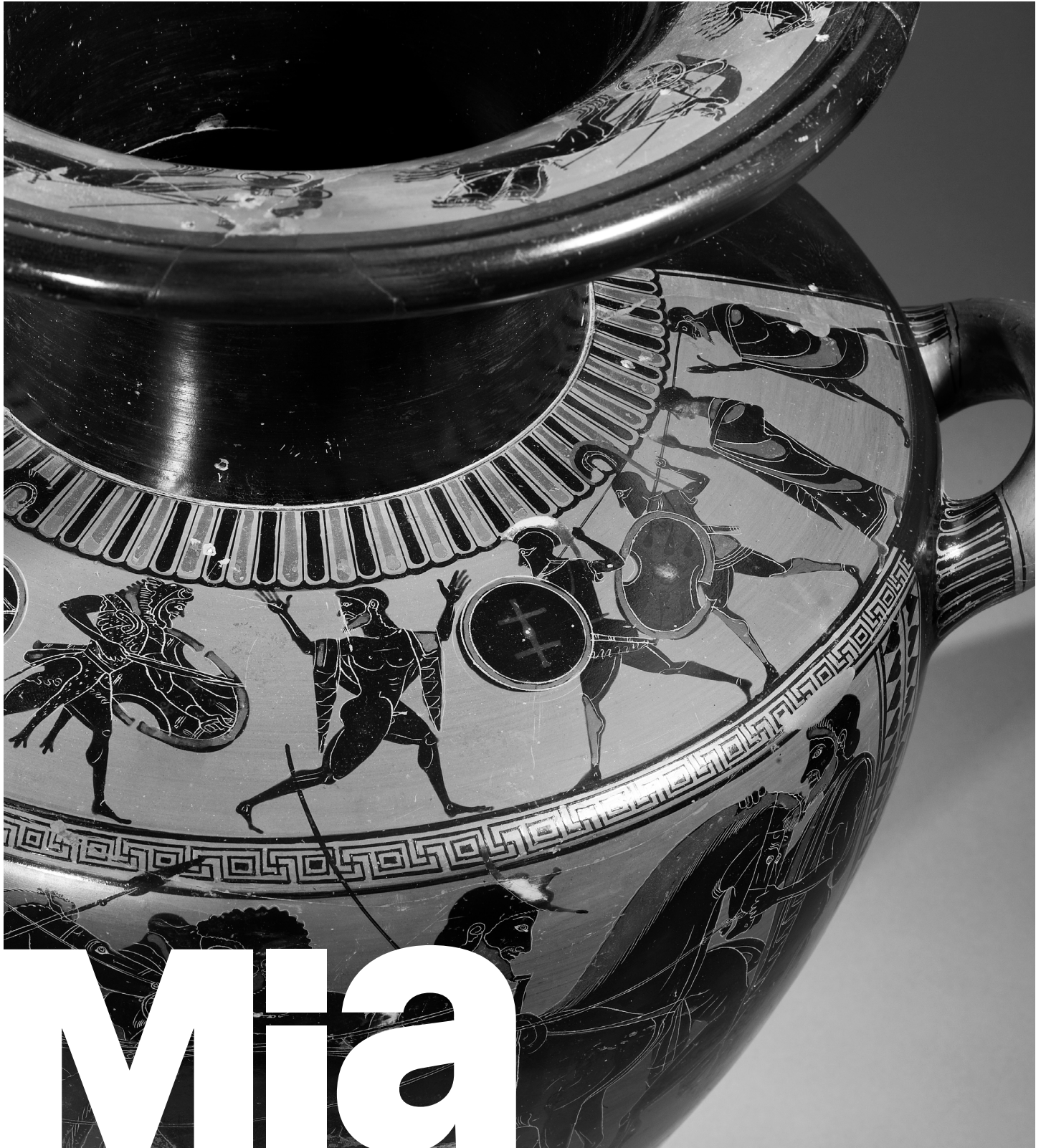


Minneapolis Institute of Art

# Art Adventure

## How People Lived



## **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. Membership at the Minneapolis Institute of Art now has a Pay What You Can option. Make a contribution or join for free, and become part of the member community! You'll enjoy access to special exhibitions, discounts, incentives, and insider news and information. If you choose to contribute, you'll be supporting the museum's free general admission every day. Donations also provide valuable resources that go to the museum's exhibitions, lectures, events, and classes offered for young and old alike.

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 Art 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.

# The Art Adventure Program

## **What's the Art Adventure Program?**

Art Adventure is a program that engages students with artworks from the Minneapolis Institute of Art's collection. Through the support of thousands of trained volunteers, Art Adventure brings visual arts into K-6 classrooms across Minnesota and beyond. The program encourages creativity, critical thinking and global awareness through in-depth explorations of art across various cultures and time periods. Art Adventure is an opportunity for students to experience art up close and personal through reproductions, technology, and touch-and-feel props.

## **What's a Picture Person?**

Picture People are the volunteers from the community who facilitate discussions of artworks using 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 theme and artworks their school will be using that year. At training they receive printed background material, learn engagement techniques, and—most importantly—experience interacting with the original objects they will soon be introducing to students.

## **What does the Art Adventure Program do for students?**

A recent evaluation of Art Adventure showed that, besides encouraging an interest in art, the program fosters five major critical thinking skills: describe what they see, notice details, understand how the parts form a whole idea or artwork, support interpretations with sufficient reasons, and support opinions or preferences with sound reasons. The skills and experiences students gain through Art Adventure will impact them for the rest of their lives.

# Once You're in the Classroom

## **Relax!**

The information provided in this booklet is intended as background material to help you feel confident when sharing the images with children. You are not expected to cover everything. 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 can see you and the reproduction.**

Talk with the classroom teacher to find out what routines the class follows when gathering for a visitor. Aim 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 with everyone in the group.

## **Set up the students for successful exploration.**

Have the children wear nametags so you can call them by name.  
Set your own preferences aside to allow students to form their own opinions.  
Encourage the students to take turns speaking.  
Paraphrase what the students have said to let them know that you have been listening and help clarify each student's statement.

## **Begin each discussion with a moment of silent looking.**

Begin by introducing the lesson, yourself, and the reproductions. Review with the class what a museum is and what you'll be doing with them. Start by having the students observe the artwork in total silence. 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. Model your expectations by spending the time quietly looking too.

**Give students time to talk about what they have observed.**

Start with questions like “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! “What else can you find?” or introducing and linking historical content can help generate further comments.

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

When the students’ observations begin to slow down, use what you have learned about their interests to steer the discussion towards key ideas which you have chosen to focus. 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 ways you might find out together.

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

Don’t expect young children to be able to focus for more than twenty minutes. Plan your presentations accordingly. 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”? Keep in mind that younger children are more likely to accept the abstract than older students, who may want concrete content.

**Talk to other Picture People.**

Experienced Picture People have great ideas about how to capture the imagination of a class. Don’t hesitate to borrow and adapt their suggestions, but remember to bring your own creativity along too!

# Talking about Art

These questions encourage close-looking and meaning-making to help students find their own relevance in works of art. Through this process they learn to value art as having something to do with their own lives.

**What do you see in this artwork? What else can you find?**

This is the best line of questioning to begin conversations with K-2 students. For students that seem ready to dive deeper, ask "What do you see that makes you say that?"

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

You'll notice this question is different than, "What do you see?" "What's going on?" invites a consideration of relationships and interactions and taps into children's natural interest to find stories. "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?

**What does this artwork remind you of?**

What would you use this for? What do you see that makes you say that?

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

What are people in the picture looking at? Where are there bright colors? What is biggest?

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

What would happen if you changed a color? Moved an object or person? Left something out?

