

# Cultural Reflections in Art

Art Adventure

CE 2.20.25

Cultural Reflections		
Unknown, China	Money Tree	201
Democratic Republic of Congo, Kongo	Power Figure	250
Peru, Chimu	Ear Spools	260
Clementine Hunter	The Wash	OFF
Macena Barton	Portrait of José Mojica	OFF
Jean Clouet	Portrait of Charlotte of France	342

# Mia

Because artworks are often created for a **context** other than a museum, their meaning can be better understood if we are aware of the context for which they were made.

Context is the setting or circumstances that help you understand something.

So what else do we need to fully understand the Bwa mask?



Each artwork is a product of a specific place and time and in some way reflects the culture that produced it.

Culture includes the art, beliefs, social and family customs, inventions, language, technology, and traditions of a people.

Looking for a sub? Stop into a period room!





Students can use their eyes as tools of discovery, looking for clues about the various cultures.

By asking certain questions, they can collect a surprising amount of information and can make many deductions about the works of art and the cultures that produced them.

What can we tell about this girl's life, based on what we see in this portrait?







Jean Clouet the Younger, France, 1475–1541, *Portrait of Charlotte of France*, 1522, Oil on cradled panel, Bequest of John R. Van Derlip in memory of Ethel Morrison Van Derlip, 35.7.98 (Portrait is 5" x 7"). Inset: *Portrait when she is 2*, also by Clouet.

**Minneapolis Institute of Art**



Portrait of Francis I, c. 1530.  
Jean Clouet with possibly  
assistance of François Clouet.  
Left, Claude, Livre d'heures de  
Catherine de Medicis.

King Francis I of  
France and his wife  
Claude had 7 children.









Key ideas for students:

In France in the 1500s, Princess Charlotte, age 6 or 7, was expected to behave and dress like an adult.

Charlotte, is dressed in fine clothes with jewels, depicted in great detail by the artist Jean Clouet the Younger.

This portrait of Charlotte is very small in size and likely meant for personal use rather than a public display.

Question ideas? Props?

**CF:** Identify the Kongo culture and country, Democratic Republic of the Congo, within Africa.



Minneapolis

Map data ©2025





**CF:** Identify the Kongo culture and country, Democratic Republic of the Congo, within Africa. Artist once known.

Kongo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Africa, Power figure, 20th century, Wood, natural fibers, glass, metal, undetermined materials, The Christina N. and Swan J. Turnblad Memorial Fund, 71.3



**CF:** Avoid letting students guess at the meaning of this figure, but direct their questions to connect to the use and meaning of the Power Figure.

What conveys power (or strength) in this figure?

*Answering a question as “Actually, this is...”*



The Kongo people believed that power figures brought protection, healing, and resolution to their community.

The term for this figure is nkisi nkonde.





# Similarities?



**Minneapolis Institute of Art**



Left, Detroit Museum of Art; Right, St. Louis Art Museum



## Key ideas for students:

This power figure, is used to maintain the well-being of a Kongo community by resolving conflict and sealing agreements.

The nail figures are known as nkisi nkondi, nkisi = spiritual charm, nkondi = to hunt.

Each of nails, blades and screws driven into this figure represents a judicial action.

The figure's spiritual power is invoked by a ritual specialist who places special substances in the container on the figure's stomach.

Map showing the Chimú empire (in today's country of Peru)





Chimú, Peru, South America, Ear Spool, 1150–1450, Gold alloy, The William Hood Dunwoody Fund, 43.4.1. Artist once known.





Chimú, Peru, South America, Ear Spool, 1150–1450, Gold alloy, The William Hood Dunwoody Fund, 43.4.1. Earspools and feathered crown from Metropolitan Museum of Art

[Chimu, Khan Academy](https://www.khanacademy.org/art/ancient-peru/a/ancient-peru-earspools-and-feathered-crown/a/ancient-peru-earspools-and-feathered-crown)





Kero cup,  
Inca artist,  
once  
known,  
1300-1550





## Key ideas for students:

A nobleman or high-ranking Chimú man would have worn these ear spools as a sign of his status. (So question would be “How would the Chimú man have felt wearing these?)

It is believed that the gold ear spools provided protection from evil spirits. The ear spools are decorated with mythical figures indicating a belief in supernatural forces.

The technique of making these gold ear spools is very sophisticated despite being made around 1000 years ago.

Questions? Props?





## Sichuan Province, China





China, Asia, *Money Tree*, 1st–2nd century, Bronze and green glazed earthenware, Gift of Ruth and Bruce Dayton, 2002.47a-rrr.

