

# Art Adventure

MINNEAPOLIS  
**MIA** INSTITUTE  
OF ARTS

## **Artists' Inspirations**



Pablo Picasso, *Baboon and Young*, 1951

## ● **Become a member of the museum today!**

Thank you for participating in the Minneapolis Institute of Art's popular Art Adventure Program! By volunteering as a Picture Person, you build an important link between the museum and our region's schoolchildren.

By becoming a member of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, you can reach even further, bringing the experience of world-class art to thousands of museum visitors a year – some visiting for the first time ever, and many of them schoolchildren. Members help support the museum's free general admission every day. Members also help support the exhibitions, lectures, events, and classes offered for children, families, students, and adults.

As a member of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, you'll enjoy access to special exhibitions, savings, incentives, and information.

For more information or to join, please call the Members' Hotline at (612) 870-6323 (toll-free (888) 642-2787), or visit our website at [www.artsmia.org](http://www.artsmia.org).

## ● **What are you doing next Family Day?**

Family Days at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts are free monthly events that highlight the museum's collection and special exhibitions for art lovers of all ages. The second Sunday each month, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., the museum is filled with hands-on art activities, live music, dance performances, artist demonstrations, family tours, and more. All activities are free and appropriate for children of all ages. Visit our website, [www.artsmia.org](http://www.artsmia.org), for specific Family Day dates, themes, and descriptions.

# About the Art Adventure Program

## What's the Art Adventure Program?

The Art Adventure Program at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts is a way of bringing works of art that can't leave the museum into elementary school classrooms. Each of the ten Art Adventure reproduction sets features eight works of art chosen around a theme of particular interest to children. Students and teachers are encouraged to follow up classroom presentations with a class visit to the museum to see the actual artworks. They can take a tour with an Art Adventure Guide or with their teacher using a self-guide brochure available from the museum.

## What's a Picture Person?

Picture People are the volunteers from the school community who present the reproductions in the classrooms. They are the vital link between the original work of art in the museum and children in the schools. Before they visit any classrooms, Picture People come to the museum for a training session on the reproduction set their school will be using that year. At training they receive printed background material, learn presentation techniques, and—most importantly—experience the enjoyment of interacting with the original objects they will soon be introducing to students.

## What does a Picture Person Presentation consist of?

Each participating school structures its Picture Person presentations differently. A Picture Person may present pairs of images in a series of short visits; all the images at once in a single, longer visit; or some other schedule arranged by the school's Art Adventure Coordinator. The presentation may consist only of a discussion or it may involve hands-on activities. In addition, Picture People bring their own individual creativity to their presentations.

Whatever the format, however, one essential characteristic is constant: the Picture Person encourages the children first and foremost to **look** at the reproduction and **talk** about what they see. Although the Picture Person is knowledgeable about the works of art, she or he facilitates the discussion with thoughtful open-ended questions and related props rather than delivering "lecture"-style information.

## What does the Art Adventure Program do for kids?

Picture Person presentations provide students with a rare opportunity to spend time looking at art and express what they see in words. Students gain confidence in their ability to find meaning in artifacts from a wide range of world cultures. They practice seeing things from another person's point of view, whether it's their classmate's or the artist's. They feel the thrill of meeting an old friend when they later come upon familiar objects at the museum. And, not least, they enjoy meaningful contact with a visiting member of the school community.

# Preparing for a Picture Person Presentation

## **Relax!**

The information provided in this manual is intended as background material to help you feel comfortable when you present the images to children. You are not expected to convey all the details. On the contrary; choose two or three key ideas you think will be compelling for the age group to which you are presenting. Kids love stories—what might you “spin” into a tale? What parallels can you draw with their lives?

## **Be sure everyone is able to see the reproduction.**

Talk with the classroom teacher to find out what routines the class follows when gathering for a visitor. Young groups will often sit on the floor; older students may remain at their desks. Try for a setup that will get the students as close to the reproduction as possible. Keep the students’ eyes on you, too, by making regular eye contact throughout the group.

## **Establish a climate where students can listen to what each child has to say.**

It is very difficult to listen to more than one person at the same time. Let the kids know at the outset that you expect them to take turns speaking. (If you don’t know the children’s names already, arrange with the teacher to have them wear nametags so you can call on them by name.) Paraphrasing what is said emphasizes that you are really listening and encourages them to listen to one another. Your rephrasing may also help expand their vocabulary. Take care to remember, however, that aesthetic judgments are personal and inexact—set your own preferences aside to allow students to form their own opinions.

## **Begin your presentation of each image with a long moment of silent looking.**

Introduce the lesson by explaining who you are and that you have brought reproductions of real works of art from The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Review with the class what a museum is and what you’ll be doing with them. Then make a show out of getting the class to understand that their first job is to look quietly. You might build the suspense by keeping each image hidden while you explain that you do not want them even to raise their hands until you ask them to. Model your expectations by spending the time looking too.

**Give children time to talk about what they have discovered by looking.**

Good questions to use are "What's going on here?" and "What do you see that makes you say that?" Be sure to use your finger to point to the part of the picture the child is talking about. Paraphrase his or her words to clarify the observation for others. You'll be surprised how quickly students learn to justify their comments with evidence they can see in the picture, with a little prompting. "What else can you find?" can help generate further comments. See the "Tips for Talking about Art" following this section for more ideas.

**Connect your key ideas to the students' observations.**

When the student's observations begin to slow down, use what you have learned about their interests to steer the discussion towards the key ideas you have chosen to focus on. Try to ask questions that will draw connections between what they have said and what you would like them to consider. If they pose questions you can't answer, admit it! Brainstorm together ways to find an explanation.

**Keep the age of your audience in mind.**

A child's interests and understandings evolve through generally predictable stages of development. Plan your presentations accordingly. Don't expect young children to be able to focus for more than twenty minutes. Consider your class's ability to understand time—will students understand a date or phrase such as "colonial times" (fifth graders might) or should you stick with "a long time ago" or "about 100 years ago"? At the same time, try not to talk down to older students.

You can expect developmental differences in children's aesthetic approaches to art, as well. Younger children will accept abstraction, while older children tend to demand a high degree of realism. Remember, too, that it's hard for young viewers to look "through" subject matter to notice compositional devices until preadolescence. And it's surprising to us as adults that children generally do not notice the emotional overtones of a work until the middle years of childhood. (Find out more about the stages of aesthetic development in *Invented Worlds*, by Ellen Winner, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.)

**Talk to other Picture People and use your own imagination!**

Veteran Picture People have great ideas about how to capture the imagination of a class. Don't hesitate to borrow and adapt their suggestions. In addition, several Art Adventure sets come with "prop kits," an assortment of supplementary materials for you to use in your presentation. Talk to your school's Art Adventure Coordinator to see if the set you are using comes with props.

# Tips for Talking about Art

Remember, a key goal of the Art Adventure program is to help beginning viewers create personal meaning in a work of art. While your impulse may be immediately to begin "teaching," more is gained in the long run if you take the time to help the children establish an emotional connection with the art. The questions below help kids find their own relevance in works of art, and thereby learn to value art as having something to do with their own lives.

**What's going on in this picture?  
What do you see that makes you say that?**

These simple questions work particularly well with artworks that have a narrative thread. You'll notice this question is different than, "What do you see?" Instead of eliciting a list of things in the picture, "What's going on?" invites a consideration of relationships and interactions and taps into children's natural interest in stories. The question, "What do you see that makes you say that?" focuses comments on the evidence at hand and helps kids explain their assumptions.

**How would you feel if you were "in" this work of art?**

What would you hear? How would something feel to touch? What path would you take through the picture? What do you see that makes you say that? Imagining the picture as an environment engages all the senses. The expressive qualities of a work become more concrete, easier to relate to.

**How is this object like something you encounter in *your* life?**

What would you use this for? What do you see that makes you say that? Do you have anything like it? Why do you like to have pictures of yourself? Why do you buy postcards on vacation? Drawing parallels with children's experiences gives them a hook on which to hang new information. Identifying similarities helps illuminate differences as well.

**What person or object in this picture do you think was most important to the artist?**

What are people in the picture looking at? What has a lot of details? Where are there bright colors? What is biggest? Talking about what makes things seem important in a work of art can allow even a novice to address basic compositional principles.

**How would the artwork seem different if you could make a change?**

What would happen if you changed a color? Made something bigger or smaller? Moved an object or person? Left something out? Added more details? Changed the quality of a line? Imagining changes helps identify visual elements and their contribution to the overall effect of the image.

**How is this work of art like or different from another one you've seen in this set?**

"Compare and contrast" is a staple of art historical thinking, but it can be done by anybody, at any level of thinking. Get together with your fellow volunteers to coordinate some provocative pairs.

**How does this work of art relate to the theme of the set?**

Let the students pull it all together! What connections do they see between the theme and what they've noticed and learned about the work of art?

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**Want to take it further?**

Have a look at *The Intelligent Eye: Learning to Think by Looking at Art*, by David N. Perkins (Santa Monica, Calif.: The J. Paul Getty Trust, 1994), a very readable guide on how and why to look carefully at art.

