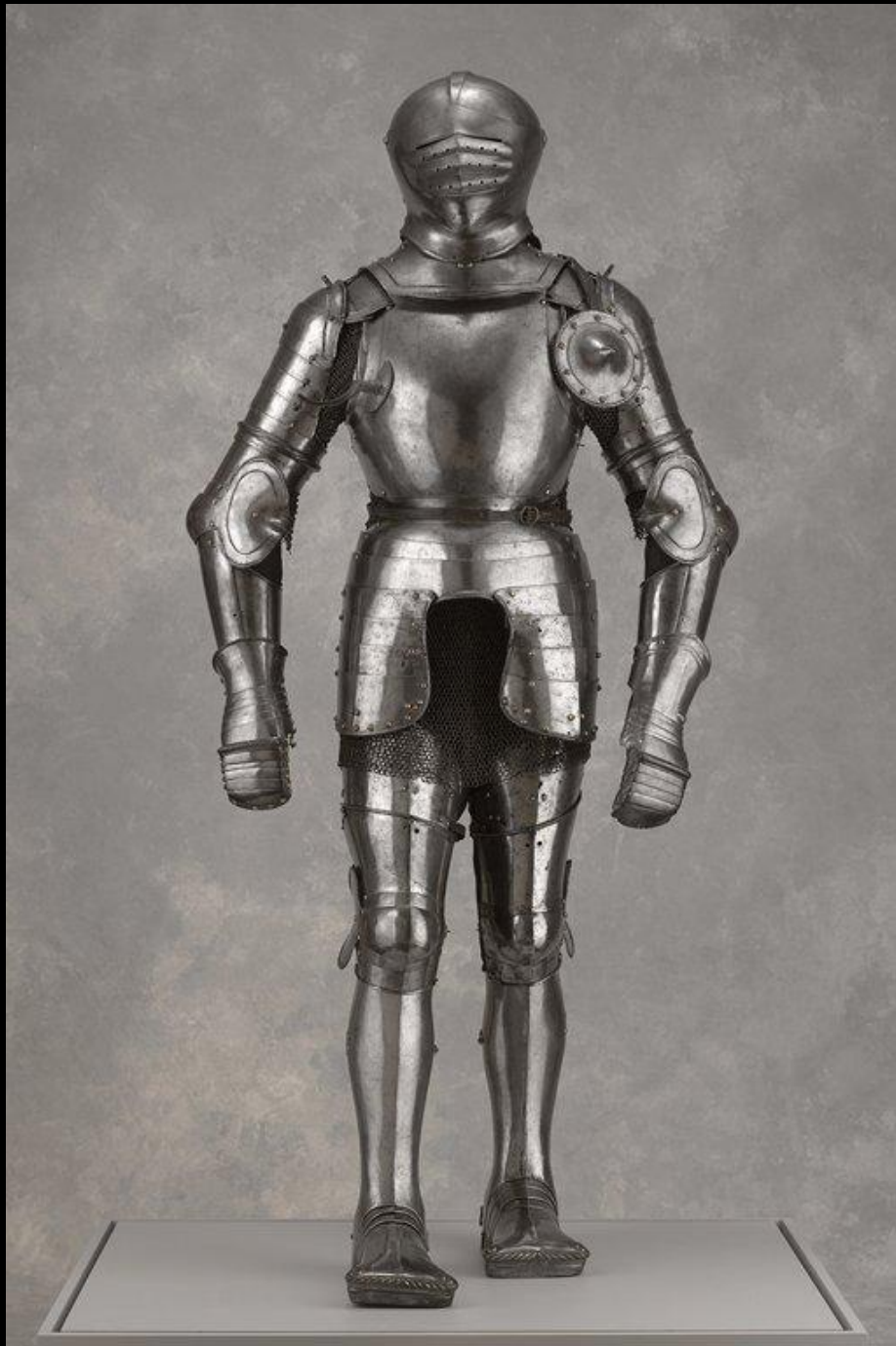
Be sure to have students circle around to see it in full, but gather back together in front.

Germany, Europe, Armor, 1520, Steel, leather, copper alloy (composite; early 20th century restorations), The Washburn Fund, 23.54

Artist once known!



This armor was used for jousting (called “tilt armor”). Jousting is one-on-one combat fought with long wooden lances while galloping full speed on horseback toward an opponent. The object was to knock the opponent off his horse or break his lance.



Horse Armor, Germany, 1480-1500, Deutsches Historisches Museum. Denis Finnin/AMNH

This armor was considered fashionable (the belted waist of the breastplate was a popular design) and also functional.

It might take around 20 minutes to put all this armor on--with help!

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Football protective gear is a good analogy for understanding the idea of protecting the body from injury.

A full suit of plate armor for jousting may weigh up to 110 pounds!
Regular plate armor for fighting would be up to 55 pounds.

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A suit of tilting armor was expensive, over 3 years of wages for a skilled laborer!

Our suit is a pastiche, with pieces assembled to make a complete set.

Remember that the gallery itself may have some references that connect!



For an associative question, close your eyes if you want, and imagine putting the suit on. What might it feel like to move in this armor? What types of activities would be difficult to do while wearing it? What types of activities might be easier, or safer?

or

What types of armor or protective gear do people wear today to protect themselves at home, at work, or at play?

Look closely. Where does the armor move and bend with the body's movement? What do you see that makes you say that?

What ideas do you have for props for the armor?

Resources

From World History Encyclopedia: [Medieval Jousting](#)

From Wikipedia: [Plate armour](#) and [Jousting](#)

Britannica, video: [Learn about the history of the medieval sport of jousting](#)

Break



Q and A with Mia Guides

For next class

- Work on Small Group Presentations
- Read online resource [Gender Revolution](#) and check out [My Name, My Identity](#) student stories.
- Read handout on pronouns and inclusive language
- Read handout on group management tips

Thank you! Please fill out the check-in form.

