



**FINE ARTS MUSEUMS OF SAN FRANCISCO
DE YOUNG MUSEUM**

HIGHLIGHTS TOUR (INCLUDING VISUAL ACCESS CONTENT)

Audio tour script –

A detailed visual description following the general analysis of each object is included.

WRITER/PRODUCER:

FRANCES HOMAN JUE

SOUND DESIGNER:

PETER DUNNE

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GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: This is no ordinary cart driver. See those bony ribs? – the figure is actually a skeleton, representing Death itself. Seated in a chariot with a bow and arrow, Death is out hunting for its next victim.

This sculpture was made around 1900, by members of the Roman Catholic “Penitente” brotherhood in present-day New Mexico, in the American Southwest. During Easter Holy Week, the brotherhood carried objects like this in processions through the streets. The figure reminded viewers that death comes to everyone, and warned them to live a moral life before they died.

Take a closer look at the figure. Sometimes, we think of art as being very grand and costly. But this simple piece was created by a devout Catholic from hand-carved wood, a pair of toy marble eyes, and horsehair. With origins in the Spanish Colonial empire in the Americas, it’s just as much a part of the story of American art as the more elaborate portraits and furniture that you’ll see in the galleries ahead.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

*This is a sculpture titled *La Carreta de la Muerte/Chariot of Death*. An unknown artist created it around 1900. It is made of cottonwood, horsehair, glass marbles, paint, leather, string, nails, paper, and fabric. It measures almost 3 feet tall, 4 feet wide, and more than 1.5 feet deep.*

This sculpture features a skeletal figure seated in a chair on a cart and holding a bow. The cart has two simple wheels, a base, and a long pole coming out of the front.

The figure sits rigidly in the chair. The back of the figure is flat against the seat, his hips and knees bent and his feet flat on the cart’s floor. His outstretched arms hold a crudely made white bow and arrow out away from his chest as if he is about to shoot at something. The body evokes a skeleton with its greyish white color and the incised lines denoting rib bones around his torso. The skeleton’s face stares out ahead of the

cart with an open mouthed grin. His blue eyes are wide and his mouth opens slightly revealing four teeth with wide spaces in between. On his head, there is a lock of blond hair that is braided down the figure's back.

The chair and cart the figure sits on are made of unfinished, brown wood. The cart is just big enough to fit the chair and the figure; the two wheels are just below the base of the chair. Overall, the sculpture's finish appears hand-made and utilitarian.

Stop 304 The Freake-Gibbs Painter, *David, Joanna, and Abigail Mason*, 1670

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: David, Joanna, and Abigail Mason were the children of a rich baker from Boston, Massachusetts. Their portrait, made in 1670, is full of clues about their family's status in society, and their parents' expectations of them as they grow up. Like miniature adults, they hold formal poses, and are dressed in smaller versions of adult clothing. Their sleeves are fashionably slashed to show two layers of expensive fabric at once. Eight-year-old David stands in a commanding pose, holding a gentleman's gloves and a silver-tipped cane.

So if David, who takes up half the painting, poses as the man of importance he's expected to become – what can we tell about the girls' future? Joanna's fan indicates ladylike accomplishments and graces. Abigail's rose symbolizes childhood innocence, and perhaps also the marriageable beauty her parents hope she'll grow up to be. And the coral beads around the girls' necks and in Joanna's hand? Those are a sign of wealth, but were also thought to keep sickness away – an important consideration when raising a healthy child to adulthood was an achievement in itself.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This painting is entitled *David, Joanna, and Abigail Mason* and is attributed The Freake-Gibbs painter. This oil on canvas was painted in 1670. It measures almost 3.5 feet tall and a little more than 3.5 feet wide.

Three expressionless children stand side by side, filling this canvas. On the far left, is the tallest of the children, a young boy. Next to him stand two girls. The number 8 appears above the boy; the number 6 above the middle girl, and the number 4 appears above the head of the smallest girl on the right.

The children are all dressed in clothing from the 17th century. The boy wears a black jacket and knee-length pants with a large white rectangular collar. White puffy accents peek out from his sleeves, waist, and pant legs. In his right hand, he holds two black leather gloves at his hip. In his left hand, he carries a wooden walking stick with a

shiny metal handle. He has black, small eyes, thin bright red lips, and shoulder length brown hair with a hint of a curl at the ends.

Both girls wear white headscarves and black dresses accented with white, ruffled fabric and red bows at the sleeves. A long, white, crisp apron covers most of the dress. Both girls wear brown shoes with red laces. They have small black eyes and thin, bright red lips. The middle girl holds a fan and a string of beads to her chest. The girl on the right holds a single red flower.

The children stand in a relatively sparse room. Behind them is a dark brown wall draped with a velvety green curtain. The floor is made of brownish red tiles. The space and children are realistically painted but are relatively flat and simplified.

Stop 308 Joshua Johnson, *Letitia Grace McCurdy*, ca. 1800-1802

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: Gazing solemnly out at us, Letitia Grace McCurdy of Baltimore offers her dog a cookie. Will he wait patiently, or jump up to grab the treat? Including the dog in the painting is a charming, playful touch – but it has a deeper meaning, too. Puppies, which can be trained to be well-behaved, faithful adults, symbolized the state of childhood, and are often seen in early 19th-century portraits of children.

Letitia's portrait expresses her family's wealth and social standing. She has a fashionable, high-waisted muslin dress, short haircut, and red leather slippers -- known as "straights" because there was no left or right shoe! The artist, Joshua Johnson, followed the traditions of grand American and European portraiture in picturing a luxurious setting with a marble floor and fringed red curtain.

Johnson is the earliest identified African-American artist in the United States. Born enslaved, he was freed as an adult by his white father. He built a successful career as a portrait painter for families in and around Baltimore. While historians initially assumed that Johnson first studied with a local artist, he proudly advertised himself in local newspapers as "a self-taught genius."

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This painting is titled *Letitia Grace McCurdy*, and was painted by Joshua Johnson around 1800-1802. The oil on canvas measures about 3.5 feet tall and a little less than 3 feet wide.

This portrait does not reveal much about the subject's personality. The young girl with delicate features and no expression stands in the very center of the canvas, staring out at the viewer. Even though she is a child, she is posed very rigidly. In the bottom right corner sits a grey, fluffy dog looking eagerly toward a cookie in the girl's left hand. The girl is dressed in a high-waist, ankle-length short-sleeved white dress with a delicate lace detail around the scooped neck. A brown and gold necklace hangs around her neck. Her bright, red slippers contrast the crisp whiteness of her dress and stockings. The girl's gentle eyes, thin, pursed lips and short cut brown hair are all carefully painted. Her skin is very pale, almost translucent.

The space around the girl is detailed but plain. The floor is tiled marble. A red velvet curtain with gold fringe accents the top left corner of the painting. It drapes next to the little girl's head and is tied off to the left. Behind the curtain, a moss-colored green wall fills the space behind the girl. It changes shades slightly from a dark green next to the curtain to a light green at the girl's right. The wall ends about 2/3 of the way on the right side of the canvas, leaving an ambiguous opening. It is unclear if this leads to a new space or is just a painted surface. Through the opening, we can see a brown wooden post and rail fence, some green bushes, and the top of a leafy green tree.

Stop 311

Thomas Hovenden, *The Last Moments of John Brown*, ca. 1884

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: A white-haired man leans over to kiss an African-American baby. This is John Brown, who famously fought and died trying to abolish slavery. In 1859, after leading an unsuccessful attempt to start a slave rebellion in the American South, he was captured. He is pictured here, a noose around his neck, on the way to his execution – or martyrdom, according to his supporters.

The artist, Thomas Hovenden, made this painting 25 years later after carefully researching the details. The soldiers' uniforms and the condemned man's slippers were true to life. But the scene depicted here never happened - the enslaved mother and her baby were invented by a sympathetic Northern newspaper reporter. It provided an uplifting interpretation of Brown's story though – a symbolic blessing for African-Americans who would grow up free because of his sacrifice. And Hovenden heightened the drama by portraying Brown as a noble, Christ-like figure calmly going to his death. Christ's cross is even suggested behind Brown's back, created by the vertical gun and, on either side, a man's belt and a horizontal line of dark bricks. *

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This painting is titled *The Last Moments of John Brown*. Thomas Hovenden painted it around 1884. The oil on canvas measures almost 4 feet tall and just over 3 feet wide.

In this exterior scene, a crowd of people surround abolitionist John Brown as he descends a flight of stairs and pauses to kiss a baby. Brown emerges from a red brick building and stands near the bottom right of the stairs. He leans over a railing to the right to kiss an African-American baby being held up to him by a barefoot African-American woman in ragged clothing whose head is covered in a bright red scarf. Brown is rail thin with a shock of gray hair and a long beard. He is dressed in a brown suit with a rope around his neck, presumably a noose. His eyes close as he purses his lips to kiss the child who stretches forward with his arms to touch him. Several white men, dressed in dark suits and bowties crowd the steps and doorway behind Brown, and look down at him with inscrutable expressions.

In the bottom right corner of the painting, two white soldiers stand at attention with bayonets. They face the stairs and look up toward Brown and the baby. In the left corner of the painting, a third white soldier is turned away, looking to the left toward something we cannot see. He grasps his rifle in both hands across his chest as if he might use it.

The soldiers block the view of additional people crowded into the space. On the left edge, African American adults and children crouch and stand looking up toward Brown.

