

Educator Resources: The Arts of Asia and Africa

The following resources are designed to prepare for and extend a classroom visit to the Ackland Art Museum. The experiences are intended to support classroom curriculum and learning standards, while allowing for students to express their ideas through a variety of formats – writing, discussion, research, and art making. Activities and conversation starters can be modified per grade level and discipline.

Introduction:

The vast continents of Africa and Asia are home to peoples whose artistic production stretches back in time for thousands of years. The art created by these people was a significant part of their lives, often connecting their belief systems with the way they view and live in the world. Many of the masks, sculptures, ceramics, and works on paper that we enjoy today express their links to nature, their beliefs about the world, and the rituals they practiced.

Pre-Visit Experiences

- **Looking Closely**

As a class, look closely at the Sande Society Mask, Hill Jar, Fertility Child Doll (Umndwana), or The Offering of the Four Bowls to Buddha. (See images and artwork information). Have students describe the work of art and consider the following questions:

- Look closely at this image and describe what you see.
- Based upon what you see, what do you think this work of art is about?
- What information might this work of art tell you about the culture that made it?
- Where would you find more information about this work of art using the visual clues that you see?

- **Exploring Asian and African countries: Culture, Beliefs, Geography, and Current Events**

Have students research basic information about African (i.e. Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Egypt) and Asian countries (i.e. China, Japan, India, Thailand), including their geographic features, climate, location to other countries/ bodies of water, economic industries, political and social systems, belief systems, and culture (food, music, literature, art). Encourage students to share their findings through a variety of formats – research papers, travel posters, display boards, image and word collages, etc.

As a class, continue the discussion about specific African and Asian countries through cultural materials such as clothing, music, art, literature, and film. Encourage students to compare and contrast these cultural materials by categories: ancient/contemporary, regions, belief systems, etc.

Explore contemporary African and Asian countries through the eyes of world news and current events. For one or two weeks, have students pay attention to the political, social, economic, and cultural news related to an individual country and its relationships with other countries. Encourage students to collect newspaper or news website articles and images – have them share their findings, and, as a class, discuss their content.

- Complete a K-W-L chart (see page 4) to help students confirm what they know about art from Asian and African countries. The prompts include: “What I already know about African and Asian art.”, “What I want to know about African and Asian art.”, and “What I learned about African and Asian art.”

Post-Visit experiences

- After your Museum Visit
 - Have students share one thing they remembered from the Museum and how it relates to their life. (Note: This activity can be done on the bus back to school and allows for students to be accountable for their learning and arts experience.)
 - Back in the classroom, have students think about their Museum experiences and respond through writing or drawing. What did you see at the Ackland and what did you do in the Museum galleries?
 - Review the pre-visit experience K-W-L chart to see which predictions were true and what new ideas students learned.
 - Create a class mural about the trip by passing around a large sheet of paper so students can write or sketch their impressions of the trip.
 - Have students research any issues or questions that came up during their tour.
- Many works of art from Africa and Asia were inspired by the natural world. Go outside and be inspired by nature too! Look for things that you like and that have a special meaning to you. Make drawings or rubbings of what you see. Using your five senses, describe what is around you and how you feel. When you have finished, share your work with the class.

Additional Web Resources:

- Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill: <https://ackland.org/collections>
- Metropolitan Museum, New York: www.metmuseum.org/art/collection or www.metmuseum.org/toah/
- National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Museum: www.asia.si.edu
- Asian Art Museum of San Francisco: <https://education.asianart.org>
- Asia Society Museum, New York City: www.asiasociety.org/arts/asia-society-museum
- National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Museum: www.africa.si.edu/
- University of Iowa Museum of Art, Iowa City: <https://africa.uima.uiowa.edu>

North Carolina Standards for Social Studies

- 6.H.2.2 Understand the political, economic and/or social significance of historical events, issues, individuals, and cultural groups.
- 6.G.1 Understand geographic factors that influenced the emergence, expansion and decline of civilizations, societies, and regions over time.
- 6.C.1.1-2 Explain how the behaviors and practices of individuals and groups influenced societies, civilizations, and regions.
- 7.H.1.3 Use historical thinking to analyze various modern societies.
- 7.C.1.2 Understand how cultural values influence relationships between individuals, groups, and political entities in modern societies and regions.
- WH.H.1 Apply the four interconnected dimensions of historical thinking to the Essential Standards for World History in order to understand the creation and development of societies/civilizations/nations over time.

North Carolina Standards for English Language Arts

- 4.W.1 – 5.W.1 Text Types and Purpose (Opinion)
- 4.W.2 – 5.W.2 Text Types and Purpose (Informative/Explanatory)
- 4.W.7 – 5.W.7 Research to Build and Present Knowledge (Conduct research and writing)
- 4.W.8 – 5.W.8 Research to Build and Present Knowledge (Recall or gather information)
- 9-10.R.7 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (Analyzing Written and Visual Information)

North Carolina Standards for Visual Art

- 4.V.1 – 8.V.1 Use the language of visual arts to communicate effectively.
- 4.V.2 – 8.V.1 Apply creative and critical thinking skills to artistic expression.
- 4.CX.1. – 8.V.1 Understand the global, historical, societal, and cultural contexts of the visual arts.
- 4.CX.2 – 8.CX.2 Understand the interdisciplinary connections and life applications of the visual arts.

