

# Museum Leaders in Training

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**Welcome to...** The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
**my name is...** Kara Adams and I currently attend Douglas Freeman High School.  
**and I am part of the...** Museum Leaders in Training Program

**Introduction:** Today we are going to explore three works of art in the African Art Collection.

I want to start by asking you all to think about your family. Your parents, your siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, second cousins, etc. Each of these people, like all people on earth, came into the world in the same way. Over the course of history, science has only elaborated on the miracle of childbirth and how it brings people together.

A number of pieces in this gallery show strong reverence for the female maternity figure, but I would like to draw your attention to a particular trio which come from the Idoma, Songye, and Akan cultures, respectively.

Spending some time with these particular figures and hearing the stories that go along with them will give you not only an experience that you can share with others here at a later time, but also the opportunity to see that “it is a small world after all.”

## Object 1:

**Seated Woman**, 19th-20th century

Idoma culture

African

Wood, kaolin, paint, metal, nutshells

From the Robert & Nancy Nooter Collection, Adolph D. & Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 2004.20



**Object Information:** This piece is titled Seated Woman. The piece came out of Nigeria from an artist of the Idoma culture. (Nigeria is on the eastern curvature of the African continent.) The piece was crafted in the nineteenth or twentieth century. The Idoma is a fairly small tribe; only about 550,000 people large. They are predominantly farmers and traders.

The Idoma show reverence for their ancestors' spirits by meditating with figures in and around shrines. This practice is called *Anjenu*. An Anjenu favors economic transactions, helps to cure sickness, and, above all, aids in female fertility.

Men who wish for their wives to become pregnant look to this figure for hope.

The face of such a figure is usually painted white, representative of her femininity and a distinctive part of tribal rituals.

**Question:** So, does anyone have a guess as to from what the statuette is carved?

Answer: Correct, wood!

**Object Information:** The wood, though, did not come off the tree white. The artist created such an effect by applying kaolin, a white, soft powder consisting principally of the mineral kaolinite, and used as a pigment over the dark coloring of the wood.

She appears very "womanly"- the strikingness of her posture with the conical breasts and genitalia allude to her childbearing abilities. Among the Idoma people, large-scale sculptures of women represent maternal culture heroes. This piece first caught my eye with the strikingness of her posture paired with the stark visual contrast between the intense red and black, black and white, and red and white combinations.

The woman's facial features are carvings in the wood and accentuated by black paint over top the white kaolin. Her face is marked by several vertical lines: the most pronounced runs from her hairline to the bridge of her nose, but there are four more (one next to each eye and one on either cheek). Scarification marks on this particular figure among similar works are colored black while the skin is coated with white kaolin, typical of the ritual practices that signify purification or communication with otherworldly spirits that I mentioned earlier.

**Question:** Mothers are famous for their advice. What sorts of situations has your mother helped you through?

This woman has helped her family through some situations of their own; the lines on this particular woman's face are thought to represent her sagacity, her wisdom, as a mother.

Her short, jet-black hair is pushed off of her forehead by a scarlet-colored headband which largely resembles the fashionable headbands of today. The headband is made of an unknown natural material while the bangles on her wrists and ankles and the necklace resting on her chest are made of metal.

**Transition:** As we move to the next piece, I want you all to think about adornments that signify power (as opposed to persona). What are some things that people wear now to show power or position or gender role? The next object that I'd like to lead you all to is a *nkishi* figure. Nkishi figures are known to anthropologists as a type of power figure or charm. We're going to explore what the figure "add-ons" of this nkishi signify and how charms play a role in its potency.

Raise your hand if you are a Harry Potter fan. So you're all familiar with inexplicable, intangible power, right? Voldemort possesses a sort of malicious power, but Harry has a positive gift of power. Leave that thought hanging there for a minute as I tell you how it relates to this nkishi figure.

### Object 1:

**Community Nkishi**, 19th-20th century

Songye culture

African

Wood, horn, iron, copper, brass, glass beads, string, hide, raffia, cloth, "bishimba" (magical formula made of natural substances)

Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 89.27



**Object Information:** For the people of the Songye culture in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, inexplicable, powerful phenomena were a part of life. Smallish idols like this one are a source of protection from malicious phenomena.

This idol was crafted by a sculptor who took instructions from a *nganga*- a "medicine man" of sorts, well-versed mystical knowledge and able to manipulate the special "medicines" inserted in the figure. This particular nkishi is a community nkishi that was made sometime between the nineteenth and twentieth century's.

**Question:** Let's go back to Harry Potter. What is Harry Potter's form of protection? (his patronus) Where does it come from?

Like a patronus, the statue's protective power does not derive from its visible attachments but from special ingredients packed inside of it.

**Object Information:** These nkishis are created for use in divination ceremonies. These ceremonies allowed the Songye to discover the causes of a misfortune. The diviner or *nganga* would ask questions of the consulting party, who would be holding an instrument the diviner would strike. The figures also honor Songye ancestors. Songye ancestral leaders served many roles: chief, metal smith, hunter, and medicine man. Each of these roles is represented on the figure. Now, when you think of a "medicine man," an older, wise fellow comes to mind, doesn't he? But how does this relate to fertility if only women can have children? I would like to draw your attention to the nkishi's belly. It protrudes quite smoothly from the figure, just like a pregnant woman's belly does. The Songye believe that the divine being, given that there is one, is both male and female. Earthly families and tribes, too, require both male and female contribution. Thus, nkishis feature both male and female elements in order to honor both the spiritual and the familial elements of their daily lives.

The figure's skirt is made out of raffia. Paired with glass-bead necklaces and a long feather headdress, now missing, the figure looks like a chief. The artist applied copper and brass to the figure's face. The hoe blade embedded in the forehead indicates the leader's hunting and metal-smithing skills. It is also representative of his power to direct lightning against an aggressor or evildoer. The horn on top of the head speaks to the elders' wisdom. The face is covered in nails which serve as a reminder of smallpox. Copper or brass bands increase the magic power of the statue. The pregnant-looking stomach references Songye generational heritage and acknowledges the Songye creation myth.

**Transition:** Both the seated female figure that we saw first and this nkishi figure have been very visually-stimulating, featuring contrast in texture and color. This next figure is comparably smaller in size and also features a simpler aesthetic appeal.

When I was in elementary school, I carried around a doll named Kaya. She was tan and had thick brown hair (like me). Most of my friends, too, carried dolls- it was just part of our culture's "little girl" phase. Why do you suppose little girls carry around dolls or stuffed animals? Sociologists believe that it is society's subtle way of grooming us into sensitive female adults that will someday care for our own babies. Western dolls like American Girl Dolls, Cabbage Patch Kids, etc. have rounded edges and plastic-y skin.

### Object 3:

**Divination Figure**, 19th-20th century

Adja culture

African

Wood, natural and man-made materials

Kathleen Boone Samuels Memorial Fund, 2002.526a-e



**Question:** Does this doll-like figure seem soft? Would you like to carry this around? Why or why not?

In the Adja culture of Togo, priests instruct women wishing to conceive to carry *akua'ba* figurines like this one around, treating the little figurine like a real child in order to prepare for motherhood. She would tie the figurine into her clothing, nurse it, adorn it, and put it to sleep every night as if the figurine were a real child! Eventually, the woman would become pregnant and no longer require the doll. At that point, the woman would give the statuette to her daughter or give it back to the priest for another woman to use. What do you notice about the smallish figure? The female figure has a disproportionately large head that features a tall, flat forehead- which supposedly suggests royal blood.

**Conclusion:** Obviously, fertility spans all cultures and serves as a timeless inspiration for many artists. I hope this tour lent you a new perspective on fertility and family that you may not experience in your day-to-day life.

Art is important because it is the most accessible forum of ideas. As ideas evolve, elements such as science and history interweave themselves to form more complete explanations of our world. There are no right or wrong answers in art- only inclusion.

Thank you for coming on my tour today! I hope that you learned or heard a cross-cultural connection or story that you will share with others later. Come back to the museum soon!

# Museum Leaders in Training

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**Welcome to...** The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
**my name is...** Jack Armstrong  
**and I am part of the...** Museum Leaders in Training Program

**Introduction:** After the American Civil War ended in 1865, the South was economically, agriculturally, and socially devastated whereas the North was significantly less devastated. Throughout the years after the war leading up to the turn of the century, America was transformed and the affluence and success of the North spread south and west, as these paintings exhibit the post-war modernization and wealth in late 19th century America. People dressed better, people had more leisure time, and during the war, technology was developed by both sides more rapidly than in a non conflict situation.

## Object 1:

**Mrs. Albert Vickers (Edith Foster), 1884**

Sargent, John Singer

American

Oil on canvas

Adolph D. & Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 92.152



**Question:** What emotions does this woman seem to have and why might she be experiencing these emotions?

**Object Information:** Take a moment to appreciate this magnificent portrait of the beautiful Edith Foster. Sargent was one of the most famous and leading artists of his time, and will forever be engrained in the American art tradition due to his muted colors and unequalled painting prowess. Here, Mrs. Albert Vickers is clad in a lavish yet not ostentatious dress. The Vickers family, which she is obviously a part of, was the creator of the Vickers Company which was a notable engineering firm that produced armaments, ships, and later aircraft. Wars always need arms to fight with, and the Vickers family company directly benefitted from wartime activities as demonstrated by Edith Foster's ability to dress like this and commission a portrait by the leading painter of the day.

**Transition:** Even people without weaponry businesses could experience some post war wealth, as seen by this next work of art.

## Object 2:

**Alexander Harrison, 1888**

Beaux, Cecilia

American

Oil on canvas

J. Harwood & Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art, 2009.2



**Question:** What does this person in the painting have as a profession?

**Object Information:** Alexander Harrison was actually a painter just like his good friend and female contemporary Cecilia Beaux. Beaux has been labeled the greatest female painter of this time period, and this painting is a great portrayal of her skills. She has been called the 'Jane Austen of the art world'. She did not directly benefit from the civil war, but did indirectly benefit from the countless individuals that commissioned art from her on account of their newfound opulence, some of which was a result of the war and modernization.

**Question:** Who benefitted the most from war—artists or society?

**Object 3:**

***The Under World***, ca. 1909-10

Woolf, Samuel

American

Oil on canvas



Funds provided by a private Richmond foundation, 95.101

**Object Information:** Although Woolf's intended purpose was to demonstrate the certain cloak that only an urban location can provide, the purpose that I have in showing this to you is to demonstrate the amount of modernization and wealth found in America since the end of the civil war in 1865. The war had been over for over 40 years when this piece was painted, but it does an excellent job of showing how much more wealth an urbanite has as a direct or indirect result of the war. The effects of conflict on an economy are significant, sometimes to the detriment of the economy, but often to the benefit, as exemplified by the Civil War, World War I, and World War II.

**Question:** What types of wealth are exemplified in this painting? Think of the technology for the turn of the century

**Transition:** After looking at a scene that portrays an anonymous urban setting, let's look at an individual family that directly benefitted from the war.

**Conclusion:** Thank you for coming and visiting the VMFA and for taking my tour. I hope this information will aid you somehow in your future endeavors.

# Museum Leaders in Training

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**Welcome to...** The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
**my name is...** McKennah Blouin  
**and I am part of the...** Museum Leaders in Training Program

**Introduction:** I will be focusing on modern art, specifically pieces that most people pass by and think, “This piece has no rhyme, reason, or meaning.” I’ll be showing you the rhyme, reason, and meaning behind those pieces that can be found with a little research and thought. The first piece of work we’re going to look at today is called *Triple Elvis*, by Andy Warhol.

**Object 1:**  
***Triple Elvis***, 1963

Warhol, Andy

American

Silkscreen ink, silver paint & spray paint on linen

Gift of Sydney & Frances Lewis, 85.453



**Question:** When you first look at this piece, do you think there’s any reasoning behind it? I didn’t think there was much reasoning behind it myself, when I first saw this piece.

**Object Information:** *Triple Elvis* was made in a series of Elvis silkscreen works by Warhol in 1963. It was made with silkscreen, silver paint, and spray paint on linen. Andy Warhol was an American artist born in 1928. He was a very influential and controversial artist and is most known for his Campbell soup cans series. He often took comic books, Hollywood stars, grocery store products, and other related things as his subject matter. Warhol began initially as a commercial artist, illustrating fashion in New York, but he gradually changed his style around the time he was 33. He made his first Pop paintings in 1961.

**Question:** What is everyone’s favorite pop star?  
A few examples of famous pop stars right now are Justin Bieber, Rihanna, and Lady Gaga.

**Object Information:** Although Andy Warhol was known to have said, “Just look at the surface of my paintings... there’s nothing behind it,” his silkscreen paintings often alluded to the pervasiveness of consumer culture. This is especially true with Warhol’s works that include multiple identical images, like *Triple Elvis*. The overlapping of the images in this piece portrays film frames and cinematic motion. The metallic background is a play on Hollywood’s silver screen.