Another good book is *Take a Look: An Introduction to the Experience of Art*, by Rosemary Davidson (New York: Viking, 1994). Written for young readers, it provides a nice example of how to talk with children about art.

# Tips for Using Props

## Why props?

Students normally first encounter the Art Adventure works of art in their classrooms as 20 x 22-inch reproductions. In the reproductions, all the works of art appear to be two-dimensional and similar in size. Props accompany many of the reproductions to help overcome this limitation. Touching a material similar to the work of art, seeing the technique used to create it, or looking at a photograph in which the object is being used adds another dimension to the reproduction of the work of art. The use of props also helps engage learners who prefer hands-on learning styles, and reinforces the understandings of all learners.

## What are the challenges of props?

Be aware that props will do little but distract your group without careful planning. Consideration of the following points can prevent group management challenges from undermining the benefits of props:

- What understanding about the work of art does the prop best illustrate? Present the prop in conjunction with information about a work of art or to help answer a question about the work of art.
- How will you structure the group's interaction with the prop?  
There are a number of ways to use the prop. Among the variations:
  - Pass the prop around to each student. If you do it this way, give the students a question to consider while they are waiting for the prop and one to consider after they have held the prop. Encourage the students to be ready for discussion when the prop finishes circulating.
  - Ask a single student to come forward and describe how it feels to the whole group.
  - Hold the prop yourself and walk it around the group for the students to touch or look at closely. What should the students be doing while you're doing that?
  - Hold the prop yourself to illustrate relevant parts of the discussion. Then give everyone a chance to examine it more closely at the end of your presentation.
- How will you explain to the group what you expect them to do with the prop? Clear communication of your expectations is essential to getting the students to stay focused on the activity. Will they all get to touch the prop? How should they take turns? What should they do when it's not their turn? How should they treat the prop?
- How will you link the experience with the prop to the rest of the discussion? After the students have explored the prop in some fashion, refer to the experience as you continue the discussion.
- How will you get the prop back? Don't forget to plan how you'll get the props back! Schools are charged significant fees for missing or badly damaged props.



# ***Artists' Inspirations***

**Art Adventure Program  
An Educational Program of the  
Minneapolis Institute of Arts  
Revised 2014**

# ***Artists' Inspirations*** **Prop Kit Contents**

<b>Work of Art</b>	<b>Prop</b>	<b>Replacement Cost</b>
Paleolithic France, <i>Venus Figure</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Clay scale model of Venus figure</li> <li>●Sample of sandstone</li> </ul>	\$40 \$10
China, <i>Jade Mountain</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Sample of carved jade</li> <li>●Portrait of Chinese ruler, and (flip side) scene of Chinese landscape</li> </ul>	\$40 \$10
Georgia O'Keeffe, <i>Pedernal-From the Ranch #1</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Samples of painted canvas</li> <li>●Photograph of Pedernal Mountain, and (flip side) portrait of O'Keeffe</li> </ul>	\$30 \$10
Papua new Guinea, <i>Frieze Decoration from a Malagan Ceremony</i>	No prop	
Bertel Thorvaldsen, <i>Ganymede and the Eagle</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Sample of marble</li> </ul>	\$15
Junius Brutus Stearns, <i>A Fishing Party Off Long Island</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Photograph of shark fisherman, and (flip side) 1816 map of United States</li> </ul>	\$10
Pablo Picasso, <i>Baboon and Young</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Photograph of baboon model, and (flip side) portrait of Picasso and his son</li> </ul>	\$10
Yves Tanguy, <i>Through Birds, Through Fire, but Not Through Glass</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Photograph of Tanguy</li> </ul>	\$10

**Please make sure that you have enclosed all of the items on this list when you return the prop kit. You will be responsible for the cost of replacing any missing items. Thank you!**

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# Introduction

Art is often defined as a tangible object that is shaped by human hands as opposed to natural form. The artist's technical skill plays a major role in shaping a particular material into a certain form. Yet, what is of equal or even greater importance in the creative process is what takes place in the mind of the artist which initiates the whole process.

What inspires an artist to create a work of art? **Artists' Inspirations** explores the sources of inspiration of eight different artists and examines how their original ideas were then shaped and transformed in the creative process.

The eight works included in this set provide a broad cross-section of the ways in which artists from a variety of cultures have manifested their inventive powers. Whether their source of inspiration was the natural world, ancient myths and traditions, or just ordinary objects of everyday life, each artist has shaped those ideas into a unique and original work of art.

# Questions: Suggested Approaches

## Suggested Questions

The suggested questions are offered as guidelines and starting points only. Please feel free to use your own creativity and expertise to develop additional or alternative questions.

## General Thematic Questions and Discussion Points

1. **Discuss the many possible sources of inspiration for artists**—i.e., nature, traditions, spiritual experiences, dreams, everyday life, historic events, inner-emotions, stories of the past and present, music, and other works of art. Ask the children to think about what might inspire them to create a work of art. Would it be something that they can see? Something that they feel? Or perhaps something they know about from a book?
2. **For each reproduction you might ask:** What inspired this work of art? Do you think people of all ages and cultures are inspired by the same thing? Why or why not?

## General Brain Teasers

1. Does the same source of inspiration (i.e., nature) always produce the same response from an artist? From the viewer? What might account for different responses? For different ways of expressing those responses?
2. Can a work of art reflect the particular inspiration of the artist and his/her culture at the same time? Can a work of art stimulate the viewer's imagination? How?



Paleolithic (Europe, Found: France)

***Venus Figure***, c. 20,000 B.C.

Sandstone

H.5¼ x W.2¼ inches

The William Hood Dunwoody Fund, 72.10

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## Theme

What inspired humankind's first works of art? When was art first created and for what purpose? Who were the first artists? The Paleolithic *Venus Figure* reaches across time to give us clues to these intriguing questions.

## Background

In the development of the human race, the invention of tools was a critical step toward improving the survival skills necessary in a world where shelter meant a cave or pit dwelling and the food supply was dependent on success in hunting the herds of animals that roamed the plains. The Ice Age was just drawing to a close, so the climate between the Alps and Scandinavia was comparable to present-day Siberia. The tools which humans crafted were made of chipped stone, bone, or ivory. Because we classify past "ages" of humankind by their tools, this period is referred to as the Old Stone or Paleolithic Age.

The discovery of tools designed for a particular function was the first indication of craft production in the Old Stone Age. It was not until the latest stage of the Paleolithic Age—about 35,000 years ago—that what we consider to be the earliest art objects were made. The level of skill apparent in the art suggests that it was preceded by a tradition that is lost to us. The most striking works of art are images of animals painted or carved on cave walls. Small individual carvings have also been discovered including our Paleolithic *Venus Figure*.

## The Paleolithic *Venus Figure*

This small sandstone carving of a female figure was found in a cave near La Mouthe in Southern France. Its estimated date is 20,000 B.C. What inspired the creation of this object, who created it, or for what purpose it was made can only be speculated upon. The evidence suggests, however, that human beings at this time not only chose to reproduce their own images but that the artist may have been capable of inventing a form that had symbolic meaning.

Female figures resembling ours have been discovered in various sites in Europe. What they have in common is the tendency for exaggeration of some features and a disregard for others. For example, the head and limbs are poorly defined but the breasts and extended abdomen are emphasized, suggesting to us a pregnant female.

Why would a society produce such a figure and why was it important to them? We must remember that survival was a high priority in the Paleolithic Age. Women played a key role in the continuity of society by bearing children. Human survival also was dependent on abundance of game for food. The fullness of the body, which we would call obese today, might well have represented a standard of nourishment necessary for health and fertility in the Paleolithic Age.

The lack of a base upon which the *Venus Figure* could stand indicates that it was not intended to be displayed but rather held in the hand or passed around. This suggests that it may have been used as a ritual object. It seems likely that objects like this may have represented fertility figures, possessing magical powers that insured not only human reproduction but also abundant game and successful hunting. The prevalence of carved female figures from this time and region suggests that they were objects of significance to the people.

## **Technique**

The soft sandstone of this object was probably carved with a flint stone. The rough surface of the figure attests to the difficulty of carving stone with flint. It is possible that the natural shape of the stone suggested human form and that the artist simply refined it. The figure stands out from the stone but is still attached to the rough stone. This is called relief carving because it is not fully three-dimensional and is meant to be viewed from the front.

## **Artist**

The artist who created this figure was probably a member of a group of nomadic hunters. Why someone would take the time to create an object when the greatest concern was survival is a mystery. The purpose for the object must have had great significance. It is intriguing to realize that this artist from thousands of centuries ago was confronted with the same challenges that are present for artists today. Once inspired to create a work of art, an artist must make choices of how to transform that material in accordance with his/her own vision or purpose.



