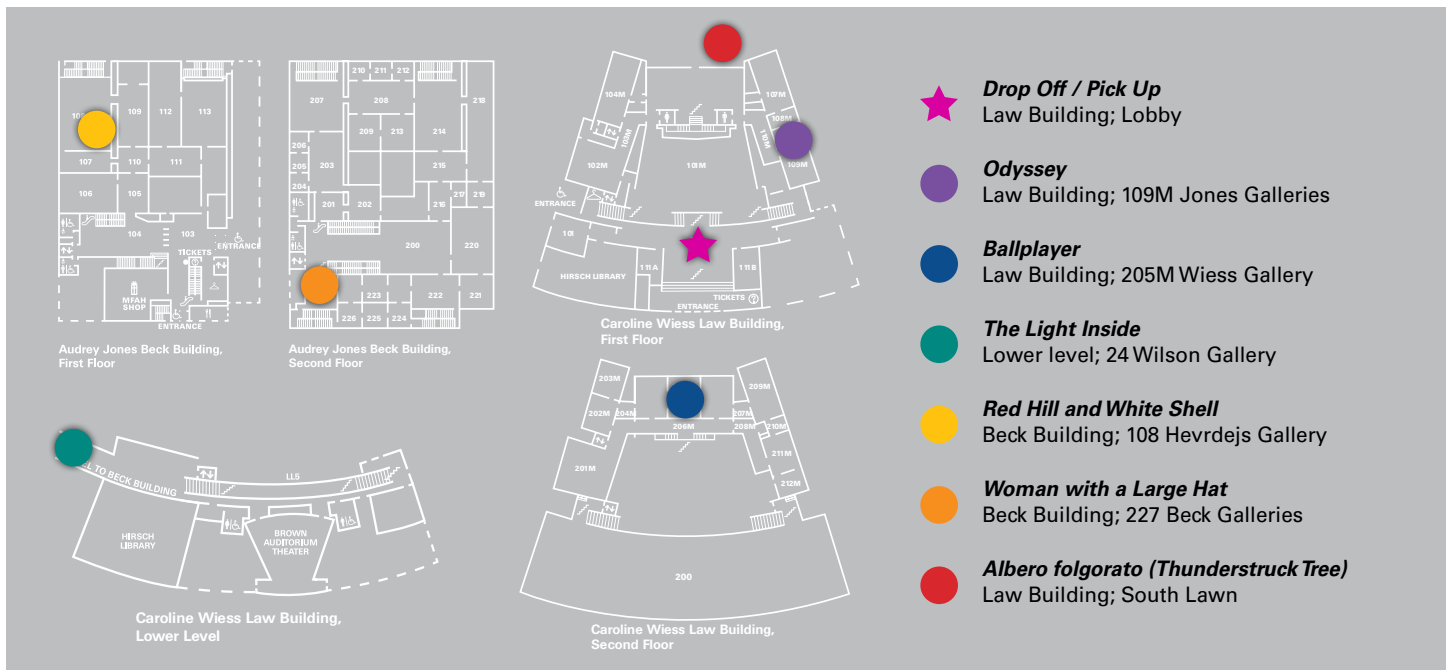


Self-Guided Resource: Grades K–5



How To Use This Resource:

This resource will help you guide K–5 students on an hour-long visit to the permanent collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, for groups of up to 75. Each stop includes four parts.

Part 1: Art History

Before your tour, read about the works of art.

Part 2: Tour Tips

Because the Museum is often crowded and works of art may be off view, the back-up objects and tour tips will help you improvise along the way. The questions in this guide can be applied to nearly all works of art in the collection. Talk about what students are interested in, and encourage them to articulate and discuss their ideas, even if you do not have any art history information about an object.

Part 3: Questions

When you arrive at a new work of art, encourage students to spend a few minutes to look closely, ask questions, and think about what they see. Then, facilitate observation and discussion using these questions as your guide, sharing the art history from **Part 1** when relevant.

Part 4: Transitions

These transitions will guide the conversation from one object to the next, highlighting connections between artwork, collections, and ideas. The transitions are flexible, allowing the groups from your school to visit the objects in any order.

Helpful Tips

- Before you visit, review How to Prepare for Your Visit attached to your confirmation email to learn about drop-off, pick-up, and check-in procedures, Museum policies, and more.
- Check the online collection module before you visit to confirm the works on view.
- Before you enter the galleries, split into groups of approximately 10–15 students and one chaperone. A chaperone must be with every group of students at all times.
- Please limit to one group per gallery, when possible.

Looking for more information, or tips on how to make the most of your visit?

Visit the Museum's Learning Through Art online curriculum (mfah.org/ltta) with teaching videos and lessons, and the self-guided resources page (mfah.org/selfguided) for more in-gallery activities!

