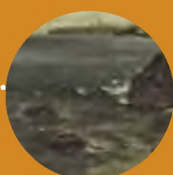


MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE ART MUSEUM

# WALKING GUIDE



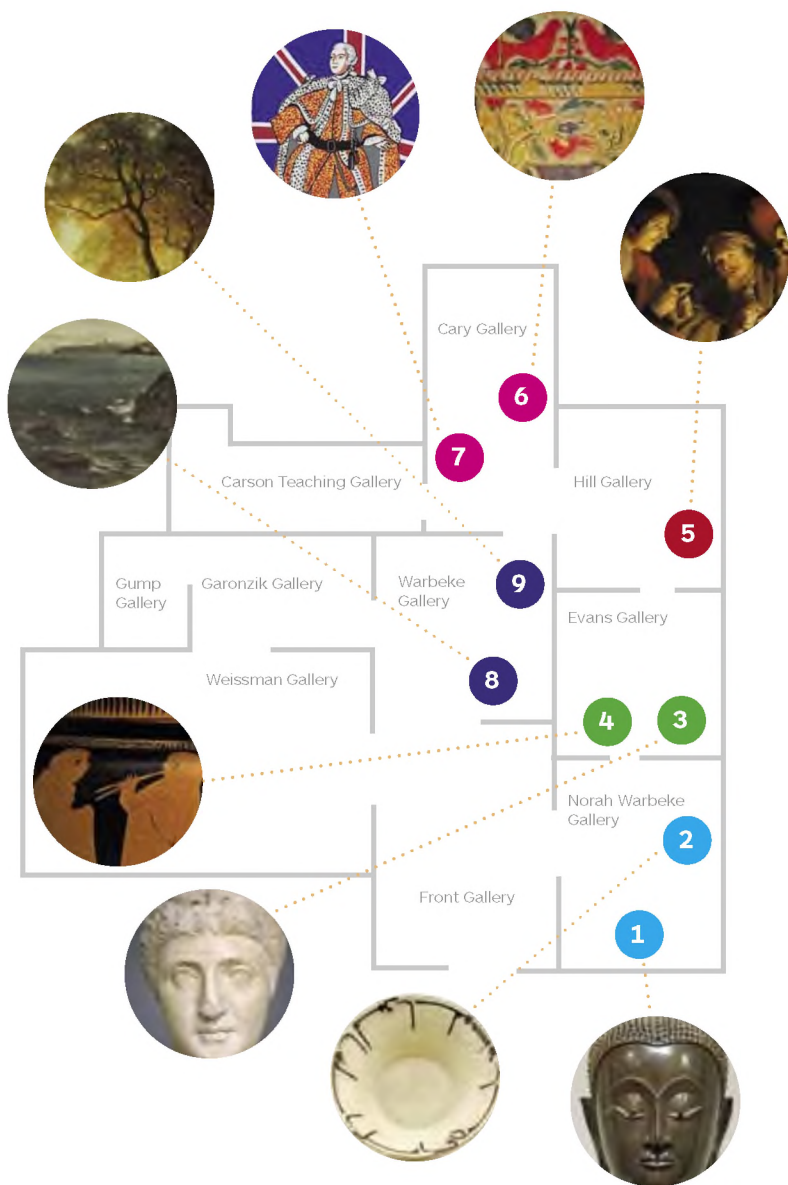
## WELCOME TO THE Mount Holyoke College Art Museum!

MHCAM was founded in 1876 and the collection consists of over 17,000 works of art and material culture from all around the world, ranging from ancient to contemporary. This guide presents nine objects in an interactive format that invites you to look closely and discover details that will enhance your viewing experience.

Try reading each tour stop in this booklet slowly, either alone or with companions. Take time to notice your first impressions of the artwork. Pause and examine the work again before returning to the accompanying text. Look for the **Try This** tip on each page. They are fun, interactive ways to continue your exploration of art!



# GALLERY MAP



This guide is made possible by a grant from The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation and the gifts of individual donors in support of Mount Holyoke College Art Museum's *Diverse Voices Initiative*.

## STANDING BUDDHA

Thai, 15th–16th century, bronze

**As you encounter this regal bronze Buddha, what do you notice first?** Every detail has special significance. His graceful downward gaze conveys compassion and his forward-facing palm is a gesture called the *abhaya mudra*—meaning “fear not”—which gives protection and reassurance to the worshipper. Even his elongated earlobes have meaning: they are symbolic of the life of luxury the Buddha led before renouncing worldly possessions, when his ears were weighed down with precious earrings.

This work of art, made in the Ayutthaya Kingdom (present-day Thailand), features many other common attributes of the Buddha, such as smooth skin, rounded shoulders, level feet, and a distinct bump on the top of his head. Buddhism emerged in India between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE and spread widely, becoming a major religion across Asia. Representations of the Buddha were produced everywhere, each region creating sculptures that reflect both universal aspects of Buddhism, as well as distinctly local artistic traditions.