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

"Compare and contrast" encourages close looking and reinforces the theme. 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?

**What do you like most about this artwork? Why?  
What do you like least about this artwork?**

If you could keep one artwork from this set, what artwork would you pick? Why?

# Using Touch-and-Feel Props

## Why props?

Students normally first encounter the Art Adventure artworks in their classrooms as reproductions. 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 experience. The use of props also helps engage learners who prefer hands-on learning styles, and reinforces the understanding of all learners.

## How should you use props?

Without careful planning, props will do little but distract your group. Use these helpful tips to lead successful exploration:

- Present the prop alongside information about a work of art or to help answer a question about the work of art.
- There are a number of ways to use the prop:
  1. Pass the prop around to each student. Give the students a question to consider while they are waiting for the prop and one to consider after they have held the prop.
  2. Ask a single student to come forward and describe how it feels to the whole group.
  3. Hold the prop yourself and walk it around the group for the students to touch or look at closely.
  4. Hold the prop yourself to illustrate relevant parts of the discussion.
  5. Then give everyone a chance to examine it more closely at the end of your presentation.
- Clear communication of your expectations is essential to getting the students to stay focused on the activity. Let the students know that they will need to take turns, what they should do if it's not their turn, and how they should treat the props.
- After the students have explored the prop, refer to the experience as you continue the discussion.
- Don't forget to plan how you'll get the props back! Schools are charged significant fees for missing or badly damaged props and reproductions.



# *How People Lived*

Art Adventure Program  
A program from the  
Minneapolis Institute of Art  
Revised 2015

GENEROUS SUPPORT FOR ART ADVENTURE PROVIDED BY:

UNITED HEALTH FOUNDATION\*

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THE HEARST FOUNDATIONS

# How People Lived

## Prop Kit Contents

Work of Art	Prop	Replacement Cost
Antimenes Painter <i>Hydria</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information sheet describing the firing process</li> </ul>	\$10
France, <i>The Falconers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Samples of cotton, hemp, linen, and wool yarn</li> <li>• Life-sized facsimile of a cartoon diagram</li> </ul>	\$10 \$40
Robert Koehler, <i>Rainy Evening on Hennepin Avenue</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photograph of Koehler's wife and son, and (flip side) a view of contemporary Hennepin Avenue</li> </ul>	\$10
Nicolas de Largillière, <i>Portrait of Catherine Coustard with Her Son Léonor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sample swatch of velvet and lamé</li> <li>• Sheet with detail of painting and questions</li> </ul>	\$10 \$10
Japan, <i>Helmet</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photo prop of a dragonfly and (flip side) an image of an MIA full samurai armor</li> </ul>	\$10
Sierra Leone, <i>Sande Society Mask</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bundle of raffia</li> <li>• Photograph of dancer wearing mask</li> </ul>	\$15 \$10
Artwork Reproductions (6)		\$50

**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!**

# Contents

## Introduction

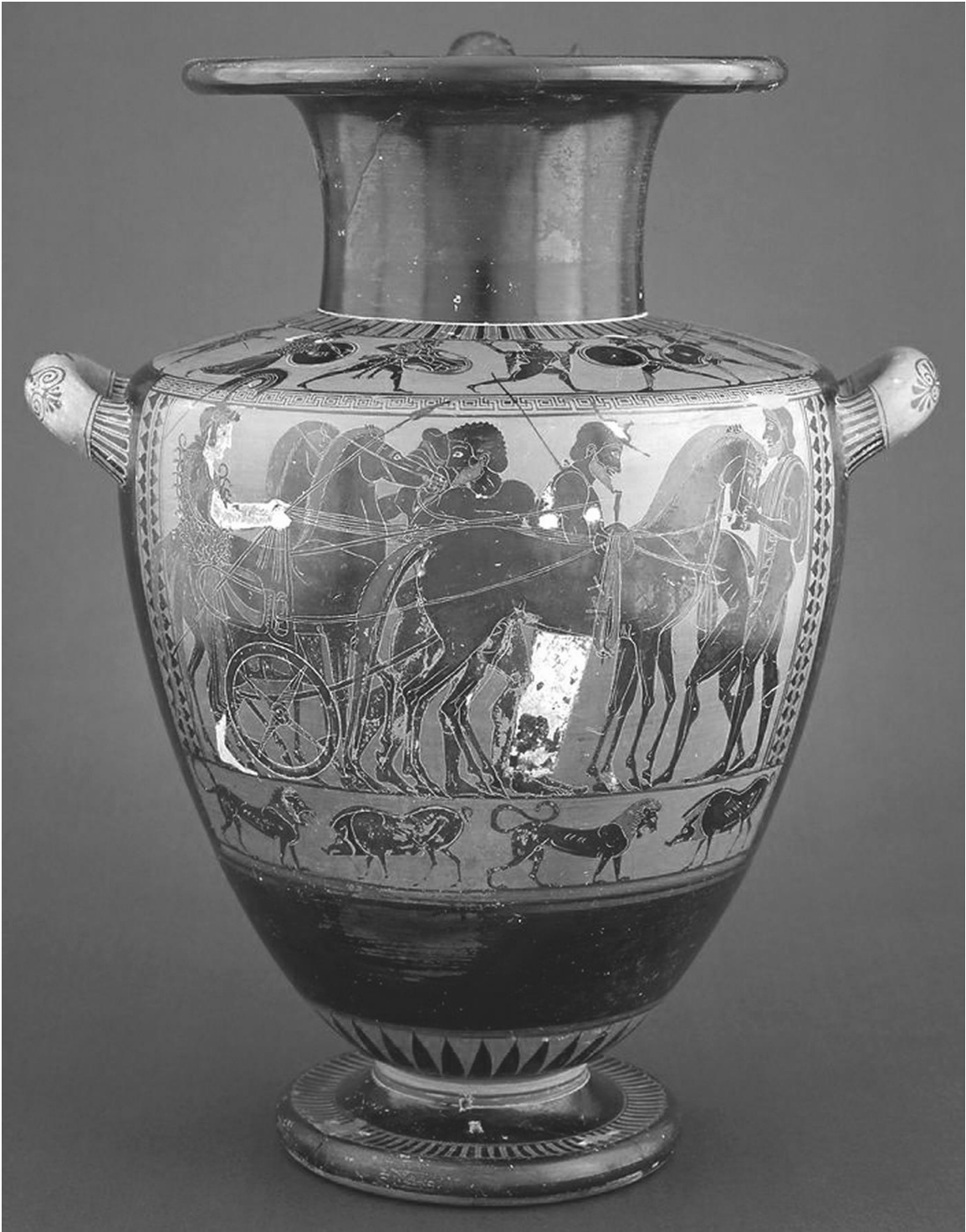
1. Antimenes Painter, **Hydria**, 530-500 B.C. E..... 13
2. Arras, France, **The Falconers**, c. 1445-1455..... 19
3. Robert Koehler, **Rainy Evening on Hennepin Avenue**, c. 1902..... 25
4. Nicolas de Largillière, **Portrait of Catherine Coustard, Marquise de Castelnau, Wife of Charles-Léonor Aubry, with Her Son Léonor**, c. 1700..... 31
5. Japan, **Helmet**, 1600s..... 35
6. Africa, Sierra Leone, **Sande Society Mask**, 1900s..... 39



# Introduction

The earliest historical records made by human beings were not written, but painted or carved on the walls of caves thousands of years ago. The six works reproduced in this set give a vivid picture of how people lived at different times in various parts of the world.