All of the figures are placed in a way that directs our attention toward the stairs and the figure of Brown kissing the baby.

Stop 371

Horace Pippin, *The Trial of John Brown*, 1942

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: “The Trial of John Brown” is by African-American artist Horace Pippin. He painted it in 1942, inspired his mother’s eyewitness account of John Brown’s hanging in 1859. In this painting, the wounded hero is accurately depicted lying on a stretcher on the courthouse floor, with his open Bible nearby. The prosecutor points accusingly at him, while the all-white and all-male jury looks on without sympathy.

Pippin’s painting is very different in style from Hovenden’s, but both artists turn Brown into a Christ-like figure. His bloody head bandage recalls Christ’s crown of thorns, and the pointing prosecutor reminds us of the apostle Judas, who betrayed Christ and condemned him to death.

So – whose version of John Brown’s story contains the deeper truth? Hovenden’s painting depicts Brown as a larger-than-life hero, while Pippin’s depicts the freedom fighter as an ordinary—and vulnerable—man. Both paintings contain elements of the true story, but neither was made by someone who was actually there. And like most images of historical events, both paintings were carefully composed to convey a specific meaning or interpretation. Which painting do you find more moving?

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This painting is titled *The Trial of John Brown*. Horace Pippin painted it in 1942. The oil on canvas measures about 1.5 feet tall and almost 2 feet wide.

A judgment of some kind seems to be taking place in this somber, serious painting. Two rows of sitting white men fill the top half of the painting looking down upon a man, presumably John Brown, laid out on a stretcher below. The work appears as if the viewer is observing from an elevated position, slightly down onto the scene.

Brown’s feet are toward the left side of the painting, his head toward the right; his body is covered with a black blanket. His bandaged head faces the viewer with a somber, blank expression. A man stands near Brown’s head facing out toward the

viewer. He points strongly with his right hand down toward Brown below him to the left, his mouth is open as if he is speaking, and in his left hand he holds the barrel of a rifle that rests against the ground. In front of Brown on the floor sits a red bag and a small opened book.

The men in the top portion of the painting while individualized, are remarkably similar. All of the men are white, bearded, wear dark clothing, and face straight out at the viewer. The men in the first row obscure the men in the second row so only their heads are depicted. The men's faces lack expression and are emotionless, maybe even bored.

Overall, the colors are muddied and dark, mostly browns, greys, and blacks. The artist has painted in a simplified style so the space and the individual figures lack details that indicate volume and space.

Stop 370 Hiram Powers, *Greek Slave*, ca. 1873

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: At first glance, this graceful marble statue on its classical column resembles a Greek or Roman goddess. Venus, perhaps. But you see details that you won't find around the goddess of beauty. Like the shackles binding her wrists together. And beside her right hand, a shawl, hat, and Christian cross. This is no goddess – although the artist, Hiram Powers, certainly was inspired by an ancient statue of Venus when he made the first version of this sculpture, in 1843.

Powers called his sculpture “Greek Slave.” It represents a Christian Greek woman captured by Turkish forces during the recent Greek War of Independence. She's shown displayed for sale in a slave market, her clothes removed by her captors.

The *Greek Slave* caused a sensation when it first toured the United States. Some found the figure's nudity indecent. But others were convinced by the exhibition pamphlet describing the woman's Christian virtue and courage. Many viewers also connected Powers' statue to the enslavement of African-Americans in the Southern United States. The Greek Slave therefore became a powerful symbol used by those fighting to abolish slavery in the years before the American Civil War.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR:

This sculpture is titled *Greek Slave*. Hiram Powers created it around 1873. It is made of marble and is almost 4 feet high, a little more than 1 foot wide, and exactly 1 foot deep. The sculpture sits on top of a pedestal, so that the bottom of the sculpture is about waist height.

The relaxed posture and expression of this idealized female nude give this sculpture a deceptively calm feeling. The entire statue is a smooth, milky white, and the woman's body is realistically depicted. Her perfectly proportioned hourglass figure is reminiscent of an ancient goddess.

The woman stands facing the viewer looking down toward the viewer's right. Her left leg is straight and her right leg slightly bent. She leans against a post on the left that is draped with a cloth, her right arm casually resting on its surface. Her left arm hangs in front of her body, and her wrists are tied together with a rope. She casts her eyes

downward and her mouth is closed. Her hair is parted down the center and is pulled into a tight bun at the back of her head.

Stop 380

James McNeil Whistler, *The Gold Scab: Eruption in Frilthy Lucre*, 1879

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: A cruel caricature, created as an act of revenge. Not what we might expect from a famous artist – but that was the original purpose of this painting. The American artist James McNeil Whistler made it in London, England, where he'd become famous for daringly modern paintings partly inspired by Asian art.

Here, we see a grotesque creature - half-man, half-beast with a mangy peacock tail. He hunches over a piano, heaped with bags of gold coins. This is Whistler's caricature of Frederick Leyland, a wealthy shipping tycoon and keen amateur musician who'd been a very important patron. But Whistler went way over-budget, without permission, in redecorating the dining room of Leyland's London home. This was the celebrated blue and gold "Peacock Room," now preserved in the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington D.C..

When Leyland refused to pay all of the enormous fee Whistler demanded for his work, the artist portrayed Leyland as a hideous and greedy peacock. And in a final flourish of venom, he added his signature butterfly emblem at the top of the painting, with a long, barbed tail that's about to sting the back of Leyland's neck!

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downward and her mouth is closed. Her hair is parted down the center and is pulled into a tight bun at the back of her head.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This painting is titled *The Gold Scab: Eruption in Filthy Lucre*. James McNeil Whistler painted it in 1879. The oil on canvas measures a little more than 6 feet tall and about 4.5 feet wide.

At the painting's center, a light-skinned man faces to the right and hunches demonically over a piano. He seems to be transforming into a gangly peacock-like beast. The man's feet and hands are claw-like, his jacket transitions into a tail with plumes of feathers filling the bottom left corner of the painting. The man's legs, back, arms, and hair are covered in scales of blue and gold. He sits perched atop the roof of a plain white house, meant to be his piano chair. He faces the viewer and stares with wide-opened black eyes down toward the bottom of the painting, his brow furrowed. His pale white face is human, but where his hairline should be, his head is blue with a ridge of feathers down the center like the head of a bird.

We see the man and the piano from the side and slightly above. The piano occupies most of the right hand portion of the painting. Sheet music faces the pianist and blue and orange bags of money cover the top of the piano. Floating above the piano in the top right portion of the painting is a butterfly emblem with a long barbed tail that curves across the top of the painting as if it is about to sting the pianist's neck.

The painting has a fantastical almost dreamlike quality with the objects and figures not grounded in any discernible setting. The background, roof of the house, the man's body, and the piano are all the same shade of greyish blue. The blue is punctuated by white and orange details.

Stop 325

Frederic Edwin Church, *Rainy Season in the Tropics*, 1866

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: Imagine seeing this painting just after it was made, in 1866. In an era before color photography, this spectacular view of a “tropical” landscape took people’s breath away when it was displayed in New York City.

The painting is by Frederic Church, who had traveled to South America and Jamaica. But rather than depicting a real place, he conjured up a landscape blending experience with imagination. We’re floating above a dramatic, mountainous river valley. Those two tiny men and donkeys at the lower right give us a sense of the landscape’s vastness. There’s a dash of modern scientific knowledge about the double rainbow - the colors on its upper arch are accurately reversed. Church may have had a scientific treatise in his New York studio, as well as sketches, potted palms, and preserved tropical birds and butterflies he’d brought back from his travels as inspiration.

The painting also may be symbolic. The year it was finished, Church and his wife were expecting a new baby, having lost two older children. On the national front, the end of the American Civil War the previous year heralded a new era of hope for the United States. So the painting’s veil of mist, melting in the warm sun, may perhaps hint at the lifting of both private and public traumas.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

This painting is titled *Rainy Season in the Tropics*. Fredric Edwin Church painted it 1866. This oil on canvas measures more than 4.5 feet tall and 7 feet wide.

This painting’s perspective is from above and far away, encompassing a great deal of diverse landscape, and is painted in a highly realistic way.

A craggy brown and grey mountain range dominates the left side of the canvas. The steep sides drop off abruptly into a misty, white waterfall. In the lower right quadrant of the painting, a road curves through a lush green jungle of bushes and palm trees. The jungle is relatively uniform in color, with deep emerald greens highlighted by yellowish greens where the sun reflects off of leaves. A group of people and pack animals make their way along a brown, dirt road. They are tiny in comparison to the

vast landscape, and are only noticeable because of the bright red clothing they wear. Behind the jungle and road in the distance, a body of water occupies the middle right portion of the painting.

Behind the mountains and water, further into the distance, there are blue skies with some clouds and haziness, like it is still raining or as if a storm had just passed. The background colors are more muted and details are less crisp, as they would appear if you were looking at something far away. In the top right hand corner, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up the painting, the clouds break to reveal an azure sky and an even higher, snowcapped mountain peak.

Completing the scene is a glowing double rainbow forming a perfect semi-circular arch over the entire landscape below.

Stop 321 William Michael Harnett, *After the Hunt*, 1885

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: Did you do a quick double-take as you walked over to this breathtakingly realistic painting? It looks like we just missed a hunter walking away. But he's hung up the rabbit and birds he caught on this wonderful old door with its curly, rusty hinges. And he's left his guns, flask, battered hat, and well-used hunting horn.

