

## Mysteries in the Museum

### Tour Description

How did an artist make solid marble look transparent? Solve mysteries posed by art works by looking carefully for clues that reveal their meaning. This family-oriented tour encourages participants to figure out works of art based on what they see going on in them.

- Tour Objective** This tour encourages participants to solve mysteries posed by artworks in the museum by looking carefully at the objects for clues that reveal their meaning.
- Means** Have your group take on the role of detectives, and remind them that their major task is to arrive at conclusions based on what they can *see*. Use open-ended questions that encourage participants to discover mysteries and solutions on their own. Here are some ideas – many suggested by docents!
- Suggested Objects**
- Daumier, *The Fugitives*, about 1868, 54.16 and modeled about 1850, 56.31 – Why are all these people running away? What do you think has happened? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Paleolithic era, *Venus Figure*, about 20,000 BCE, 72.10 – What does the shape of this figure tell us about why it might have been made? Imagine holding it. How might it have been used?
- Nayarit, *House Group*, 200BCE-400CE, 47.2.37 – Why are there people in both the upper and lower levels of this house? What are they doing?
- India, *Shiva Nataraja*, late 10<sup>th</sup> century, 29.2 – What about this figure tells us that he is a superhuman being? What do you think he is doing?
- Monti, *Veiled Lady*, about 1860, 70.60 – How did the artist make solid stone look transparent? Look closely to figure out this mystery!
- Close, *Frank*, 1969, 69.137 – Is this a painting or a photograph? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Bellows, *Mrs. T. in Cream Silk*, 1920, 60.33 – Why do you think this elderly woman had her portrait painted in her wedding gown that she wore at age 18? What clues do you see that make you say that?

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West, *The Destruction of the Beast and the False Prophet*, 1804, 15.22 – What’s going on in this picture?

Read, *Portrait of a Boy*, 1856, 77.46 – How is this young man feeling? What about this picture makes you think that?

Beckmann, *Blindman’s Buff*, 1945, 55.27a-c – What’s going on in this painting? Who are all these characters?

Ensor, *The Intrigue*, 1911, 70.38 – Why are these people wearing masks? What do the masks say about the people wearing them? What do you see that makes you say that?

Coaci, *Inkstand*, 1792, 69.80.1a,b – Have fun discovering all the surprises: the inkwell, sandbox, kissing turtledoves, candleholders.

Magritte, *Promenades of Euclid*, 1955, 68.3 – What is behind the canvas? Do you think it’s the same as what the artist painted? Why or why not?

Peto, *Reminiscences of 1865*, after 1900, 44.25 – What do you see attached to or carved into the door? What might these objects mean?

Tanguy, *Through Birds, through Fire, but Not through Glass*, 1943, 75.72.2 – Put yourself in this picture. What do you see? Where is this scene taking place? What’s going on?

Delft *Puzzle Jug*, about 1750, 96.36.3 – Why doesn’t water spill out of this pitcher?

Look at the colors in paintings by Gauguin, Vlaminck, Matisse, Braque, and other expressionist painters. What effect do the colors have?

Mexico, Guerrero, *Mask*, 900-300 BCE, 2002.127 – What type of face do you see on this mask?

**VTS**

VTS is always a great idea for a “mysteries” tour since VTS discussions encourage visitors to figure out works of art based on what they see going on. This kind of looking and thinking is at the heart of all mystery-solving.