There may not be many specific things behind each individual painting of Warhol’s, as he has said himself, but knowing even a little of his background and what some of the patterns of his works could mean make his pieces all the more interesting. There is always a reason for his pieces of work, mainly to portray American consumerism

**Question:** Are there any questions about this piece?

**Transition:** Now that I've shown you that there can be reason behind pieces of work that seem like they don't, I want to show you that there can be a rhyme behind them too. There are several different definitions, but the most common one is "a word agreeing with another in terminal sound."

**Interactive Component:** Now, can one person give me a word? Any word you want. Now going around in a circle, let's come up with different words that rhyme with the first word.

I believe that the definition of a rhyme can pertain to paintings and works of art, not just words. A painting that agrees with another in terms of pattern might be said to rhyme with it.

**Object 2:**

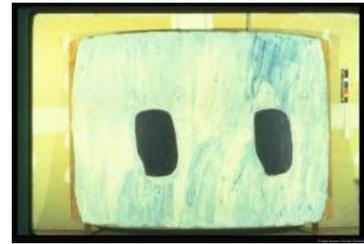
**Wedding, 1979**

Gorchov, Ron

American

Oil on linen

Gift of Sydney & Frances Lewis, 85.541



**Object Information:** This brings me to the next piece we're going to look at today. The title of this painting is *Wedding*. It was made in 1979 with oil on linen by Ron Gorchov. Gorchov is an American artist born in 1930.

**Question:** What is the first thing you notice about this piece?  
The focal point of this piece is definitely the two oval shapes in the middle.

**Question:** Does anyone have an idea what these two ovals represent?

**Object Information:** These shapes are called 'Planaria', a name given to them by Gorchov. He named them that because of their resemblance to flatworms. He added them to a multitude of his paintings to create a sense of movement. Their size, color, and shape differ in each of these paintings, but there are always two. It is said that Gorchov repetitively painted these 'Planaria' to create something like a body. His paintings are three-dimensional, with the canvas stretched over wood like skin stretched over a skeleton. The curve of the wood resembles a face or the back between the shoulder blades. The 'Planaria' suggest a diverted gaze of the eyes.

In a lot of Gorchov's paintings, there are paint drips at the bottom of the canvas. He explained this by saying, "Paint drips. It's one of the things paint does. I want other painters to be able to see what I did to make the painting. Nothing hidden."

Many of Gorchov's paintings relate to one another by way of their pattern. He almost always has the same pattern in his paintings, even though they're completely different colors, sizes, and even shapes. Just like rhyming words match in patterns or in ending sounds, even though they're completely different words.

**Question:** Are there any questions on this piece?

**Transition:** Now, like I said at the beginning, this tour is to show you that there is always a rhyme, reason, or meaning behind every piece of work. I have shown you that there can be a reason, that there can be a rhyme, and now we move on to the final piece: meaning. This doesn't necessarily mean that there is a

massive amount of deep psychological meaning behind the piece, although sometimes there is. Sometimes it is difficult to discern the meaning behind a piece of work. It's easy to pass by a painting and write it off as simply a figment of the artist's imagination and no more. While this is partially true, the paintings are figments of artist's imaginations, there is often a personal meaning behind those paintings.

**Object 3:**  
***Out West*, 1977**

DeForest, Roy

American

Polymer on canvas

Gift of the Sydney & Frances Lewis Foundation, 85.378



**Object Information:** This last painting is called *Out West*, by Roy DeForest. *Out West* was made in 1977 with polymer on canvas. Roy DeForest was an American artist, born in 1930.

**Question:** Now, can anyone tell me what kind of landscape this might be? Where in the world might this landscape be found?

**Object Information:** The title might give you a hint. The cowboys and horses might give an even bigger hint. Roy DeForest grew up on a farm and many of his paintings reflect that. Every one of his paintings is a “depiction of a little adventure,” in DeForest’s own words. He said once before that “[Painting] was like creating a map, basically, and the map then turns into a landscape, and the landscape adds figures, and that is a little bit of the history of my painting.”

**Question:** Are there any questions on this piece?

**Conclusion:** I have now shown you that even though a piece may not seem so at first, there is almost always some sort of rhyme, reason, or meaning to it. *Triple Elvis* was made to point out an aspect American consumerism. *Wedding* had rhyme in many of his pieces, with the Planaria. And *Out West* portrayed a life on the farm and country life, showing the meaning to the artist. All you need to do is learn a little bit of the background of the piece. Even minor insights can make your piece so much more interesting and give it more depth.

**Question:** Are there any questions?

# Museum Leaders in Training

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**Welcome to...** The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
**my name is...** Hannah Bratton  
**and I am part of the...** Museum Leaders in Training Program

**Introduction:** Today I will be giving you a highlights tour of three Antebellum Era paintings in the American Art Gallery. The theme of my tour is tranquility and happiness. Thomas Cole's *View of Mount Etna*, Stearn's *Washington as a Farmer at Mount Vernon*, and Cropsey's *Mt. Jefferson, Pinkham Notch, White Mountains* all share a singular conceptual tone of happiness and tranquility. They utilize subject matter, warm colors, subdued light, and landscape texture to create atmospheres evoking happiness and tranquility. However, while the subjects in Stearn's painting are happy and tranquil, the landscapes of Cole and Cropsey depict their happiness and tranquility painting nature.

## Object 1:

***Mt. Jefferson, Pinkham Notch, White Mountains*, 1857**

Cropsey, Jasper Francis

American

Oil on canvas

J. Harwood & Louise B. Cochrane Fund for American Art, 96.35



**Introduction:** The first painting I will show you is *Mt. Jefferson, Pinkham Notch, White Mountains*. This was painted by Jasper Francis Cropsey.

**Object Information:** Jasper Francis Cropsey began his career as an architect, but gave up the profession to paint landscapes. He lived in Rome from 1847 to 1849 and in England from 1856 to 1863. He also travelled in Turkey extensively. On his return to America he continued to paint landscapes, in particular autumn scenes of Lake Greenwood, New Jersey, and also worked as an architect. He designed a dozen of the overhead railway stations on New York's Sixth Avenue. In 1851 he became a member of the National Academy of Design in New York, and he was a founding member of the Society of American Painters. He characterized the White Mountains, which were the favorite subjects of the painters of that time period. Cropsey's mountains are sharper and more alpine than his natural models, and likewise they are misidentified. (Birmingham, Peter) Cropsey made the not uncommon mistake of the time, repeated in guidebooks and maps, of calling the central peak Mt. Jefferson rather than Mt. Adams.

**Transition:** Cropsey once said, "The ax of our civilization is busy with our old forests". I have no doubt that his counterpart Thomas Cole would have agreed with him. Both Thomas Cole and Cropsey were famous for their epic landscapes, and they both painted in the style of the Hudson River School Painters. Thomas Cole also painted a view of Mount Etna.

**Object 2:**

*View of Mt. Etna*, ca. 1842

Cole, Thomas

American

Oil on canvas

Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 76.39



**Object Information:** This painting, entitled *View of Mount Etna* was painted by Thomas Cole in 1842. Thomas Cole was the first important landscape painter in America and a founder of the Hudson River School of 19<sup>th</sup> century American landscapists. Cole's landscape paintings became well known at the same time that writers were reassessing and re-examining their attitudes toward nature. Ralph Waldo Emerson inspired writers and artists alike with his 1836 essay "Nature," which revealed his love for the natural scenes of the United States and expressed the main principles of Transcendentalism (an American philosophical movement based on the search for reality through spiritual intuition that had lasting effects on religion, literature, art, and social reform movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and later). America's landscape consistently impressed Cole. All nature in America was art, he said, "primeval forests, virgin lakes, and waterfalls," with none of Europe's famous sites like Tivoli or Terni in Italy that were "hackneyed and worn by the daily pencils of hundreds" of sketchers. Along with art lovers, he was convinced that landscape painting had a "happy and civilizing influence" on the country, that it provided intellectual stimulation and fostered a love of nature and beauty.

**Transition:** Thomas Cole painted to promote a philosophical dialogue, while some artists, like Stearns, painted to promote figures of state.

**Object 3:**

*Washington as a Farmer at Mount Vernon*, 1851

Stearns, Junius Brutus

American

Oil on canvas

Gift of Edgar William & Bernice Chrysler Garbisch, 50.2.4



**Object Information:** This painting, entitled *Washington as a Farmer at Mount Vernon* was painted by Junius Brutus Stearns. The painting depicts George Washington, surrounded by slaves who are harvesting hay on his Mount Vernon estate. Washington was passionate about farming and devoted considerable time to developing his plantation. The skills and labor that kept Mount Vernon operational, however, were provided by Washington's slaves. Slavery seems to be glorified in this painting, which most can agree is an inaccurate representation. This painting was controversial during a time when slavery was eradicated but still widely approved of. A young boy fixes the hairstyle of a younger girl, who one can guess he is related to.

**Question:** How do you think these people are related?

***Object Information:*** Two horses pull a wagon full of hay, while slaves work together in harmony and a white overseer chats with Washington. The focal point of this work is the body of George Washington, darkened in the foreground of the painting. The background is primarily composed of hazy renditions of hay and a landscape. This haziness and the clothes the subjects wear give an onlooker the illusion of a hot summer day.

***Conclusion:*** Whether painted for personal benefit, philosophy, or politics, all three of these paintings exemplify ideas of tranquility and happiness in the Antebellum Era. Thank you for touring the antebellum galleries with me today!

# Museum Leaders in Training

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**Welcome to...** The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
**my name is...** Virginia Chambers  
**and I am part of the...** Museum Leaders in Training Program

**Introduction:** Welcome to the Renaissance Galleries here at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts! I'm going to introduce you to Renaissance art with a look at reward and punishment on a holy level. The works we're going to be examining will exhibit either a reward or a punishment. That's one of the themes, and it's a little more cerebral. However, there's another theme as well, which is found in the art physically. I'll ask everyone what they think it is when we get to the end of the tour. You can see it in the art if you think creatively. Keep both the themes in mind as we travel through the pieces today.

First, however, a few museum reminders. Please look with eyes, and not with hands, and please stay at least twelve inches away from the art at all times. You can lean in to see the work closer, but please stay one foot away. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask me. Let's get started!

**Object 1:**  
***Madonna and Child Enthroned With Saints***, 1499

The Bruges Master of 1499

Flemish

Oil on panel

Arthur & Margaret Glasgow Fund, 57.39



**Object Information:** The first work we'll be looking at here is called *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints*. The artist who painted it has no known name, but he is called the Bruges Master of 1499, which tells us this was painted in 1499. The Bruges Master was Flemish, which is not a terribly important fact for this piece, but is interesting to note.

**Question:** Now, before we get into the deep information about the piece, what first struck you about the work?

**Object Information:** I was first drawn to the Virgin Mary in the middle. After that, my gaze ringed out to the women surrounding them. Now, we know they are saints, but we don't know who exactly they are. This is an instance when the label gives us a lot of insight into the painting. It tells us that the saints Catherine of Alexandria, Dorothy of Cappadocia, Barbara, and Agnes are all huddled around the Virgin and Child. All the saints were martyrs, meaning they died to stand up for their faith, but their crimes were varied in type. In addition, the saints lived in vastly different time periods, and never would have seen each other on earth.

**Question:** What do you notice about the setting?

**Object Information:** While the landscape appears that it could be on earth, it is too perfect. The hedges in the background are perfectly manicured, the roses on the bushes are perfectly spaced, and the dresses are arranged on the ground just so. The scene is supposed to be heaven. This actually logically makes sense as a means to bring everyone and everything together.

I chose this piece in the tour because I felt the whole thing fit in the theme of punishment and reward. Most obviously, the scene depicted here is a reward scene. The saints, who lived challenging lives on earth, are relaxing in paradise with the Virgin Mary and Jesus. They had been blessed with the ultimate reward of being with the holy family in heaven. However, the backstory is one of punishment. To get to the reward, the saints had to die first, often in brutal or gruesome ways. The suffering came first, and they earned the reward. The saints had to die to get to the good part.

There's heavy symbolism in this piece, and much of it ties to reward. The peacock in the background strutting next to the castle was a common symbol of immortality. Immortality reappeared as a common theme for the Europeans. Remember many navigators, such as Juan Ponce de Leon, motivated to explore to find the fountain of youth, perceived as a reward for man. Another one of the many symbols in the painting is the roses in the bushes. They symbolize Mary's purity, for she was referred to as the "rose without a thorn" in the scriptures.

**Transition:** Now we're going to explore the complimentary pieces in this tour—ones focusing on reward.

### Object 2:

***The Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence***, 1580-1590

Balducci, Giovanni (called Il Cosci)

Italian

Oil on panel

Anonymous loan, L.120.96



**Object Information:** The second work on the tour is *The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence*, painted by Giovanni Balducci, who was called Il Cosci. It was painted in 1562. Okay, let's start with a similar question as before.

**Question:** What do you think is the focus of attention is?

**Question:** What do you think the artist wanted it to be?

**Object Information:** Personally, I think the focus is the men on the lower left corner of the painting. They're what my eye was drawn to first, probably because of the light. However, if I had to guess, I'd assume Balducci wanted the focus to be St. Lawrence on the gridiron. That's the event of which the painting takes its title, and there also the most action is occurs.