## Suggested Questions

1. Do you think this piece of stone has been carved to appear as it does? What makes you think so? Has it been carved on all sides? **Explain relief sculpture.**
2. What does the carved form remind you of? An animal? A human being? Other?
3. If it is a human figure, do you think it is a male or female? How can you tell?
4. Can you see the figure's head? Legs? Stomach? Breasts? What parts of the body do you think the artist wanted us to pay attention to?
5. Can you think of a reason why the woman's breasts and stomach are so large? Could the artist be representing a pregnant woman?
6. What tools do you think a stone age sculptor would use to carve a piece of stone? How long do you think it would take?
7. The sculpture is less than 6 inches high. Do you think it was meant to stay in one place? Be carried from place to place? Be seen by a large group of people? Be held by individual people? Explain your answer.
8. When a woman (or a female animal) is able to have babies, she is called "fertile"—just as the land may be called fertile when it produces good crops. Why do you think people who lived long ago in the Stone Age thought "fertility" was so important? How was their life different from ours?
9. This sculpture is small enough to hold in your hand. How would it feel if you held it—smooth, rough, cold, warm, lumpy? Do you think Stone Age people might have held it? Maybe they hoped holding a fertility figure could help their women and animals become fertile.
10. Are artists from different times in history inspired by different things? What might inspire you to make a sculpture or painting? What materials would you use? Do you think your work of art might be different from one made by a student in Africa or Japan? Why?

## Bibliography

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China (Asia, Ch'ing Dynasty, Ch'ien Lung reign, 1736-95)

***Jade Mountain Illustrating the Gathering of Poets at the Lan T'ing Pavilion,***  
1784

Light green jade

H. 22½ x W. 38¾ x D. 19 inches

The John R. Van Derlip Fund and Gift of the Thomas Barlow Walker Foundation,  
92.103.13

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## Theme

Nature has been the primary source of inspiration for Chinese artists for centuries. Equally important has been a reverence for the past. The artist who created the *Jade Mountain* followed both of these traditions. The particular event that inspired this artist was a gathering of poets that occurred nearly 1400 years earlier in 353 A.D.

## Background

This work symbolizes the long-standing Chinese cultural values associated with landscape and nature. The landscape theme is rooted in a philosophy of nature that can be traced to Confucian and Taoist precepts formulated as early as the 6th century B.C. The ideal of this philosophy was to be in harmony with the fundamental laws of the universe. Taoist philosophers taught that the way to spiritual understanding and peace was through contemplation of the beauties and mysteries of nature. The followers of Confucius drew their wisdom from the "natural order of things." From these philosophies the belief emerged that a harmonious existence pervades the universe, and that human beings, in recognizing the elemental powers, should seek to live in conformity with them.

Chinese poets and painters have sought to express this philosophy in their work. The Chinese were the first to make landscape a dominant theme in painting. A worthy picture had to evoke a poetic inner reality rather than just an outward likeness of form. Artists sought to convey the vastness of nature and the relative insignificance of humans within the cosmos. This philosophy was expressed in a respect for environment that valued landscape as a place to seek spiritual tranquility.

Jade mountains like this one were carved to represent the magnificent mountain landscapes that were so valued by Chinese philosophers, writers, and artists for over twenty centuries. They are the translation of the Chinese painting tradition into sculpture.

The Chinese consider jade to be the most sacred and treasured of all precious stones. Their word for jade is *yu*, meaning pure, precious, noble, and "right." Its physical characteristics were believed to express the greatest virtues of mankind: soft, smooth and glossy, like benevolence; fine, compact, and strong, like intelligence; angular—though not sharp or cutting—like righteousness; internally radiant like faith; pure of sound when struck, like wisdom; and able to be broken, but not bent, like courage.

Jade is not native to China. To obtain the precious stones, caravans often traveled as far as 2,000 miles across difficult terrain to mine deposits in Afghanistan, Siberia, Tibet, and Burma. By the time this was carved China had annexed the area of Turkestan where the jade for this piece was found. (It is located in today's Sinkiang province.) Once the jade was found, it was an arduous task to remove it from the mountains. The largest slabs, for objects like the *Jade Mountain*, were laboriously chiseled away from the surrounding rocks.

The Minneapolis Institute of Arts' *Jade Mountain* was created during the Ch'ing Dynasty (1644-1912), which was the last period of imperial rule in China. The Ch'ing Dynasty ruled through traditional Chinese institutions of government, philosophy, and religion. Its rulers also had great respect for Chinese cultural tradition and sought to preserve the great achievements of the past and to encourage the arts of the present. One of the foremost patrons of scholarship and art was the emperor Ch'ien Lung (chee-en long), who ruled from 1736 to 1795. His reign is regarded as the last truly creative period in the history of Chinese art. Ch'ien Lung, who commissioned this piece, was himself a prolific painter, calligrapher, and poet and his collection of Chinese paintings of all periods was one of the greatest ever assembled.

### ***Jade Mountain***

*Jade Mountain* was carved from one of four unusually large blocks split from a boulder found in Turkestan (a region in central Asia between Iran and Siberia, now considered today's Sinkiang province). Weighing 640 pounds, it is the smallest piece from that series but is considered to be the largest piece of carved jade in the western hemisphere.

*Jade Mountain* illustrates a poetry gathering held at Lan T'ing (the Orchid Pavilion) near K'uai Chi (gwi jee) Mountain in Chekiang province, where on March 3, 353 A.D., the gentleman-poet Wang Hsi-Chih (Wong She Jurr) invited 41 of his scholarly friends. Relaxing along the banks of a meandering stream where orchids grew in abundance, the group consumed wine from cups that floated downstream, contemplated nature, and composed poems for the occasion. These were later assembled by Wang, who immortalized the historic party for future generations in a long poem entitled *Prelude to the Orchid Pavilion*. Composed of 324 characters in 28 lines, the text is a rather sophisticated philosophical discourse on the meaning and enjoyment of life, death, the past and the present. Because the Chinese consider calligraphy to be the highest of all art forms, and because Wang was regarded as the greatest of all calligraphers, many copies of his poem were soon in circulation. It has received great attention and respect from artists, poets, and calligraphers in China and Japan ever since.

Jade is very difficult to carve. The skill of the artist in rendering this scene is evident in the details of the crisply defined ridges of the hills, the leaves on each tree, the delicate cups floating down the brook, and each tiny figure walking the mountain paths. Equally remarkable is the delicately inscribed calligraphy on two sides of the mountain. The long poem seen on the front is Wang Hsi-Chih's famous preface. Its inclusion here is a reminder of the importance of the past and tradition in Chinese art. In addition to the poem, written centuries earlier, all the subject details described in the poem are depicted on *Jade Mountain*: a mountain landscape with scholars, pavilions, and wine cups. On the back is a poem by the emperor Ch'ien Lung. (Translations of both are found on page 8.)

The incorporation of these poems into the sculpture illustrates the Chinese belief that calligraphy and poetry are integral parts of an artwork. As early as the 11th century, scholar,

painter, poet, and calligrapher were often the same person. Rulers considered themselves the scholarly elite, so it is not surprising that an enlightened connoisseur and patron like Ch'ien Lung, living in the 18th century, would commission such a work as the *Jade Mountain* and compose his own verse for the back. It was not just a reverent tribute commemorating the historic event of a poets' gathering, nor merely a decorative triumph of the jade-carver's art, nor yet another copy of the famous poem. Rather, it was a combination of all of these things, uniting in one work the best of the past and the present and embodying for the emperor and other viewers the important virtues of scholarly activity, love of the arts, and unity with nature.

## Technique

Ch'ien Lung established palace workshops in several cities to produce jade objects for imperial use. The process involved in making large jade mountains like this was time-consuming and expensive. It included eight or nine stages, required several workmen, and took years to complete. Jade, which is an extremely hard material, is worked slowly by drilling, using an abrasive harder than the rock itself, such as quartz dust. Until recently and despite jade's hardness, the power for drilling and carving came only from the artist's hands or from a foot treadle that turned a grinding element. The artist's tools were thought to have been wood or bamboo, while the surface was worn down by causing friction between the abrasive quartz and the damp stone. This type of sculpture that is produced by carving away or removal of stone from a larger piece is called subtractive sculpture.

## Artist

Although his name has not come down to us, the artist who conceived and carved the *Jade Mountain* must have been an honored and respected member of Chinese society. The creation of any jade object required great skill, patience, and discipline; in addition to this, the mountain would have called for great scholarship, aesthetic sensitivity, and feeling for life. It is these qualities that transform what could have been merely a demonstration of technical ability into an object intended for poetic contemplation, in keeping with the Chinese reverence for nature.

## ●Calligraphic Transcription●

"Prelude to the Orchid Pavilion," Wang Hsi-Chih

In the late spring of the ninth year of the Yung Ho reign (A.D. 353) a gathering was held at Lan T'ing, the Orchid Pavilion, north of K'uai Chi Mountain. The meeting was held to clean and repair the honored graves and all the luminaries came. Young and old alike were gathered together. At this site were steep magnificent mountains of lush forests and elegant bamboo. Here, too, was a clear, rapid running stream, traversing the slope which could be used to float the wine cups. We sat about the banks of this stream. Although lacking the joy of flute and string, a single cup and single poem were sufficient to draw out the deepest emotions. On that day the sky was bright, the air pure and the gentle wind a thing of tranquility. Gazing upward the vastness of the universe could be comprehended; downward one saw the varied abundance of things. All that the mind and eye conceived was best appreciated through the senses. It was a delightful experience! In this generation one is influenced by experiences within his own tiny environment, but one's emotion comes from outside his material existence. Although there are ten thousand moods of fondness and dislike, and a difference between action and non-action, when a man feels joy he is content to know that that feeling may be confined to him alone.