Our survey begins with a vase from ancient Greece—what does this ancient vase reveal of how the Greeks lived nearly 2500 years ago? What did they value? Why did later civilizations, such as our own, imitate them? The answers to these questions and many more may be found in the art objects themselves. These silent objects from the past reach to us across the centuries, using visual language to tell us of how people lived in other times and places. Our challenge is to learn to “read” these stories. Once we have learned to do that with the six objects in this set, we will be prepared to try our skills of discovery with other works of art.



Attributed to the Antimenes Painter, Greek

**Hydria**, c. 530 BCE

Slip-glazed earthenware

H.20¾ x 17 x 15 inches

The John R. Van Derlip Fund, 61.59

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## Theme

The shape and decoration of this *hydria* gives us insight into the lives and thoughts of Greek people who lived over 2000 years ago. Although the function of this vase was to carry water, its elaborate decoration and proportions speak of the qualities the Greeks most admired—harmony, order, balance, and beauty.

## Background

The ancient Greeks developed one of the most remarkable civilizations in the history of the world. It reached its height 400 BCE, known as Classical period. The Greeks gave to the world a great body of works of art, literature, law, science, and philosophy, notable above all for the spirit they see in human beings. Their sense of individual human worth was so great they depicted their gods in human form. Captured in the words of the ancient Greek dramatist Sophocles: “The world is full of wonders, but nothing is more wonderful than man.”

This *hydria* exemplifies that spirit. It was created just before the Classical period in the Archaic period, which lasted roughly from 800 to 500 BCE. During this time, Hellas (as Greece was then called) evolved from a primitive agricultural society to one organized into many small city-states. The soil was poor for most crops, but olive trees and grapevines flourished. Olive oil and wine, along with fine pottery, became major trade items.

The common bond of the city-states was language, but they were also united by the legacy of Homer, the 700s poet who wrote the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. These epic poems, and following works, recounted the legends of the Greeks’ gods, goddesses, and heroes, stories the Greeks loved and taught to their youth as history. The legends dealt with questions of good and evil and served as models for human behavior. The Greeks envisioned their gods in all things.

In addition to the Olympian gods and goddesses, each city-state had its own patron god and goddess. Festivals were held to honor these divinities, and people attended from all over Greece. The festivals evolved into competitions—the most famous of which were the Olympic Games, founded in 776 BCE. The games were held every four years, as they are today.

Athletics developed in accord with the Greeks’ aspiration to excellence in all things and their belief in the wonder of man. Athletes in the Olympic Games participated as individuals. A victorious athlete could expect to be immortalized as a hero in public sculpture in his home city.

Hero worship was in fact closely related to worship of the gods. Thousands of heroes believed to have descended from the gods, were revered throughout Greece. Greek poets celebrated their deeds in verse, and vase painters drew on the heroic legends for the subjects of their

decorations. Foremost of the Greek heroes was Herakles, who was considered to be the first athlete and, according to some versions, the founder of the Olympic games. He was celebrated by poets and was one of the most popular subjects of Archaic period vase painters, often accompanied by his patroness, Athena—as we see on this *hydria*.

### ***Hydria***

Several types of utilitarian vases (vessels used for eating, cooking, and storage) were made in ancient Greece. The *hydria* was used to carry water from a communal fountain. The side handles were used to lift it onto a woman's head for carrying, and the vertical handle at the back was used for pouring or for carrying the jar when empty. Even though this vase was made to be functional, great attention was given to its design and decoration. The balanced and harmonious proportions are emphasized by the painted decoration. For example, the largest image appears on the main body of the vase, in keeping with its size and importance, and decorative patterns draw our attention to the handles and the foot. The elegant shape and elaborate decoration tell us that the Greeks placed a high value on beauty; even utilitarian vessels had to be beautiful.

The decoration of the *hydria* reflects the Greek preoccupation with heroes, athletics, and the interaction of human beings and gods. On the lip of the vase, the artist depicted a chariot race, one of the most exciting forms of competition to the ancient Greeks. It was, in fact, the nine-mile, four-horse chariot race, which opened the Olympic games. The image on the main body of the vessel is the harnessing of the four-horse chariot of Athena, who prepares to step into the chariot on the far left. Athena was venerated as a warrior-goddess as well as the goddess of wisdom and the arts of peace and as patroness of household crafts. She was especially honored in the city of Athens, named in her honor. Athena holds the reins of the two pole horses (horses already attached to the chariot). Two men (one's head is hidden behind the horses) stand at the heads of the pole horses, while two men lead the horses forward.

One of the two men (center) leading the horses is bareheaded with a red beard and a short, curly haircut befitting an athlete. These characteristics suggest that he is Herakles, although Herakles usually wears a lion skin (as in the image on the shoulder). The son of Zeus and a mortal mother, Herakles was considered by the Greeks to be a mortal. An ideal athlete (credited with originating the Olympic games) and a hero, Herakles served as a model of human perseverance against seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

The subject of this vase could be the journey of Athena and Herakles to the battle between the gods and the giants. The gods needed a mortal to assist them, so Athena carried Herakles to battle in her chariot. This scene could also refer to another of the many tales about Herakles: upon his death, Athena transported him to Mount Olympus, where he became immortal.

The male figure behind the pole horses wears the long white robes of a charioteer and a *petasos* (traveler's hat) and carries a staff. He may represent Hermes, the patron of athletes and the god of travelers. Immediately below the scene is a row of boars and lions, a motif commonly found on 500 BCE vases. In this case, the animals are associated with two of the twelve labors of Herakles. For the first labor, he strangled the Nemean lion with his bare hands, skinned it, and made a garment from the skin, which made him undefeatable. For the fourth labor, he captured a wild boar that had terrorized the inhabitants of the land.

Above the harnessing scene, on the shoulder of the vase, is another episode from the life of



Herakles, described in an epic poem from this era. This is Herakles' combat with Kyknos, son of the god of war, Ares. Kyknos was a bandit who robbed travelers on their way to visit the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. When he attempted to intercept Herakles on his visit and then refused to step aside, Athena urged Herakles to kill him. Ares attacked Herakles but was wounded in the thigh and had to retreat. Herakles is easily identified by his attribute, the lion skin, which symbolizes his strength. He is backed by Athena and Hermes on the left. To the right, behind the shield, is Kyknos, supported by Ares and two unidentified figures. Between Herakles and Kyknos is Zeus (Herakles' father), who stands with outstretched arms and appears to intercede.

To the Greeks, this image represented not just a story but also the two sides of human nature. Herakles the hero and Athena as his patroness represent the forces of good. Ares and Kyknos display the darker side: those who wage war for the sake of destruction or greed. The story may remind us of heroes—real or imaginary—of our own time. For the ancient Greeks and for us today, stories of good and evil can be lessons in proper human behavior.

## Technique

Pottery making was the first major industry to develop in Athens during the Archaic period. Workshops manufactured utilitarian and luxury wares in a variety of shapes and sizes for both the local market and export. In most cases, the potter (who formed the pot) and the painter (who decorated it) were two different artists.

Generally, pots were formed (thrown) on the potter's wheel. A potter's wheel consists of a turntable, on which the clay is placed, and a disk or crank that the potter operates with his foot to keep the turntable moving. Both hands are free to form the pot from the clay as the turntable turns. Large pots such as the *hydria* were made in sections, which were joined together with slip (a mixture of clay and water). Sections were joined at the structural points between neck and body or body and foot. Thin coils of clay added on the outside conceal the joins. Handles were made by hand and attached with slip.

The images on the vases were created by means of a technique developed about 625 BCE. The figures were applied to the vase when the clay was leather-hard. The painter did not use the pigments that we associate with painting today but rather a substance called *engobe* (a thickened mixture of clay and water). Once the *engobe* was applied and dried, the pot was placed in a kiln, an oven-like structure that can be fired to high temperatures.