Philadelphia artist William Michael Harnett specialized in "trompe l'oeil", or "fool-the-eye," paintings. He intended this one, made in 1885 in Europe, to be his masterpiece. Soon thereafter, it was purchased for an incredibly high price, and hung in a luxurious New York City bar as part of the owner's art collection. The painting, framed in drapery and dramatically lit, quickly became the most famous still life in America. Newspapers reported people fighting about which elements in it might actually be real, and trying to jump the guard rail to find out.

By 1885, most of these objects would have been considered antiques. But viewed in a New York City saloon, especially by first-generation immigrants, they would have served as nostalgic reminders of a simpler, rural life in Europe that was now part of an idealized past.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

This painting is titled *After the Hunt*. William Michael Harnett painted it in 1885. The oil on canvas measures almost 6 feet tall and about 4 feet wide.

This painting is a highly detailed, realistic painting of a door with hunting equipment hanging on it. It is painted with delicate, fine brush strokes that fool the eye into thinking it might be a real door with actual objects.

Let's start by talking about the background, an old forest green wood planked door, hinged on the right side with large, rusted metal hinges that extend from right to left across the width of the door. The planks and seams are all carefully painted showcasing every imperfection and detail. Centered on the left side of the canvas is a keyhole, with a skeleton key hanging just above it.

On the surface of the door hangs a variety of hunting related gear and paraphernalia. The well-worn objects are hung in layers centered on the door about a quarter of the way down. The last item to be hung is a grey hat. Beneath it hangs a shiny brass hunting horn with small dents, a polished rifle, a well-worn leather cross body bag, and a pair of deer antlers. To the left of these objects a gunpowder horn hangs from a string. In the lower half of a painting dangle several small animals: two grey and brown-feathered pheasants, a brown furry rabbit, and a small light brown bird. Their feathers and fur are so carefully painted you can almost feel the texture. A long, leather strap extends from the center of the painting to the very bottom holding a canteen. A wooden walking stick with a sharp metal point hangs, extending from the top right of the door to the bottom left.

Stop 330 Mary Cassatt, *The Artist's Mother*, ca. 1889

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: What are you drawn to first in this portrait? Probably the woman's face – even though she gazes away from us, seemingly lost in thought, her features and expression are painted with so much care and insight that she is very compelling. It's not surprising that Mary Cassatt was able to capture and convey such a strong sense of individuality and character, as this is a portrait of her mother, Katherine.

Cassatt never married and was very close to her mother, who was supportive of her daughter's career as a professional artist. This was an extremely unusual path for a young American woman from a wealthy family to follow in the nineteenth century. By the time she painted this portrait around 1889, Cassatt had trained in Paris, been accepted into the circle of French Impressionists, and frequently exhibited alongside her male colleagues.

Here, she pauses to contemplate the woman whose constant encouragement meant so much to her, focusing our attention on her melancholy face and strong hands, and contrasting the solid figure with the swift, Impressionist-style brushstrokes in the background.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR:

This painting is titled *Mrs. Robert S. Cassatt, The Artist's Mother*. Mary Cassatt painted around 1889. The oil on canvas measures just over 3 feet tall and more than 2 feet wide.

An elderly woman sits slouched in a chair, resting her face in her hand and gazing off into the distance. She faces the viewer at an angle facing the right side of the canvas. She wears a black high collar dress and her shoulders are draped with a cream shawl that covers her arms. The woman sits in a barely visible chair resting her left elbow on the chair's arm, with her hand propping up her head. Her right hand grasps a white handkerchief resting in her lap. The woman's grey hair is pulled back away from her ashen white face revealing vacant eyes and pursed lips.

The woman is at eye level and occupies most of the canvas. Behind her, in the top third of the canvas, a blue and grey painting hangs on the wall, its subject matter blurry and indecipherable. In front of the painting a vase of red and yellow flowers rests on an unseen surface.

The woman and her features are painted realistically and with great care and detail. But her clothing, the chair, and background details are painted more vigorously and with less detail. Brushstrokes are clearly visible and in some places, like the bottom left corner of the work, the underlying canvas is visible giving the work a bit of an unfinished quality.

Stop 331 Chiura Obata, *Mother Earth*, 1912/1922/1928

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: Standing naked and alone in the forest, this woman appears to exist in perfect harmony with nature. Her slender, vertical form echoes the tall trunks of the ancient California redwood trees around her. And beneath her feet are delicate spring flowers, their soft blues and pinks reflected in the colors of her hair and body.

When Japanese-American artist Chiura Obata began this portrait of his wife Haruko in 1912, they were expecting their first child. Obata eventually titled the finished painting “Mother Earth,” making the female figure a universal symbol of motherhood and fertility, and linking the cycles of human life with those of nature. His title reflects his global perspective - “Above the border line of nationality”, he stated, “everybody must feel a deep appreciation toward Mother Earth.”

This painting fuses Obata’s knowledge of traditional brush-and-ink techniques learned in his native Japan, with elements of western perspective and realism. Obata played a key role in introducing Japanese art techniques into the United States, initially as an instructor at the University of California, Berkeley. Later, when his family was confined to an internment camp in Utah during World War II, he organized an art school to offer hope and inspiration for the future.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR

This painting is titled *Mother Earth*. Chiura Obata originally painted it in 1912, and reworked it in 1922 and in 1928 with ink and colored pigments on silk. It is just over 7 feet tall and is almost 5 feet wide.

The nude, light-skinned woman standing in a forest seems to glow in this mysterious and captivating painting. She stands in profile left of the center, facing the right side of the painting. Her long, dark black hair drapes down to her knees, and covers part of her face, shoulders and arms. Her face peeks out from the hair with a somber, serious expression. The soft pink of her skin gives off a translucent glow. She walks gently along, her left leg slightly bent. The woman and the space she occupies are realistically painted, but the colors are somewhat fantastical.

The woman stands between three very tall trees with thick trunks. One tree is to the far left edge of the painting cut off by the canvas. The other two trees are just behind her on the right side. The trees mimic her vertical posture. The light and dark brown textured surface of their trunks also gives off a soft glow. A few branches hang down from the trees with evergreen-like foliage. The needles are very dark; a blackish brown with highlights of blue. Filling the ground between the bases of the trees are delicate, small blue and pink flowers. In the distance, about one third up from the bottom of the painting, there is a small clearing. Beyond it are the silhouettes of a denser forest of evergreen trees, with a similar dark, brownish color of the foliage of the trees in the foreground. Far in the distance, the sky glows a warm, peachy orange.

Stop 337 Georgia O’Keeffe, *Petunias*, 1925

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: Georgia O’Keeffe wanted to get at what she called the “real meaning of things.” She set about this by looking at the world around her in new ways, focusing intently and poetically on its natural forms and geometries. In the summer of 1924, she decided to plant purple and blue petunias while staying at Lake George in upstate New York. As they flowered, she studied their soft, velvety petals up close, capturing their intense colors and delicate forms in her paintings.

No-one had looked at flowers in this way before, allowing them to fill the whole canvas so that their intricate structure and rich colors take on a monumental presence. It was a very radical, modern way to approach what could have been a very traditional subject – these are both beautiful flowers, but also semi-abstract forms, seemingly floating in space and taking on a life of their own. O’Keeffe observed, "When you take a flower in your hand and really look at it, it's your world for the moment. I want to give that world to someone else."

VISUAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR

This painting is titled *Petunias*. Georgia O’Keeffe painted it in 1925. It is oil on hardboard and measures 1.5 feet tall and 2.5 feet wide.

The group of deep, purple flowers fills this entire canvas from top to bottom and left to right, making it seem like we have just zoomed in on a bountiful bouquet.

The centermost petunia is positioned facing the viewer, so we can look down on the flower and into its center. The petals fan out, revealing a bright green stamen at the center. At the right side of the canvas and just behind the center flower, another flower is viewed from the side. We see the petals curve gently back from the center toward the base of the flower. In the top left quadrant of the painting, a third flower is obscured showing only a few petals and a center green stamen. There are a few more flowers that are not fully opened that are layered behind these main, opened flowers.

The flowers are all carefully painted with nearly invisible brushstrokes. The curves of the petals are emphasized by contrasting light and dark shades of purple.

Stop 343 Grant Wood, *Dinner for Threshers*, 1934

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: When artist Grant Wood made this painting of a Midwestern harvest meal in 1934, the Great Depression and the drought-driven “Dust Bowl” had made life extremely hard for farm families. But this scene is set earlier, perhaps around 1900 – and evokes the Iowa farm where Wood was raised.

Beginning at the left side, two horses rest while farmhands wash before they eat. Through the door, in the farmhouse dining room, a group of farmers eat together, weary and hungry from gathering the harvest. Women serve them, and work in the kitchen to the right. Everything is clean, orderly and idealized. Even the kitchen cat waits until the meal is over to beg some scraps!

But there’s more to this scene of rural American life. Although Wood depicted his native Midwest in his work, he was also inspired by European Renaissance paintings. Wood’s portrayal of the farmhouse recalls Italian Renaissance religious paintings, which open up a cross-section of a building to reveal the stories of the people inside. The farmers at their dinner table recall images of Christ and his disciples at the Last Supper, giving their simple meal a sacred association.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This painting is titled *Dinner for Threshers*. Grant Wood painted it in 1934. It is oil on hardboard and measures almost 2 feet tall and more than 6.5 feet wide.