With this acceptance one will never notice the approach of old age. When one is fatigued through thought the feeling is joy, and that emotion will suddenly become a thing of the past. Still, these are the things which excite one's emotions and all achievements and failures are thus transformed and finally come to an end. The ancients stated that birth and death are great events. Such pain! In tracing the course of the emotion involved in building a grave I always feel grieved although I know that birth and death are illusions and that the (legendary) birth of Chi and the demise of Pong are untrue. Our concept of posterity is presently formulated and can be likened to our present view of the past. A sad situation! Therefore, I record and collate all the writings of my contemporaries. Although the occasion may change from this one and although the next generation may be different from this one, what touches one's heart remains the same. Posterity will be inspired by these verses.

Early in the late spring month of the Chia Ch'en cycle (1784, copied by the emperor).  
(Placed above the copy of Wang Hsi-Chih's poem is the seal of Ch'ien Lung.)

### ●On the reverse side of the mountain is another inscription, a poem written by the emperor himself:

The mountain of jade of Huo T'ien was large.  
It was carved to represent a literary gathering.

Elders and youth alike comprised the meeting.  
The calligraphy was originally fashioned late in the Yung Ho reign;  
And the writing has been authenticated on numerous occasions since then.  
It pleases me that this colophon is genuine.  
One should ask in this picture,  
Who should be considered to be the man of jade?

By imperial decree, the Chia Ch'en cycle of the Ch'ien Lung reign.

## Suggested Questions

1. How big do you think this sculpture is? **Discuss and then show them with your hands.** How heavy do you think it is? (*640 pounds.*)
2. Can anyone guess what it is made out of? Jade is a very, very hard mineral. Would it be hard to carve? How long do you think it might have taken to carve this? **Briefly describe process.**
3. Is this sculpture all one color? Do you think the brownish color is painted on or is it a part of the stone itself? Have you ever seen a stone with different colors in it?
4. Pretend you are taking a walk in this landscape. Start here. **(Point to either the far right or left sides.)** Tell me everything you see. Do you see any water? **(You will probably have to point out because it is hard to distinguish in the reproduction.)** Is it an easy walk? Do you have to do any climbing?
5. How many figures can you see? How many trees? Are all the trees the same? What do you think the various groups of people are doing?
6. Is there any writing on this sculpture? Where? Does it look like our writing? **Discuss how many Chinese characters there are versus our 26 letters, and that the Chinese read up and down, not from left to right.**
7. This sculpture was commissioned by the Emperor Ch'ien Lung. What does it mean to commission a work of art? Why would the Emperor commission it? His signature seal is somewhere on the sculpture. Can you find it?
8. What might have inspired this artist to carve this particular scene? **Explain the historical significance of the scene.** Do you think the artist had visited this particular place or is he inventing an imaginary place he has never seen?
9. Do you think this artist is more interested in showing us the activities of the people or in picturing nature? Do these people seem to be part of nature or do they seem to intrude on it?
10. The Chinese had to travel far to get this jade. It is also very hard to extract (get out) of the rock. Since it is also difficult to carve, why do you suppose the Chinese loved it so much? What is the most precious thing you have?
11. **Talk about scale.** How does the artist make this landscape appear vast? (*Small people, proportionate scale of people, trees, mountain.*)
12. By looking at the picture, can you imagine how this jade feels? Is it smooth, rough, prickly, silky, etc.? Do you think it would be warm or cool to touch? Would it feel good?

13. Have you seen a marble sculpture in this series? How are these two alike? (*Both subtractive, both have people in them, both are hard materials, both get inspiration from the past.*) How are they different? (*Figures are different in scale, no landscape in Thorvaldsen, carving technique is different, they are from different cultures, etc.*) **If you have discussed these terms ask:** Is this sculpture additive or subtractive? Jade is even harder than marble and the artist has to use some different tools. **Discuss process.** Which would be more difficult to carve—marble or jade? Which would take longer?
14. What might have inspired the artist to create this scene? (*See answers above and add—to commemorate an historic event, to remind people to venerate their ancestors, to instill pride in their Chinese heritage, to evoke a quiet mood, to instill a love of nature, etc.*) Can you think of an historical event that inspired a piece of American sculpture? Do you think the jade mountain was meant for public or private viewing? **Discuss its size.**
15. What important event in your life, in your family or in the country might inspire you to make a sculpture? What material would you use? Why?
16. Calligraphy was highly regarded in China. What is calligraphy? Can you find some on this sculpture? Do the Chinese characters look like our writing? Do we still use calligraphy today? Would you use calligraphy to write: a) a paper for school? b) to write a letter to a friend? c) to make something special like a short poem or name tags? Why?

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Georgia O'Keeffe, American, 1887-1986  
***Pedernal—From the Ranch #1***, 1956  
Oil on canvas  
H. 30 x W. 40 inches  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Cowles, 64.43.2

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## Theme

Like the sculptor of the *Jade Mountain*, Georgia O'Keeffe looked to nature for inspiration in her paintings. However, unlike the Chinese artist, she broke sharply with tradition to evolve a highly individual style that conveys a personal expression of her feeling for the environment.

## Background

Georgia O'Keeffe was born in the Midwest and lived many of her adult years in New York. It was, however, the American Southwest that she loved and adopted as her home. In 1929, she made her first journey to New Mexico, where she discovered the landscape that so intrigued her. In the years that followed, she spent several months a year in New Mexico, settling there permanently in 1946.

Living in the desert in an adobe house surrounded by sagebrush and jimsonweed, O'Keeffe was equally fascinated by the landscape and the animal bones and skulls that she collected on her walks. One day as she held up a pelvic bone, she caught a glimpse of sky through the hole that inspired her to paint that image. *Pedernal— From the Ranch #1* is rooted in that experience.

## ***Pedernal—From the Ranch #1***

The Pedernal is a flat-topped mesa that lies southeast of O'Keeffe's Ghost Ranch near Abiquiu, New Mexico. The artist has framed her view of the mesa with the curving shape of an animal's pelvic bone. The Pedernal was one of the artist's favorite subjects. "It's my private mountain," she once joked. "It belongs to me. God told me if I painted enough, I could have it."<sup>1</sup>

Like a film director, she focuses our vision through the shape of the bone to give drama to the Pedernal, contrasting the simple silhouette of the mesa with the curve of the bone. Consider how differently the mesa would appear without the framework of the bone. This telescopic view creates a sense of vast space and endless blue sky punctuated by the flat shape of the mesa.

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<sup>1</sup> Sandra Lipschultz. "A Woman on Canvas." *ARTS*, February 1989, p. 16.

O'Keeffe drew her inspiration from the mountain as she viewed it, but she has not merely imitated its appearance in the painting. Notice how she has simplified and reduced the forms. She eliminates details and varied textures in order to give greater emphasis to form and color. Our attention is focused first on the mesa, then on the sky and the bone.

She does not hesitate to exaggerate the proportions of objects. Here the bone takes on monumental proportions because of its placement in the composition. Without some information about the painting, we might not recognize this as a bone. This process of reduction and simplification of form is called abstraction.

Color plays an equally important role in O'Keeffe's compositions. The rich primary colors of red and blue that she has chosen not only reflect the natural environment of the Southwest, but also convey to us a warmth and feeling that she felt for this land. Likewise the bones and landscape serve as equivalents of life in the desert, symbolizing this new land she has chosen as her home. This painting may be viewed as the expression of O'Keeffe's love of nature and as a tribute to the vastness of her beloved Southwest.

## **Technique**

O'Keeffe was a pioneer of early American modernism. During the years when realism had a stronghold in America, O'Keeffe was experimenting with abstraction, reducing forms in nature to broad areas of color and simplified forms. By taking liberties with scale, such as the enlarging of the bone, she forces the viewer to see images in new ways.

O'Keeffe is more interested in expressing her feeling for nature than simply describing it. It was her experience of drawing while listening to music that gave her the idea that line, color, and shape could be expressive of beauty. It is this private vision that is the real subject of her work.

## **Artist**

When O'Keeffe died in 1986 at age 98, she was the most celebrated woman artist of the 20th century. Born in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, O'Keeffe was interested in art at an early age and knew by the eighth grade, that she would become an artist. Growing up in the Midwest was an influence that she acknowledged had shaped her artistic development.

O'Keeffe created more than 900 paintings and drawings in her lifetime and was honored with retrospectives by major museums throughout the United States. She served as a role model for women artists at a time when men totally dominated the art world, and remains today a source of influence for many artists.