To understand this painting, one has to understand some background about St. Lawrence. He was a deacon in the mid 200s, and he was executed because he refused to surrender the treasures in his church. Because of his noble martyrdom, he was named the patron saint of Florence.

A lot's going on in this scene. There are at least three different situations depicted—St. Lawrence on the gridiron, the laborers in the foreground, and the king on his dais. First, let's look at St. Lawrence. He's being prodded over the burning fire.

**Question:** What do you notice about his body?

**Object Information:** It's in an unnatural position, and it looks like he's looking for supplication from his God. One of the interesting things to note about his position is that his leg totally obscures his genitals. In the

Renaissance, the human form was a common subject, and the whole body was accepted and embraced, even the genitalia. The fact that St. Lawrence's are concealed could have a symbolic meaning or could just be due to the date of the painting—it was produced in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and 1600 generally marks the end of the Renaissance period and the transition into the Baroque period. This may have factored into the covering. Another possible reason was that this painting was a commission for a government official in Florence. That is to say, we know the portrait was commissioned, but we don't know who did. He may have wanted to display it in an office or his home, and didn't want the offending body parts.

**Question:** Did you notice something amiss in the background?

**Object Information:** There is a man dressed in clothing far too contemporary for 258 AD, the time of St. Lawrence, lurking in the back. Most art historians, and the curator here at VMFA thinks this was the commissioner, which would explain the out-of-place dress. The odd positioning of St. Lawrence draws more attention to him and adds movement to the painting.

The next part of the painting to focus on is the laborers in the foreground. They seem to be pretty oblivious to all the commotion behind them, and are just working away. For me, one of the great ironies of the painting is that they receive most of the light, but are, at least to me, probably the most boring part of the whole scene. They aren't main focus—St. Lawrence's execution is— but they still get a lot of attention.

The most interesting part in this whole scene, to me, is the emperor on the dais in the background. He isn't really doing a ton of interesting stuff, but he's just hanging out in the background. I almost think of him as the thematic opposites of the laborers—almost a foil— neither aspect is doing much, but the king's emphasized, by a lack of light, in this case. This element adds some mystery to the painting, and it's a welcome change from the rest of the mostly bright painting.

**Question:** Have you been thinking about that physical theme I mentioned?

**Object Information:** There's a hint hidden in what I'm about to discuss. After studying this painting for a fair amount of time, I realized it represents a kind of life cycle of the adult life. I start with the laborers. You start at the bottom of the chain, doing the hard work. Then you graduate to the ranks of soldier, with a little better pay. Finally you're the king, in a high position, relaxing. After a while of that, you retire, becoming like the old man standing in the background on the right. After a retirement period, you eventually die, like St. Lawrence himself.

**Transition:** Continuing with the emphasis of punishment, we're next going to examine a painting that shows the ultimate price — execution.

### Object 3:

#### *Salome Receiving the Head of St. John the Baptist*, after 1510

Solario, Andrea

Italian

Oil on canvas

Private Collection, L.118.96



**Object Information:** The final work we're going to explore today is *Salome Receiving the Head of St. John the Baptist*, one of my personal favorites. It was painted by Andrea Solario in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, probably after 1510. This is the piece on this tour most closely tied to the bible. But before getting too deeply immersed in

its history, let's take a closer look at the physical painting. This is a very graphic painting, and the bold contrasts catch eyes first, but let's look at the little things for now.

**Question:** What are some details you notice in the painting?

**Object Information:** I noticed the intricate draping on Salome's sleeves. They almost seem to further accentuate the head, leading the viewer's gaze into the plate and up to John.

**Question:** What else do you see in the painting? Did you expect to see more of the executioner?

**Object Information:** There are tons of renderings of this event. Many artists loved to paint what they thought might have happened, so we have lots of other pieces to compare it with. In many other paintings, the executioner is far more present. The viewer can usually see at least to the executioner's shoulder, if not their whole torso. I think Solario may have been commenting on the fact that John's head was unceremoniously sliced off, and he did the same, ironically, with the executioner, by abruptly cutting him off mid-forearm.

**Question:** What do you notice about the hair in this piece?

**Object Information:** First of all, it's curly. Curly hair was common in Renaissance paintings, and it continued the idea that that was beauty. However, both Salome and John had reddish curly hair. I think Solario kind of meant to show that they were more similar than most believe. It is believed that Salome later died by drowning because she sank in a freezing river up to her neck. They both died of injuries that affected their head, and this shows a little similarity, at least in their deaths.

**Object Information:** As promised, the history of the piece. This is the end of John the Baptist's life. A quick John the Baptist biography—he led the way for Jesus to begin his teachings and continued spreading the word, often raising eyebrows with his evangelism. Among many who didn't appreciate John was King Herod. His daughter Salome once played the piano perfectly for him in front of many of his advisors and officials. He promised her anything she wanted as a reward. Salome's mother told her to ask for St. John's head on a plate, because she knew that would further please Herod. The deed was done, and this is Andrea Solario's rendering of what the moment may have looked like.

**Question:** Do you see anything else of note?

**Concluding Question:** Did you ever figure out the hidden theme?

**Conclusion:** Take a close look at the paintings to see if you can figure it out. *Give up?* It was circles. Starting with Mary, Jesus, and the saints in the first piece, the painting was set out in rings—from Mary to Jesus to the saints. In the Saint Lawrence painting, it was the arrangement of the parts of the painting. First we had Lawrence, and then the laborers, and then the king. In this last piece, the crook of the executioner's wrist and John's head form the curve.

Thank you so much for coming out to the museum today. I thoroughly enjoyed having you on a tour today, and I encourage you to continue exploring the Renaissance gallery on your own. I'm Virginia Chambers, and I hope to see you here again soon!

## Museum Leaders in Training

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**Welcome to...** The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
**my name is...** Arielle Eisen  
**and I am part of the...** Museum Leaders in Training Program

**Introduction/Transition:** I would like to remind you that we are in an art museum and that you should stay at least twelve inches away from the works of art, or about half an arm's length away.

Today we will be exploring Spanish and Dutch Baroque period paintings that display light's influence on emotion. We will investigate the artist's thought process of choosing where the light source is placed and the significance behind this decision. Understanding how these Baroque artists played with light and utilized the light to characterize their subjects allows us to better understand the importance of the subject in the painting.

The first stop on our tour has a fixed and true light source with attention drawn to it by the placement of the main subject in the painting. This was a very common techniques used in Baroque art because at the time, the subjects were the most important parts of the paintings.

### Object 1:

***Saint Mary Magdalene Renouncing Worldly Life***, early 1650's

Bartolome Esteban Murillo

Spanish

Oil on canvas

Gift of Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams, 53.21.2



**Introduction/Questions:** This is the first piece on the tour, *Saint Mary Magdalene Renouncing the Worldly Life*. Can you spot where the light source coming from? Why did the artist use this particular position of the light source?

**Object Information:** Mary Magdalene was an important Saint of the Counter-Reformation. The Spanish artist, Bartolome Esteban Murillo produced a series of seven known oil paintings of St. Mary Magdalene. It was suggested that the model for Magdalene was his daughter Francisca. Although, the painting depicts Magdalene tearing off her clothes and it would be highly unlikely that he would depict his daughter in this way. Magdalene's gaudy dress and the jewels at her feet are representative of the vanities of the world that she has renounced. The prominent color of this piece, a dark or deep red, was used in most, but not all, representations of St. Mary Magdalene. This color could be used as a symbol of love and passion, the symbolism that Murillo was aiming to achieve. In the Baroque period, monumental, single figures against plain, dark backgrounds with strong contrasts of light and dark were very popular. Another technique typically used by Counter-Reformation artists in this period was overt emotion. In this piece, St. Mary Magdalene expresses her yearning for forgiveness and mystical union with G-d at the very moment she renounces worldly things and turns to an austere life dedicated to prayer. These artists used strong facial features to easily convey a message through the subjects' faces. The light from up above shines down on St. Mary Magdalene's face to draw the viewer's attention straight to her expression.

**Question:** What emotion is St. Mary Magdalene conveying?

**Transition:** Now let's look at a painting that has a light source emanating from down below. This light source was used because it illuminated an important part or the focal point of the painting.

**Object 2:**

***A Boy with a Roemer of Wine by Candlelight*, 1623**

Hendrick ter Brugghen

Dutch

Oil on canvas

Private Collection, L.74.2011



**Question:** What is the first thing that your eye is drawn to?

**Object Information:** This oil painting, *Boy With a Roemer of Wine by Candlelight* by Dutch artist Hendrick Ter Brugghen shows a young boy holding a cup of wine. Young boys were often used in Baroque art because these were unidealized figures and were thought of as a blank canvas. There are no outright clues to the emotions of the boy or the messages in the painting.

**Question:** What do you think his smile represents?

The half smile on the boy's face could be a sign of smiling through pain or of pure happiness. The glass is either half full or half empty depending on how you look at it. The light comes from a single candle that illuminates the cup of wine in great detail. Utrecht Caravaggisti was a group renowned for their manipulation of light effects evident in the candlelight shining through the glass illuminating the boy's face.

**Question:** What do you think is the message being conveyed in the painting?

The fact that the subject holding the wine does not look old enough to have the drink could be a warning against alcohol abuse and its effects. Although, it was common to drink wine or other drinks because clean water was not readily available during this time.

**Transition:** The next object on our tour also has light coming from a single candle. This artist chose to use a single candle for a different reason. Using our knowledge from the first and second piece, we can infer that having light focused on one subject helps us understand their emotions. This painting does have more than one subject but it has a main character of sorts.

**Object 3:**

***The Stone Operation*, 1624 – 1625**

Rembrandt Van Rijn

Dutch

Oil on canvas

Private Collection, New York, L42.2012.1



**Question:** What do you think is happening in this painting?

**Object Information:** This piece by Rembrandt titled *The Stone Operation* shows three men. Is anyone familiar with the term “stone in the head?” The phrase “stone in the head” is a Dutch expression for an unsound mind. The oil painting shows a barber removing a stone from another man’s head while another looks on. Typically when these operations took place, the operator could slip and do major damage to the brain. This phrase is particularly appropriate because the painter is Dutch himself. The single candle illuminates the patient’s face and it is clear that he is in pain. The expression on his face keeps in line with the overt emotion from the first object on this tour. Along with strong expression, Rembrandt attempted to manipulate paint in unconventional ways to produce convincing illusions of weathered skin or shiny metal. This piece and the one next to it are part of a series that reveal the artist’s interest in depicting emotion and thought, as well as the dramatic play of light and shadow that would become his hallmark.

**Question:** Why did the artist choose a single candle as the light source in the painting? How does this affect the mood or characterization of the subjects?

**Interactive component:** If you could choose a favorite subject from the paintings we looked at today, who would it be? Would you want to be in their shoes?

**Conclusion:** Thank you for coming today. I hope you enjoyed the tour and learned about light’s influence on expression during the Baroque period. Feel free to look around the gallery and see if you can find other examples of light’s influence on emotion. Please come visit the museum again soon, there’s always something new to discover.

# Museum Leaders in Training

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**Welcome to...** The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
**my name is...** Kate French  
**and I am part of the...** Museum Leaders in Training Program

**Introduction:** Just a quick reminder, there is no use of pens within the galleries, only pencils.

So what do you guys think about Teen Talent so far? Pretty great, huh? People have come out to celebrate our accomplishments this evening and it's such a wonderful thing that so many people come out here to celebrate teens who are able to express themselves. Similarly, people all throughout the world depict celebration whether it's in dance, religion, or even in art work. Celebration has been around for centuries, a great example of is some of the sculptures within the South Asian art gallery here at the museum. To forewarn you, I'm going to ask for a volunteer later, but right now please close your eyes and imagine a celebration of your own. Is there dancing and music? Talking all around and laughter? Be sure to keep your mind on this place throughout the tour.

## Object 1:

***Vaishnavi Dancing***, 9th century

Artist unknown

Indian

Red sandstone

Nasli & Alice Heeramanek Collection, Gift of Paul Mellon, 68.8.12



**Object Information:** Our first piece is *Vaishnavi Dancing*. It was made in 9th century India in the Madhya Pradesh;

**Question:** Does anyone know where that is?

It is in central India.

**Object Information:** Within India there are two popular religions: Buddhism and Hinduism. Buddhism concentrates on the idea that life is full of suffering caused by desire and the way to end this suffering is through enlightenment by endless rebirths and deaths of your soul in another body or form. In Hinduism it is believed that to escape earthly evils you must undergo reincarnation based on a caste system following the supreme God Brahma and his divinities. Hinduism is the religion we will be focusing on in this tour; it was flourishing in this region against all odds, so it's no surprise that this red sandstone female divinity was created during this period. Although the artist is unknown, the artist used religious symbolism to depict the meaning behind this piece.