A cross section of a farmhouse including interior rooms and a porch fills this canvas that is four times as wide as it is tall. The scene documenting a daily meal amongst farm laborers is orderly and organized like we are looking into a dollhouse.

Let’s start at the left side of the painting and work our way to the right. At the left, a horse and chickens occupy a yard in front of a large red barn that fills the space. Next to the yard, on the porch of the house, two men wash their faces and comb their grey hair. A dining room with a long table fills the middle of the canvas like a stage set. 15 men sit at the table, half with their backs to the viewer, the other half on the opposite side of the table, their faces obscured. The men have grey hair, reddish tanned skin and wear denim overalls and long sleeve button-down shirts of various colors. Two pink-

cheeked women with grey hair in long dresses and white aprons serve the men. The room is decorated sparsely with tan and cream geometric wallpaper, a red-checked tablecloth and lace curtains covering one window.

On the far right of the canvas, a small kitchen connects to the dining room. Two women work in the kitchen over a black potbellied stove with an orange cat sitting at their feet. The room is simple: neatly stacked white dishes, a white curtain in the window, and plain brown walls. To the far right of the kitchen a screen door leads to a tiny yard and red shed.

Stop 345 Aaron Douglas, *Aspiration*, 1936

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: Let's start at the bottom of this visionary painting about African-American history. Made in 1936, it's titled "Aspiration". The hands of enslaved people, chained at the wrists, reach up from the waters below toward figures representing freedom and achievement. To the right is a seated woman in an Egyptian headdress holding a book, and below her are silhouettes of three pyramids. Together, they symbolize African American pride in an ancient and noble heritage. Meanwhile, two men in business suits holding symbols of learning point to a modern city with towering skyscrapers and factories.

This painting is by Aaron Douglas, the first African-American artist to fully embrace modernism. He made it for the "Hall of Negro Life" at the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition. See the five-pointed stars radiating light across the painting? Texas viewers may have seen these stars as symbolizing their "Lone Star State." But it can also be seen as a reference to the North Star that guided slaves out of the South to freedom in the North of the United States. Douglas himself compared his use of radiating stars and circles to radio waves, which spread the African-American art form of jazz around the world.

VISUAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR:

This painting is titled *Aspiration*. Aaron Douglas painted it in 1936. It is oil on canvas and is 5 feet tall and 5 feet wide.

This large, perfectly square painting has an almost mythical quality. The canvas is filled with areas of colors of solid pink, purples, and blue.

At the center of the painting three silhouetted African-American men fill a raised platform. They are a solid dark purplish blue contrasted against a lighter pink background. On the far right of the platform, a female African-American figure sits with her back to us leaning back on the platform. In her right hand, she holds open a book as she gazes upward. There is a large yellow five-pointed star sitting at her shoulder, though it is painted as an overlay, so you can see the woman's shoulder through the star. The star's light emanates in a circular pattern around her.

At the center of the platform, two broad shouldered men stand with their backs to us. They hold mathematical instruments and the center man points off into the distance toward the top right corner of the painting where a factory and four skyscrapers sit on top of a mountain painted in shades of yellow and yellowish-brown. Along the entire base of the painting, seven anonymous arms are raised, their hands outstretched toward the platform with wrists chained together.

Nothing is painted in a realistic way, but rather it is stylized and simplified into geometric forms without any depth of space.

Stop 346 Richard Diebenkorn, Berkeley No. 3, 1953

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: Wide expanses of warm orange, red and yellow. Energized black lines and vivid blue forms. Seemingly an abstract painting. And yet, as we look closer, we may see a landscape emerging from the rectangles of color. Perhaps that long, dark line is a horizon, with a milky-blue sky stretching across above it.

Richard Diebenkorn made this painting in 1953. He'd just returned to the San Francisco Bay Area after teaching in the Midwest for a year. Happy to be back in the landscape he knew and loved, he began an extensive series of numbered paintings, all titled Berkeley, after the East Bay city where he settled. This is number 3. They're all abstract on the surface, but Diebenkorn observed that, on some level, he had "always been a landscape painter." These paintings also hint at the artist's recent experience of flying for the first time, and the thrill of seeing the landscape from a radically new angle.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This painting is titled *Berkeley No. 3*. Richard Diebenkorn painted it in 1953. This oil on canvas measures almost 5 feet tall and 6 feet wide.

The most important thing about this painting is that it is completely abstract. But some of the abstract elements come together and could be read as a landscape.

The work features large patches of soft peachy and pink areas accented with dark lines, distinct circles, a few patches of blue, and small bits of red.

About a third of the way down from the top of the canvas is a black line that runs from left to right. Above it, an area covered in white paint appears to be layered over other layers of peach, pink, and blue paint as if it is translucent. Perhaps this line is a horizon line of a landscape indicating a space far away. Below the black horizon line are more patches of pink, blue, and peach with a few black and blue curved lines and ovals.

In the bottom third of the painting, there are more abstract spaces of line and color concentrated mostly in the bottom left corner. There are small patches of black, yellow,

and white intermixed but not overlapping with a black outlined oval and other geometric shapes. The bottom right corner is filled with a peachy-pink rectangle of color.

Stop 245 Larry Rivers, *The Last Civil War Veteran*, 1961

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: The Stars and Stripes, hung next to a Confederate flag –potent symbols of the two opposing sides in the American Civil War. Between them, an old Confederate army jacket. And beneath, a frail, ghost-like figure lying in bed. This painting, dating from 1961, is titled “The Last Civil War Veteran”. It was made by Larry Rivers, who based it on a photograph in a 1959 *Life* magazine article of the man thought to be the last living Civil War veteran.

U.S. census records later revealed that this man was too young to have fought in the Civil War. For Rivers, this information made the photograph even more compelling. On one hand, it had seemed to depict a powerfully emotional scene, encompassing life, death, and duty, not to mention the historical event that most profoundly shaped the United States. But, the whole premise for the photograph had proved to be inauthentic. Rivers was fascinated by mass-circulation imagery and its power to shape our perceptions of the past and the present, and made it the main focus of his art.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This painting is titled *The Last Civil War Veteran*. Larry Rivers painted it in 1961. The oil on canvas measures almost 7 feet tall and almost 5 feet wide.

This work is painted in a rough, abstract style with the few objects only indicated by their most basic features. The result is a hazy, dreamlike quality that feels melancholic but significant. The scene includes a frail, elderly white man lying in bed. A Confederate flag, a US flag, and an army jacket hang on the wall behind him. Both the man and the hanging objects are all painted on top of each other so there is no sense of the space or room they occupy.

The man and bed occupy the bottom half of the painting. The man’s head is in the center of the canvas and he lays facing to the right, his body lying diagonal toward the bottom right corner. His face is implied by faint black outline and a peach-colored patch of paint. An outline below his neck suggests his arms are crossed on his torso. Grey, white, and maroon rectangles of paint beneath him may be blankets and a pillow.

Filling the top half of the painting on the wall behind the man hang the two flags and jacket. On the left hand side hangs a Confederate flag: a red background and a blue “x” covered with white stars. On the right hand side, hangs the US flag: the top half blue with white stars, the bottom, white and red stripes. Between the two flags hangs an army jacket. It is green with brownish gold trim.

Stop 375 Frank Stella, *Lettre sur les aveugles II*, 1974

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: Take a moment to let your eyes travel around this enormous 12-foot-square canvas. * As you look at its flat bands that alternate between a color spectrum and a gray scale, you become aware that it's two things at once. It's a two-dimensional surface, but at the same time, these concentric bands seem to draw you in, giving a sense of depth and volume. * Do you feel like they're pulling you into a deep, geometric hole? * Or do those darker colors at the center appear to be pushing out toward you, like a four-sided pyramid? *

This painting does not have a traditional subject or story. Instead, it's about the nature of how we see – an idea that fascinated Frank Stella. He made this painting in 1974, as part of a series of experiments into bands and stripes of color, and how they play off both against each other, and how we perceive them. In fact, Stella titled the painting after a famous essay by an 18th century French philosopher named Denis Diderot, called “Letter about the blind for the use of those who see,” which explored vision and perception.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR

This painting is titled *Lettre sur les aveugles II*. Frank Stella painted it in 1974. The work is painted on canvas using Synthetic Polymer paint. It measures almost 12 feet tall and 12 feet wide.

This massive square canvas is entirely filled by a series of concentric rainbow-colored and grey square outlines. The square bands create a 3D effect, making it appear as if the flat canvas is receding away from the viewer like a tunnel or perhaps coming out toward the viewer like a pyramid.

It's easiest to describe the squares individually, starting on the outside edge and working inward. The outermost square is a light grey square outline about five inches thick. Just inside the grey square is a uniformly dark red, almost maroon square about the same width. The squares continue to alternate between a colored and grey square. The colors follow the spectrum of the rainbow moving from red, to orange, to yellow to green, to blue, and finally terminating at the very center of the painting as purple. The grey squares get slightly darker as they move closer to the center of the canvas.