## Suggested Questions

1. Can you identify each object in the painting? Can you enjoy this painting even if you are not sure what each object is? Do any parts of the painting look like objects in nature? What natural objects are they?
2. What kind of shape does O'Keeffe put around her mountain? Is it a perfect circle? **Explain that it is part of a bone. Bring in a round steak bone, a turkey "wish" bone or some such item to demonstrate. Let students view an object in the room or out the window through the bone.**
3. Can you find other lines that repeat the curving lines of the bone? Point them out.
4. If you could take away the bone, what might you see behind it? Why do you think the artist used the bone in her painting?
5. How can you tell that the bone is thick, not thin?
6. Does the mountain top look near or far away? Why?
7. Georgia O'Keeffe was inspired by the natural landscape of New Mexico. What object in nature would inspire you to paint? How would you paint it? Would you change its local (natural) color? Why or why not? Do you think the artist changed any natural colors in this painting?
8. Does this look like a landscape in Minnesota? What does O'Keeffe's painting tell us about the landscape and/or climate in New Mexico? Does she give us any clues about how she feels about her surroundings? What feelings does the painting evoke in you? Why?
9. Does the power of O'Keeffe's work come from what she puts in or from what she leaves out? What has she added here? What has she left out?
10. Discuss abstract art. Why do some people consider O'Keeffe an abstract artist? Does she paint nature just as she sees it? How do you think she may have changed the mountain, sky or bone? Why would she want to change them?
11. What was it about New Mexico's natural landscape that seemed to inspire O'Keeffe? Bring in a few more of her New Mexico paintings for comparison. Why do you think she chose to live there? What aspects of nature might inspire you to paint? Would you choose to paint in Minnesota or somewhere else? Explain your answer.

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Oceania (New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, Melanesian region)

**Malagan Frieze**, 19th century

Wood, shell, and pigment

H.39 x W.16 x D.5 ¼ inches

Gift of Bruce B. Dayton, 85.94

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## Theme

The images of birds and foliage in this New Ireland sculpture provide evidence that the artist, like O'Keeffe, drew inspiration from nature. The objects of New Ireland, however, come into being less by the individual choice of the artist than as a result of a process in which the artist draws upon the traditions, the expectations and the material support of a complex social system.

## Background

New Ireland is the second largest island in Northwest Melanesia. Tropical rain forests cover much of the island, and a wide variety of birds, reptiles, and sea animals abound. In New Ireland thought, these creatures serve a symbolic function. Society is ordered by two major moieties (groups) (MOY-ah-tee), Hawks and Eagles, and further divided into clans, which are associated with snakes, birds, and fish. The animals selected correlate to the social structure, but at the same time represent the natural order of earth, air, and sea. In both the culture and art of New Ireland, social structure is viewed as parallel to the natural order.

Most societies have ceremonies which mark important transitions in life and that is true in New Ireland. The rites that are carried out at the time of death are central to the social and aesthetic life of the community.<sup>2</sup> Mortuary festivals concern large social units and can last for years. Almost everything in New Ireland society is bound to the preparation for or dependent on the outcome of this activity.

On the northern coast of New Ireland, elaborate sculptures are made for the mortuary festivals. Snakes, birds, and fish often appear in ceremonial objects such as the New Ireland frieze. They are called *malagan* sculptures and are made for the memorial services, also called *malagan*, which take place after a person's death.

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<sup>2</sup> When a person died, they wrapped the body in trade cloth, placed it in a tree's branches, and hooked a bamboo tube from the body to the ground to drain fluids from the body. The tree had the religious symbolism of another "realm." Then they collected the bones and buried them in a cave or in the ground (sometimes in the ground under their houses).

### ***Frieze Decoration from a Malagan Ceremony***

The subject of this *malagan* sculpture is one of the favorite themes of sculpture in New Ireland art—a struggle between birds and snakes. The animals refer to the clans or social order of society as well as the natural order of air (birds) and earth (snakes). The struggle is a common feature of sculpture and dance, representing this opposition of air and earth.

Even knowing that the subject is birds and snakes, it is difficult to immediately identify the individual images within the design. In fact, the design of this frieze might remind us of our picture-puzzles that invite us to find hidden images within them. Three birds and a snake are interwoven into the foliage without a clear distinction between them. The two white-faced chickens in the center may be identified by their snail-shell eyes and black beaks. The larger chicken hovers over the smaller one. Above the chickens, a slender black frigate bird (a tropical sea bird with long tail feathers) forms the upper edge of the frieze. The frigate bird is engaged in a struggle with a black snake whose tail is caught in its beak. The snake undulates through the foliage and curves through the beak of the largest chicken.

If this design seems complex to us, it is because the sculpture is intended to invite speculation. Chickens (particularly roosters) play an important role in the imagery of religious objects in New Ireland. The feathers of chickens are a prized decorative element. New Ireland artists choose from a very small number of species for their images and exclude many others from among the common fauna. The chicken is among a type of animal given the name *Masalai* (mahz-ah-lie) in New Ireland. *Masalai* are animals whose characteristics overlap and confuse categories. For example, chickens are birds, are creatures that are less inhabitants of the air than of the earth. Transformation, or the ability of one animal to shift to another, is what gives meaning and power to these images. Many times stories are connected to them, although we do not usually know what they are.

The complexity of design is created in part by the patterns that are formed through color and repetition of lines. Notice how the patterns on the foliage do not differ greatly from the patterns on the feathers of the birds. The foliage patterns superimposed on the beaks of the birds obscure the distinction between the foliage and birds. In fact, the forms nearly blend together because of the patterning. One bird form flows into another. Likewise, there is a blurring of the positive space (the birds themselves) and the negative space (the areas in between forms). This further contributes to the ambiguous quality of the object.

Although the sculpture might appear to be constructed of several components assembled together, it is in fact carved of a single piece of wood. The piercing and hollowing out of the wood around the forms create the various shapes. The basic colors of black, white, and reddish-brown are applied in sharp contrast to one another, delineating certain shapes (such as the faces and eyes of the birds) and obscuring others (such as the bodies of the birds and the foliage).

Horizontal friezes were often placed on poles for display during *malagan* ceremonies or carried in dance. Although, we don't know the precise usage of this one, we know that it was set on something, possibly a pole, but it could also have been pegged to the head of a standing figure.

The success of a *malagan* ceremony depends upon the carving as well as feasting and dance. At the end of a ceremony, the host's material resources are depleted, but that person's stature in society is enhanced. After the close of the ceremony, the sculptures are allowed to perish



but the stature remains.

An anthropologist once asked the old men of a village what they would like her to tell people about *malagan* sculpture. They instructed her to say, that they were not just carved, painted pieces of wood, but that work and wealth went into them. In other words, the sculptures are not just objects but symbols of social cooperation and economic activity of the society in which they are produced.

## Technique

The production of *malagan* sculpture was in the past and is today inseparable from the ritual of mortuary festivals of New Ireland. *Malagan* sculpture is made during the first phase of a festival which can last for months or even years. *Malagan* designs are owned by older male members of a clan. When an individual wishes to host a ceremony to honor a deceased person, the rights to use a certain design must be acquired. The host then commissions a carver and supervises the process. Payment for the use of the design is made during the presentation or closing ceremony.

The traditional method of producing a *malagan* sculpture began with the cutting and drying of a tree (alstonia—similar to European linden). On the seventh day, carving commenced with a feast. Prior to 1850, the roughing out of the sculpture was done with an ax with a shell or stone blade, while finer carving was accomplished with pieces of shell. Since that time, nearly all carving, including that of the *malagan* frieze, has been done with metal tools introduced by Europeans. Likewise, metal drills have replaced those made with shark teeth for piercing. The sculpture was then dried for about two months over fire. Polishing, which is marked by another feast, was done with sharkskin.

At this point, an enclosure was built for the *malagan*. Traditionally, *malagan* sculptures were painted with pigments made from lime powder, charcoal ash or vegetable material using a brush made from the stalk of a fibrous leaf. This *malagan* frieze was painted with traditional pigments, but today oil pigments are commonly used. The eyes, which are made of the valve of a sea snail, were placed into the sculpture last; it is this step that empowered the figure.

On the final day of the *malagan* ceremony, which took weeks or months, the enclosure was torn down and the sculpture was exhibited. Once a ceremony was completed, the *malagan* sculptures no longer possessed power and were allowed to perish. It is fortunate that this particular frieze has survived.

## Artist

New Ireland artists seldom make their living solely by art. They engage in other activities (farming, fishing) but they are generally people who have both a deeper religious knowledge and specialized skills that are developed through a casual apprentice system. Some artists' reputations are known at long distance (which in New Ireland terms means 50-100 miles), and they are sometimes hired to work far from home. New Ireland artists are respected not only for their artistic skills but also as valued members of their society.