Art History Background

Trained in stage design, Cai Guo-Qiang's (born 1957) work crosses multiple media, including drawing, installation, video, and performance art. Guo-Qiang began using gunpowder in his work to foster spontaneity and confront the controlled artistic tradition and social climate in China. Guo-Qiang draws on a wide variety of symbols, narratives, and traditions. This monumental gunpowder drawing borrows from Song dynasty landscapes and Daoist alchemical ritual, and explores texts such as the Dao De Jing that suggest that all things are dependent on one another for each other's existence. The work engages ancient pieces in the gallery such as the Shang and Zhou bronzes that were used in ancestral feasts preceding the advent of Daoism in China. The public was invited to view the creation process of *Odyssey* at a 25,000-square-foot warehouse in the south of Houston. A video of the process is available in Gallery 108.

Questions

- What do you notice?
- What can you recognize?
- If you could jump into this landscape, what would you hear, smell, taste, touch, and see?
- What if I told you this was made from gunpowder?
- We've been talking about the mood created in the room. How does knowing that the work is made out of gunpowder change your ideas about the landscape?



Cai Guo-Qiang, *Odyssey* (detail), 2010, gunpowder and pigment on paper, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, museum commission funded by the Caroline Wiess Law Accessions Endowment Fund, and the Chao Family in honor of Ting Tsung and Wei Fong Chao, with additional funds from Friends of Asian Art 2010, 2010.1660.1-42.

Tour Tip

Due to the size of this work, two small groups can occupy this gallery at once. If you would like to share this gallery with another group, use opposite sides of the gallery.

Transition

Great job of looking closely and talking about what you find. Now, we're going to move upstairs and use our observation skills on something very different: a sculpture from ancient Mexico!

Ballplayer, Classic Veracruz

Art History Background

A ball game similar to soccer was important in Pre-Columbian cultures of ancient Mexico and the surrounding areas. Large playing fields have been discovered in ceremonial centers in many Mesoamerican cities, and depictions of ball games appear on architecture and painted ceramics. The ball court represented the act of creation, and the game itself the moment when the world as we know it began. This ballplayer, notable for his hyperrealistic features, wears what would have been a leather helmet secured by a band and strap. Heavy fringe extends over the helmet's rim to deflect bright sunlight. Ballplayers also wore large, elaborate wristbands for protection, as well as a protective yoke around their waist. Life-size ceramic ballplayers like this are extremely rare.

Questions

- Spend a minute looking closely at this figure. Tell me what you see.
- How would you describe this figure? What do you notice?
- Describe what he is wearing. Is there anything you recognize?
- What if I told you this object shows a ballplayer? What associations do you have with ball games? Based on what you see, what kind of personality do you think he would have had? Why?



Classic Veracruz, *Ballplayer*, 600–900 AD, earthenware with slip and traces of polychrome pigment, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, museum purchase funded by the Alice Pratt Brown Museum Fund, 2007.1185.

Tour Tip

Is this work of art off view or occupied? Apply similar questions to the Colima dogs in Gallery 205.

Transition

As we move through the building, we will encounter a tunnel that connects the buildings underground. It is also a work of art! Pay close attention as you move through it and be aware of what you notice.

Along the way, students may notice . . .

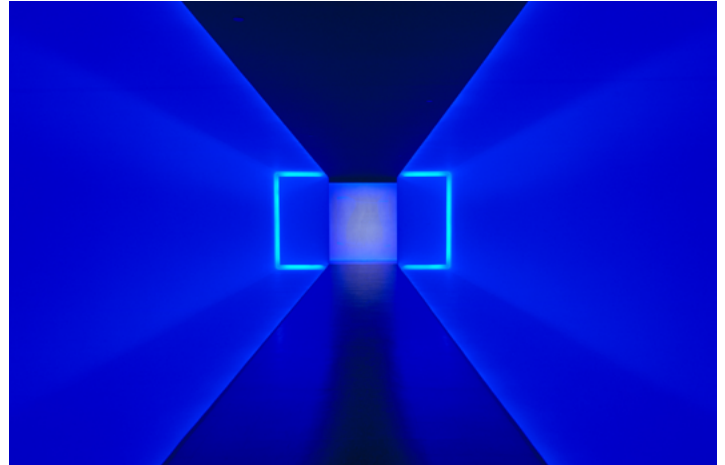
The Light Inside by James Turrell

Art History Background

Throughout his artistic career, James Turrell (born 1943) has focused on light and perception. In *The Light Inside*, concealed sources of neon light periodically change between magenta, cobalt blue, and crimson. Painted with highly reflective white paint, the ceiling, walls, and lowered area on either side of the raised black walkway capture and transmit the light, creating the illusion of boundless illuminated space.

Questions

- What did you notice in the tunnel?
- How does walking through the space change your experience of the work? What if you stood still?
- How does color impact our view of the world?