Stop 368 Ruth Asawa Sculpture installation in Education Tower

GENERAL ANALYSIS

NARRATOR: Look up and move around as you listen. ** Metal sculptures bring this space to life. Their elegant, often elongated forms remind us of the natural world – seaweed, roots, trees, and seedpods. These sculptures go beyond traditional definitions of positive and negative space, and the idea of inside and outside, blending those concepts together. And the shadows they cast are as engaging and beautiful as the sculptures themselves. **

All of these sculptures are by artist Ruth Asawa, who was fascinated by the possibilities of using wire in her work. She would crochet the flexible wire by hand, creating shapes that are full of light and air, and sometimes contain other smaller forms inside them. They're almost like intricate, 3D drawings in space. Asawa's techniques were partly inspired by a trip to Mexico as a very young artist, where she watched women making baskets that were woven, yet still transparent. In other pieces here, tied wire creates delicate branch and root-like forms. Asawa was deeply connected to nature all her life, ever since her childhood on a California farm. Later, at her family home in San Francisco, her garden was a constant source of inspiration, while inside, her sculptures hung from the ceiling like vines, as she worked on them.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

Rather than describe one work of art, this stop describes the entire space you are in right now, which features an installation of sculptures all by the same artist, Ruth Asawa. The space is large and cavernous with hardwood floors and blank, unfinished concrete walls. The ceilings are very high with lights hanging throughout the space. The space is empty aside from signage and a series of sculptures.

Suspended from the ceiling along the walls are delicate metal sculptures. Each sculpture is made from thin pieces of metal intertwined to form a textured but see-through surface, much like a crocheted blanket. The sculptures each have different shapes. Some have branch-like shapes and look like the roots or branches of a tree. Others are bulbous and globe-like with spheres inside. Most of the sculptures are quite large, measuring more than 3 feet wide or tall.

The objects are hung from the ceiling and very high up with lights pointed directly at them. The result is shadows being cast on the matte concrete walls that are just as interesting as the sculptures themselves. Some objects have one shadow; others are lit by more than one light and have multiple shadows on the same wall, or on different walls. The shadows enlarge the profile of each sculpture and emphasize the tiny holes in the crocheted metal. For some works, the object and its shadow are a similar color and it is hard to tell where the sculpture ends and the shadows begin.

Stop 385 Louise Nevelson, *Sky Cathedral's Presence I*, 1959-62

General Analysis

NARRATOR: In Louise Nevelson's hands, discarded materials scavenged from the streets took on a new life and identity. "All objects are retranslated", she said, "that's the magic." In this piece, made between 1959 and 1962, she combined wood and metal fragments, creating box-like structures partly inspired by the urban landscape of New York City, where she lived. Together, they also make us think of the façade of a great, Gothic cathedral – an association evoked by the sculpture's title: *Sky Cathedral's Presence I*.

Around this time, Nevelson painted much of her work a rich black, believing that it contained all the colors of the spectrum. This black veil unifies her sculptures, while giving them a sense of mystery and bringing to mind darkness, death, and mourning. In fact, Nevelson connected her coffin-like black box forms to the lingering trauma and uncertainty of World War Two, in which her son had served. But in a more positive light, she also spoke of her black sculptures as encompassing "the Universe, the stars, the moon – and you and I, everyone".

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This sculpture is titled *Sky Cathedral's Presence*. Louise Nevelson made this work between 1959 and 1962. It is made of painted wood and found objects and measures almost 9 feet tall, about 10 feet wide, and almost 2 feet deep.

The rich, matte black surface of this object unifies the many, irregularly sized boxes that are stacked together to form it. This work is massive and dominates the space it occupies.

The individual boxes that make up the work are relatively similar in size and scale but they are not uniform. Some of the boxes are made of rough wood, others of metal, and others of carved wood with curved details. Some boxes are covered so we cannot see into them; others are open with other scraps of material inside; still other boxes have empty parts where we can see through to space beyond the sculpture. The boxes are arranged and stacked in overlapping rows and columns that are the same height and width in some places, and completely different in others. Every surface of the entire

sculpture is painted a solid matte black. The result is a sculpture that feels structured and unstructured, finished and unfinished, and stable and unstable.

Stop 211 Figure of an Ancestor or Deity (Dogon), 1027 - 1209

NARRATOR: This figure's elongated, slender form makes its body seem even taller, more imposing. Made by the Dogon people of Mali in west Africa around eight to nine hundred years ago, it may be a spirit or ancestor figure. It would have acted as a link between living people and the spirit world. Originally, its arms were raised upward – perhaps in a prayer for much-needed rain, or in some other kind of communication with the spirits.

You might have noticed something else remarkable about the sculpture – it features both male and female body parts. * This may refer to the Dogon people's ideal of a perfect balance in nature. The figure also has a prominent beard, symbolizing older age. Dogon society, like many around it in Africa, greatly valued the wisdom of its elders. They were thought of as being closest to the ancestors whose power was so deeply revered in Dogon culture, and rulers were often chosen from among them.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This sculpture is titled *Figure of an Ancestor or Deity*. The Proto-Dogon people from the continent of Africa created it sometime between 1027 and 1209. It is made of wood and measures more than 5.5 feet tall, 1 foot wide and 10.5 inches deep.

This statue is very tall and narrow. It is unclear if it is a male or female figure because it has both male and female body parts. The figure is carved from wood with a light brown, almost claylike color. You get the sense that this object must be very old. The head and arms are jagged where pieces have broken off, and the entire surface seems rough and uneven.

Let's start at the top of the sculpture and work our way down. The figure's head is elongated with two oval eyes bulging out framing a flattened oval nose. Two horizontal bulges represent the lips and a beard juts out below the figure's chin. Two rows of carved beads decorate the base of the extended neck. Where the shoulders of the figure would be, two pieces of wood stick upwards with jagged edges. Perhaps these would have been the figure's arms but they appear to have been broken off.

On the figure's chest, two breasts hang, pointing downwards with cylindrical nipples at the end. The figure's torso is also elongated and a pattern of very small rectangles runs up and down along the very center of the torso. A belly protrudes outward above the statue's male genitalia. Whoever this person is, they stand with a solid stance on slightly bent legs and flattened feet on a narrow piece of wood.

Stop 215 Hornbill Mask for Poro society, 19th century

NARRATOR: This mask represents a spirit that mixes human and animal characteristics. Its large, ridged beak looks like a hornbill's – which may have been a deity in the Mano culture of Liberia in west Africa, where the mask originated.

When it was worn in a ceremony, the mask was seen to take on active spiritual powers, acting as a bridge between the living and supernatural worlds. On the forehead, you'll see encrusted dried blood, feathers and little pieces of iron. These were all added during sacrificial rituals, increasing the mask's power.

There's something else very rare inside it – Arabic or pseudo-Arabic numerological squares and lettering that reference the Koran. By the nineteenth century, the Islamic faith had coexisted with local religions in west Africa for over three hundred years, and Muslims were the only literate people in this region. The Mano people revered the power of the words that made up the Muslims' holy text. So by copying some of them into this mask's lining, they intensified its spiritual powers.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This work is titled *Hornbill Mask for Poro society*. It dates to the 19th century and is made of wood, metal, cloth, vegetable fiber, and ink. It made by the Mano People of Liberia. The mask is 1 foot tall, about 5 inches wide, and 15 inches deep.

If you are facing the object, the long, triangular beak sticking out from this shiny black oval mask defines this object. It is long and thin with a gentle curved taper at the point. Grooves in the beak's surface mimic the beak's shape and emphasize the highly polished surface. A single row super sharp teeth line the top and bottom of the open mouth. Inside, there is a hint of red paint- perhaps the animal's tongue.

The beak extends from where the mask's nose would be covering where a human mouth and chin should be. Tiny ovals pierce the mask on either side of the beak for the wearer to look through. The rest of the mask's face is simple: gentle raised edges for cheeks, sharp semicircular indentations for eyebrows, and tall curved forehead. Along the outside edge of the oval face there are three shallow lines carved concentrically and a ring of uniform dots at the very edge of the mask. At the top of the mask, there is

some brown debris as if additional items were once attached there. The mask offers no expression or suggestion of emotion and the large beak protrudes almost like a weapon.

Stop 216 Nail and Blade Oath Taking Figure, Democratic Republic of Congo, 19th century

General Analysis

NARRATOR: This figure has an important job. Acutely alert, hands on hips, his mouth opens as if he's about to speak, and he fixes us with a powerful gaze. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, in central Africa, *Nkisi n'kondi*, or oath-taking figures, were used to help settle lawsuits and resolve disputes.

If you had a disagreement with a neighbor, you would summon the supernatural powers believed to be contained within a figure like this. Nails or blades were pounded into the figure when the spirit was asked to respond, and also represented the argument that helped resolve a legal matter. * The key sites for placing blades were those which symbolize seeing, thinking, speaking and feeling in human terms - behind the eyes, on top of the head, in the mouth, and inside a hidden behind a piece of mirror on the figure's chest. Over time, these mounted up, contributing to the figure's stern and fearsome appearance.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This work is titled *Nail and blade oath taking figure*. It dates to the 19th century from the Kongo People of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is made of wood, metal, nail, horn, branches, and glass. It is a little less than 3 feet tall and 1 foot wide.

This nearly three-foot high male figure stands bending toward the viewer, with its hands on hips, and its mouth open in an aggressive stare. The surface is stained with different patches of color-red, blue, and white-that have been worn off unevenly. There are nails partially driven into sensitive places, with the nail heads sticking out of the figure's neck, shoulder, stomach, and chest. A rope hangs down from the figure's neck with objects attached, like a bell, a feather, a small rectangular mirror, and scraps of fabric. A large piece of stained fabric is tied around the waist.