**Question:** Where do you think you would have found this if you had stumbled across it one day? It was most likely once a shrine in a temple.

**Object Information:** If you look closely you notice that Vaishnavi is holding a conch shell in one hand, a symbol of religious practices; mace in another, which symbolizes the power of the Lord Shiva; and a flaming wheel which describes disrupted wholeness. She is a Matrika divinity, meaning mother.

**Question:** If you pay attention to the children around her, you might notice that she isn't holding any of them; why might that be if her name means mother? She exemplifies a maternal role, but she has a great fury at times too; just like any other mother, I'm sure we can all relate.

**Object Information:** She embodies the rhythm of creation and destruction; most often Matrikas are pictured or placed together dancing to the beat of Nataraja, Lord of Dance. Vaishnavi is often associated with Shiva in one of its forms. How do you think she ties in with celebration? The link drawn between dance, religion, and art played an important role in the aesthetics of expression in art and celebration in years to come.

**Transition:** Speaking of Shiva's many forms; let's move ahead in time a bit to mid 12th century Tamil Nadu, a southern region found in India.

**Object 2:**  
*Shiva as King of Dancers (Nataraja)*, mid 12th century

Artist unknown

Indian

Copper alloy

Adolph D. & Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 69.46



**Object Information:** This sculpture in stone and bronze is known as *Shiva as King of Dancers (Nataraja)*. Bronze became a popular medium during this time and so did the interest in depicting a human figure animating deities. A deity is just another name for a god or goddess. Nataraja became an important symbol and was placed in many worship temples and sanctuaries. What is the first thing you notice about this sculpture? Remember there are no such things as a wrong answer. You may notice the statue is mainly bronze, what do you think this might represent? The bronze expresses the dance he is depicted doing, known as the cosmic dance. This cosmic dance includes five principle manifestations of eternal energy: creation, destruction, preservation, salvation, and illusion. He shows himself as a god who creates, sustains, and destroys, he stands for all opposites working as one in the universe. One of the first things you see is the circle of flames encompassing Nataraja, showing the burning of the air and destruction. Each of its' hands represent a different concept.

**Question:** What would you do if you had this many arms?

**Object Information:** One is holding a drum, embodying sound, one of the first signs of creation. Another is held with the palm facing the audience as a gesture of reassurance. The hand pointing down towards the foot is a representation of release. If you noticed, there are snakes wrapped around the wrist of the deity, representing life and death in one. The earring found on one of its ears shows that Shiva is both male and female. When you think about the compatibility of all these different gestures, it really brings the piece together. Just like a celebration brings people together, Shiva brings the other deities together.

**Question:** Now before you jump to conclusions, Nataraja is not standing on a baby; what do you think this figure might represent?

**Object Information:** It is standing on the demon of ignorant forgetfulness as if to squelch it from existence. Nataraja is the epitome of harmony and peace between two, just like how celebration brings people together that may not necessarily fit together. Nataraja illustrates the celebration of life and overcoming ignorance, reaching the ultimate reality. Call this silly, but a great way to really relate to the artwork is to reenact it.

**Interactive Component:** Do I have a brave volunteer that is willing to pose as Nataraja for a picture?

**Transition:** And now we reach 19th century India, up to the northern part of India in Rajasthan, vicinity of Bharatpur.

### Object 3:

**Garden Pavilion**, 19th century

Artist unknown

Indian

White marble with black schist and brown mottled marble inlays

Adolph D. & Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 2005.2



**Object Information:** The name of this piece is called *Garden Pavilion*. This grand piece stands boldly in the center of the room was most likely built by multiple artisans and constructors. It weighs 27 tons, is 27ft long, 14 feet wide, and 9 feet tall. I mean who could really move this much marble? The basin found in the center was once used as a fountain center piece.

**Question:** What patterns or reoccurring designs do you see? What colors do you first observe?

**Object Information:** Some of the underlying colors produced by the coloration and texture of schist bring out the designs against these simple, dull colors. Conversely, these colors contrast well against the room and really bring out the intricate carvings of the structure. If you look at the carvings you may notice the lotus flower is a repeating symbol. The lotus stands for creation mythology and purity.

**Question:** Can't you just imagine this surrounded in greenery? Or people dancing about under the gleaming sun? What do you imagine this pavilion was used for? What kind of celebrations do you think took place here?

**Conclusion:** Across centuries of time South Asian art has told a story of celebration and also reflects each period uniquely. No matter where or when, people always express themselves through celebration and dancing. Whether it's to show joy and cheerfulness, sorrow, or even in worship, celebration ties us all together in ways we would never expect.

## Museum Leaders in Training

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**Welcome to...** The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
**my name is...** Geneviève Gray  
**and I am part of the...** Museum Leaders in Training Program

**Introduction:** Today we are going to take a look at the photography gallery. Many of the works currently on display in the photography gallery seem to challenge commonly held notions about the construction of identity. The photographs being discussed today are all images in which the subject of the photograph has been selectively trimmed down or cropped. This dramatic framing transforms a series of what might have been known references into more conceptual images, and disguises the identity of the chosen subject matter. By framing the photographs in this way, the artists convey a sense of confusion: what is it; where was it taken? This confusion leaves the door open for a freely subjective interpretation of the images.

**Transition:** This first piece by Aaron Siskind is titled *New York, 1951*, and it is a gelatin silver print.

**Object 1:**  
*New York, 1951*, 1951

Siskind, Aaron

American

Gelatin silver print

A. Paul Funkhouser Fund, 2009.340



**Question:** When looking at this piece what do you initially see?

Good. You are helping us think about this more.

**Object Information:** The photograph is formal and almost painterly, its original identity is hidden and it is open to a subjective read. It could be strongly argued that Siskind intended these photographs to operate only on the formal level and that the letters are an accident, not an intentional statement. Or it can also be interpreted as an intended message as depicted through the lettering you pointed out. As Albert Camus once said, “what is a rebel? A man who says no.” By including the word “NOT” in this cropped image, Siskind could potentially be conveying an anti-feeling toward establishment as an illustration of the time of the rebellious movements of the era. Perhaps he means to question our typically negative reaction to the idea of graffiti itself as seen through established perceptions and connotations. Yet, he could merely be expressing the idea that the photograph itself is timeless since the title itself includes the number, “1951,” which relates back to the: “NOT 51” in the image. By including this reference to the date of the photograph, maybe Siskind wished the viewer to look at the image in a way that removed it not only from its physical surroundings but also from the era in which it was shot. Siskind began his career as a photojournalist, documenting his social surroundings through his lens. At the time however, photography was not taken seriously as a form of fine art since it mainly captured portraiture, landscapes, etc. These abstract images, on the other hand, allowed viewers to better understand the artistic nature of photography itself. Thereby, Siskind not only allowed people to challenge what the photographs themselves contained, but also what exactly made a photograph artistic. In my opinion, this is really where he breaks the mold and added something new to perceptions of what a photograph could be. This context is really important to this work.

During his time, there was a vast artistic revolution taking place known as Abstract Expressionism, and a cultural one which included members of the Beat Generation such as the writer Jack Kerouac. By creating photographs relating similar ideas to the work of artists such as Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, or Hans Hoffman, Siskind set himself on par with these creative and influential individuals and established his own work and sense of artistic expression. Ultimately this allowed the stage to be set for other photographers to follow.

**Question:** What do you think Siskind wished us to see? Do you think that the words themselves mean anything at all?

Yes! There are definitely many ways to interpret what is really going on in the piece.

**Transition:** Now moving away from the more organic and free flowing form of the first piece, the next photograph we are going to look at conveys abstraction in a more linear and geometric way.

### **Object 2:**

***Corrugated Abstract***, ca. 1950s

Lenz, Gita

American

Gelatin silver print

Collection of Pamela K. and William A. Royall, Jr., L.44.2012

\*No image available

**Object Information:** This piece is aptly named *Corrugated Abstract*, and is the work of Gita Lenz. It is also a gelatin silver print. Lenz was a great friend of Siskind's and her art was strongly influenced by him. Also, like Siskind, she began her career with photography as a social documentarian.

**Question:** How do you think this piece differs from the last? How do they connect?

Yes, they both take something out of its industrial context and create a new image with the help of cropping.

**Object Information:** This photograph focuses on what appears to be some kind of ripped up metal. We gain this perception by our mental association with the very recognizable linear lines that are so often noticed with corrugated industrial steel. Here, however, the image is meant to be abstract. Because we don't know exactly where the photograph was taken, it is much harder to judge exactly what we are looking at. While it is presumably steel, it could have been taken anywhere. Is it the side of a building? A torn up wall? A wrecked car sitting in the junkyard? It is impossible to tell. What Lenz intended to establish, however, was that anything can be art if subjectively removed from the connotations surrounding it. I don't know if any of you have ever seen the film *American Beauty*, but in it there is a character who is a young filmmaker. In the film he creates a fifteen minute long documentary focused entirely on a plastic bag. Normally one might think this was crazy, but it establishes much the same idea that Lenz and artists like her wished to convey. It envelops you in the electricity of the moment and allows you to connect with this object in way that is removed from our sense of its identity. As you watch this plastic bag floating and tossing in the wind, becoming one with the leaves and its surroundings, it removes the context of the bag itself and creates something both transfixing and strangely beautiful. People might make fun of the idea of photographing "trash," but if one can remove the idea that something is trash and allow it to exist outside of itself, than something wonderful can be created out of this separation. Instead, one may focus on the lines within this work itself, or the way the shadows highlight the accented edges and create a sense of depth and contrast within the work itself. Again,

however, the identity of the object itself remains elusive since when taken out of context it also changes what senses we are able to view the object – visual depth is now limited to a flat surface and our eye’s ability to translate it into its naturally three dimensional form. Since it was the artist’s intent to change one object of recognizable standing into an abstract photograph through the positioning of the lens and the creation of balance through cropping, it helps challenge our ideas behind what we see in front of us and what we bring to the image that has been gathered through our own memories and associations with other things. Every viewer in effect is a large part of the photograph since what baggage we bring with us will change what we think of the image itself.

**Object Information:** Without any kind of cultural reference in mind, do you think that your interpretation of this piece would be at all different?

Yes, ultimately this really illustrates the timelessness of the ideas being captured here since similar thoughts are still being conveyed in art today.

**Transition:** The final piece we are going to look at combines the geometric element of this piece and the organic-ness of the first with the addition of a human element. This piece by Minor White is titled *Sandblaster*, and it is also a gelatin silver print.

**Object 3:**  
*Sandblaster*, 1949

White, Minor

American

Gelatin silver print

Collection of Christopher English & Meda Lane, L.43.2012

\*No image available

**Question:** Do you think that the title of the piece strongly influences what you see here?

Yes, I know when I gave my earlier tour, some people were not even aware that this piece contained a person at all until I pointed it out. It is very easy to see how this could be lost on the viewer without the known context of what is taking place in the photograph.

**Object Information:** This is actually my favorite piece in the gallery. I love how the framing of the subject doesn’t just include the physical up close cropping of the image, but it also contains a frame within a frame visible to the viewer. While this may be seen as an artistic choice, it also gives the piece a very distinct feeling.

**Question;** When you look at this piece, how does it make you feel?

Yes, you are definitely helping us to develop a deeper understanding of the work.

**Object Information:** It really gives off a sense of tightness and claustrophobia. The tight spaces, the darkness of the photograph, the abstractness of the area surrounding the figure might provoke a very strong response. When I look at this piece, I am reminded of the fact that Minor White was actually homosexual. This might seem slightly off the wall and unrelated, but under the context of the time, being gay was something strongly frowned upon. Personally, I see this as an illustration of how he, the artist, may have felt within the confines of society as he struggled with his sexuality. Other interpretations might include the representation of the poorer working class masses in the obscurity of anonymity. Again, however, the piece

was meant to be left up to the viewer's discretion. Through its strange removal of the surface, it becomes perhaps not a political statement at all -- perhaps it is just an expressive piece of art. In truth, we are not meant to discover the deeper meaning, but appreciate it for what it is. When I look at this piece, there are things easily identifiable to my eyes, and there are things that can be taken to mean things that they not necessarily are. For instance, this abstract shape here that overhangs the figure could easily be seen as a gun. Next, the lettering and numbering may be important to our interpretation of it, and then again, it may be a red herring. What does this imply? Does he wish us to see this as a commentary on the superficiality of ordinary life, or is he merely combining the organic life form within with the geometric industrial setting in order to juxtapose what is life with what is lifeless? Ultimately, like the other two, it remains at the viewer's discretion to interpret the image as you will. The artist merely chose to turn the recognizable into something more unrecognizable. In doing this, he created a new sense of beauty in the complexity and intricacy of something that might ordinarily be considered routine to everyday life.

**Question:** How did this piece both differ and relate with the work of the other two artists?

Yes, you are allowing us to find deeper meaning in the works.

**Object Information:** This artist wished us to notice not what is conventional and "right" but what is actually there in front of us. If we were to come to every piece of art with a blankness of thought, without connections to our own lives and experiences, it would permanently change how we view the objects in front of us. What these artists wished us to see was that even the average day, the grossly decayed, or the irrevocably destroyed can contain beauty if perceived under a different light.