James Turrell, *The Light Inside*, 1999, neon and ambient light, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, museum commission, funded by Isabel B. and Wallace S. Wilson, 2000.1. © James Turrell

Red Hill and White Shell by Georgia O'Keeffe

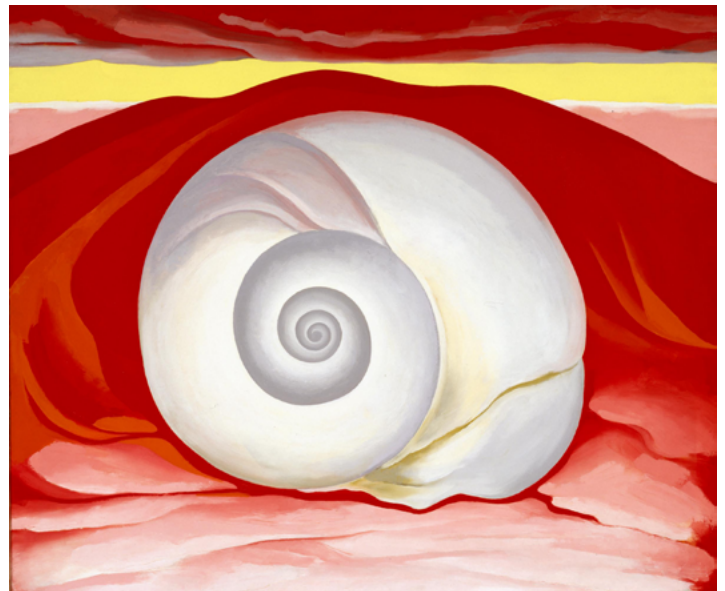
108 Hevrdejs

Art History Background

In 1929, Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986) bought a ranch in the bare desert of New Mexico. Entranced by the mountains and land that surrounded her, she often painted outdoors, sleeping in a tent and wearing gloves to work on cold days. The setting depicted here—red, arid hills, barren of grass—was visible outside her New Mexico door. A large body of O'Keeffe's work features organic objects, such as shells, flowers, and even animal bones, as the central theme. She once said of her work, "Nobody has seen a flower . . . really . . . it is so small . . . we haven't time—and to see takes time . . . I'll paint it big and they will be surprised into taking time to look at it." Her distinctive painting style begins with a subject that is altered and simplified, resulting in a careful study of line, shape, form, and color.

Questions

- What are you noticing?
- How would you describe the shell?
- How would you describe the background?
- What do you associate with each of these: shells, spirals, red, yellow?
- What words would you use to describe the tone of this painting?
- How would the painting be different if the shell was small in scale?
- Imagine you are making a painting like Georgia O'Keeffe's. What small object would you scale to a new size for your painting? Why?



Georgia O'Keeffe, *Red Hill and White Shell*, 1938, oil on canvas, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, gift of Isabel B. Wilson in memory of her mother, Alice Pratt Brown, 91.2027. © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Tour Tip

Is this work of art off view or occupied? Apply similar questions to *Grey Lines with Black, Blue and Yellow* by Georgia O'Keeffe in the same gallery.

Transition

We've been talking about how color, line, and shape can create mood. Keep this in mind as we move to our next stop.

Art History Background

Woman with a Large Hat is a depiction of Spanish artist Pablo Picasso's (1881–1973) second wife, Jacqueline Roque. Picasso painted her portrait 160 times and continued to paint her in increasingly abstract forms until his death in 1973. Picasso explored ways to present three-dimensional objects on a flat, two-dimensional surface. Although this painting still includes some recognizable elements from its original subject matter, the artist fragmented those forms into geometric shapes and rearranged them into a seemingly chaotic composition. Picasso used color to help the viewer focus on the face, emphasizing her eyes and eyebrows with bold lines and exaggerated detail.

Questions

- What are we looking at?
- How would you describe this woman?
- What stands out the most about her?
- Based on what you see, what kind of personality would she have? Why?
- How would the painting be different if she were painted more realistically?
- What if you painted a portrait of yourself as Picasso has done? What colors would you use? Why?

Tour Conclusion

At the end of the tour, ask students to reflect on their visit with any of the following prompts.

- What surprised you about your visit today?
- What are you still wondering about?
- What did you most enjoy about your visit?



Pablo Picasso, *Woman with a Large Hat*, 1962, oil on canvas, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, bequest of Caroline Wiess Law, 2004.51. © Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Tour Tip

Is this work of art off view or occupied?
Apply similar questions to *Self-Portrait* by Suzanne Valadon in Gallery 226.

Extra time? Take a look outside . . .

Albero folgorato (Thunderstruck Tree) by Giuseppe Penone

Art History Background

This tree's journey to Houston began two years ago in Italy, where Giuseppe Penone (born 1947) conceived and cast the sculpture in bronze from a lightning-struck oak, which he had shipped to his studio, gilding its core to capture the power and drama of a lightning bolt. Born in an agrarian community in the mountains of Italy, Penone became a part of the Arte Povera movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Artists associated with Arte Povera explored a range of unconventional processes and materials to challenge traditional artistic conventions. In *Albero folgorato*, Penone has created a dramatic sculpture with contrasts of positive and negative space, interiors and exteriors, and themes of change over time that suggest a human relationship with nature that is poetic.

Questions

- Walk around this object, looking closely from all sides. Share what you see.
- Do you think this a real tree?
- Based on what you see, what do you think happened to this tree?
- What could it be made out of?
- What do you think about the gold? What associations do you have with gold?



Giuseppe Penone, *Albero folgorato (Thunderstruck Tree)*, 2012, bronze with gold leaf, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, museum purchase funded by the Caroline Wiess Law Accessions Endowment Fund, 2014.728. © 2012 Giuseppe Penone