The figure's face does not give many additional clues. It features large, almond shaped eyes painted white with small black pupils. The mouth is opened wide as if screaming or yelling, and a tongue and hollow mouth are visible. The head is wrapped with

several pieces of fabric extending high above its head. The feet are flat and simplified, and set on two separated pieces of wood with ropes around the ankles.

The style of the statue is simple and abstract. We know this is a male figure, but the features and details are not realistic. This is not how a man would appear in real life.

Stop 221 Plaque, Girl with Leopard, Nigeria, Kingdom of Benin, 1600, 1980.31

General Analysis

NARRATOR: Cast bronze and brass plaques like this were made for the court of the ancient kingdom of Benin. They decorated pillars inside the royal palace, and were kept highly polished.

The young girl on this plaque carries a water-jug shaped like a leopard on her shoulder. Leopards were an emblem of royal power, and leopard-shaped jugs were used to pour water on the king's hands during an annual ceremony. This detail, in addition to the girl's elaborate body decorations, jewelry and hairstyle, tells us that she must have been of noble, or maybe even royal, birth.

The powerful kingdom of Benin existed for almost a thousand years. In 1600, when this plaque was made, its warrior kings had conquered neighboring lands, and traded regularly with the Europeans. The court employed highly skilled artists, such as those who made beautifully detailed representations of courtiers, like this one.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

This object is titled *Plaque, girl with leopard*. The Edo People of Nigeria created this work. It dates to 1600 and is made of bronze or brass. It is about 1.5 feet tall and 7 inches wide.

In this work, an African girl appears to emerge and float in space from a flat background. The entire surface of the plaque and the girl's body are covered in incised organic and geometric patterns, giving the shiny bronze a richly textured surface.

The girl's head is proportionally larger than her body. Her hair is represented in stylized, textured rows circling the crown of her head. Her facial features are exaggerated and serious with wide-open, almond eyes, a stylized nose, and large, full lips. Layers of necklaces cover her neck.

Her left hand holds up a small, feline animal to her left shoulder, it is about a third of the size of her head and about twice as big as her hand. It is simplified and stylized like

it is an object rather than an actual animal. Her right arm and hand hang stiffly by her right side. Her legs are also rigidly straight, her feet flexed outward toward the viewer. A geometric pattern of swirls, diamonds, and dots covers her torso, stomach, thighs, legs, shoulders, and upper arms. Her forearms, hands, feet, and face are smooth surfaces.

On the flat surface surrounding the girl, there are additional patterns that cover the entire object. Large flower-like designs float among tiny lines of dots. Where the patterns have been incised, the color is more yellowish. In each of the four corners of the object, there are square holes punctured through the surface, perhaps for mounting.

Stop 222 Master Drum for a Civic Brotherhood, Ghana, Fante, 1980.73

NARRATOR: Move around this drum and you'll see that the surface is covered with carved imagery. It's a rich source of information about the society that made it – the Fante people of Ghana. Civic brotherhoods are often found in Fante communities, and they usually have a band. The drum was made around the 1940s for one such group.

Let's take a closer look. First, you might notice the breast-like forms that protrude from the drum's body of the drum. * These signify that the drum is the mother, and leader, of the group. Wording below confirms that this is "number one", setting the tone for performances. In a matrilineal society like this one, this also echoes the women's important role. Around the drum, pictorial carvings represent Fante proverbs. A scholar who studies these drums, Doran Ross, has helped us interpret them. For instance, a semicircle with six arrows is the sun, illustrating the saying "who is most senior – dark or light?" An elephant moving into a trap represents the proverb "When an elephant steps on a trap, it does not spring". And a leopard preying on a tortoise alludes to the fact that an animal will turn a tortoise over and over in vain, foiled by his strong shell!

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This object is titled *Brotherhood*. The Fante People of Ghana created it in the early 20th century. It is made of wood, hide, and pigment. The object measures about 3.5 feet tall, almost 2 feet wide, and a little more than 2 feet deep.

This large drum is both functional and decorative. The drum is cylindrical but tapers so that the middle part of the drum is larger than the top or the bottom. The top third of the object is the drum playing area, and the bottom two thirds are covered with decorative elements and symbols. The entire object is a dull brown color with scratches and rough areas indicating that this object must have been used many times.

The easiest way to describe this object is to start from the top and work downward.

The very top of the drum is a narrow and flat surface. It is made of hide pulled tight by a set of strings. The strings are attached to the hide and are held taut by a series of

large nails embedded in the drum about a third of the way down the sides where the object begins to taper. A chevron pattern lines the bottom of this tapered edge. Below the chevrons are many tiny rows of circles ringing the drum's base along with other decorative elements. Four, breast-like cones protrude above and below two blank rectangular spaces. Other symbols include a semicircle with six arrows, an elephant moving into a trap, and a leopard preying on a tortoise. On one side, there are non-English words raised from the surface.

Stop 223 Kane Kwei, Coffin in the shape of a cocoa pod, ca. 1970, 74.8

General Analysis

NARRATOR: This intriguing object was made for a surprising purpose. A huge cocoa pod with a carved stalk, it's made from a single piece of wood and painted in a glorious, glossy orange. But see the line that runs horizontally along it? ** That's a break in the wood, enabling the top to open like a lid. The cocoa pod is, in fact, a coffin.

It's one of the many special coffins made by the Ghanaian artist Kane Kwei, each one designed to symbolize the trade or interests of the deceased. Kwei began by creating a boat-shaped coffin for his fisherman uncle, and his imagination and career took off from there. He made massive hens, giant onions, enormous fish, and often, cocoa pods like this, since Ghana was the world's largest cocoa producer in the 1970s when this particular coffin was made. Kwei's coffins were beautifully finished inside too, with satin, velvet or tie-dyed mattresses and pillows.

The coffins' joyous, flamboyant design and high cost reflect the importance of funerals for important people in Ghana, which often last for days and are attended by many people. Kwei's work was a symbol of wealth, prosperity and worldly success.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This object is titled *Coffin in the shape of a cocoa pod*. Kane Kwei created this work around 1970. It is made of polychrome, wood and textile. It is almost 3 feet tall, 8.5 feet wide, and almost 2.5 feet deep.

This object has two distinct but connected parts. A large orange elongated pod shaped portion makes up most of the object. It is likely the coffin referred to in the object's title. This pod is connected by a small piece of brown wood to a tree-like structure that is much smaller in size and scale.

The pod is shaped like a cylinder that has been stretched out, tapering at each end. It is a bright, shiny orange color with distinct lines that run along the pod horizontally emphasizing the pod's elongated shape. Two very small, blue rectangular supports prevent the pod from moving and raise it just a few inches off the pedestal.

The tree-like object and branch that connects to the pod have a rough, brown wood surface that seems like tree bark. The tree's narrow trunk expands into a few very short, stubby branches. On the branches a few small pods hang. These pods are not the elongated tapered shape that the coffin has, but are more like seeds. Some of the pods are the same bright orange of the coffin; other pods are an olive green.

Stop 240 Tsimshian artist(s), Totem pole, ca. 1880
8947

NARRATOR: This massive totem pole features a wonderful array of creatures, each interacting with the next one down in different ways. A bald eagle crouches at the top. With his claws, he grips the head of a whale whose tail flops down over the head of a large bear. * The bear holds a small human figure upside down by his feet! * The bear's hind paws rest on another fish.

The totem pole dates from the later 19th century and was likely carved by a Tsimshian artist who lived in British Columbia, or another northwestern area. By then, most poles were mostly carved for sale, rather than for the community's own use. Tsimshian artists are well known for their carving and painting skills – notice how the shapes of eyes, noses and tails harmoniously echo one another here.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR

This object is titled *Totem Pole*. It dates to the late 19th century. The Tsimshian or Northern Style people from Canada created it. It is made of wood and paint and measures about 16 feet tall, 2.5 feet wide and 2 feet deep.

This massively tall object depicts a series of animals interacting with each other one on top of another to form a pole. The animals features and coloring are all simplified, emphasizing their eyes, which are white with large black pupils that stare out at the viewer.

Let's work our way from the top of the pole to the bottom. On the top of the pole, a black bald eagle crouches facing the viewer. He grips the head of a black whale beneath him seen from above. The whale's tail flops downward overlapping the head of a much larger bear below. The bear's head is black and body is red. The bear clutches in front of his body a small upside down light-skinned human figure. The human's head faces out toward the viewer revealing a pained expression. The bear stands firmly on a white fish and the fish rests on top of the head of a black, feline figure, the last figure on the pole. The bottom of the pole cuts off the feline figure. We only see its ears, eyes, and a row of white curved teeth representing the top of an open mouth.

Some of the animal's features, like arms, legs, and snouts, are carved in relief; others are only painted on. The wood pole is painted red, black, and white to emphasize the different animals. It is meant to be viewed from the front and both sides, and it is flat along the back.

Stop 225 Abraham Anghik Ruben (b. 1951), Passage of Spirits, 20th-21st century, 2007.21.292

NARRATOR: Look at the front of this vessel, carved by the contemporary Inuit artist Abraham Anghik Ruben, and you'll see a female face. It's Sedna, the goddess of the sea. Her hair flows back to form the body of the boat, and echoes the shapes of the waves we imagine below. She is carrying ten small figures. Half have human heads, the other half animal heads. Several of them have oars, and the figure in the helm brandishes a drum to set up a beat for the oarsmen.