NAME _____

KWL Chart

Before Your Visit

After Your Visit

What I <u>know</u> about African and Asian Art	What I <u>want</u> to know about African and Asian Art	What I <u>learned</u> about African and Asian Art



Unidentified Artist, Mende people, Sande society; Sande Society Mask, 20th century; Wood
16 3/8 x 9 1/4 x 9 3/4 in. ; Ackland Art Museum, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Gift of Miriam E. Dixon, Judith D. Gooding and Susan R. Dixon in memory of John W. Dixon, Jr. and
Vivian S. Dixon, 2009.19.2



Unidentified Artist (South African, Nguni, Ndebele); Fertility Child Doll (Umndwana), after 1940; Beads and fiber; 8 3/8 x 6 in.; Ackland Art Museum, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Ackland Fund and Gift of Norma Canelas Roth and William Roth, 2017.19.20



Unidentified Artist (Chinese); Green-Glazed Pottery 'Hill Jar', Han Dynasty (206 BCE-CE 220); Red pottery; Jar: 2 1/2 x 7 3/4 x 7 3/4 in. base: 5 5/8 x 7 3/4 x 7 3/4 in.; Ackland Art Museum, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Gift of Smith Freeman, 2009.26.14



Unidentified Artist, Indian, Gandhara; The Offering of the Four Bowls to Buddha, 2nd century; Gray schist; 16 3/4 x 18 7/16 x 3 5/8 in. ; Ackland Art Museum, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Gift of Clara T. and Gilbert J. Yager and Ackland Fund, 90.35

Unidentified Artist (Mende people, Sande society)

Sande Society Mask, 20th century

Wood

16 3/8 x 9 1/4 x 9 3/4 in.

Ackland Art Museum, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Gift of Miriam E. Dixon, Judith D. Gooding and Susan R. Dixon in
memory of John W. Dixon, Jr. and Vivian S. Dixon, 2009.19.2



Sande is a women's secret society among the Mende people and some of their neighbors in Liberia and Sierra Leone. At puberty all young women are initiated into the society in ceremonies that include masked dancers. The dancer who commissioned and wore this mask would have been a woman of high status in the Sande society. Wearing it, she embodied the water spirit, Sande, that presides over the society.

The masks present characteristics of the ideal woman. The downcast eyes and delicate, regular features are indications of physical beauty; the smooth high forehead indicates both beauty and wisdom. The elaborate hairstyles, which vary widely from mask to mask, derive from changing fashions and are a sign of wealth and status.

Source: Ackland Art Museum Curatorial files

Unidentified Artist (South African, Nguni, Ndebele)

Fertility Child Doll (Umnndwana), after 1940

Beads and fiber

8 3/8 x 6 in.

Ackland Art Museum, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill,

Ackland Fund and Gift of Norma Canelas Roth and William Roth, 2017.19.20



This doll is made of beads wrapped around a core of straw. In a sign that these figures were used by multiple generations, it is possible that arms, armbands, headdress, necklace and apron, etc. are later additions, perhaps some three decades after initial manufacture.

Beaded Ndebele dolls are made for adolescent girls either by their mothers or by the girls themselves as beadwork samplers. Such dolls are also given to girls who are soon to marry. The girl cares for the doll, and gives it a name which is then later also given to her first child.

Source: Ackland Art Museum Object Guide

Unidentified Artist (Chinese)

Green-Glazed Pottery 'Hill Jar', Han Dynasty (206 BCE–CE 220)

Red pottery

Jar: 2 1/2 x 7 3/4 x 7 3/4 in. Base: 5 5/8 x 7 3/4 x 7 3/4 in.

Ackland Art Museum, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Gift of Smith Freeman, 2009.26.14



The green of Han Dynasty glazes was prized for its resemblance to oxidized archaic bronzes and jades. During the Han Dynasty and after, Chinese tombs were filled with objects that the departed may need or desire in the afterlife, including servants, companion animals, various amusements, and vessels for food and wine. Jars like this may have been used for alchemical potions of various medicines and life-prolonging herbs.

The theme of immortality is referenced in the design of the hill jar. The hills on top represent Mount Bo a sacred Taoist site to which the departed would ascend on their journey to the afterlife. The various figures on the side of the jar represent immortal beings who reside on or around Mount Bo. Some were said to subsist solely on the dew of clouds.

Source: Ackland Art Museum Object Guide

Unidentified Artist (Indian, Gandhara)

The Offering of the Four Bowls to Buddha, 2nd century

Gray schist

16 3/4 x 18 7/16 x 3 5/8 in.

Ackland Art Museum, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Gift of Clara T. and Gilbert J. Yager and Ackland Fund, 90.35



In the story of Buddha's first meal after attaining enlightenment, the guardians of the four quarters of the cosmos offer him food in costly gold and silver bowls. He refuses the food until the guardians offer it in plain stone bowls. He then takes the four bowls and miraculously combines them into one. By doing this, he refuses to privilege one offering over another and asserts the unity of the four quarters of the universe.

For Gandharan Buddhists in the second century, the concept of the universe and its four quarters was surely more than a metaphor – their region was an international trade center. This sculpture and the one next to it, *Buddhist Worshipers Adoring the Wheel of the Law*, demonstrate that the artists knew something about Roman art. Drapery folds in both works recall conventions of Roman sculpture, and in this one, the garland-bearing figures at the lower edge resemble Roman putti, or cupids.

Source: Ackland Art Museum Curatorial files