Bronze cup, China, 7th-8th century





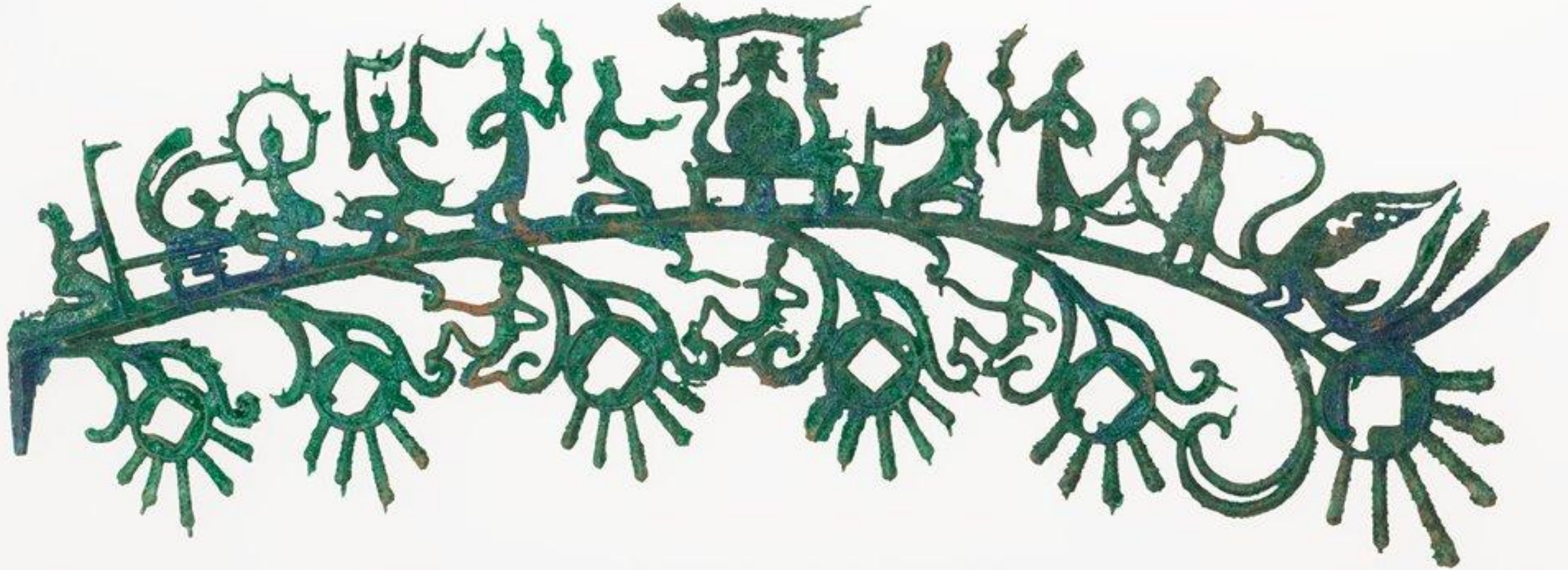


Han Dynasty coins ([Wikipedia](#))





# Queen Mother of the West







Money trees remain popular today with some families during the Chinese New Year. They are made of pine or cypress branches, arranged inside a clay pot filled with rice grains, and are symbols of long life.



## Key ideas for students:

Money Trees were highly prized tomb objects believed to grant wishes and prosperity to the tomb's occupant.

This was made during the eastern Han Dynasty in China, 15-200 CE.

At this time, furnishings and sculptures were put into the tomb for the deceased to enjoy in the afterlife.

The money tree's branches are full of images of paradise and coins providing wealth and well-being for eternity.

Questions? Props?

**Minneapolis Institute of Art**



If you had to give a weather report on the day you see here, what would you say?

**CF:** Racial discrimination and limited work opportunities left many Black Americans with few options other than to continue working on plantations.

Clementine Hunter, United States, 1885–1988, *The Wash*, 1950s, Oil on board, The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund, 91.88.2

**Minneapolis Institute of Art**







Clementine Hunter, on Melrose Plantation, in Natchitoches, Louisiana, in the 1960s.

Hunter had pride in her work at Melrose. She didn't start painting until in her 60s.



Africa House on Melrose Plantation, with the murals painted by Hunter.





Picking Cotton, 1950s





Key ideas for students:

Clementine Hunter was a self-taught artist who created a visual record of her life on Melrose plantation.

Hunter painted colorful scenes from everyday life.

This scene depicts 3 women doing laundry at a time when clothes were still boiled and scrubbed by hand.

Questions? Props?