Sedna is taking them on a journey through time and space, to the spirit world, since these are all shaman – mortals who have special powers and access to the spirits. Above them rise white antlers. Their graceful, curving forms represent the Northern Lights, or smoke that might come from oil lamps, lighting the way through the darkness.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR

This sculpture is titled *Passage of Spirits*. Abraham Anghik Ruben created it in the 20th or 21st century. It is made of Steatite, a type of Brazilian soapstone, caribou antler, and commercial cotton fiber. It is a little more than 2 feet tall, about 3.5 feet wide and 13 inches deep.

Ten small figures paddle a long, thin boat. The figures and boat have been carved from one solid piece of stone. The natural variation of color in the stone transitions between turquoise and light brown throughout the boat and figures- much like the waves of the ocean. Five are seal like animals and five are humans. All the figures are cylindrically shaped. Their features are simple: holes for eyes and curved lines around their heads suggesting hair.

The figures follow an orderly arrangement. There is one seal-like animal figure at the front bow of the boat and one human figure at the stern. The other 8 figures are set in evenly spaced pairs in the boat's center. The paired center figures hold white ivory oars. The figure at the front bow holds a large gray circle above his head with an ivory stick, as if he is going to beat it like a drum.

From the center of the boat, thin, fragile pieces of ivory extend and curve upwards implying the shape of a sail. The bow takes the form of a beautiful woman's head and torso. Lines implying hair extend along the edge of the boat, mimicking the lines of waves.

Stop 220 Teotihuacán People, Feathered Serpent and Flowering Trees

General Analysis

NARRATOR: At the top left of this fragment of a mural, or wall painting, you can see the splendid head of a mythical serpent. Its long, rippling body, colored with green, blue and yellow, extends back for many feet. And it's covered with feathers. * Why? This supernatural creature can slither into holes beneath the ground, and fly up to the heavens – both places that you might find water. For the people who lived in the great and powerful city of Teotihuacán just outside modern-day Mexico City, water was a precious substance. So the deities who were seen to help bring it were deeply revered.

Look at the serpent's mouth, and you'll see it's obliging handsomely. A great torrent of water streams down, throwing out drops to either side. Beneath, beautiful flowering trees thrive, their roots growing strongly. Many of the tree trunks contain a glyph, or symbol. * They may refer to the families who lived in the apartment compound that the mural once decorated, or to the types of plants being depicted.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This sculpture is titled *Mural Fragment (feathered serpent and "flowering trees")*. It was created in Mexico in the 6th century AD. It is made of earth aggregate, lime plaster, and mineral pigments. It measures about 2 feet tall, 13 feet wide, and 2 inches deep.

This object is a fragment of a mural and is hung in two sections, one closely on top of the other, and about the same size. The fragments are much wider than they are tall.

Let's start with the top fragment. In this piece, a serpent extends along the entire width of the object, its head at the left, the tail on the right. The serpent's body is segmented into similarly sized sections that alternate between a deep emerald and a lighter shade of green. Additional lines on the body imply a uniform texture, or maybe feathers that are yellow, blue, and red. Light Red and light blue water flows from his mouth, curving along the left corner of the piece and down into the bottom fragment section.

Thirteen flowering trees line the bottom portion of the mural. Each of the trees are shaped similarly, with a thick trunk and branches extending up and out to either side. But each tree is a little different. The flowers and leaves are all different shapes and

colors. Behind the trees, the mural is painted a solid fire engine red color. The same red is used as an accent in the top portion of the mural. While all the colors are richly pigmented, they appear muted, as if they have faded over time.

Stop 236 Maya Stela 761 CE

General Analysis

NARRATOR: At the center of this carved stone panel, known as a stela, is a stately figure crowned with a tall feather headdress. She is Ix Mutal Ahaw, a queen of the Maya people who lived in the 8th century. By then, the Maya were very powerful – their territory extended over what we'd now call southern Mexico and Guatemala, as well as parts of Belize and Honduras.

Let's take a closer look at the queen. Her beaded dress with a mask at the waist symbolizes maize, or corn – a key crop for the Maya. She holds a hollow bone in her arms. Through it moves a gigantic snake, which coils around her body – up beside her headdress, you can see its mouth opening wide. As you might have guessed, this is no ordinary snake. The queen has summoned it in order to communicate with the ancestors on behalf of her people. In response, a head emerges from the snake's mouth. * It's the lightning god, K'awiil, who helped rulers communicate with the spirits and was welcomed as the bringer of storms that would mean all-important rain for the crops.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

This object is titled *Stela with Queen Ix Mutal Ahaw*. It was made in Mesoamerica in 761 AD. It is made of limestone and is about 7.5 feet tall, almost 4 feet wide, and 3 inches deep.

This massive, flat stone fragment depicts a woman with an elaborate headdress carved in relief. The woman and other objects fill the entire stone fragment and are carved in a highly geometric style. The stone is a solid beige color, except for an area at the top that appears like a rusty discoloration.

The female figure is at the very center of the stone panel. Her body faces the viewer, while her face is in profile, looking to the left side of the stone with a firm, serious expression. On top of her head extending upward is a large feathered headdress. The figure grasps in her arms a large bone-like object, and wears a garment with a beaded pattern at the chest and a woven, crisscrossed pattern on the bottom. Portions of her body have been worn away or are covered by a serpent and the bone she holds. This serpent slithers through the space forming an S curve around the woman's body. Its

head bursts through the headdress, mouth opened wide with an animal head emerging from its jaw.

Behind the figure and serpent, the background is a solid, un-carved surface of the stone and the figure appears to be standing on a flat solid surface with her feet pointed in profile toward each edge of the stone.

Stop 230 Maori Canoe Prow

General Analysis

NARRATOR: Imagine this incredible carved wooden boat prow coming at you through the waves. It was once the front part of a huge canoe powered by many oarsmen, belonging to the Maori people of New Zealand. At the front of the prow is a formidable figurehead. Representing an ancestor, he thrusts out his tongue and glares forward with eyes of inlaid shell. His function? To challenge and intimidate anyone who saw him, and to protect the canoe and its oarsmen from the enemy.

Woodcarving was a sacred activity for the Maori. A *tohunga*, or master carver, would have worked on a piece like this with stone blades until European metal tools became widespread. The *tohunga*'s job was to create figures filled with the power of the ancestors, which would act as an intermediary between gods and people. Ceremonies, rituals, and purifications accompanied every step of the carving process, from selecting the wood to installing the finished carving.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This work is titled *Canoe Prow (Tauihu)*. The Maori People of the Whanau-a-Apanui Tribe of New Zealand made this object in the 19th century. It is made of wood and abalone shell and measures a little less than 2 feet tall, almost 4 feet wide, and about a 1.5 feet deep.

This object was once part of much larger canoe. Displayed here is the prow, or the piece that would have been at the front tip of the boat. It is made of a dark brown wood that is rough and worn. The piece is intricately carved with a beast-like figure at the head of the prow and the central part of the bow is made up of two decorative spirals of equal size.

The beast-figure is at the very front end of the prow. It is intimidating with a large forehead. Its almond shaped eyes slant upward and are white with a black pupil, the only colored surfaces of this object. It thrusts from its opened mouth a large, thick tongue. The head rests on a long, slender neck that curves along the front edge of the bow and connects to two short, stubby legs.

Imagine the curved neck of the beast is the front edge of the boat. Intersecting the neck is a series of intricately carved wood patterns including 2 large, flat spiral circles. This part of the prow takes up about 90 percent of the object. The end opposite the figure ends with these decorative elements, as if it was broken off from the larger canoe.

Stop 231 Toraja Housefront with Water Buffalo

General Analysis

NARRATOR: Originally, this huge carving would have been placed high on a house front, looking down on everything beneath it. The carving was made by the Toraja people who live in the mountains of Sulawesi, one of Indonesia's largest islands. It features an ancestor figure, dressed in full battle dress, sitting astride a water buffalo. To the Toraja, water buffalos symbolize prosperity and virility. And its curved horns suggest the shape of a boat – another powerful symbol for the Toraja.

Toraja houses often feature impressive carvings like this one. They signaled the wealth and status of the home's owners – as well as a connection to their powerful ancestors. A traditionally-designed house has a dramatically-shaped roof, sweeping upward at either end in a way like these buffalo horns.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This object is titled *House Façade Figure*. The Osango Village Toraja People of Indonesia created it in the early 20th century. It is made of wood and pigments and measures about 4.5 feet tall and 4.5 feet wide.

This sculpture depicts a figure sitting on top of a water buffalo with the most basic shapes and lines. Imagine you have approached this object head on, with the figure and water buffalo directly facing you. The water buffalo's large horns are as wide as the object is tall, and curve out and upwards. The entire object is carved from wood with the surface painted black, red, and white, some of which has been worn away.

Atop the figure's head sits a black, white, and red hat with geometric designs. The figure's face is simple and abstract with tiny, curved lines indicating eyes and a nose. The head is carved into an inverted trapezoid shape. A rectangle with curved sides represents the body with black, white, and red curving lines painted on for emphasis. A block of wood behind the figure is decorated with red, white, and black triangular designs.