## Suggested Questions

1. There are four animals on this wooden frieze sculpture. Can you find all four? How many eyes do you see? How many heads? How many birds are biting the snake?
2. Which animals in this frieze can fly? How do the animals get around? Besides air and earth (ground), where else can animals live? What animals live there? How do they get around?
3. These animals are ones that the artist sees in New Ireland. They inspire artists to make works of art. You live in Minnesota. If you could carve a frieze, what animals would you use to represent earth, sky and water?
4. What kinds of lines are repeated in this sculpture? Where do you see these lines? Why do you think he repeats lines so often? How many different design patterns can you find?
5. Is this sculpture solid or are there open spaces in it? Find some of the open (negative) spaces. Do they make the sculpture more or less interesting? Why?
6. Are the eyes of the two chickens carved out of wood? Why do you think the artist would use a different material (shells) for these eyes? **Find New Ireland on the map.** Why would the artist be able to find so many shells to use?
7. Is this sculpture solid or are there open spaces in it? Find some of the open (negative) spaces. Do they make the sculpture more or less interesting? Why?
8. What shape seems to be used most often? Find at least five examples of that shape. Is it a geometric or an organic shape?
9. Find at least two ways the artist has found to suggest feathers.
10. Why does the artist choose to connect these animals in his frieze? Point out the different ways he connects them. Can you think of ways air, land, and water animals are connected in our ecology? (*Food chain, carrying seeds, etc.*)

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Bertel Thorvaldsen, Danish, 1770-1844  
***Ganymede and the Eagle***, 1817-1829  
Marble  
H.34¾ x W.18½ x L.46⅜ inches  
Gift of the Morse Foundation, 66.9

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## Theme

Ancient myths have been the source of inspiration for several generations of artists. Bertel Thorvaldsen (bear-tell TOOR-val-sen) drew on this artistic heritage to carve this image, yet at the same time produced a fresh interpretation of the theme appropriate to the Neoclassical taste of the early 19th century.

## Background

Neoclassicism was the dominant style when Thorvaldsen came to maturity as an artist. The movement arose in part due to the excavations in the 18th century of the buried cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii in Italy, both of which generated interest in ancient Greece and Rome. As the name suggests, Neoclassicism was a reworking of the classical traditions of Greece and Rome in the light of 19th-century aesthetics. The Neoclassical artists found inspiration in works of art rather than from nature. The art stressed clarity, rationality, harmony, and balance, and combined naturalism in execution (correct proportion, attention to detail, careful rendering of surface textures) with idealism of form (perfection of form, control of emotion).

While the Neoclassical artists revered classical sculpture as the most perfect art ever created, they rejected the idea that by directly copying antique sculpture they could restore the "true style." Rather, they believed that a sculptor must rigorously study the proportions, poses and drapery of antique models, and then, by using his imagination, create a new sculpture that evoked the spirit of a classical work. This is another way in which an artist can take the source of inspiration and transform it into an original work of art.

## ***Ganymede and the Eagle***

According to the myth that inspired Thorvaldsen, Ganymede was a shepherd and the son of Tros, the legendary king of Troy. One day while the youth was tending his father's sheep, he was seen by Zeus, the chief of the Olympian gods, who greatly admired Ganymede's physical beauty. Transforming himself into an eagle, Zeus swooped down and carried Ganymede off to Mount Olympus, where the prince became Zeus's cupbearer.

Thorvaldsen's depiction of this myth is unusual because it was the violent scene of abduction that most artists of this period chose to illustrate. Instead, basing his sculpture on an ancient Roman gem with a similar composition, Thorvaldsen chose to depict the encounter in a restrained and idealized manner. Thorvaldsen felt no need to indicate violent or dramatic movement but rather wanted to create something beautiful for the viewer to enjoy. This is a non-specific, timeless presentation of the story—one that gives hints of what happened before (Zeus disguising himself), during (the encounter with Ganymede) and after (Ganymede fulfilling his function as cup-bearer).

It is evident in Thorvaldsen's sculpting of the figures that he was imitating the smooth, idealized forms of classical Greek sculpture. Ganymede's body is well proportioned and anatomically correct, yet too perfect to be real. Likewise, the serene expression of his face conveys no emotion nor does the body imply any sense of movement. The details of the eagle—the feathers, talons, back, and eyes—have been meticulously rendered but also in a perfected or idealized manner. Not one feather is ruffled, and we know the eagle just flew down from Mt. Olympus!

At the same time, Thorvaldsen convincingly dramatized the differences between the powerful eagle and the slender Ganymede. Even though marble is an extremely hard material, the skin of the boy appears soft and pliable in sharp contrast to the feathery eagle with its hard beak and scaly talons. By making the eagle life-sized and the boy slightly smaller than life, he balanced the two figures in the composition. It is clear that the artist was more concerned with the physical attributes of the figures and the balance of composition than with expressing emotional feeling.

Thorvaldsen placed the figures in a configuration that creates an imaginary triangle from the top of the boy's head to the tail feathers of the eagle to the feet of the boy. Other triangles appear within the arrangement of arms and legs. The triangles serve to stabilize the composition. These elements along with the idealization of the figures present us with an impression of harmony, balance, and order. This work is meant to appeal to our intellect, not our emotions—a trait that would have been highly prized in the early 19th century.

## Technique

Thorvaldsen spent nearly twelve years working on this sculpture. He began by modeling (shaping) the figures with clay. The clay was formed around a supportive frame. Once dried, a plaster mold was made by applying a layer of plaster to the surface of the clay. When dry, the plaster mold was split, removed, and filled with liquid plaster. This created a plaster model of the original. The plaster model was marked with innumerable marks, which were then measured and transferred onto the slab of marble. From these marks, an accurate copy was carved in marble.

In order to complete all of the commissions that came to him, Thorvaldsen had to have assistants, sometimes employing up to 50 men. Once the full-sized plaster model was made, it was possible for skilled assistants to produce the marble form even without supervision. We do know, however, that Thorvaldsen did much of the work on the marble, taking great pride in finishing it so as to find the best of what he called "the skin of the marble." His techniques for finishing became the established standard processes of the early 19th century.

## Artist

Bertel Thorvaldsen, who began his life in Copenhagen, as the son of an Icelandic woodcarver, became one of the most famous sculptors of his day in Europe, second only to Antonio Canova. A child prodigy, he entered the Danish Royal Academy of Fine Arts in 1781, at the age of 13, and in 1796 received the Academy's gold medal to study in Rome. In Italy he met Canova, the foremost Neoclassical sculptor in Europe. Inspired by Rome's antique heritage and the masterpieces of Canova, Thorvaldsen soon rivaled the Italian in technique, honors, and popularity.

By 1820 Thorvaldsen had gained international recognition and was receiving important commissions for both single works and large-scale sculptural monuments. The artist was in such demand that he found it necessary to hire several assistants to help him with the work. In 1838, having spent most of his productive years in Rome, Thorvaldsen returned to Copenhagen. There he was honored with the establishment of the Thorvaldsen Museum, which still exhibits most of his sculpture, either the originals or casts. When he died in 1844, he was buried there.

## Suggested Questions

1. Tell me the story of this sculpture. What is the boy doing? Why do you think he is giving the eagle a drink? Do you know any fairy tales that tell of someone doing a good deed for someone who is in disguise?
2. The Greeks told many myths. In the original Greek myth the king of the gods was called Zeus. He was called Jupiter by the Romans. Zeus wanted to find a mortal to bring back with him to Mt. Olympus to act as cup bearer for the gods. When he saw Ganymede, the shepherd boy, he disguised himself as an eagle, kidnapped him and flew him back to Mt. Olympus. Which part of the story has this artist chosen to tell? Why do you think this particular myth inspired Thorvaldsen? Do you think many artists today are inspired by myths? Why or why not?
3. The subject of this sculpture is taken from a classical myth. What is a myth? Do you know any myths? What myth or story might inspire you to create a sculpture or a painting? What characters or parts of the myth would you emphasize? Explain your choice.
4. Even though this is a calm scene, is there anything about the eagle that might be frightening? Is he normal size? **Compare him to Ganymede.** How do his eyes look? Are his beak and talons sharp?
5. If Ganymede had clothes on, would the eagle's claws and beak seem frightening? Why or why not? Do you think that is one reason why Thorvaldsen shows him in the nude? Does it help us to see exactly how he is posed and whether his body is relaxed or tense? Do you think Ganymede knows what Zeus, the eagle, is planning to do?

6. Since Ganymede is wearing no other clothes, why does the artist show him wearing this hat? (*It identifies him as a shepherd and the viewers would then recognize this particular myth.*)
7. This sculpture is made of marble. It is all the same material, yet how many different textures can you see? (*Feathers, skin, robe, talons, hair, etc.*) Which textures do you think would be the smoothest to touch? Roughest?
8. Does the eagle look like he will fly away soon? Does Ganymede look like he will jump up and run? This is an action that seems "frozen in time."
9. Which part of this sculpture do you think would be hardest to carve, the bird or the boy? Why? Which part of the eagle would be hardest? Which part of the boy?
10. Show me with your right arm how you think Ganymede is holding the pitcher? Is his arm bare?
11. The Greek myths are sometimes called classical as is Greek sculpture. This sculpture is called neoclassical. What do you think that means? How does this resemble classical sculpture?
12. Thorvaldsen uses a very stable shape as the basis for his composition. What is that shape? (*A triangle.*) What other qualities contribute to the sculpture's stability and calmness? (*"Frozen" action, relaxed body stance, curving lines, etc.*)
13. Why would Thorvaldsen, who lived just 200 years ago, choose to tell a story that is over 2000 years old? Do you like to hear the same story more than once? What is your favorite story? Have you ever heard different versions of the same story (i.e., in a cartoon or movie versus a book)?
14. Do you like the way Thorvaldsen has told this story? Why or why not? Would you pick the same part to tell? What part would you pick? Why?