**Conclusion:** By removing an object from its traditional context it can completely change how we view it. Interestingly, while the ideas behind these works may have been exceedingly important to their times, the images themselves are timeless. In fact, they can easily still relate to our lives today. For instance, these works could very easily be likened to music. What may initially come to mind is the relationship they have to jazz because of the fluidity of their movement and because the artists themselves were so forward thinking. They can, however, also relate to such genres as experimental music or even heavy metal. Like the early jazz artists, metal bands have often been criticized for their sound. What these artists have in common with them is that they both challenge viewers and listeners to remove themselves from past influences and to react to what is in front of them in a more objective way. While older people may have a hard time finding beauty in the raucousness of the music, people of the past may have felt the same way about the way these photographs disrupt our perceptions. An example of this is a French group called *Alcest*, which is actually one of my favorite bands, because as NPR once said of them, they make metal beautiful. Ultimately, both these photographs and modern music challenge us to break free of how we define beauty. They show us that selective cropping and studied manipulation of surroundings can very much influence how we perceive things and how oftentimes we put great limitations on our own experiences. Over all, they help open our minds and challenge us to witness beauty in places where we might not ordinarily expect to see it. Thank you for listening, I hope you enjoyed the tour and that you learned something new today. It was certainly a pleasure having all of you on my tour and receiving your input. The other photographs in the gallery are all definitely worth looking at, so make sure you check them out! If you have any further questions feel free to ask.

# Museum Leaders in Training

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**Welcome to...** The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
**my name is...** Emily Hastings  
**and I am part of the...** Museum Leaders in Training Program

## **Gallery Expectations:**

- Stand at least 12" away from artwork (no touching)
- No running or playing around in the galleries
- No eating, chewing gum, etc...
- Be respectful!

**Introduction:** Today we will be visiting three Japanese works from the East Asian Gallery. We will be exploring how these pieces are interconnected in the spiritual reflection that is culturally and religiously connected with the Japanese Tea Ceremony. Tea is thought to be a medium for relaxation, but this simple cup also can embody an art form and a complexity that transcends the surface.

Japan didn't even know of tea until it was introduced, from China, in the ninth-century. It didn't gain major popularity until around the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when Buddhist monks brought tea tree seeds and the Chinese Tea Ceremonies into the Zen temples. The teas were first used to keep the monks in focus and awake during long hours of meditation.

Eisai was one of the first monks to bring back seeds and serve this drink to the elite and ruling class of Japan for medicinal purposes. He also introduced matcha, the form of green powdered tea that is now the fundamental form of tea served at these ceremonies. The use of matcha continued only in Japan from about the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century, as other countries moved on to steeped teas (such as China and India).

In the sixteenth century, performative tea practices gained popularity, primarily practiced by the rich, and this is where the modern tea ceremony drew its roots. (origins: temples)

In the modern tea ceremony, this process serves as a social event, a ceremony with religious dimension, and draws aspects of many fields. Floral arrangements, interior design, and cooking are a few of the fields that go into just the everyday ceremony, as aesthetics are paramount in this process. (**Floral arrangements- *Chabana*** (茶花) is the simple style of flower arrangement used in tea ceremony. *Chabana* has its roots in ikebana, an older style of Japanese flower arranging, which has roots in Shinto Buddhism. Silence is a must during practices of ikebana. It is a time to appreciate things in nature that people often overlook because of their busy lives. One becomes more patient and tolerant of differences, not only in nature, but also in other places. **Cooking-** Kaiseki (懐石) is a meal served in the formal tea function. Only fresh seasonal ingredients are used, with flavor being the focus of the dish. Great care is taken in selecting ingredients and types of food, and the finished dishes are carefully presented on serving ware that is chosen to enhance the appearance and seasonal theme of the meal.)

Zen Buddhism is the religion most identified with this process, as they emphasize on full emersion and focus which goes along perfectly with this ceremony (as a wandering mind can tamper with the form in the ritual). They also emphasize the thought of a heart free of selfish desires and the details of the process more so than the outcome of this ceremony.

This complex ceremony evolved over hundreds of years to become this complex art form, unique to Japan leading one to believe that Japan wasn't backwards as some people thought if they could form something such as this.

**Object 1:**

**Kannon (Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara)**, Kamakura Period (1185-1333),  
13th Century

Artist unknown

Japanese

Wood with polychrome, traces of lacquer, gold dust, crystal

Adolph D. & Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 67.18.1



**Question:** When you first look at this piece, what feeling does it evoke or what does it remind you of?

**Sensory Inventory/ formal analysis:**

- Aura of grandeur, monumental
- Calming
- Smooth and simple
- Complex platform juxtaposes Buddhism's thought on ridding oneself from unnecessary worldly possessions (since it's ornate) and juxtaposes the sculpture itself
- Eye drawn to gold (on rims of eyes, bracelets, and lotus)
- Draped cloth on his legs leads the eyes slowly up to Kannon himself in almost a sweeping motion
- Balance
- Fluidity

**Object Information:** The bodhisattva/ Buddha of compassion or mercy and is a significant deity in Pure Land Buddhism. Usually portrayed as a female. Some Buddhists believe that once they depart from the earth, they are placed by Guanyin in the heart of a lotus, and then sent to the western pure land of Sukhāvātī (the celestial realm or pure abode of a Buddha or Bodhisattva). The rendition of the name of this deity, Kwannon, was used for an earlier spelling of the well-known camera manufacturer Canon, The company was originally named *Seikikōgaku kenkyūsho* (jap. 精機光学研究所, *Precision Optical Industry Co. Ltd.*). In 1934 it produced the *Kwanon*, a prototype for Japan's first-ever 35 mm camera with a focal plane based shutter and named the company after it.

This sculpture is actually in five pieces, joined with hemp. Since the Heian period (794 to 1185), statues like this were coated with lacquer to protect it from cracking and other environmental inducing damage. There are tiny holes within the whole piece that quite possibly comes from insect damage after the lacquer had mostly worn off. The hands and forearms have been restored. This type of sculpture is highly reflective of the classical styles in the Kamakura period.

**Question:** What is the significance of Pure Land Buddhism and of the lotus?

Lotus Sutra- a religious text influential in Mahāyāna Buddhism or Pure Land Buddhism. The lotus flower represents a symbol of fortune in the Buddhist religion. It grows in muddy water, and it is in this environment that it gets this one meaning: rising and blooming above the murk to achieve total immersion in one's self and religion, as well as enlightenment. The second meaning is purity, purity of the spirit that originated from the murky, more humble depths. The third meaning is faithfulness to rise and to work free from these encumbering waters. Golden lotus means one has reached the achievement of enlightenment. Pure Land Buddhism focuses on rebirth and mindfulness with emphasis on meditation and self-reflection, as he is practicing this

**Question:** What is the relationship between tea and Buddhism?

Practice of making tea came from temples. Became popular in the monk's rituals. Used to stimulate self-reflection/personal enlightenment and to challenge the mind, a calling of Buddhism. Encompasses sight, sound, taste and inner thought. Emphasizes harmony, purity, tranquility, and reverence cherished by Buddhists. Inner purification and brings one in harmony with nature

**Transition:** Now we will go to what sets the atmosphere of the tea ceremony and adds a little rivalry too (with sensory games).

**Object 2:**

**Incense Box (*Kogo*),** Edo Period (1615-1868), ca. 1830

Eiraku Hozen

Japanese

Eiraku ware; stoneware with three-color glaze

Gift of Mr. Pat Booth, Jr., 92.146a-b



**Question:** When you first look at this piece, what do you observe?

**Sensory Inventory/ formal analysis-**

- Analogous color scheme with green and yellow
- Muted foreground (dark green and brown), yellow adds pop to that
- Three segmented areas with different plants in them, separated by organic trunk-like shape
- Pine, Bamboo and plum blossoms present
- Pine and Bamboo- evergreens, plum blossoms- during a certain season
- Use of Kochi- raised lines in clay

**Background Information:** Characteristics of Edo Period in Art: Relationship of art and life became more coexistent during this period, drawing influences from all over the world, spawned experimentation, higher level of ornamental refinement and technical perfection in even daily used items (interesting structure and curve in handle technical approach), “Aesthetic rebellion” against the tight socio-political sphere of the Tokugawa government, aestheticism then central to visual arts.

**Object Information:** Pine, bamboo and plum blossoms symbolize longevity, strength and prosperity. Eiraku was invited to the Kii Province to make porcelain wares of local daimyo where he obtained the right to use a seal bearing the name of Eiraku, which is on the bottom of his works. He received the most recognition for his *sometsuke* (blue-and-white) and *kinrande* (gold and enamel) pieces. Decorative style of Kochi displays one of the aspects of Hozen's work.

This box was used for storing the incense balls for the ceremony (these incense balls were placed on a brazier of hot charcoals). Kōdō (incense ceremony in the tea process) included identifying the fragrances used, writing poems, and playing various sensory games. These practices were primarily done by the aristocratic classes of this period. Kōdō is one of the three classical Japanese arts of refinement (kadō for flower arrangement, kōdō for incense, and chadō for tea and the tea ceremony). Once the guests are seated, the host enters the tea room carrying a large incense with all the implements inside and an assistant carries in a writing table and utensils. A piece of charcoal is placed into a incense heater, then a tiny piece of incense wood is

placed on a plate of mica to be warmed by the set charcoal. The guests are supposed to pass around the heater and to try to identify the scent of this wood and are required to write it down. The person who identifies the most woodchips is the victor. Genjikō is a game in which participants are to determine which of five prepared censers contain different scents, and which contain the same scent. Bonding experience as well as a “sensory journey” of reflection.

**Question:** What games to you usually play at your parties?!

**Transition:** Now we will go to the source of the practice of the tea ceremony that also defines its reflective qualities, religion.

### Object 3:

**Ewer,** Edo Period (1615-1868), 17th Century

Artist unknown

Japanese

Negoro ware; red & black lacquer on wood

Arthur & Margaret Glasgow Fund, 73.41a-c



**Question:** When you look at this piece, what do you think it’s made of?

### Sensory Inventory/ formal analysis:

- Vermillion lacquer, worn down to show black underneath
- Tin or metal-like surface quality
- Structured and clean
- Symmetric in regards to the pot itself, not the spout
- Elegant form and exaggerated curves

**Object Information:** This object is made from Negoro Lacquer, peasant and monk (monastic) origins. Negoro lacquer is known for its layer red lacquer over black. It was first made by the priests of the Negoro-dera temple in the Kamakura period (1185–1333). Starting in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it was made for daily use in at first temples and then households. Negoro later became the common name for such red and black lacquers. Weathered surface of this piece (showing the black) shows that the object has been respectfully used for its purpose, a valued quality.

Used either to hold hot water for the preparation of tea in Zen temples or as a vessel to pour sake into cups in formal occasions. Tea utensils were given to acknowledge one’s service to the shogun (hereditary military dictator of Japan), particularly in battle. An example of this was Nobunaga (a shogun that was the initiator of the unification of Japan) who gave out utensils. He required his daimyo (territorial lords) though to find and give to him famous tea accessories that he admired.

**Background:** The tea ceremony around this time finally made it away from the temples and to the warriors and shogunate classes for a social and bonding experience through refreshment and conversation. Still not widespread and it was a high privilege to be allowed to give them (right granted by shogun overall). It was such a privilege that it is said that the warrior and daimyo over Hideyoshi, when obtaining this right, was moved to tears at this rare opportunity.

**Question:** Do you think this piece should be considered art and showed off like so in a museum?

**Conclusion:** I hope that you enjoyed a spiritual take on tea and the complexity of the ceremony and culture that goes along with it. Thank you for coming on my tour and I hope that you will come back and visit the museum again!

# Museum Leaders in Training

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**Welcome to...** The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
**my name is...** Morgan Hayes  
**and I am part of the...** Museum Leaders in Training Program

**Introduction:** I hope you all are just as excited as I am to show you around the Baroque gallery. Now while many Baroque paintings are similar in the sense that they're often dark and mysterious, we're going to look into the galleries at some pieces to get a deeper look into why some of these paintings give off that feeling and why the artist chose to paint the subject that way. Now in paintings, the lighting is everything. The lighting can convey a feeling of trust, hope, sadness, and fear and in Baroque art, the most important feeling to convey is mystique.

**Question:** So, what do you all like about Baroque art? What is the first impression you get from Baroque art? Well, the name, Baroque, came from the German word "barockgeschmack" which refers to a misshapen pearl.

**Object 1:**  
**Saint Jerome**, 17th century

Strozzi, Bernardo

Italian

Oil on canvas

Private Collection, L.75.2011



**Object Information:** Okay, so this is the first piece. It's called *Saint Jerome* and it's by an Italian painter, Bernardo Strozzi.