The firing (heating in the kiln) of the pots lasted for many hours. In the first stage, the entire vase turned red because the clay contained iron. In the second stage, the oxygen supply was cut off, causing the entire vase to turn black. In the third and final stage, oxygen was reintroduced, causing the vase to turn red again. The decorated portions, however, did not reabsorb the oxygen, because of the different consistency of the *engobe*. Therefore those areas remained black. The result was black figures silhouetted against the light red background of the pot. The resulting pottery is known as black-figure ware.

Details were incised in the black areas by scraping through to the red clay with a sharp tool. Finally, accents of white and purple were applied after firing. Traces of white remain on Athena's face and Hermes' robe. Purple appears on the horses' manes. More colors were probably once present, but they have disappeared over time.

## Artist

We know the artist only as the Antimenes Painter. The Antimenes Painter was the head of a large workshop and probably painted hundreds of vases. He had many colleagues who painted in a similar manner, but our vase is considered to be by his own hand. His workshop was known for images of harnessing scenes such as the one on this vase. It was unusual in ancient Greece for the painter and potter to be the same artist, so it is likely that another member of the Antimenes workshop was responsible for forming the vase.

## Suggested Questions

1. The artist shows the horses from the side. This kind of flat, side view is called a silhouette. Think about your shadow. How is it similar? How is it different?
2. The different parts of Greek vases have names. What might you call the body of this vase? The shoulders? The neck? Where do you think these names come from?
3. This was used to carry water and is made from clay. What do we use to carry water today? What are they made of?





Arras, France (Europe)

***The Falconers***, 1435-1445

Tapestry, wool

135 x 128 ¼ inches

Gift of Mrs. C. J. Martin for the Charles Jarius Martin Memorial Collection, 15.34

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## **Theme**

This tapestry describes in great detail the art of falconry, a sport enjoyed by the nobility during the Middle Ages. At the same time, it records the extravagant 1400s court fashions considered appropriate for this activity.

## **Background**

Although tapestries had been produced since ancient times, they were especially popular in the 1300s, 1400s, and 1500s in northern Europe. As wall coverings for medieval castles and churches, these elaborate woven textiles provided warmth and beauty in somber, chilly interiors. They were expensive to produce and came to symbolize the rank of the wealthy lords and ladies who could afford to own them.

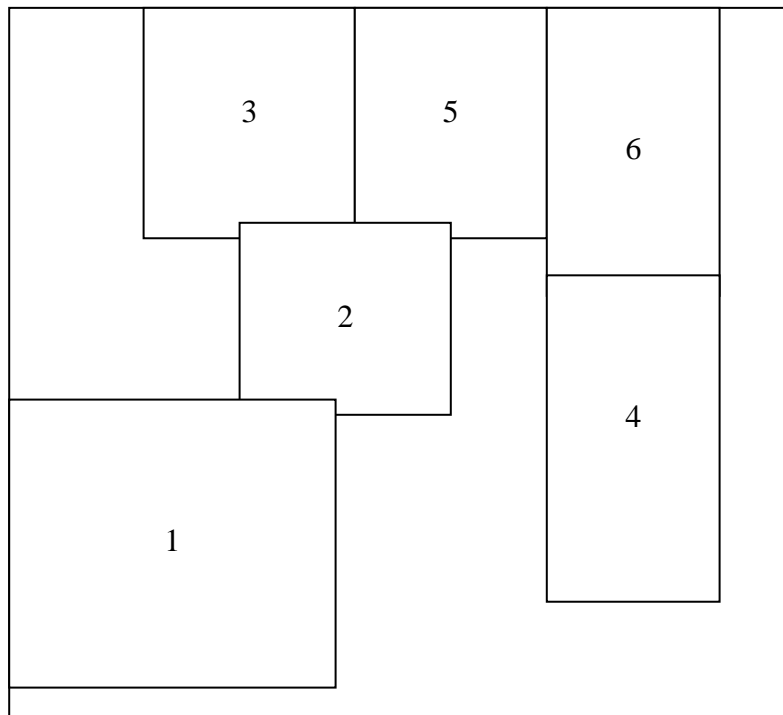
Throughout the Middle Ages, the Church had been the main patron of the arts. In the 1400s, however, the nobility and the growing merchant class began to commission numerous works of art. Chief among the patrons were the dukes of Burgundy, who ruled not only Burgundy (a large area including modern France) but most of the Netherlands as well. Under their rule, Flanders (modern-day Belgium) became the artistic center of the north. Artists in all media—painters, sculptors, metalsmiths and weavers—were attracted to Flanders because of its reputation as an artistic center and by the prospect of wealthy patrons. The cities of Arras and Tournai, in particular, became synonymous with tapestry production.

Although the subjects depicted in tapestries before about 1400 were largely religious, secular scenes such as this hunting party became common toward the middle of the 1400s. These subjects reflect the changing role of the nobility. In earlier times, a knight would have devoted himself to a life of heroism—defending his faith or his estate. Now, nobles led a life of formality, opulence, and idleness. In their pursuit of ceremonial sporting activities, they attempted to recapture the thrill and glory of past warfare. In this tapestry, we see the details of one of their passions—hunting with falcons.

Falconry is an ancient sport, known in China 4000 years ago. In medieval Europe, falcons were allotted to men according to their rank. Falcons were so valued that they were given as prized gifts. The theft of falcon eggs could result in imprisonment, and the outright theft of a bird could bring excommunication. It was not uncommon for falcons to be seen perched on the hands of their owners at court, on the streets, and even in church.

## ***The Falconers***

Like many tapestries woven during the Middle Ages, this tapestry was probably made as one of a set of panels that together told a story or illustrated a theme. *The Falconers* is a fragment of what was originally a larger piece depicting a group of elegantly dressed lords and ladies hunting in a meadow. The event is presented in the style of continuous narrative typical of the Middle Ages: several events that happened at different times are treated as if they occurred simultaneously. The subject is the sport of falconry, and the tapestry clearly illustrates the series of actions involved in hunting game with trained birds of prey. The diagram below will help you identify the various activities.



- Key:
1. Lady attaches (tethers) a leash to the leather strap (jess) on the leg of a returned falcon.
  2. Hood is either placed over the falcon's head or being removed.
  3. Falcon perches on man's right gloved hand. (Note jesses, leash, and bells on legs of bird.)
  4. Falcon returns to man's extended gloved right hand. (Leash is seen in left hand.)
  5. Two falcons attack a heron.
  6. Man swings lure (a stick with meat bait) to recall the falcon.

Falcons are hawk-like birds of prey that were captured in the wild or hatched in captivity. Training them was a long, arduous process. They were kept in total darkness at first and taught to take food in captivity. Gradually, they were introduced to light and to the presence of people. While being taught to hunt, the falcons were attached by leashes to the gloved hands of the trainers and lured back from the hunt by the promise of food.

During a hunt, as seen in the tapestry, the falcons were hooded (2) to calm them until their release. The leashes held by the hunters were attached to leather straps called jesses (1), which remained at all times on the bird's legs. The falcon also wore a silver bell (3) which produced a melodious whistling sound that helped the hunter locate the bird in flight during the hunt. The lure—a hoop or a stick with bird wings and food attached—was waved to signal the falcon to return for its reward (4). The highpoint of the hunt is depicted at the top center (5). Two falcons stooped (descended vertically) upon a heron. After sinking their talons into their prey, the falcons brought it back. To the right (6), a man swings a lure to recall the falcon from its hunt, a measure of how well the falcon was trained.