Macena Barton, United States, 1901–86, *Portrait of José Mojica*, 1928, Oil on canvas, The Ray and Carol Bergeson Endowment for Art Acquisition, 2018.69.1, © Macena Barton





Smithsonian, Archives of American Art: Macena Barton working on a painting, 1930s



Macena Barton, Portrait of José Mojica, 1928, Oil on canvas, 2018.69.1, © Macena Barton



Macena Barton's signature painting style included "aura portraits," surrounding her subjects by a ring of colorful light.





ecran M.R. 133

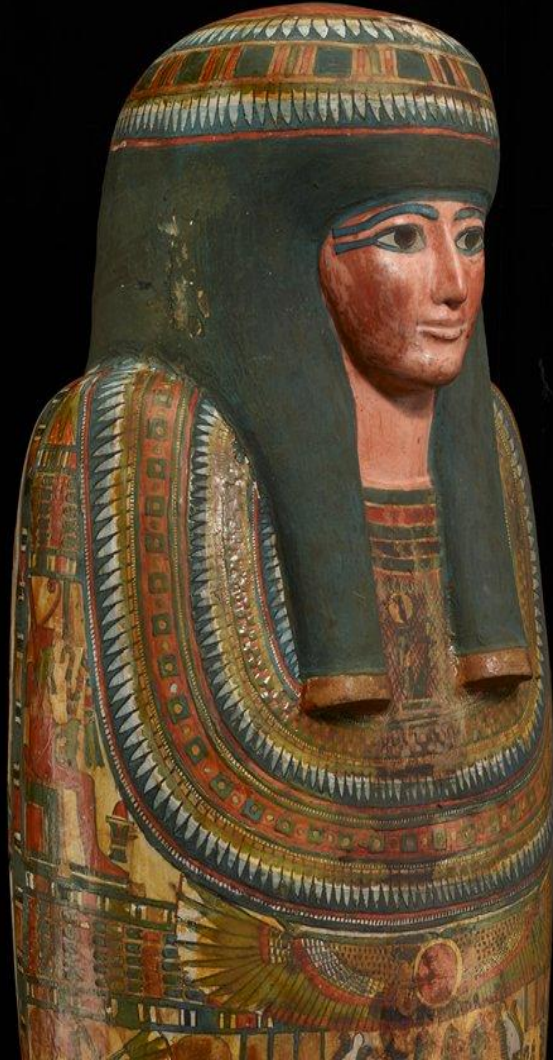


Left, Wikipedia, Cover of the Chilean magazine Ecran N°133 made by the Chilean cartoonist Raúl Manteola. Middle: IMDB, José Mojica and Rosita Moreno in Las fronteras del amor (1934); Right: Wikipedia, Fray José de Guadalupe Mojica.



# Ideas for substitutes...second floor

Tsistsistas (Cheyenne) or  
Lakǰóta, Headdress, late  
19th-early 20th century



Sarah Maniapik; Weaver: Olassie Akulukjuk,  
Creeping Up, 1980  
Unknown artist, Ancient Egyptian, *Lady  
Tashat*, 945-712 BCE





# Substitutes: 2nd floor



Myrlande Constant, Bal Kontredans, 2021

Artist once known, China, Wedding Procession, 1368-1644

Yoke, Artist once known, Nopiloa (Veracruz), 600-900





# Ideas for substitutes...third floor



Jacopo da Ponte  
(Jacopo Bassano), *The  
Element of Water*, c.  
1576-1577

Jacob Lawrence, *Subway  
Acrobats*, 1959.



Ernest Cole exhibition



# Third Floor Period Rooms





Other ideas?



## Research resources

### Princess Charlotte

- [Claude of France](#), Wikipedia
- [Charlotte of Valois](#), Wikipedia

### Kongo Power Figure

- [Power Figure](#), Nkisi Nkondi, Kongo peoples, Khan Academy
- [Power Figure](#) (Nkisi Nkondi), Kongo peoples, Smart History



# Research resources

## Chimú Ear Spools

- [Introduction to the Chimú culture, Khan Academy](#)
- [Pair of Earflares with Multifigure Scenes, Met Museum](#)

## Han Money Tree

- [Money Tree, Khan Academy](#)
- [Money Tree \(Yao qian shu\), Portland Museum of Art](#)



# Research resources

## Clementine Hunter, The Wash

- [Artist Bio](#), Nat'l Museum of Women in the Arts and [Bio](#), SAAM
- Google Arts and Culture, [Inspiring Story of Clementine Hunter](#)

## Macena Barton, Portrait of José Mojica

- [Bio of Mojica](#), IMDB
- [Bio](#) of Macena Barton

Thank you!