Gift of the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation, 2012.40.1

### TRY THIS

Notice  
the details



## BOWL WITH ARABIC INSCRIPTION

Persian, 10th century, earthenware with black and white slip under transparent glaze

***If you had a bowl like this, what would you use it for? The use of ceramic bowls connects humans across many cultures and over thousands of years.***

This bowl was made in eastern Iran, probably in the city of Nishapur, which was a bustling metropolis in the medieval period. Excavations there in the 1930s uncovered houses, schools, and markets—as well as many ceramics just like this one.

The bowl's simple black and white decoration is comprised of a single line of Arabic script that runs along the inside of the bowl's flared rim. Notice the elongated verticals that end in sharp points and the angular, graphic quality of the letters. These are all elements of the *kufic* style of calligraphy. The calligraphy is primarily decorative, but it also carries a message. It reads: "Generosity is the disposition of the dwellers of Paradise; good fortune." For a serving bowl probably used for entertaining guests, the sentiment is apt—and perhaps even self-congratulatory.

Purchase with the John Martyn Warbeke Art Fund, 2013.29.2



### TRY THIS

Look for connections to your own life



## PORTRAIT OF FAUSTINA THE ELDER

Roman, second half of the 2nd century CE, marble

***Compare this bust of Faustina the Elder to the sculptures on either side of her.*** What details make this ancient head seem so realistic compared to the others? Notice the finely carved features, intricate hairdo, and lifelike eyes. The sculpture originally would have been painted in vivid colors, bringing to life the subject, the Roman empress Faustina the Elder.

Faustina was the wife of the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius. When she died at 40, her devoted husband honored her with deification, declaring her a goddess. In both life and death, Faustina embodied the attributes of the ideal Roman woman: beauty, elegance, and devotion to her husband.

Try walking around the sculpture so you can see the back. Images of Faustina the Elder are identifiable by her unique hairstyle, which is interwoven in the back and piled high in braids at the top of her head. Elaborate hairstyles were not just fashionable in ancient Rome, they were also important political and social statements. Many Roman women adopted Faustina's hairstyle in an attempt to publicly represent themselves as possessing the same virtues as the empress.

Purchase with the Art Acquisition Endowment Fund, Marian Hayes (Class of 1925) Art Purchase Fund, Susan and Bernard Schilling (Susan Eisenhart, Class of 1932) Fund, Warbeke Art Museum Fund, Abbie Bosworth Williams (Class of 1927) Fund, 1997.15



### TRY THIS

Compare the work of art to those around it

## VESSEL FOR MIXING WINE AND WATER

Eupolis Painter, Greek, 450–440 BCE, earthenware with black slip (red-figure ware)

**Take a close look at the figures depicted on this large Greek vase, paying special attention to their costumes.** Their shrouded forms and veiled faces are an unusual and mysterious subject rarely seen in Greek art. Such concealing costumes were worn by women during religious rituals in ancient Greece, though similar drapery and veils were also worn by professional dancers. Move around the vase and consider the figures on both sides. Do you see any clues that this could be a dancing scene? Closer examination will reveal a woman playing a double-flute, suggesting the figures may be moving to music. We can't know for sure whether the women on this vase are dancing or taking part in a religious ceremony, but the mystery is part of what makes the object so fascinating.

The unique shape of the vessel identifies it as a *krater*, a vessel used for mixing water and wine. Wine was much stronger in antiquity, and in Greece was usually mixed one part wine to three or five parts water. A vessel like this would be used at *symposia*—all-male drinking parties at which wealthy men would be entertained by musicians, dancers, and courtesans.

Purchase with the Nancy Everett Dwight Fund, 1913.1.B.SII



**TRY THIS**  
Move around to  
see multiple  
angles

## JOSEPH INTERPRETING THE DREAMS OF PHARAOH'S BUTLER AND BAKER

Crijn Hendricksz. Volmarijn, Dutch,  
ca. 1631–1637, oil on panel

**Come close to this painting—the real-life scale of the figures and the intimate setting might make you feel as if you could step right into the scene.** If you could join their conversation, you would hear the man on the left interpreting the dreams of the other two. The man in the red cloak is the biblical hero Joseph, here shown in prison in Egypt, having been wrongly accused of a crime. He is joined by two other prisoners: the baker and the butler of the Egyptian pharaoh. Joseph interprets their dreams, accurately predicting the fate of the two men. The butler (leaning over the table on the right side of the painting), will be released from prison. The baker (in the middle with his wrists in chains) will be executed.

Notice the sharp contrast between light and dark in the composition and try to find the source of the light. It is almost hidden, but we can just make out a candlestick behind the man's arm in the front right. The candle illuminates the distinct costumes of the figures, which resemble 16th-century European dress rather than biblical attire. Just as the figures themselves are depicted as white rather than Middle Eastern, the costumes serve to create a more familiar scene for the painting's original Dutch viewers.