The tapestry follows the conventions of the 1400s northern European late Gothic style. The subjects are presented as if they were actors on a stage rather than hunters in a meadow. Each activity of the art of falconry, which probably occurred over several hours and occupied considerable space, appears to be happening simultaneously in this shallow space. The tiny castle, in the upper right-hand corner, indicates distance by its smallness in relation to the figures, but there is no attempt to show receding space by the use of linear perspective. Depth is indicated by overlapping of the figures. For example, we know that the figures in section 1 are closer because they overlap the figures in sections 2 and 3.

The elongated figures are flat and two-dimensional because their shapes are created by lines. Notice the sharp contours of each face and head-covering and the sharp, precise lines of the clothing. The faces are uniformly bathed in light rather than shaded with light and shadow and therefore appear very flat. It was detail, not anatomy, that interested these weavers, detail as seen here in the intricately patterned and draped fabrics, the individual leaves and flowers of the foliage, and the accurate illustration of each aspect of the art of falconry. With this rich surface detail, weavers of the 1400s created not only decorative tapestry but also a woven record of how people lived a long time ago.

## Technique

Tapestries are woven, made by interlacing two sets of threads, called the warp and the weft. The warp threads stretch the length of the loom, and the weft threads are worked over and under them. Strong fibers such as wool, linen, or hemp must be used for the warp, while the weft may vary from wool to silk or even metallic threads.

In tapestry weaving, as the weft thread is woven in, it is packed down so that in the resulting fabric the warp is completely covered. It is the weft thread that creates the image in the tapestry. Each differently colored weft thread is held on a separate bobbin. Weft of one color is woven through the warp to the point where the pattern requires another color, and then is turned back on itself. At the point where different colors meet, small slits sometimes occur, which can later be sewn together by hand. Intersecting threads can also be intertwined so a slit does not occur.

The original designs for a tapestry generally were rather small. Enlargements to the full size of

the tapestry, called cartoons, were placed behind the warp threads on the loom to serve as a diagram for the weaving.

### **Artists**

Tapestries were produced in workshops by highly skilled specialists—designers, cartoon makers, dyers, artisans who warped the loom, and weavers. The weavers themselves often specialized in certain areas or images of the tapestry, such as borders or faces. Three to six weavers worked side by side to produce a large tapestry, but each one averaging perhaps one square yard of tapestry per month, depending on the number and type of threads used. The weavers in the Middle Ages were usually men. Women assisted in the workshop, often preparing the fibers for weaving and doing the dyeing.

### **Suggested Questions**

1. The people in this tapestry are hunting. How did the artist show that they are hunting?
2. Do you think tapestry was made by one person or several people working together? Why? Who would you rather be—the artist who drew tapestry's design or the weavers who made the tapestry? Why?







Robert Koehler, American, 1850-1917  
***Rainy Evening on Hennepin Avenue***, c. 1902  
Oil on canvas  
H.25 x W. 24¾ inches  
Gift by subscription in honor of the Artist, 25.403

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## Theme

In *Rainy Evening on Hennepin Avenue*, Robert Koehler creates a picturesque view of everyday life around 1902 along a busy street in Minneapolis. Among the many people depicted are his wife and son walking with the family dog. Also portrayed is his daily environment—the place where he worked and the community in which he was involved.

## Background

The city of Minneapolis was undergoing tremendous growth and change when Robert Koehler painted *Rainy Evening on Hennepin Avenue* in the first decade of the 1900s. Culminating an era of urbanization, Minneapolis, like other burgeoning cities throughout the nation, mirrored the vastly altered conditions of American life that resulted from increased population, advancing technology and industry, and the shift from a rural to an urban society.

Many of the buildings portrayed in this painting arose during the 1880s when a building boom took place. This was a golden era for Minneapolis reflecting the new prosperity brought by lumbering, flour milling, and trade. The building on the left is the Minneapolis Public Library, built in 1889 of reddish brown Lake Superior sandstone, an imposing presence on the southeast corner of Tenth Street and Hennepin Avenue. A newspaper account noted its “dreamy seclusion” away from the central business district.

The library housed the Academy of Natural Sciences and the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts (the forerunner of The Minneapolis Institute of Art), which included the Minneapolis School of Art (later called the Minneapolis College of Art and Design) and a gallery. Both the school and gallery were situated on the top floor.

What was it like to live in Minneapolis at the time of this painting? Passage into the 1900s brought an ever-quickening pace. Electric streetcars replaced horse-drawn streetcars in the early 1890s; electricity was competing with gas in the lighting of the city’s streets and buildings; and automobiles made a rare appearance on the roads, driven by prosperous individuals with a taste for adventure. Nonetheless, horse-drawn carriages were the prevalent means of transportation. The bicycle was all the rage with nearly ten million Americans riding them in 1890.

Nicollet and Washington Avenues were bustling with retail activity, and shoppers could enjoy the new meccas of merchandising—fashionable department stores such as Donaldson’s Glass Block, Powers Dry Goods, and the recently opened Dayton’s. Those were the days when a man’s suit sold for \$10, a sirloin steak cost 12 cents and a new stove \$22.50.

As the city grew, so did an appetite for entertainment and culture. The theater enriched urban

life with a variety of plays, opera, and vaudeville, a favorite form of family entertainment. In professional sports, baseball was the most popular game. Twin Citians trooped to Nicollet Park, home of the Minneapolis Millers, and to Lexington Park, home of the St. Paul Saints.

Home and family, central institutions in American society, were symbols of calm and stability in the midst of a changing world. Traditional family roles were clearly defined: men took charge of the business world and cast the votes in the political realm, while women were responsible for taking care of the home and children. Urban families tended to have fewer children than those in rural areas. As families grew smaller, children became even more important, and the concerned mother was very involved in her child's upbringing and education. The growth of publishing produced a profusion of books and magazines that advised women on home-management, and reinforced their traditional roles.

At the same time, urban growth was creating changes that eroded tradition. Technological advances and labor-saving services allowed women more free time; many became involved in charity work and the burgeoning women's clubs and organizations. New career opportunities caused a growing number of women to enter the workforce.

There were adverse effects to the extraordinary changes taking place in society. Problems relating to labor strife, child labor, swelling immigration, the rights of women, and corruption in city government were major concerns at this time, and movement for reform was underway.

Nonetheless, it was the Age of Confidence, and the country entered the 1900s with a sense of optimism. On New Years Day, 1900, the *Tribune* assured the city's 200,000 residents that their future was "onward and upward." The new century would bring untold "expansion of all desirable blessings, of prosperity, of educational and moral growth, of beneficent political policies."

### ***Rainy Evening on Hennepin Avenue***

This picturesque cityscape offers a glimpse of life in Minneapolis at the turn of the century. Looking south from Ninth Street, we see the buildings located around Tenth Street and Hennepin Avenue. The prominent building in the left middle distance with the lighted first floor window is the Minneapolis Public Library. Across the street to the right is the Hennepin Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, which stood on that site from 1881-1911. Known as the Red Brick Church, its steeple was a prominent landmark in downtown Minneapolis. When Koehler painted this scene around 1902, the southern area of Hennepin Avenue he portrayed was more residential than the commercial end to the north. Many private homes were in the area as well as numerous rooming houses and hotels.

Koehler depicts the bustling activity of the city as it looked on a rainy evening, perhaps in early spring or late fall, suggested by the leafless trees and the warmly dressed figures. It is twilight and the rain has stopped, as evidenced by the glistening puddles in the street, the cloud-filled sky, the furled umbrellas and the sense of moisture in the air. While the streetcar's headlights are on and light glows from the library and church windows, sunlight penetrates through the clouds in the western sky.