The figure appears to be sitting atop the water buffalo, but only the animal's head is depicted and painted grey. It too is reduced to its most basic geometric forms: a

cylindrical head with a snout comes out toward the viewer, and the horns curve upward in a long C shape.

Stop 251 Biwat People, Male Figure, East Sepik Province, L05.1.15

General Analysis

NARRATOR: As we look up at this imposing figure, it's impossible not to feel a little overawed by it. Almost six feet tall, it seems to survey everything around it with the intense gaze of its circular eyes. Deeply-carved eyebrows throw a dramatic shadow above them, throwing the eyes into even greater relief.

Made by the Biwat people who lived along the Yuat River in New Guinea, this is a spirit figure, representing a mythical giant. He was probably once a guardian for a family group, protecting their home and people. He would also have been called on to help with the success of hunting expeditions. Such a figure was central to people's lives, and it would have been kept in a family's home, and revered, worshipped and adorned. The figure is remarkable in another way, too – it may date back as far as the 15th century, which, for a wooden object kept in the hot, damp climate of New Guinea, an astonishingly long time to survive.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This wooden object is titled *Male Figure*. It was made by the Biwat people of East Sepik Province in New Guinea, and possibly dates back to the 15th century. It measures 5.5 feet tall and almost 1.5 feet wide and deep.

At nearly six feet tall, this sculpted male figure looms over the viewer. The most striking aspect of the figure is its verticality. It stands perfectly upright with an erect back, arms straightened by his sides, and legs evenly spaced in a wide, strong stance. All of these features are represented by their most basic elements, his body not represented in a naturalistic or realistic way but rather the most basic lines and shapes.

Let's start at the top of the sculpture and work our way down. On top of the figure's head rests a headdress detailed with three cones sticking outward surrounded by concentric circles. The face is covered by a flattened triangular mask, with the triangle point extending downward to form the man's chin. The area around the eyes is deeply inset accenting the two button-like eyes. The nose and mouth are flattened and simplified.

The figure's body is elongated with a wide chest and narrow belly. On the belly of the man, carved in relief as if directly on the figure's skin, are swirls and a head. His arms extend straight downward with small circular hands. His legs are equally straight with knobs representing kneecaps. The legs have been broken off at the ankles and now the sculpture attaches to the pedestal with a narrow pole to hold it upright.

The worn surface of the object is smooth overall but it is not polished or painted so it has a matte, raw finish and in some places deep scratches and marks.

Stop 252 Sawos People, House Posts, New Guinea, 17th-19th century

General Analysis

NARRATOR: This pair of enormously tall figures might look like free-standing sculptures. But they were actually made as posts for a ceremonial building. Carved by the Sawos people, from the Pacific island of New Guinea, they are ancestor figures, with a commanding presence. Their eyes are made from stacked circles – a traditional way of representing awakened ancestors in the Sawos culture. On their heads, they wear towering headdresses. These are decorated with fish – very important to the Sawos, who are coastal people. And on the sides, you'll see circular forms that might symbolize waterlilies, or again, the stacked eyes of ancestors who are alert and active. You can look for other versions of the stacked eyes elsewhere in this gallery.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

These objects are titled *House Posts*. The Sawos People of New Guinea created this object between the 17th and 19th centuries. It is made of wood and pigment and measures over 8 feet tall, almost 1.5 feet wide and 9 inches deep.

This very tall, narrow sculpture is divided into three nearly equally sized elements. The top third features an elaborately carved headdress that represents a fish. The bottom third contains a simplified torso. The center portion features an oversized, imposing face. The figure's eyes seem to bulge off the face. They are represented by three stacked concentric disks and framed by two semi-circular eyebrows. Two large nostrils punctuate the elongated nose. And, just above the chin rests a narrow oval mouth.

The headdress is very narrow and elongated. Rising from the head in an elegant long curve, the surface is textured to represent scales and gills. By comparison, the sculpture's body is very simple. A narrow torso divides the thicker chest and hip area. There may once have been arms or legs, but they seem to have been broken off at some point.

The sculpture is all one solid piece of very worn wood. While there may have been pigment at one point, the surface is raw now with only the wood surface evident.

Stop 264 Astrolabe Figure, LO5.1.432

General Analysis

NARRATOR: It's remarkable that this wooden figure has survived until today – it likely dates back to the 15th century. Only a very few others like it still exist. Made by the people of Astrolabe Bay, situated in northeast New Guinea, it personifies a mythical hero. His tall, elaborate headdress and large ear ornaments emphasize his importance, and his open, sturdy stance conveys a sense of strength. The figure would have been made to stand in a ceremonial men's house. As a powerful spirit, it played a significant role in young men's coming-of-age ceremonies and rituals.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This object is titled *Astrolabe Figure*. The Astrolabe Bay people of New Guinea created it in the 15th century. It is made of wood and is almost 6 feet tall, a little more than 1 foot wide, and almost 1.5 feet deep.

ALT: It is made of wood and is a little over 3 feet tall, more than 1 foot wide, and almost 1.5 feet deep.

This male sculpture figure is heavily abstracted and simplified. The most prominent feature is the figure's head, which is nearly the same size as the body. The large forehead takes up half the head and terminates in a straight line above eyes that bug out from the surface and frame a large, stylized nose. The mouth is especially aggressive. It is a flattened triangle facing downward with jagged teeth lining the edge. A long narrow cylinder sticks out from the mouth, maybe representing a tongue. An elaborate headdress and ear ornaments frame the figure's head.

By comparison, the body seems simple and less important. Straight bulky arms and legs extend outward from the v-shaped torso. The figure appears to stand in an open sturdy stance on some kind of surface that curves upward and connects to the figure's arms.

Stop 266 Yimam People, Hunting Spirit

NARRATOR: This figure has an extraordinary aura of power. Its head is emphasized as the most important part of the body. And it seems almost alive, with its dramatic, deeply carved eye area, and open mouth, as if it has the power of speech. Compared to the more realistic head, the body is an almost abstract. Hook-like forms extend out from its spine, representing ribs that curve protectively over the straight form in the center symbolizing the heart.

The figure, called a yipwon, was made by the Yimam people of New Guinea. Representing hunting spirits, figures like this were believed to be able to steer the outcome of a hunting trip, or even a battle. This particular figure once belonged to a twentieth century artist named Roberto Matta. He and other Surrealists, who prized the unexpected and looked to the interior world of dreams and memory for inspiration, were very interested in art like this, which is all about the power of the spirit world.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This object is titled *Hunting Spirit*. The Yimam (Yimar) People, Alambalak Language Speakers of New Guinea created it in the 19th century AD. It is made of wood and is 7 feet tall, about five inches wide and almost 1 foot deep.

The experience of this sculpture changes depending on where you stand in relation to it. If you are facing it head-on, it appears extremely narrow. When approached from the side, it appears very wide. We'll describe the statue as if we are looking at it from the side.

The overall shape resembles a large hair comb standing on end, with some of its teeth missing. There is nearly as much negative space as carved wood, allowing you to see through the statue. This gives it a delicate quality, despite its large size.

A slender, elongated human figure has been carved from a single piece of worn, honey-colored wood. The figure's spine is a tall curving hook. At the top, just under the hook, is the figure's head, in distinct profile. The forehead is bulbous and protruding, with a deep crevice suggesting where the eyes would be. The figure's nose extends sharply

outward, and has delicately carved nostrils. It has a slightly open mouth, and a long, pointed beard that extends toward the floor.

Below the tip of the beard is a series of concentric hooks, which form a swirling, abstracted body. The hooks appear like claws or talons, each one in the shape of the letter "C," with pointed edges. The entire figure balances on a solid peg at the bottom.

Stop 261 Lake Sentani Figure, West Papua, Doyo village LO5.1.19

NARRATOR: Arms folded up against its chest, and head tilted very slightly, this figure seems to turn its attention on those who approach it. The carefully-defined eyes, appearing to look right at us, and faint smile, add to this feeling of connection.

Created in Lake Sentani in West Papua, the figure would originally have ornamented a ceremonial building, or a chief's house. It would have been seen as a powerful figure, able to act as a channel between the human and supernatural worlds. And the wood it's carved from, taken from a sacred tree, would have deepened people's sense of its special links with the spirits.

Dating from as long ago as the 18th or 19th century, the figure is one of the great treasures remaining in the world of Lake Sentani culture. It's extremely rare for such a figure to have survived, and people come from all over the world to see it.

VISUAL DESCRIPTION

NARRATOR:

This object is titled *Lake Sentani Figure*. Made by the Yimam people of West Papua in the 18th or 19th century, it is made of wood and measures almost 4 feet tall, 9 inches wide and 7 inches deep.

The rusty, brown wooden surface of this male sculpture shows signs of wear and damage, suggesting that it must be very old. The body's proportions are not realistic: the torso is long and thin compared to the head. Curved lines incised into the torso indicate the figure's arms are held close to his sides. The curved lines suggest elbows, but are stylized and not straight, as elbows would typically appear. The forearms are raised upward, with his hands spread open and lying on his chest. The top of the torso tapers to form narrow sloped shoulders. The figure's melon-shaped head is slightly tilted with a narrow pointy chin. The face is abstract and minimal: a thin nose separates two incised circular eyes, and discs on either side of the head represent ears. The bottom of the torso also tapers to form the groin area between two elongated, simplified legs. The legs extend straight downward but appear to have been broken off asymmetrically at the mid-calf.