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Junius Brutus Stearns, American, 1810–1885

***A Fishing Party Off Long Island***, 1860

Oil on canvas

H.37 x W.54½ inches (canvas)

Gift of the Regis Collection, 78.26

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## Theme

In the 19th century, a growing appreciation of the grandeur of the American landscape led many artists—Junius Brutus Stearns among them—to find inspiration in nature.

## Background

Attitudes toward the American landscape changed significantly during the 19th century. Previously, the vast, untamed wilderness had been something to fear. Clearing the land for farming and building brought a sense of comfort and control, which made the unknown seem less threatening. People began to view America's spectacular landscape with new eyes and sought to preserve, record, and experience its wonders.

While wilderness preservation efforts were getting started, authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau penned their accounts of the outdoors, and artists of the Hudson River school, including Thomas Cole, Frederic Edwin Church, and Asher B. Durand, romanticized the countryside on canvas.

The general public, increasingly fascinated by the discovery and exploration of remote areas, craved a sense of engagement with nature. Fishing was one outdoor activity that could be both adventurous and peaceful. *The Compleat Angler* (1653), a book by the 17th-century Englishman Izaak Walton detailing everything a fisherman needed to know, was published in America for the first time in 1847.

As fishing gained favor as a sport, it became a subject for artists. Junius Brutus Stearns combined his skill at portraiture with his enthusiasm for fishing to create distinguished genre (everyday) scenes.

The area shown in *A Fishing Party Off Long Island* was known for shark fishing. Three types of shark—blue, mako, and thresher—inhabit the waters off the Long Island coast, and shark fishing remains a popular sport on Long Island today, especially in the vicinity of Montauk. The season runs from June to October, with tournaments for the most avid fishermen.

## ***A Fishing Party Off Long Island***

The men pictured in it have not been positively identified. They may be fishing companions of a possible patron, a man named Mr. Hone (who may have commissioned the work). Or they may have been friends of the artist. In Stearns's obituary, seven men were mentioned as his close friends, one of whom was president of the Oceanus Boat Club.

*A Fishing Party Off Long Island* presents a contrast to Stearns's typical charming, quiet river-fishing scenes. The setting is the open water of Long Island Sound, with distant sailboats gliding past and seagulls wheeling overhead. In the foreground, seven men occupying two boats have caught what looks like a blue shark, a common catch in this area, and are working to pull it in.

With their fishing equipment at the ready, and bracing themselves in anticipation of the struggle ahead, the men appear involved yet strangely impassive. The size of the fish would seem to warrant more drama and excitement than is portrayed here; however, the reflection of red shirts in the water hints at blood and danger.

## Technique

Stearns painted his fishing scenes in the recently developed style of Realism. Works in this style were true to the natural world and often incorporated commonplace people, places, and events. As depictions of everyday life—known as genre scenes—gained popularity among artists and the public, fishing scenes were in demand.

Stearns's unusual amalgam of genre painting and portraiture set him apart from fellow artists interested in fishing. In 1850 he began painting fishing pictures that included children, and by the time he produced *A Fishing Party Off Long Island* in 1860 his style was fully developed. The positioning of the men and the inexpressiveness of their faces were probably intended to allow viewers to recognize each person in this portrait. As an artist knowledgeable about fishing, Stearns rendered the fishing equipment and the fish in precise detail.

## Artist

Junius Brutus Stearns was born in 1810 in Arlington, Vermont. He enrolled as a student at the National Academy of Design, in New York, around 1838. After exhibiting at the school and studying in London and Paris, he settled in the New York area, where he remained for the rest of his life.

Stearns is best known for a series of history paintings chronicling the life of George Washington, but he was also among the foremost 19th-century painters of fishing subjects. Although little is known about his life, he seems to have been a fishing enthusiast. His membership in the Oceanus Club of New York, his bequest of his fishing gear to his sons, and his numerous fishing scenes all point to his passion for the sport.

## Suggested Questions

1. A portrait is a likeness of a person. This picture is a group portrait. Why would the artist paint a portrait of men fishing? (*Someone commissioned it.*) Do you have a portrait of a group of family or friends at home? How was it made? (*With a camera*) How was this portrait made? (*Painted*) If you had your portrait painted while doing something you liked, what would that be?

2. What are the people in this painting doing? (*Fishing*) What kind of fish have they caught? (*Shark*)
3. Do you think the people in the two boats know each other? Why or why not?
4. What kinds of fishing equipment do you see? (*Rods and reels, fishing line, bucket*)
5. How do the men in this picture feel? How would you feel if you caught a fish this size?
6. Do you think these fishermen expected to catch such a large fish or were they surprised?
7. Who is in control, the fishermen or the fish?
8. Does anyone on either of the boats appear to be in charge?
9. What time of day is it? What time of year? Give a weather report.
10. What other kinds of boats do you see in the picture?
11. Where might this scene be set? Do you think this place would look the same today? What might be similar or different?
12. What is the red color in the water? (*Reflection of two men's shirts*) Why might the artist have wanted some of the men to wear red shirts?

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Pablo Picasso, Spanish, 1881-1973

***Baboon and Young***, 1951

Bronze

H.21½ x W.13⅞ x D.24 inches

Gift of Funds of the John Cowles Foundation, 55.45

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## Theme

There are no limitations to the sources of inspiration that artists have found. The starting point for *Baboon and Young* was the toy cars belonging to Picasso's young son. With their undersides placed together, the cars suggested to Picasso the head of a baboon. This sculpture demonstrates that with wit and imagination, anything can be transformed into a work of art.

## Background

Picasso was an artist for whom there was little or no separation between his life and his art. In 1914, he was inspired to create a bull's head from bicycle handlebars and a bicycle seat. Years later in 1951, when he created *Baboon and Young*, he was still envisioning works of art in everyday objects.

His relationships with friends and family also became a source of inspiration for his art. In 1951, when he created *Baboon and Young*, Picasso had reason to celebrate parenthood. Late in his life, he had become a father again with the birth of his son, Claude, in 1947 and daughter, Paloma, in 1949. He was inspired during the years that followed by the children and the idea of motherhood. He often expressed the theme of motherhood in his art with representations of both humans and animals with their young.

## ***Baboon and Young***

*Baboon and Young* is constructed of several different objects and materials including the toy cars that form the head of the baboon. The cars are clearly visible even though they are no longer present, because our sculpture is a bronze casting of the original creation. More difficult to detect are the other objects which were incorporated to form the rest of the body. Look closely to see if you can discover any other ordinary objects. Do the shapes remind you of anything?

What looks like a large ceramic jug (or perhaps a ball), forms the torso of the baboon. It may be the handles of the jug that form the shoulders of the animal. The tail and backbone consist of either a metal slat from a shutter or a car spring. Without the original to look at, we can only guess what each object actually is. More importantly, though, is that we see this as an image of a baboon and young rather than a combination of "found objects." This fact testifies to the artist's ability to transform these ordinary objects into a work of art.

Picasso has combined several materials as well as several different objects in this work of art. Plaster, which was molded in a basin and striated with a knife, form the furry neck. The baboon's arms, buttocks, legs, and feet as well as the baby were modeled free-hand in clay or plaster. Finally the sculpture was cast in bronze using the lost-wax process (described under *Technique*).

The combination of "found objects" and hand-built areas of plaster or clay produce a rich surface of great textural variety. The massive proportions of the mother's body and large feet are in sharp contrast to the tiny infant's body. In this way, Picasso has conveyed to us how protective and tender the mother baboon is with her offspring. The sculpture is a touching image of motherhood, celebrating the joy of being a parent, which Picasso felt at this time of his life.

## Technique

This type of sculpture, constructed from several different natural or man-made materials, or "found objects," is called assemblage (AH-sem-blazh). We also refer to it as "additive" sculpture or that which is built up rather than carved away (for example: *Ganymede and the Eagle*). Picasso pioneered this technique in 1914 and continued to experiment with it throughout his life. The technique has had great influence on generations of 20th-century sculptors.

After Picasso assembled the objects and modeled the rest of the figure from plaster and clay, the sculpture was ready to be cast in bronze. This was accomplished by a process called *cire perdue* (sir purr-do) or lost wax. First, a plaster mold was made of the original sculpture. A coating of wax was applied to the inside of the mold. This created a wax replica of the original. Rods and air vents attached the mold to the wax layer. The wax was then covered with a coat of plaster and silica. When heated in an oven to temperatures of 1200° F, the wax melted, leaving a thin hollow space. Molten bronze was poured into the form while still hot, filling the space that the wax once occupied and thus duplicating the original construction in bronze. When the bronze cooled, it hardened. The outer mold was removed, the inner core was shaken out and the bronze was dipped in acid for cleaning.

## The Artist

Born in 1881, Picasso was a child prodigy who is said to have drawn before he walked. By the time he was 13, he was more skilled as an artist than his father, who taught at a local art school. At the age of 19, he left Spain to try his art in Paris, where he spent most of his life.

His art was marked from the beginning by great inventiveness and constantly changing styles. By 1907, he created a masterpiece that challenged all the traditions of Western art. Soon after, in collaboration with Georges Braque, Picasso invented one of the most revolutionary styles of the 20th-century Cubism.