Among the people portrayed strolling and scurrying down the avenue is the artist's family. The woman and child in the foreground are Koehler's wife, Marie, and their son, Edwin, who are walking with the family dog. A photograph discovered in the 1970s was clearly the basis for the

figures in the painting. Fashionably dressed, Mrs. Koehler lifts her long skirt, preventing her hem from sweeping the wet ground. Typical of the early 1900s, her dress emphasizes her silhouette, enhanced by a waist-pinching corset commonly worn underneath. Her hairstyle is the pompadour, drawn up high with a large hat perched on top. Her son wears a jacket with knee pants and cap typical of the time.

Walking hand in hand, they appear to be enjoying a leisurely stroll together. Koehler portrays a happy family relationship reflecting similar family values of the time. They seem to be in harmony with their surroundings, comfortable in the city despite the dampness and onslaught of evening.

## Technique

The French Impressionists of the later 1800s paved the way for artists like Koehler by addressing the subject of modern urban life and by their sense of technical experimentation and innovation.

In *Rainy Evening on Hennepin Avenue*, Koehler creates a setting filled with soft mist and atmosphere using subtle color harmonies in a variety of violet, brown, black and gray tones. Contrasting with this rather dark, murky palette are small patches of warm yellows and oranges, which represent various sources of light glowing from the library and church windows, shining from the streetcars, and illuminating the face of a man who stops to light his pipe. Highlighted areas break up the grays of the sky and create a shimmering quality on the wet ground. With loose, sketchy brushstrokes, Koehler evokes the soft, luminous quality of the rain-soaked street and sidewalk.

While Koehler's interest in light and atmosphere has much in common with the Impressionists, his forms maintain a solid, three-dimensional quality, which differs from the sketchy, unfinished appearance of many Impressionist paintings. Koehler's well-defined forms are particularly seen in the figures in the foreground of the painting, whose contours are distinctly delineated. They are depicted naturalistically, with considerable attention to details of gesture and clothing. These details, however, are softened by the hazy atmosphere of twilight. Koehler indicates depth by the use of linear perspective, where objects become progressively smaller and closer together as they become more distant, as can be seen in the figures and the buildings. He also uses aerial perspective, where the buildings depicted in the distance fade to a bluish gray color. Details blur, suggesting the effects of light, air, and distance.

## Artist

Born in Hamburg, Germany in 1850, Robert Koehler emigrated with his family to Milwaukee, Wisconsin when he was four years old. His father was a skilled mechanic; his mother taught needlework and dabbled in painting. Robert excelled in drawing at a young age, and aspired to be a lithographer (printmaking with stone). Koehler attended a few arts schools at home and abroad, before settling in Minnesota.

In 1893 Koehler was appointed Director of the Minneapolis School of Art, a position he held until 1914. Though mainly occupied with teaching and administrative duties, Koehler found time to paint, lecture, and write articles. Koehler was actively involved in many local art associations. Soon after he arrived in Minneapolis he founded and was president of the Minneapolis Art League, located at 719 Hennepin Avenue, which held annual exhibitions.

A strong advocate of American art, Koehler also organized annual exhibitions of American art at the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts. During his tenure at the school, Koehler was involved in planning for a new art school and museum, which were outgrowing their space in the library. His dreams for these facilities were realized in 1915 with the opening of the spacious building of The Minneapolis Institute of Art (then the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts).

### **Suggested Questions**

1. What are the people doing in this painting? Where do you think the people are going? What do you see that makes you say that?
2. If you were standing on that street corner, what sounds might you hear? Is this a noisy or a quiet scene? What smells would you smell?
3. Even though it is raining, there is a lot of light in this picture. Where do you think this light is coming from? What is your reasoning?







Nicolas de Largillière, French, 1656-1746

***Portrait of Catherine Coustard (1673-1728), Marquise of Castelnau, Wife of Charles-Léonor Aubry (1667-1735) with her Son Léonor (1695-1770), c. 1699***

Oil on canvas

H.53¼ x W.40¾ inches

The John R. Van Derlip Trust Fund, 77.26

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## Theme

This portrait of a French mother and her son was made to celebrate the family's newly attained nobility and the birth of an heir to their estate. From studying it, we can learn about the family relationships and life-style of upper-class society in a time of transition at the beginning of the 1700s.

## Background

Louis XIV of France was an absolute monarch whose brilliant reign of fifty-four years earned him the title of Sun King. Under his leadership, France achieved political dominance in Europe, and Paris replaced Rome as the artistic center of the time. The king's insatiable need for absolute control was the source of his triumph and also of his demise. He surrounded himself with advisors from the middle class, who had little power except what he granted them. The courtiers, who eventually numbered 10,000, were maintained in the king's opulent palace at Versailles. Even nature gave way to the king's will as he transformed a forest into a park. Art as well as architecture was at the service of Louis XIV. He established a powerful academy, which for over forty years dictated standards of art in accord with his own taste and ambition.

During the last thirty years of his rule, however, Louis XIV's power gradually declined. By the turn of the century, disastrous military campaigns and the king's extravagance at Versailles had brought the French economy to the verge of collapse. By 1700, the courtiers-in-residence could no longer be maintained, and the nobility began moving to Paris, where their lifestyle became less luxurious and more informal.

The Aubry family, two of whom are depicted in the portrait, lived in this world of excess and transition at the turn of the century. Léonor Aubry, the head of a wealthy middle-class family, was awarded noble status in return for twenty years of government service under Louis XIV. Shortly afterward, his eldest son, Charles, also a bureaucrat, purchased an estate in central France that afforded him the title of Marquis de Castelnau. Their rise to social prominence prompted the Aubrys to commission Nicolas de Largillière (Iar zhil YAIR) to paint a series of family portraits, including this one of Catherine Aubry, Charles's wife, and her young son, Léonor, named for his grandfather.

## ***Portrait of Catherine Coustard, Marquise de Castelnau, Wife of Charles-Léonor Aubry, with Her Son Léonor***

What appears to be a charming portrait of a mother and son posing with the family pet might seem (except for the clothing) like any number of modern day pictures showing the virtues of family and motherhood. But looks can be deceiving. Closer examination reveals how stiffly the

subjects are posed and how little they actually relate to each other. The concept of motherhood as we understand it today did not exist in France at the beginning of the 1700s. Family traditionally meant lineage, the inheritance wealth, and marriages were often loveless legal contracts. The birth of a child gave status to the mother for having produced an heir to the fortune, but the child's care was the servant's job. Parents and children remained almost strangers to one another. Respect and obedience were expected from children, not love and affection. It is unusual for a young child the age of Léonor to be included in a portrait of this time. The reason for his presence is to show him as heir to the family fortune and to honor his mother for having produced an heir. Léonor is the new nobility's hope for the future.

Madame Aubry, who was the daughter of a prosperous cloth merchant, wears an elegant, contemporary dress. Her fashionable blue velvet gown is lined with embroidered silk and embellished with a silver bodice. Her costume is a little unusual because it shows the less rigid dress code of the new Parisian society. The stylish fashion she wears, called a *robe de chambre*, is a softer, more comfortable gown than the gowns worn at Versailles. Madame Aubry would have worn it to receive guests at home. Her hair is fashioned in a *fontange*, with two curls framing her forehead. This was popular in French hairstyle for thirty years, appearing in many portraits of the period. Léonor's clothing may look odd to us now, but at that time it was normal to dress boys and girls alike until they were five or six years old. In France, this practice continued into the 1900s. Late 1800s American photographs also show young boys wearing dresses. Léonor's garment is called a *jacquette*. The plumes in his matching velvet headdress indicate that he is a boy.

Largillière's portraits were not intended to reveal the personalities of his sitters. The Aubrys, like most of Largillière's patrons, wanted their status emphasized, not their inner selves. Therefore, rich clothes, richly painted, became the essence of his new style of aristocratic portraiture.