**Question:** What are some parts of the piece that you're responding to?

**Question:** What part of the figure stands out to you?

**Question:** What emotions are you feeling from the piece, if any?

**Question:** What do you notice about the lighting and color pallet?

**Question:** What in this piece could possibly symbolize something?

**Object Information:** So, as you could expect, the painting is a portrait of Saint Jerome. Saint Jerome is an important figure in both Catholic and many Protestant religions because he is often credited with the translation of the Bible into Latin, which explains the little book.

**Question:** So why do you think Strozzi would paint Saint Jerome?

**Object Information:** Well, Strozzi was actually a monk until about the age of 29 when he had to leave the monastery to care for his family. He started painting to make money and depicted many other saints and scenes from the Bible throughout his career.

**Question:** But why do you think Strozzi wanted to show a saint in this sort of lighting and way?

**Transition:** So sticking with the theme of Christianity for a second, our next piece actually features Christ. This piece captures the spirit of baroque painting perfectly.

**Object 2:**

***The Mocking of Christ***, 17th century

Stomer, Mattias (or Mattias Stom)

Dutch

Oil on canvas

Private Collection, L.119.96



**Object Information:** This is called *The Mocking of Christ* by Mattias Stomer. This refers to the scenes in the Bible involving Jesus being crowned with thorns before his crucifixion. This scene is usually depicted more in Germanic baroque pieces than Dutch baroque pieces. Personally when I see this painting, the first thing my eyes shoot to are the faces of the men around Christ.

**Question:** What parts of the piece are you responding to?  
(If someone points out faces again) Their faces are extremely strange and the lighting really ups the bizarre ante of the painting.

**Transition:** Now that we've taken a look at two very well-known figures, let's take a look at something a bit smaller and "indie".

**Object 3:**

***A Boy With a Roemer of Wine By Candlelight***, ca. 1623

ter Brugghen, Hendrick

Dutch

Oil on canvas

Private Collection, L.74.2011



**Object Information:** Our final piece is called *Boy with Roemer of Wine by Candlelight*. This is by the Dutch artist, Hendrick ter Brugghen.

**Question:** What's one word to describe this piece?  
Well it is very mysterious in the sense that we don't know who the subject is.

**Question:** What do you feel when you look at this piece?

**Question:** What does the red in the piece symbolize to you?

**Question:** Why do you think the lighting is the way it is in this piece?

**Question:** What could it say about the boy?

**Object Information:** Well, Hendrick ter Brugghen was part of the Utrecht Caravaggis, mostly Dutch artists that were heavily influenced by Caravaggio. This being the case, it isn't uncommon for simple portraits to be shown in a bizarre, mysterious light.

**Conclusion:** And with that we have reached the end of our tour of the mysterious and dark paintings of the Baroque era. As we discussed before, the lighting is an all important element of painting and is an unavoidable aspect of Baroque art. So before we go, raise your hand if you learned something new. Raise your hand if you didn't. Raise your hand if you had fun.

# Museum Leaders in Training

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**Welcome to...** The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
**my name is...** Alexandra Howells  
**and I am part of the...** Museum Leaders in Training Program

**Introduction:** French Impressionists were named ‘impressionists’ because of their loose, visible brush strokes and images that only captured and conveyed the essence of the object, not the nuances of its appearance - the sketchy or unrefined quality of their pieces. However, there are multiple ways to accomplish an unfinished aesthetic, multiple approaches exhibited in just this gallery.

**Transition:** The first piece actually *is* unfinished, as the artist never intended to finish it. Most books detailing how to draw talk about creating a skeleton of the basic shapes before trying to solidify the outline and details, which certainly reminds me of what I see here in three dimensions.

## Object 1:

***Horse Walking***, ca. 1865-1881

Degas, Hilaire Germain Edgar

French

Red wax

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon 93.57



**Object Information:** *Horse Walking* by Edgar Degas, a French impressionist that lived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, primarily focused on capturing movement in his subjects. At one point, *Horse Walking* might have been a template for bronze sculpture, except that when Degas exhibited his first bronze work, *Dressed Dancer at Rest* (motion to statue in distance), it received a highly negative response, so he never exhibited his bronze work again in his lifetime.

**Question:** If he did not intend to cast this in bronze, can anyone guess what it was used for?

It was intended for use as a model, used as a reference for a horse's anatomy when a living horse, itself, was not on hand. It is more apparent with the wax ballerinas on the other side of the room.

(Wax Ballerinas): The cases for these sculptures are bolted to the floor, to prevent any accidental jostling from disrupting the poses, and feature two layers of glass and a robust air conditioning system for climate control – otherwise, the wax could very easily melt. Honestly, it's a miracle we have them here today, considering how fragile they actually are. They survived for over a century, when they could have melted or changed position at any moment. Despite France's usually comfortable climate, it has been known to have hot, humid summers, and the only reason that these pieces survived was because they were stored in a dark, cool closet in the back of Degas's workshop, discovered by apprentices and family after his death, and eventually sold to museums.

Degas used these sculptures as references for the poses in his paintings. They would have been particularly useful because of how easy they are to reposition.

I've always wondered how Degas, himself, would react at the knowledge that these were being exhibited here – practice pieces, much like quick sketches you make in the margins of your notes. Remarkable for the talent they show, but intended as quick unfinished pieces or anatomy studies nonetheless.

(Back to *Horse Walking*). Similar to a how to draw book starting with basic shapes of circles and rectangles, Degas would have started his research working with a real life horse, analyzing and capturing its every move in muscle, attitude and composure. He studied the anatomy at length and, most likely, prepared sketches on-location that would serve as blueprints for his studio work in ultimately creating a bronze sculpture using the lost wax process. The sketches were used to create the three dimensional wax sculptures, a very pliable medium, which in turn would have been used to create a mold to cast the bronze.

Quick and unfinished, please enjoy looking closely to see all the evidence of its making, the finger prints and tool markings.

**Transition:** While working from anatomy studies is all well and good, there is something to be said about working from real life. Our next artist, Berthe Morisot, understood this, a champion of painting 'en plein air', or painting on-site, specifically defined as *in the open air*.

## Object 2:

*Young Woman Watering a Shrub*, 1876

Morisot, Bertha

French

Oil on canvas

Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Mellon, 83.40



**Object Information:** Berthe Morisot was remarkable in that she was a woman in a time where, as you all know; being a female in a professional field was exceptionally difficult. Think of the music industry, how cut-throat it is, how there are so many people in it but only a select few that can really thrive. It is the same for visual artists, and having been disadvantaged due to gender does not make it any easier. This is a world where many talented individuals get waylaid because they lacked the connections to exhibit their work in public, but thankfully Morisot had connections to one of the *most* influential impressionists at the time – Edouard Manet, who knew many other influential impressionist artists. They became very close friends, convincing Manet to paint *en plein air*, and she ended up marrying his brother. The most lasting image of Morisot was a portrait painted by Manet himself.

Interestingly, various art critics have seen the influence that Manet had on Berthe Morisot's style; however the reverse was discovered to be the same, *en plein air*, just one example. Morisot's style is very distinctive, as you can see in her work here, *Young Woman Watering a Shrub*. Particularly, her use of line is very interesting. All impressionists use brush strokes to create texture, but she turns single brush strokes into fences and furniture, and if you look closely at the woman's skirt, you can even see how it has been outlined there.

Essentially, if Degas' piece is a skeleton of shapes, Morisot's work is an outline – the second step in creating a finished piece of artwork.

As to the content, *Young Woman Watering a Shrub* is typical of Morisot's chosen subject matter – her portraits were usually candid pieces of women and female children.

**Question:** What makes it particularly interesting is the identity of the woman herself – can anyone guess who she is?

Perhaps you might notice a degree of familiarity between the artist and subject as this was Berthe's sister, Edma. They were very close growing up, studying art as apprentices to Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, along with their older sister Yves, who would eventually drop out due to monetary concerns. Edma and Berthe went on to study under Joseph Guichard, and when they gained permission to exhibit their work at the Salon de Paris – the annual exhibition of art put on by l'Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris – they exhibited their work together. At least, until Edma got married, at which point she gave up art altogether.

Eventually, though, she came to regret the loss of her partnership with Berthe. At one point, Edma wrote:

*"...I am often with you in thought, dear Berthe. I'm in your studio and I like to slip away, if only for a quarter of an hour, to breathe that atmosphere that we shared for many years..."*

Edma has become little more than a ghost to the art world, it is nearly impossible to find her paintings anywhere in a catalogue; she is so overshadowed by her sister.

### **Object 3:**

***View of Paris***, 19th century

Lépine, Stanislas

French

Oil on canvas



Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Paul Mellon, 83.30

**Object Information:** Stanislas Lépine is a similarly elusive figure. The majority of substantive scholarship on him is in French – and French artistic lexicon is very difficult to penetrate, for non-native speakers. He, too, studied under Jean-Baptiste Corot, just like the Morisot sisters, except that he specialized in landscape work. However, despite his similar tutelage, you can see that his style is not entirely impressionistic, nor is he generally considered an impressionist, as he preferred to isolate himself from the artistic circles. Thus, this work, *View of the Seine*, appears the most polished, completed, of them all. Compare the buildings from *Young Woman*, smoky, insubstantial structures, with those you see here, and look at the detailed reflection on the water.

Having grown up on the coast of Normandy, the coastal areas of Northern France, water was obviously a large part of his life, as it continued to be when he moved to Paris. The majority of his works feature the Seine in some way, shape or form, as he became entranced by the intricate scenes taking place on the banks and the delicate bridges that sewed the two halves of the city together.

Lépine studied under Corot during the last years of Corot's life. They met in 1859, when Corot was 24 and Lépine was 63, in Normandy. The following year, Lépine began his tutelage. Corot's methods had changed from concentrating on breadth of tonality in his color palette and thicker application of paint to a restrained color palette, carefully controlled strokes and thoughtfully rendered compositions heightening a poetic effect of the imagery.

Corot's influence can be seen in Lépine's use of a discreet color palette, tones which appear transparent and reflect the colors beneath. The characteristics of the painting evoke the lyrical and poetic effect of Corot's work, but placed in a contemporary, urban setting. The completeness of the work, compared to the others

we have been discussing, can be seen in the absolutes, the defined lines rendering substantial structures continued with linear translation in the reflection.

**Conclusion:** If Degas' piece is a skeleton of shapes, Morisot's work is an outline and Lépine's is the frame and substance creating a more finished piece of artwork.

We have come to appreciate Impressionism for its break from traditions of academic subject matter, portraying objects and scenes of a modern Paris life, from the Seine to the sidewalks. The everyday subject matter is a defining characteristic of 'impressionism', horses walking, a young woman watering a shrub and a view of Paris. Like the varied subject matter, the rendered techniques of impressionistic art is a continuum, from the sketchiest skeletons to the more defined lines delineating objects and subjects, incorporating degrees of interplay of light and color blends found in nature. There are as many forms of 'impressionism' as there are artists, as is true for every other movement – this is no standardized science or precise math. These various examples of incompleteness in works of art, be it literal incompleteness or stylistic, portrays a spectrum. However, for the most of us, the expression is what we have come to love, the evidence of the brushwork in the paintings or the unrefined quality of the sculpture, what is not defined on canvas or finished in a sculpture.

# Museum Leaders in Training

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**Welcome to...** The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
**my name is...** Brad Lankford and I am a junior at Appomattox Regional Governor's School  
**and I am part of the...** Museum Leaders in Training Program

**Introduction:** Today I will be taking you on an exploration on the role of comfort and functionality in conjunction with the Art Deco movement. Feel free to ask any questions you would like during the tour and I will try to answer them to the best of my ability!

## Object 1:

**Sofa (for Jacques Doucet residence, Paris, France), ca. 1927**

Marcel Coard

French

Rosewood, ivory, leather

Gift of Sydney & Frances Lewis, 85.99



**Object Information:** This piece was created by Marcel Coard.

**Question:** Does anyone think they know the name of this piece?

You'd never guess, he named it *Sofa*, for reasons I can't explain. This piece embodies the curvilinear aspects that are involved with the Art Deco movement. One of my favorite qualities of this piece is its timelessness. You could see this piece during any time period. I could see it being sold in IKEA today, even. You can also find some influences of the sister movement of Art Deco, which is Art Nouveau. One can notice the Art Nouveau influences primarily in the lines of the piece. If you look closely, you'll notice there isn't a single 90 degree angle in this work. A lot, if not all, Art Nouveau pieces lack straight lines and shapes. With Coard's piece, the dark colors that are involved in the work help give the sofa a sense of home. The warm tones help give the piece an inviting feeling. Which obviously benefits the overall piece, considering it is a sofa. The white borders for the wooden part help frame the piece and it sort of brings out the piece more, which helps catch your eye.

**Question:** How many of you seen the Great Gatsby movie?

Well, the Art Deco movement aesthetic is the exact type that set designers used as a guideline when decorating the sets for Gatsby, considering that the novel took place during the roaring and glamorous twenties. So sofas, along with other furniture much like this can be seen in the movie.