During the decade of his experimentation with Cubism, he developed the technique of collage. Scraps of paper, rope, labels, and other found materials were arranged on and glued to canvas. This tendency may have earned him the nickname of the "King of the Ragpickers," given him by a friend. It was not uncommon to find Picasso picking through rubbish looking for something



to stir his imagination. It is apparent that he was still experimenting with "found objects" in 1951 when he created *Baboon and Young*.

During his long lifetime, Picasso explored unlimited possibilities of creativity, never committing himself to any one style, often returning to the themes and styles of his early years. His innovative genius has made him one of the most influential artists of the 20th century.

### Suggested Questions

1. Is this work of art a sculpture or a painting? How do you know?
2. How many animals are in this sculpture? What kind of animals are they? Which one is the mother? How can you tell?
3. How do you think the mother feels about her baby? How does the baby feel about the mother? What clues does the artist give you?
4. The artist, Picasso, found inspiration in everyday objects. What objects did he use to make the mother baboon's face? Do any other parts of the sculpture look like objects you recognize? What might the ears be? The tail? The mother's round body? The shoulders? Use your imagination as Picasso did!
5. Which parts of the sculpture look smooth and shiny? Which parts look rough? Why do you think the artist uses both smooth and rough surfaces?
6. Can you tell which parts of the sculpture Picasso worked freely with his hands? Pretend you are making the mother baboon's legs out of clay. How would you work the clay? What might you use to make the individual toes? How would you form the baby baboon's head?
7. How does this sculpture differ from the Paleolithic figure? (*Fully founded vs. relief, use of found objects here, different materials, additive vs. subtractive.*) In what ways are they the same? (*Both are mothers, both have round stomachs, both have rough surfaces.*)
8. **Show a picture of a baboon.** How does Picasso's sculpture differ from a real baboon? Can you think of a reason why Picasso made his baboon's tail so long? (*The found object was that long, to give the work stability, to remind us that this is his artistic creation, not a replica, etc.*)
9. Do you think Picasso made this sculpture a) to amuse us? b) to demonstrate his creative use of everyday objects? c) to express the relationship between mother and child? d) to show us what baboons look like? e) other?

10. What objects around your home, school, or natural environment might inspire you to use them in a sculpture? How many "found objects" would your sculpture have? How would you connect them? With string? Wire? Yarn? Glue? Clay?

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Yves Tanguy, French, 1900–1955

***Through Birds, Through Fire, but Not Through Glass***, 1943

Oil on canvas

H. 48 ¼ x W. 43 ½ inches (framed)

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Winston in Tribute to Richard S. Davis, 75.72.2

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## Theme

The sources of inspiration for the works of art in this set up to now have been the world outside the artist. However, artists in the 20th century have increasingly devoted their attention to exploring and projecting the inner workings of their own mind and spirit—the world of dreams, fantasies, and nightmares. Indeed, with this painting by Yves Tanguy (eave tahn-gea) we can see how painting has evolved into a vehicle for the expression of private experience, rather than being a reflection of external reality.

## Background

In the development of 20th-century art, Tanguy is classified as a Surrealist. Surrealism was an international literary and artistic movement that originated in Paris and reached its height during the period between the two World Wars (approximately 1924 to 1940 in Europe). Artists and writers, embittered by the destruction and dehumanization wrought by World War I, sought to revolutionize both art and society through the exploration of the world of psychic experience as it had been revealed by psychoanalytic research, especially that of Sigmund Freud. They believed that the symbolic imagery released in dreams, hallucinations, and daydreams could be used for poetic and artistic creation.

Andre Breton, a French poet who was considered the leader of the group, formulated this philosophy in 1924 in his Surrealist Manifesto. Through psychic experimentation, Surrealists intended to express the true process of thought—free from the exercise of reason and from any aesthetic or moral purpose.

Essentially, Surrealism was an art of fantasy, dreams, and the subconscious mind. Surrealist painting sought to bring together aspects of outer and inner "reality" into a single composition, in much the same way that seemingly unrelated fragments of everyday life combine in the vivid world of dreams. The creation of visual images in accord with these new concepts required new techniques. Chance associations, the pairing of unlikely objects, the scrambling of conventional contexts, and the exploration of the subconscious through dreams and other altered states of consciousness all formed the creative basis of this style.

## ***Through Birds, Through Fire, but Not Through Glass***

Typical of Tanguy's mature style of the 1940s, this painting was made soon after the artist immigrated to America from France. Subtle changes in the colors used distinguish it from earlier works, suggesting the influence of a different quality of light and sense of space in America. Tanguy's works at this time are characterized by bright color and large, complex biomorphic forms (abstract shapes that remind us of living organisms).

*Through Birds, Through Fire, but Not Through Glass*, with its neutral gray background and colorful forms, suggests that it may be read as a portrait of the central biomorphic creature. The biomorph dominates the foreground of the canvas while several smaller satellite forms lie or float in the landscape, and serve to give a sense of distance in space. Painted precisely with three-dimensional modeling, the objects are bathed in light, throwing shadows upon the ground. The shadows help to define the shapes, yet have an existence of their own. What is the source of light? We assume sunlight, but it could be night. The location is indeterminate—neither somewhere nor nowhere. The "landscape" is meticulously rendered but we can't identify it. It is the contradiction between what appears to as a normal relationship between objects and space and the alien forms that we cannot identify that causes our disorientation. Throughout, there is a feeling of mystery and ambiguity about the work that is, ultimately, from the subconscious recesses of the artist's mind.

## **Technique**

Tanguy was always reluctant to elaborate on his work, so we don't know a great deal about his process. From studying his drawings, it appears that he allowed line to flow without control of his conscious mind, a technique in Surrealism known as automatism. This would be supported by his one statement, "The painting develops before my eyes unfolding its surprises as it progresses. It is this which gives me the sense of complete liberty and for this reason, I am incapable of forming a plan or making a sketch beforehand."<sup>3</sup> From this, we can surmise that he probably drew directly on canvas before and during painting, allowing the image to develop spontaneously. One form that freely emerged then automatically suggested another.

## **The Artist**

Yves Tanguy was born in Paris in 1900, the son of a retired naval officer. He spent the summers of his childhood in Brittany where he saw the dolmens (prehistoric stones) that would inspire some of the forms of his landscapes years later.

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<sup>3</sup> Sidney Simon, "Yves Tanguy: Through Birds, Through Fire, But Not Through Glass," *The Minneapolis Institute of Arts Bulletin*, LXIII (1976), p. 24.

Tanguy became acquainted with Surrealism through a young poet he met in 1920 while in military service in Tunisia. The two returned to Paris, where Tanguy began to sketch, even though he had no formal training. In 1923, he was inspired to become a professional artist by the haunting images of Italian artist, Giorgio Di Chericco, which he saw in a gallery window.

Tanguy worked unfalteringly in the style that he established by the late 1920s. In 1930, a visit to Africa exposed him to other unusual rock formations, which also contributed to his fantastic imagery of landscape.

In 1939, Tanguy fled Nazi-occupied Europe and immigrated to the United States. There he settled in Woodbury, Connecticut, with his wife, the American painter Kay Sage, and he remained there until his early death in 1955. Throughout his artistic career, Tanguy remained faithful to Surrealist tenets, creating pictures that are paradoxical, about worlds that exist and yet do not exist.

### Suggested Questions

1. **If you have introduced these terms, ask:** Do you think this looks more like a landscape or a still life? Why?
2. Imagine if you are taking a walk and see this—where do you think you are walking: a) around your neighborhood? b) in the country? c) in the city? d) on another planet? e) in a dream? f) in a day-dream?
3. What do you think might have inspired Tanguy to create a painting like this? Where have you seen an image like this before? (*In dreams, comics, science-fiction books, etc.*)
4. Is there anything in this painting that looks:
  - a) like it could be inflated or blown up like a balloon?
  - b) like it is covering something else?
  - c) like it is inside something else?
  - d) like it is hanging in mid-air?
  - e) like something you recognize?
5. Do you think these are objects we see with our eyes in our everyday world? If the artist has never really seen them, how can he paint them? Could he see them in some other way (with his imagination) or some other place (fantasies or dreams or outer space)?
6. Are there any objects here that look sharp? Squishy? Round? Wrinkly? Smooth?
7. What temperature do you think it is in this painting? Why did you choose that temperature? Do some objects look hotter/cooler than others? Which look hot? Which cool? Is the sun shining in this painting? How do you know? Where is the sun?

8. Do you think any of these objects (constructions) might be able to make sounds, talk, or communicate? Which ones? What might they sound like? What might they say?
9. Do some of these objects look weightless? Which ones? What are some of the reasons they might be weightless? (*Filled with helium, they are figments of imagination, they are in a gravity-free environment, the artist wants them to be!*)
10. Do any of these objects look:
  - a) deflated?
  - b) like they are covering something else?
  - c) like they are inside something else?
  - d) like they are behind something else?
  - e) like they are very far away?
  - f) like they are mechanical?
  - g) like they might be from an animal of some kind?
  - h) like you could eat them?
11. Would you say there were more irregular organic or regular geometric shapes in this painting?
12. This painting is titled *Through Birds, Through Fire, but Not Through Glass*. What do you think the artist was talking about (we don't know) when he named this painting?

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