## Technique

The use of oil paint, as previously explained in the discussion of the Cranach portraits, offered artists great versatility in representing brilliant color and convincing textures. Largillière used those advantages to the utmost in this painting. By applying layers of transparent paints over opaque ones, he created the illusion of actual skin and cloth and achieved a subtle play of light off the rich blues and reds.

In contrast to the Cranach painting, which was executed on wooden and metal supports, this portrait is on canvas, stretched over a wooden frame. The surface of the canvas was prepared by priming it with a white ground. Canvas has several advantages over other supports: it is lightweight, it is inexpensive, and it expands and contracts little with temperature changes, so the paint surface does not crack.

Of the three oil paintings in this set, that by Largillière has the most vivid and broadest range of colors. This is partly due to the better quality of pigment available to artists of his time as well as to an advanced knowledge of the technique.

## Artist

Largillière was born in Paris. He received his early training in the workshop of a Flemish painter in Antwerp who specialized in landscape and genre painting. In 1674, at the age of eighteen, he became a studio assistant to the leading court portraitist in England, Sir Peter Lely. In 1680,

Largillière returned to France, where he established his reputation as a portrait painter. He was admitted to the Royal Academy in 1686. In 1705, he became a member of its teaching faculty and in 1720 was appointed director.

Most of Largillière's patrons were successful members of the *bourgeoisie* who, like the Aubry family, had gained status and wealth through government service. They appreciated Largillière's ability to flatter them in portraits; he preferred them to the impoverished court nobility because they were more apt to pay their bills. Blending elements from traditional Baroque portraiture and the new Parisian taste, he forged a portrait style that helped free French painting from the restraints of the academic style.

### **Suggested Questions**

1. What is a portrait? Explain what makes a picture a portrait. Do you have a portrait of yourself? How was it made? How was this portrait made?
2. Sit like Madame Aubry. Are you sitting up straight? Is this a comfortable way to sit? Is it good posture? How does the chair feel?
3. How would you want to look in your portrait? What would you include in the picture?
4. How do you think Madame Aubry and her son wanted us to see them? What is your evidence? How do you think they feel?



Japan

**Helmet**, 1600s

Iron, lacquer, wood, leather, gilt, pigments, silk, papier-mâché

The James Ford Bell Foundation Endowment for Art Acquisition and gift of funds from Siri and Bob Marshall, 2012.31.1a-c

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## Theme

In Japan, dragonflies symbolize focus, determination, and vigilance. Able to change directions nimbly, dragonflies reflect the ideal virtues of a capable warrior. This helmet is called an “exotic helmet” (*kawari kabuto*, [kah-war-ee kah-boo-toe]) because of its imaginative design. It likely belonged to a high-ranking warrior who wanted to stand out from his peers. Exotic helmets were a sort of military haute couture in 1500s and 1600s Japan, and they were important expressions of personality, status, and wealth.

## Background

In Japan, samurai were a class of elite warriors renowned for their loyalty and military skill. Land-owning aristocratic families employed samurai as early as the 900s. Frequently at war over land and vying for political influence, these families relied on samurai to protect their lives and interests. The samurai formed close bonds with the families they served, gaining a reputation for their devotion (the term samurai comes from a Japanese word meaning “to serve”). The ideal samurai was expected to be selfless, brave, and fiercely loyal. Because of their elevated connections, social status, and military skills, samurai developed influence in politics, eventually becoming Japan’s ruling class.

By the 1100s, powerful military families established a feudal government (social system where those who own land have power). At its head was a military leader, the *shogun* [show-gun], who replaced the emperor as Japan’s ruler. But the government was very unstable. Ruling families faced competition from other families, and sometimes even from within their own. Samurai and their lords were caught amid complicated relationships. Between the 1400s and 1500s, feuds between aristocratic families spread over most of Japan. This period is known as the *Sengoku Jidai*, [seh-n-go-coo gee-die] or Warring States Period. Low-ranking foot soldiers, peasants, and even some Buddhist clergy joined samurai armies in battles.

## Helmet

For better or for worse, it was important for samurai to be recognizable in battle—especially to distinguish friend from foe. Leaders in particular needed to be easily visible by their armies in the chaos of battle. During the 1300s, armies began marking their armor with symbols that represented their allegiance, while others shared color schemes for the same purpose. Soldiers showed their support by decorating their armor with their lord’s crest, or *mon* [moan]. Still others showed their intent to fight by attaching fans or small branches from fruit trees to their helmets.

While this ornate helmet is a far cry from a plum branch, it shows the continued importance of individual expression, identity, and the evolving artistry of armor making. By the late 1500s, flamboyant helmets were all the rage among top samurai. They distinguished officers from the ranks, and exhibited their personality, wealth, and status. Officers often chose symbols that held special meanings, or reflected an aspect of their personality. Sometimes, the design on a leader's helmet even reflected the collective spirit of his army.

In 1603, a new *shogun* named **Tokugawa Ieyasu** [*Toe-coo-gah-wah ee-yay-yah-sue*] took control of Japan. He established a strong central government controlled by his family until 1868. This period, called the **Edo** [*Eh-doh*] or Tokugawa period, was a relatively peaceful time in Japan. During the Edo period, Japan's population grew, and cities became important cultural centers. Urban residents enjoyed plenty of outlets for entertainment at restaurants, shops, and spectacular street shows. Arts like painting, calligraphy, woodblock printing, kabuki theater, and the tea ceremony flourished, all with major support from the samurai class. Lacking wars to fight, samurai invested their time—and justified their status—by patronizing the arts. Still, they maintained a connection to their military heritage. They continued practicing martial arts and remained ready for battle. As a result, even during peacetime, artisans continued making samurai armor and helmets with flair. Armor and helmets were worn during ceremonies or in public processions that showed off the ruling class's grandeur. Ultimately, samurai applied their military discipline to their intellectual and artistic interests. Prominent samurai thinkers declared samurai to be Japan's cultural role models, setting the standard for good taste and class. The dragonfly helmet at Mia shows the continuing interest among the samurai of combining both visual and military arts. This helmet illustrates their taste for beauty and humor, even when the subject was war.

Despite its high social status, the samurai class faced many uncertainties in the late Tokugawa period. Between their expensive lifestyle and few outlets for gainful employment (samurai were not typically allowed to farm or own shops), samurai families increasingly fell into poverty. Some even grew skeptical about the feudal system. In 1867, a civil war broke out between those wishing to destroy the feudal government (and restore the emperor's power) and those who supported it. A year later, in 1868, forces backing the emperor won, and the feudal system collapsed. In 1873, the new government created a national army, thereby eliminating the need for the samurai class. Three years later, the government dissolved it altogether. Many former samurai were given money to open their own businesses, while others joined the army or engaged in politics. Though their status dissolved, former samurai played important roles in shaping Japanese history and society in the early 1900s.

## Technique

Frequent wars and large armies created high demand for effective yet inexpensive armor. To keep up with demand, armor makers developed practical, simply designed helmets that appealed to lower-ranking warriors. In contrast, leaders and officers wanted elaborate helmets.

By the late 1500s, they began commissioning extravagant helmets that reflected their wealth, rank, and personality. The base was the same plain helmet made for common warriors, whereas the top was constructed out of wood, then covered with papier-mâché and lacquer for a seamless design. On the Mia's helmet, the dragonfly also features removable golden wings, golden eyes, and a silk cord to tie at the chin. Whether the Mia's helmet was worn in battle is unknown. One thing is clear: In spite of its exotic appearance, this helmet was designed to offer

good head protection during combat. And like most others, this dragonfly helmet features a apron at the rear to protect the back of the neck.