**Question:** Are there any questions?

**Object 2:**

*Pirogue Chaise Longue*, ca. 1919-1920

Eileen Gray

French

Lacquer, wood, silver leaf

Gift of Sydney & Frances Lewis, 85.112



**Object Information:** This is the *Pirogue Chaise Longue* by Eileen Gray. Its English translation is “Canoe Lounger”. My favorite aspect of this piece is the legs that hold it up. The shadow it creates is quite interesting. The colors in this lounge are more muted than the last, and it sort of gives it more of an artistic look than the sofa by Marcel Coard which seemed more commercially inclined. Much like the Coard’s piece, there are no 90 degree angles. Therefore, it shares the same curvilinear lines as the last. The creator, Eileen Gray, was considered to be a pioneer of Modernism within architecture.

**Question:** Would you consider the lounge more of a sculptural piece or more of a furniture design piece?

Personally, I think it’s a successful harmony of both. To me, the legs of the piece provide the sculptural success along with the elongated wings.

**Question:** Are there any questions?

**Object 3:**

*Sun Bed, for Jane Renouardt residence, Saint Cloud, France,--Lit Soleil*, designed 1923, made 1930

Ruhlmann, Emile-Jacques, made for Ruhlmann et Laurent--Deroubaix, Jules, cabinetmaker of headboard

French

Macassar ebony, white oak

Gift of Sydney & Frances Lewis, 85.130



**Object Information:** This luxurious work of functional art was designed by Ruhlmann utilizing his favorite wood which was Macassar Ebony, a veneer technique he helped revive. The bed showcases some of Ruhlmann’s best craftsmanship that is found primarily within the bed’s headboard. In order to perfect the bed, Ruhlmann’s craftsmen worked 252½ hours on the bed to ensure quality control. Ruhlmann managed to achieve perfect symmetry with the piece by doing so and ended up with a lovely creation. There is also a lovely balance of color.

Upon entering the gallery room in which the bed is placed, one will immediately realize that the bed serves as the centerpiece of the room. Replicating an actual bedroom, the bed is surrounded by other beautifully crafted Art Deco works that help accentuate a sense of accommodation.

**Question:** How much do you think this bed would be worth?

The bed was sold in 1930 for 11,375 francs which is approximately 12,011.66 in US currency. The bed was relocated from St. Cloud (the place it was made) to Madame Renouardt's Paris apartment. Renouardt, a former milliner, became a well-known actress which was primarily the reason she was able to afford the bed. It was obvious that Renouardt did not want any ordinary bed, but a true work of art. Not many people can say that it took 252.5 hours to produce their bed.

Ruhlmann utilized some of the best and most expensive materials available in order to impress the eyes of many. This was a trademark of the Art Deco movement since the movement took place in a time that was centered on the return to prosperity after times of solemnity.

**Question:** Are there any questions?

**Conclusion:** This concludes my tour! I hope that I provided you with some interesting information concerning the role of furniture art along with the Art Deco movement. Be sure to check out the Tom Wesselmann exhibit and enjoy your time at the VMFA!

# Museum Leaders in Training

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**Welcome to...** The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
**my name is...** Yeong Lee  
**and I am part of the...** Museum Leaders in Training Program

**Introduction:** Every culture has its own unique stories to tell. These stories don't necessarily have to be passed down by words. They can also be depicted as paintings or visual representations as Ancient Greeks and Romans had done on their potteries. All the artworks in this tour will be amphorae. An amphora is a type of container which was used for the transport and storage of various products, especially food, mostly wine. They are mostly found in ceramics but others in metals have been found. Now, most of these are placed in art museums like the VMFA and give aesthetic pleasure to the visitors, but back then their purpose was solely utilitarian. For example, think of them as Lenox Butterfly Meadow cups. They have beautiful pictures of butterflies interacting with flowers, but we use them to drink water out of them. Like us, Ancient Greeks and Romans, too, decorated their tools, in this case, with mythology.

## Object 1:

**Black-Figure Neck-Amphorae (Storage Vessels)**, 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.

Group E (attributed to a painter of)

Greek (Attic)

Terracotta

Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Fund, 60.23



**Object Information:** The first work is called the Black-Figured Amphora. It was created in 6th century B.C.E. in Attica which was a region of Ancient Greece.

**Question:** Looking at the amphora, what do you notice about the people depicted?

**Object Information:** Ancient Greeks and Romans depicted women in white and men in black. The woman in the picture is known to be Aphrodite. This side depicts the story of Athena's birth. She was the goddess of war and wisdom.

**Question:** Does anyone know from where she was born?

**Object Information:** She was born out of the head of Zeus, king of the gods. Zeus swallowed his first wife, Metis who was already pregnant with Athena. Then Athena sprang fully grown and armed from Zeus's head. In many versions of the story, Zeus's headache was so severe that he asks the blacksmith god Hephaestus to split his skull open with an ax.

**Question:** Why would Zeus swallow Metis?

**Object Information:** There was a prophecy that if Metis bore a son, then the son would overthrow his father, Zeus. Remember that Zeus had also overthrown his father, Cronus, who had overthrown his own father, too. The other side portrays the famous Greek hero Hercules also called Herakles. What is that famous must-have fashion item that you think of him? *The lion coat.* This lion is the Nemean Lion, which was

known for its golden fur that was impervious to attack. This scene shows Hercules fighting with the lion and we know that eventually Hercules defeats the lion and wears him around.

**Transition:** Shifting back to Athena, what famous war was she associated with? The Trojan War. The next piece shows the heated competition between Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite that ultimately caused the Trojan War.

**Object 2:**

*Black-Figure Neck-Amphorae (Storage Vessels), 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.*

Antimenes Painter (attributed to)

Greek (Attic)

Terracotta

Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Fund, 60.27



**Object Information:** This Black Figure Neck Amphora was also created in 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. in Attica. As I have mentioned previously, one side of this work shows Hermes leading Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite to be judged by Paris (the judgment of Paris) and the other side shows the return of Helen to Menelaus after the fall of Troy.

Zeus held a banquet in celebration of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis. Eris, the goddess of discord, was not invited for her troublesome nature, and upon turning up uninvited, she threw a golden apple into the ceremony, with an inscription that read "to the fairest." Three goddesses claimed the apple: Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite. They brought the matter before Zeus. Not wanting to get involved, Zeus assigned the task to Paris of Troy. Paris had demonstrated his exemplary fairness previously when he awarded a prize unhesitatingly to Ares after the god, in bull form, had bested his own prize bull.

This particular scene is of Hermes, who had received Zeus's order to deliver the apple to Paris, leads the goddesses to Paris. Each of them offers him a bribe in return for the apple. Hera offered to make him the king of Europe and Asia, Athena offered him wisdom and skill in battle, and Aphrodite offered him the most beautiful woman in the world (in this case Helen of Sparta, who was already married to Menelaus). Paris accepts Aphrodite's offer and he elopes with Helen, thus starting the Trojan War.

As we know Troy fell when they accepted the "Trojan Horse" into their city. After that, Helen returned to her husband and the war finally ended after nine years

**Question:** After hearing the story, can you identify each goddess on side A?

**Object Information:** Right- Hera, Middle- Athena, Left- Aphrodite. Discuss the reason.

**Question:** Was the Trojan War truly necessary? What would you have done if you were Paris or King Menelaus?

**Object Information:** There were many noteworthy heroes during this war. Some of these include Achilles, Odysseus, Orestes, Hector, Aeneas, and Agamemnon. Agamemnon was the brother of Menelaus so he, of course, fought for the Greeks. Despite his heroism during the war, he pissed off his wife Clytemnestra when he sacrificed his own daughter to appease Artemis. Upon his return, he is killed by his wife and her lover. The next amphora will show the afterwards of his death, specifically of his son Orestes.

**Object 3:**

**Red-Figured Neck-Amphora**, ca. 330 B.C.E.

Danaid Painter (attributed to)

South Italian (Campanian)

Glazed terracotta

Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 90.188



**Object Information:** This work is from South Italy. It is dated to be from around 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. This one shows a scene of Orestes, Agamemnon's son, and his sister Electra at their father, Agamemnon's grave.

**Question:** Before I begin with the story, what do you notice about this work that is different from the other two?

**Object Information:** The woman's face is not painted white. It could be a cultural difference. The other two were Greek and this one is Roman. So anyways, angry Orestes decides to avenge his father's death by murdering his mother and her lover with his sister's help. However, he is then haunted by deities that avenge patricide and matricide called Furies. But he is forgiven by the gods later on.

**Interactive Component:** Charades: I will give one volunteer a word or a scene to act out and the group can guess the answer

**Concluding Question:** After the tour, why do you think ancient Greeks and Romans used these round objects to portray their mythology?

**Conclusion:** The shapes are round (sides are theoretically "infinite"). I like to tie in their belief that their gods were immortal with the shape. The gods' immortality is shown on the infinitely round objects.

Stories are intertwined with our daily lives. Our own lives are stories that we as the authors create. The Ancient Romans and Greeks' lives were so influenced by their mythology that they usually depicted them visually. I hope that you enjoyed this brief story-time. Thank you for listening and make sure to check out the gift shop (?) if you haven't yet.

## Museum Leaders in Training

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**Welcome to...** The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
**my name is...** Charlotte Mitchell  
**and I am part of the...** Museum Leaders in Training Program

**Introduction:** Just a couple reminders before we get started: please, no food or drink in any of the galleries, stay at least twelve inches away from the artwork, and only pencils are to be used while in the galleries (no pens!).

Today I will be talking about three pieces of art from the Colonial American gallery. My focus is on portraiture and its improvement throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with an emphasis on female subjects. The first painting on this tour is *Mary Jacquelin* and it is attributed to Nehemiah Partridge.

### Object 1:

***Mary Jacquelin***, ca. 1722-23

Partridge, Nehemiah (attributed to)

American

Oil on canvas

Gift of Alice Holliday Miller, Lucy Holliday O'Neal & William Jaquelin Holliday, 60.40



**Object Information:** Nehemiah Partridge lived primarily in Boston and made his living selling paints and oils and continued with his knowledge of art materials to become a limner. At that time, limners were artists who often did paintings or illustrations for items such as fire screens, clock faces, indoor murals, and the like. They were also commissioned to paint portraits of well-known citizens of towns and cities. Nehemiah Partridge was commissioned by the Jacquelin family to paint their portraits in order to show off their wealth and prestige, a tactic very common at the time.

The Jacquelin family was a rich family in Jamestown at the time of this painting. The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts owns three of the portraits painted for the entire Jacquelin family by Nehemiah Partridge. Martha Jacquelin is currently off-view. The portrait of Mary Jacquelin has a simple background and Mary is central in the painting. She is holding a bouquet of flowers, which, like her face, body and clothing, almost look cartoonish. They are flat and boldly colored and have harsh highlights and very little shadowing.

Characteristically, limner paintings are flat, frontal facing portraits of disproportional figures, painted in poses and compositions generally copied from English engravings, or mezzotints. This strategy allows the limner – who is generally uneducated with very little artistic experience – to paint a portrait that looks prestigious without any necessary creativity to create an original composition. As a result, the figure's faces often have a faint resemblance to the sitter and the subject looks rigid and awkward in their sitting position. The portraits of the Jacquelin family were painted primarily to preserve the memory of each family member as well as to display their social and monetary success in society. Multiple oil portraits were a symbol of wealth.

**Object 2:*****Susannah Marshal***, 1749-1752

Wollaston, John

American

Oil on canvas

Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 76.38.2



**Object Information:** The second portrait on this tour is by John Wollaston and is of *Susannah Marshal*. John Wollaston mainly painted portraits that showed half to three-quarters of the sitter's body and his subjects are characteristically painted with "slanted, almond-shaped eyes." His earlier works depict portraits of well-off citizens with simple backgrounds and dark clothing, but later he began to experiment with richer and brighter fabrics and developed detailed backgrounds in his paintings. *Susannah Marshal* is a half painting of a woman who is wearing opulent clothing and who has Wollaston's iconic almond eyes. The background is not developed and is mostly black, and while the figure is somewhat proportional the image still appears flat on the canvas. While it is a drastic improvement from the awkward portrait of *Mary Jacquelin*, the portrait itself does not look realistic and is lacking in creativity in terms of background detail and facial shadowing and detail. As it is said on the Museum label, Susannah Marshall was one of many daughters of a New England merchant. She never married.

**Object 3:*****Mrs. Isaac Royall***, ca. 1767-69, & ca. 1777-78

Singleton, John

American

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mrs. Adolph D. Williams, 49.11.2



**Object Information:** The last portrait on this tour is *Mrs. Isaac Royall* by John Singleton Copley. This portrait was painted at the time of her husband's portrait, one year before Mrs. Royall's death. She is shown in a gray gown with a black shawl, and her hair is tucked into a bonnet. This is a three-quarter-length portrait, and shows a relatively developed and detailed background looking out over a landscape. There is also a column behind the red upholstered chair she is seated in. After his wife's death, Mr. Royall moved to London. After his arrival, he commissioned Copley for a second time to paint over his original creation in order to modernize the late Mrs. Royall's clothing with London's fashion at the time. Her hairline was altered to accommodate the bonnet, and her sleeve was shortened from a long, flowy sleeve and a bracelet on her wrist was painted over. The painting itself is well-structured, and the subject's face has depth and detail that makes the portrait seem more. While the composition of the portrait is very similar to that of Copley's *Mrs. Seymour Fort*, the facial structure and representation is unique to whom we can assume is Mrs. Isaac Royall.