Purchase with the Art Acquisition Endowment Fund, the John Martyn Warbeke Art Fund, the Belle and Hy Baier Art Acquisition Fund, the Eleanor H. Bunce (Class of 1926) Art Acquisition Fund, and the Art Acquisition Fund, 2006.2.2



**TRY THIS**  
Imagine yourself  
in the painting



## CRADLEBOARD

Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk), 1860–1870  
wood, paint, and sinew

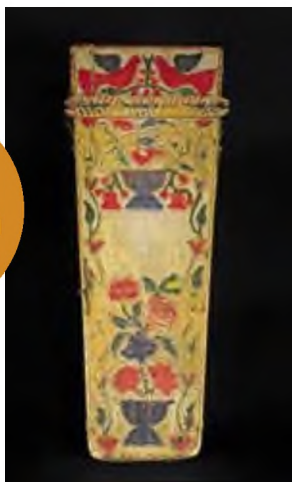
**Cradleboards are used by many Native American peoples to hold babies.** Look at this object from both sides. How do you imagine a baby would be attached? Notice the small foot rest on the inside bottom of the board. The baby would be secured to the undecorated side of the board, after which the board would be attached to one's back or propped up. The projecting piece at the top could be covered with cloth or animal hide to give the baby shade, while also protecting the infant's head and providing a place to attach amulets and toys to amuse and distract.

This cradleboard was carved and painted by a Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) artist. The Kanien'kehá:ka live along the Mohawk River in upstate New York and into Canada. Notice the tulips, roses, vines, birds, and other motifs in red, black, yellow, and green on the decorated side of the board. These decorations are typical of 19th-century Kanien'kehá:ka art. The birds and stylized flowers are likely adapted from European designs, signaling the interaction between the Kanien'kehá:ka and French Canadians.

Joseph Allen Skinner Museum, Mount Holyoke College, SK K.70

### TRY THIS

Consider the  
object's original  
use or function



## DECLARATION OF FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE

Faith Ringgold, American, 2009, screen prints\*

**Look around this gallery. What types of art do you see? Does this print fit in or stand out?**

Though the subject of this print is 17th-century America, the artist created it in 2009. Look at the left side of the image and compare it to the right—they depict very different subjects. The print is from a series of six in which artist and activist Faith Ringgold pairs traditional images of America's founding with images of slavery, abolitionists, and the Civil Rights Movement, using a colorful palette and a graphic style of illustration.

Speaking about this series, Ringgold wrote: “‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.’ The actual meaning of this critical phrase was clear: white men are created equal, not black men, not white women, and not black women. . . in America my freedom was still not much more than a promise. . . that for people like me freedom could be, in many instances, denied.”

It might be surprising to see a contemporary print in a gallery with historical works, but Ringgold's image gives a voice to those traditionally not represented in galleries like this one, and sheds light on the harsh realities of inequality and disenfranchisement rooted in the founding of the United States.

Partial gift of the Experimental Printmaking Institute, Lafayette College and purchase with the Susan and Bernard Schilling (Susan Eisenhart, Class of 1932) Fund 2016.2.12.1-.10



**TRY THIS**  
Question what  
you are seeing

\* Prints from this series will rotate every semester.  
Actual image may differ from illustration.

## UNTITLED

Edward Mitchell Bannister, American, ca. 1885–1889,  
oil on linen on canvas

**How does looking at this painting make you feel?** One of the first things you might notice is the light, which seems to break through the dark clouds to soak the rocky cliffs and small figures with a welcome warmth. A billowing sail in the distance and a soaring bird in the sky hint at breezy conditions. A dedicated landscape painter, Edward Mitchell Bannister's canvases often have a human presence—in this work we see several people enjoying a day at the shore, seated under a red parasol or casting a fishing line into the sea.

Despite his talent, Bannister was denied formal artistic training because he was black. Largely self-taught, he persevered as an artist, eventually earning a major prize for painting in 1876. However, the award committee did not know the winning work was by an African American painter and made an (unsuccessful) attempt to take back the prize. Bannister's idyllic scenes of New England have been described as metaphors for the freedom he was denied in his own life. Bannister himself believed art was about translating one's individual communion with nature into paint.

Purchase with the Susan and Bernard Schilling (Susan Eisenhart, Class of 1932) Fund, 2017.25

## TRY THIS

Focus on how an  
artwork makes  
you feel



## HETCH HETCHY CANYON

Albert Bierstadt, American, b. Germany, 1875,  
oil on canvas

**Try standing about ten feet away from this painting, and then slowly move closer to it—notice how your perspective changes.** What details emerge as you get closer? The artist Albert Bierstadt was famous for large-scale works like this one, which came to exemplify the majesty of the American landscape. The artist's depiction of Hetch Hetchy Canyon, in California, is filled with soft, warm light that seems to permeate the valley. The small elk in the foreground give us a sense of our own scale in this sweeping landscape.

Bierstadt made many trips to California. However, his paintings were actually made in his New York studio based on sketches and photographs taken during his travels. The scene before you is an important document of a bygone era; in 1913 Congress authorized the flooding of the Hetch Hetchy Valley to build a reservoir for the city of San Francisco, almost completely erasing the landscape depicted here. This awe-inspiring painting was donated to the Museum upon its founding in 1876 by the wives of two college trustees who wanted Mount Holyoke students to be able to study contemporary American art.

Gift of Mrs. E. H. Sawyer and Mrs. A. L. Williston, 1876.2.I(b).PI



### TRY THIS

Start far away,  
then come closer