### **Suggested Questions**

1. In Japan, dragonflies symbolize focus, determination, and the ability to change directions without losing course. Why might a warrior choose to put a dragonfly decoration on his helmet? In what ways might these qualities appeal to a warrior?
2. What qualities do you associate with dragonflies? If you were to design your own samurai helmet, what creatures or symbols would you add? Why? What meaning does this creature or symbol have to you? Would you choose a personal meaning, or one to rally the spirit of your troops?





Mende (Africa, Sierra Leone, West Africa region)

**Sande Society Mask**, 1800s

Wood, raffia

13 x 8 x 8 inches

The Christina N. and Swan J. Turnblad Memorial Fund, 72.69.1

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## Theme

This mask from the Sande Society in Sierra Leone was worn by a mature woman as part of an initiation ceremony for young girls entering adulthood. The mask represents the ideal of womanhood and feminine beauty among Mende women.

## Background

The country of Sierra Leone is situated on the west coast of Africa, just north of Liberia. The population of over five and a half million people comprises many different cultures, about thirty percent of which (about 1.5 million) is the Mende (men-day) people. The Mende live in a hilly, fertile area, and most are rice farmers.

The Mende people believe in one supreme god, Ngewo, and a number of lesser spirits responsible for the general well-being of the people. It is the lesser spirits who are evoked by masks in special ceremonies.

Politically, the Mende people are organized into small chiefdoms. Socially, they revolve around so-called secret societies, which are separated by sex. At puberty, boys are initiated into the Poro Society, and girls are initiated into the Sande (sahn-day) Society. Initiation into the societies involves a period of isolation from the village (which varies among villages, but generally lasts several weeks) during which time the young initiates are trained in all aspects of life to prepare them for adulthood. Girls learn about feminine values, marriage, childcare, family life, economics, and singing and dancing. Although the Poro Society often has greater political control among most Mende peoples, the Sande Society plays a significant leadership role in many aspects of the community. Sande provides women with the opportunity to acquire political expertise and a strong support base for those who pursue political careers. Owing to their strong Sande Society, Mende women have held a significant percentage of paramount chieftaincies in Sierra Leone.

The masking tradition of the Sande Society is also nearly unique in West Africa. While it is common practice in Africa for masked dancers to participate in initiation and other ceremonies, it is only among the Mende, Temne, and a few other groups in Sierra Leone and Liberia, that women own and wear masks for this purpose. A woman must be of a certain rank to commission a mask from a carver. The carver is a man in the community possessing special knowledge of spiritual and social concerns.

Women who hold the *sowo* rank (therefore called *soweï*) constitute the uppermost level of the Sande Society, and, therefore commission the most special masks. Their masks embody the most powerful Sande spirit, referred to as *Bondo*, *Bundo*, *Nöwo*, or even *Soweï*. These masks are usually distinguished by a soft hairdo with little ornamentation (an indication of an older woman) and a white cloth tied at the top.

Women in the middle (*ligba*) level of the Sande Society commission and wear masks made much more to the individual dancer's fancy. These masks have much more elaborate hairdos, like those of young Mende women. Each woman tells the carver the name of the spirit that her mask will represent, and he "dreams" the appropriate form. The resulting mask can be worn only by this woman, and only she can evoke the spirit. The mask itself is an embodiment of the spirit, not simply a decorative object that conceals the dancer. In evoking the spirit, the masked woman gives up her own identity to allow the spirit to take over.

### ***Sande Society Mask***

This mask belonged to a woman in the middle (*ligba*) level of the Sande Society. To fully appreciate the mask, we would have to see it in the context of the ceremony. Now still and silent, this wooden helmet mask once embodied a spirit during an initiation ceremony for young girls. Imagine for a moment the awesome appearance of this mysterious and beautiful black mask worn by a woman with raffia swirling about her as she moved.

Before the spirit can enter a mask in a ceremony, the masker must be completely covered to protect her body from the spirit. The masked dancer makes no sound, but the spirit speaks through gesture and movement, referring to the ideal qualities of womanhood in Mende women, such as wisdom, discretion, order, patience, and beauty.

The mask was not intended to be a specific portrait; rather, it communicates an ideal. The ideals of womanhood and feminine beauty of the Mende people are exemplified in the delicate features and downcast eyes of the mask. The smooth high forehead indicates wisdom and success. In Mende thought, a woman's future may be told by her forehead. The vertical incised lines on each cheek and near the eyes seem to be scarification marks. In reality, most Mende do not have scars; some carvers may continue to include them in mask designs because of traditional conventions. The hair is carefully arranged in orderly patterns, reflecting the balance and harmony of an ideal household. Mende women who do not care for their hair are considered immoral or mentally unbalanced.

The blackness of the mask symbolizes femininity in Mende culture. The glistening black surface may also refer to wetness, an allusion to water, the domain of Sande spirits. The Sande Society initiates often rub their skin with palm oil to enhance their own blackness before dancing in front of their community and prospective husbands. Nonetheless, white—signifying absolute cleanliness, physically, morally, and spiritually—is the color of Sande. It is bright, pure and beautiful.

The rings of flesh on the neck are greatly exaggerated depictions of natural lines or creases on some individuals' necks. The Mende consider a lined neck desirable because it signifies wealth, high status, and health—characteristics of someone who is blessed by god and, therefore, special. Neck rings are extremely attractive to the opposite sex, so adult Mende who don't have them naturally try to cultivate them.

The bird on the crown of the mask is a hen and refers to maternity and the responsibility of motherhood. Just as a hen watches over her eggs, the Sande Society leader watches over her initiates. Furthermore, the Mende consider the chicken the supreme bird—it is busy, domestic, sleeps at home, and it is entertaining! They also believe that chickens can see peoples' hearts, which means they can see the truth.

The *sowe*i and other masked women escort the girls into initiation, provide guidance while they are in training, and emerge with them in festive celebration of their readiness for adulthood and marriage. By the time they complete training the girls have learned the secret that a human being, a woman known to them, impersonates and becomes the spirit.

The Sande Society remains a vital part of Mende life today. A mask such as this one loses its value when its owner no longer participates in initiation or moves upward in society. While initiation and masking continue today, Sande members do not discuss their beliefs and practices with outsiders. For the most part, knowledge of their traditions remains, as it should, secret.

## Technique

According to one description, Sande masks are roughed out with a machete from the trunk of a tree. To hold the log firm while carving, the artist digs a hole and places one end of the log in it. He begins by digging out the head cavity with a chisel and then scoops out the interior wood with a curved blade.

After the log has been hollowed out, the center of the face is marked with a machete. From the center line, the artist marks a diamond shape and proceeds to carve the face, hair, and neck, always referring to the center to maintain symmetry. No preliminary drawing is done. Eyes are made parallel to the mouth. Viewing slits for the wearer may correspond to the eyes of the mask or be concealed in the ridges of the neck.

A small knife is used for finishing, and sandpaper is employed to achieve a smooth surface. When carving and sanding are complete, holes are burned in the bottom, and raffia is attached. Juice of the leaves of the *kojo* vine is used to dye the raffia, which at first is bright green but oxidizes to a deep, rich brown.

Before completion of the mask, the carver performs a ceremony to determine if the mask is satisfactory for spiritual use. The woman who commissioned the mask will then compare it to other masks that have been proven satisfactory. If she approves the mask, she will perform a ceremony that invites the spirit to enter it.

## Artist

Although we do not know the name of the artist who carved the Sande mask, he would have been respected in his culture not only for his carving skill but also for his knowledge of the spiritual and social needs of the Sande Society.

## Suggested Questions

1. How do you think this mask feels? How would the bottom of the mask would feel?
2. Why do people wear masks today? Why do you think people wore this type of mask? What do you see that makes you say that?
3. The face represents the facial features of ideal beauty. With that in mind, what do you think was considered beautiful to the Mende?