Copley spent his early life in Boston living with his mother and stepfather. He was educated as a young person, but taught himself the art of portraiture and gained fame and success as he began painting prominent figures in his society. His portrait, *Boy With a Squirrel*, was displayed in a prominent exhibition in London, and as a result he became well known in Europe as well. He continued correspondence with artist Benjamin West, who encouraged him to visit Europe to further strengthen his portraiture skills. Copley was, at first, reluctant

to leave New England where he was a popular portrait artist with no shortage of commissions. His skills were beyond many portrait artists before him as he was able to capture a strong likeness to his commissioner and choose rich colors that complimented and supported his subject matter.

***Conclusion:*** Colonial American portraiture changed and developed a lot from the early, flat and unoriginal limners of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century to Copley's rich and realistic portraits of the late 1700s. Composition and pose became more and more original, and the faces were painted so that the commissioner or sitter was easily recognizable.

# Museum Leaders in Training

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**Welcome to...** The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
**my name is...** Veronica Parker  
**and I am part of the...** Museum Leaders in Training Program

**Introduction:** Today we will explore the British sporting art section of the Mellon Gallery in a quest to gain a sense of a few ways the horse is featured in art. We will begin with a sculpture of the horse as depicted in nature, then move on to a painting displaying one of the many ways humans interact with these animals. Lastly our tour will take us to the realm of myths and legends with a work that melds both of the first pieces together into a creature that is neither man nor beast, but something in-between.

## Object 1:

**Horse Surprised By a Lion**, ca. 1850

Barye, Antoine-Louis

French

Bronze

Gift of Mrs. Nelson L. St. Clair, Jr., 2003.163



**Question:** What is your first impression of this work?

**Object Information:** The first work we will look at today is titled *Horse Surprised by a Lion*. It is a bronze sculpture done by the French artist Antoine-Louis Barye in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is typical of this artist to show animals in mortal combat. Barye's training led him to develop a style that is a mix of romanticism, classical, and realism, which can be seen in the movement and dramatic positioning of this sculpture. The muscles on the lion and on the horse are highly defined which can be attributed to Barye's knowledge of animal locomotion and anatomy. This knowledge was widely admired in his time. He was called an 'animalier' by the critics of his time but this term was meant as a slight to the importance of his works. By Barye's continuing challenges of the accepted artistic convention though, sculptures of animals became part of "serious" art.

Another cool fact about the artist is that Barye was all for making art more accessible for all the classes of society. He made multiples of most of his works so that they could be more affordable, and so that more people could enjoy his sculptures. His most popular works were sometimes cast in many different sizes as well so that they could 'fit everybody's mantelpiece'. I find the struggle depicted in this piece reminds me of the idea Hobbes talked about when referring to government, a state of nature. In the state of nature, the rules of man don't exist and there is chaos. This work shows the savagery I would expect from such a place.

**Question:** Does this piece remind you of anything? If so, then what?

**Question:** If you could change one thing about this work what would it be?

**Transition:** Moving on from uncontrolled wilderness, we will see in the next work one aspect of the domestic side of the horse.

**Object 2:**

***The Final Lengths of the Race for the Doncaster Gold Cup*, 1826**

Herring, John Frederick

English

Oil on canvas

Paul Mellon Collection, 99.79



**Object Information:** This work is called *The Final Lengths of the Race for the Doncaster Gold Cup*. It is oil paint on canvas and was created by John Fredrick Herring in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is an English work. The race shown in the painting is an actual race held in England for three year old horses. It is now one of the classic races and today is held annually every September.

**Question:** What is a bit odd about this work?

**Object Information:** The horses in this work are shown with legs stretched out much like the legs on a rocking horse or the legs of a dog are when running. This is not how actual horses run, but at the time this was painted it was the accepted way of depicting horses at full gallop. This all changed of course with the invention of photography. A little bit about the artist now, Herring was self taught and got his start painting coach panels and inn signs. He began to paint sporting scenes for a commission he received and discovered that he was rather good at it. His notoriety and fame as a painter grew so much in fact that he got Queen Victoria as one of his patrons.

Back to the work itself, the jockeys are not positioned in the way we would normally see them in an actual race. This like the horses legs is most likely attributed to his being self taught, and his tendency to distort reality a bit. What I mean by distorting reality, I'm talking about the fact that there were newly built stands for fans that don't show up in his painting. And I'm also talking about the rather stylized horses.

**Question:** Why do you think he chose the setting as he did?

**Question:** Why do you think he left out the stands?

**Transition:** We are reaching the final leg of our tour now, so let us go into the realm of myth and legends where the horse has been elevated to new heights by the human imagination.

**Object 3:**

***Theseus Combating the Centaur Bianor* (sketch), ca. 1846**

Barye, Antoine-Louis

French

Bronze (atelier)

Gift of Mrs. Nelson L. St. Clair, Jr., in memory of her father, Walter T. Rilee, 2002.553



**Object Information:** This work is titled *Theseus Combating the Centaur Bianor* and like the first work it is by Antoine-Louis Barye. This is also a sculpture in bronze, and also depicts a serious life or death struggle between two figures.

**Question:** What do you know about Centaurs, and how else can we compare this work to the other two we have just seen?

**Object Information:** The centaur myth is thought to have been originated from the sight of the first person to ride a horse. If you see a person riding away from you at a distance they do appear to have the lower half of a horse so I can see where this could happen. These creatures were normally party-loving, violent, and rambunctious. They are said to have carried off women in quite a few myths, there is a painting in one of the galleries up stairs that shows just that. Barye was probably inspired by Greek sculpture in his creation of this work and in the subject of the work. He used the hero Theseus once before in his own sculptural depiction of Theseus killing the Minotaur. The hero in this work twists his arm back as if to deliver a killing blow to the bellowing centaur, who's face appears to be like that of an ancient theater mask. These contorted poses lend movement to the work that might otherwise not be present and also help to illustrate the drama of the moment. Once more the muscle tone in the figures displays Barye's skill as an 'animalier'. This work could symbolize the triumph of man over nature, with the centaur representing all that is wild, like the horse and lion sculpture, and Theseus representing humanity.

**Question:** Would this sculpture would be more dramatic in full color or do you think that the dramatic elements are aided by the single color? And Why?

**Question:** What other myths do you know that involve horses?

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, I would say that the horse is found in the art of many different cultures and time periods. This could be for the fact that this animal has served as a farm/pack/domestic animal for many years. I personally find the horse inspiring and fascinating for its power and fluid movement. For the gentleness it can possess as well as the ferocity I also admire the horse. Both of the artists you've seen on this tour had their own reasons for painting or sculpting the horse, but I imagine that at least one time or another they found the subject fascinating for one of the reasons I have just stated. Anyway I hope that you have enjoyed your tour and that you will continue to explore this wonderful gallery on your own sometime.

# Museum Leaders in Training

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**Welcome to...** The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
**my name is...** Joseph Zampetti  
**and I am part of the...** Museum Leaders in Training Program

**Introduction:** Religious objects/idols served different purposes throughout Indian and East Asian history. This depends on the time period and location that the artwork was created in. Also, the intended location of the artwork, whether it is in a home or a temple, affects its purpose. For example, it may have been created as an aesthetic decoration, it may be a functional piece of the architecture, or it may solely be made for worship. While considering the purposes and functions of artwork, we will move to our first piece...

**Transition:** Since the theme of this tour is how location affects the way art is made and how it makes people feel, we are going to do a fun and thought provoking activity about this theme! At each stop we take to discuss the art, I want you to split into groups based on where you think the artwork was intended to go. Then I will ask your group why you chose this and I need you to support your decision with reasons based on the appearance of the art.

**Object 1:**  
*Surya*, 19<sup>th</sup> century

Artist unknown

Indian

Honey-colored sandstone with traces of pigment

Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Fund, 96.34



**Question:** Where do you think this work would have been found?  
Answer: A relief in a Northern Indian Temple wall

**Object Information:** This piece comes from early 19th century Northern India and was located on the wall of a temple as a decorative relief and is made of honey-colored sandstone.

**Questions:** How would you say people felt about the seated figure in the chariot? Do you think he was an ordinary man, someone respected, or even a king or god?

Well it turns out that the seated figure is Surya, the Hindu God of the Sun inside his Sun Chariot pulled by seven horses. Even though he seems highly respected and powerful, this is actually a very modest and humble depiction of him. The simple cart suggests a more human-like and earthly figure than the mystical and divine depiction which is customary of Surya. In his hands he holds lotus flowers and there are seven horse heads, both elements of the composition are symbolic. Does anyone have an idea of what these might symbolize? The lotus flowers in Surya's hands symbolize purity and tranquility. The seven horse heads represent the seven days of the week, the seven Chakras of Hindu faith, and the seven colors of the rainbow that exist in Hindu culture. Finally, the charioteer driving the chariot is Aruna, the Hindu personification of the reddish glow before Sunrise. These elements that are commonly depicted with Surya show his power and divinity. Just as location can affect the purpose of art, it can also affect the materials used.

**Transition:** This sculpture is made from sandstone which is a common material from Northern India and the next sculpture we will visit is made from gray chloritic schist, another common material in India. Before I start, let's do our short activity for this stop!

**Object 2:**

**Seated Ganesha**, early 12<sup>th</sup> century

Artist unknown

Indian

Gray chloritic schist

Nasli & Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Gift of Paul Mellon, 68.8.18



**Question:** Where do you think this work would have been found?

Answer: Located in a Hoysala temple.

**Object Information:** The title of this piece from early 12th century India is *Seated Ganesha*. As we just found out with our activity, it was originally located in a temple which is suggested by its flat backing with slight relief and engraving. The artist did not want to leave the back side incomplete. The purpose of this statue was to be worshipped by devotees and lovers of Ganesha. He holds a relaxed, benign, and regal posture as if he is awaiting his followers and is prepared to be worshipped. Because he is one of the most beloved gods in Hindu faith, the insides of his navel are worn smooth by the ritual touch of people there to worship. Ganesha is described as both kind and intelligent in Hindu belief. As you can see, he is depicted with an oversized round belly, an intricately jeweled crown, a snake belt, and four arms with each hand holding something unique to Ganesha. There is a modaka or sweet rice cake in his trunk which is his favorite delicacy that he is eating from a bowl in his lower left hand. A lotus is in his upper left hand and an axe in his upper right. Does anyone remember what we said that lotus flowers symbolize from our last stop? Finally, he holds the severed end of his tusk in his lower right hand. According to Hindu mythology, Ganesha's steed tripped over a snake on an outing and Ganesha toppled off his mount spilling all of his Rice cakes out of his stomach. The incident was so funny to witness that even the moon laughed. Outraged, he stuffed the cakes back in and secured them in by tying the snake around his belly like a belt. Then he broke off the end of his tusk and flung it at the moon causing it to plummet to the ground. Ganesha promised to return the moon to its place on the condition that at wax and wane each month.

**Transition:** Our last piece told the viewer a story, this next object also tells a story. Once again we need to activate our senses and decide the function based on its appearance.

**Object 3:**

**Kurukulla**, 16<sup>th</sup> century

Artist unknown

Tibetan

Copper alloy, silver, paint

Berthe and John Ford Collection, Kathleen Boone Samuels Memorial Fund, 91.528



**Question:** Where do you think this work would have been found?

Answer: Because it is smaller, this object was probably placed in the home of a wealthy individual or commissioned by royalty. It could have been part of a private shrine or simply a religious idol.

**Object Information:** It is known that it was once part of a larger composition because of the large lug or mount piece on the back. It is a solid cast sculpture with a high copper content which is appropriate for the traditional fiery red complexion of Kurukulla. As a Tibetan custom, her hair and face are painted. She is energetic and shown in a dancing pose with her flowery bow taught and her hand pulling the string that is now missing. Kurukulla uses her bow to destroy ignorance according to Hindu mythology. The lower hands hold a noose, skullcap, and an elephant goad. These objects are attributes to Kurukulla and her fierce and joyful qualities. In the full composition there would have been a figure under her trampling feet who symbolizes passion and desire. Because they are qualities of greed or personal gain, passion and desire are renounced by Hindus.

**Question:** How is *Kurukulla* similar or different from *Seated Ganesha*?

**Conclusion:** Throughout this tour we have explored the relationship between functionality and purpose of Indian Hindu art and their location whether it is in a home, in a shrine, or on a temple. The three objects share a common style and importance of Hindu symbolism. Thank you all for taking the time to listen to my tour and answer questions or interact. I hope you enjoyed learning about Indian and East Asian art. Please come back and visit the museum any time. You could come back to this gallery and impress your friends and family with all of your new knowledge.