



**FINE ARTS MUSEUMS OF SAN FRANCISCO
LEGION OF HONOR**

**HIGHLIGHTS TOUR
WITH VISUAL ACCESS CONTENT**

Audio tour script

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Stop 416 Fra Angelico, *The Meeting of Saint Dominic and Saint Francis of Assisi*, c. 1427 - 1429 61.44.7

General Analysis

NARRATOR: Inside an austere church, St Dominic, in a black cloak, clasps hands with St Francis of Assisi. According to Dominic's biographer, he dreamed of meeting Francis – and the next day, recognized him in real life, in a church in Rome. Dominic greeted him warmly, appreciating that he and Francis had similar aims in mind, in founding religious brotherhoods.

This painting is tiny – it was once part of a multi-scene altarpiece. But lean in a little, and look at the faces of the two main players and their companions. They're full of expression and individuality. The Italian artist, known as Fra Angelico, was known for his tender, human portrayals of religious figures. He was also a Dominican friar himself, so this subject must have been especially close to his heart.

Visual Description:

This work is titled *The Meeting of Saint Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi*. Fra Angelico painted it between 1427 and 1429. It is tempera and gold leaf on panel. It measures about 14 inches tall and wide.

At the center of the painting, two pale men in robes greet each other, their heads highlighted by golden halos. They gaze directly and intently into each other's eyes, their arms outstretched and clasping each other's hands. Four similarly pale men stand slightly behind them, looking on. The scene takes place in a sparse but spacious grey, stone space like a church with a rusty red floor. The church takes up all the space behind the figures marked by a series of archways and high windows that line the edges of the canvas and recess behind the figures. Light emanates soft and evenly from the windows.

Saint Dominic, on the left and slightly taller, wears a black hooded cloak over a white, ankle length garment. He is balding, with grey hair. He leans toward Saint Francis in greeting. Saint Francis of Assisi, on the right, is barefoot. He wears a brown hooded garment tied at the waist with a rough rope. His hair has been shaved into a monk's circular crown.

On the left behind Saint Dominic, two men are dressed similarly to Saint Dominic, standing with their heads slightly bowed and hands in prayer. On the right, two men stand behind St. Francis, also barefoot and wearing brown garments. They are standing in an identical manner as their companions, with heads bowed and hands in prayer.

Stop 421 Cesare da Sesto, *Madonna and Child with St John the Baptist and St George*, c. 1513 – 1515, 61.44.15

General Analysis:

NARRATOR: In the center of this painting, a laughing Christ child pulls at his mother Mary's clothing with chubby fingers. Her blue robe symbolizes the sky, since she's queen of heaven in the Catholic faith.

But who are those men standing on either side? Luckily, Renaissance art is full of clues that help us figure out their identities. The man to the left: long hair? check. Tunic made from animal hide? Tall, reed cross? Yes and yes. All of these signs suggest that he is John the Baptist, who foretold the coming of Christ, and later baptized him. The other man is dressed in armor. So it's got to be St George, suited up to face the legendary dragon. Even the ruined classical building behind them carries a message: once Jesus begins his work, the old, pagan world will crumble and Christianity will triumph.

Finally, notice how the figures and landscape are depicted with a sense of depth and realism. * The Italian artist, Cesare da Sesto, was heavily influenced by Leonardo da Vinci, who had spent many productive years in Cesare's native Lombardy in northern Italy.

191 words

Visual Description

This painting is titled *Madonna and Child with St. John the Baptist and St. George*. Cesare da Sesto (Il Milanese) painted it between 1513 and 1515. The oil on panel transferred to hard board measures over 8 feet tall and nearly 7 feet wide.

The painting features four figures with thin, gold halos arranged on and around a crumbling ancient marble structure that occupies much of the painting. At the center, a Madonna gazing downward with pale glowing skin and brown hair sits on

the steps of the structure draped in richly colored cloths of deep red, and azure blue. She cradles a naked, squirming baby with peachy skin and golden brown hair looking happily toward the viewer. Above the mother and child, a nude baby angel, holds a large piece of velvety red and green fabric creating an awning over them.

To the right of the structure, St. George with pale skin and short, brown hair, in full medieval grey, metal armor stands facing the viewer. His left hand rests on his hip. His right hand holds a pole with a white and red cross flag billowing on the top. The knight looks off the right side of the canvas.

To the left of the Madonna and child stands St. John the Baptist, with slightly tanned skin and brown curly, shoulder length hair. He is draped in a brown animal skin and red and pink fabric. He points toward the seated mother and child while grasping a thin wooden cross. He looks to the left edge of the painting.

Behind them, a small village is visible in the distance, a light blue sky, and some dark green trees. In front of the figures, the dirt is scattered with pieces of the marble structure that have fallen to the ground.

Stop 422 El Greco, *Saint Francis Venerating the Crucifix*, c. 1600, 61.44.24

General Analysis:

NARRATOR: Kneeling in prayer, St Francis of Assisi leans over a carved image of Christ on the cross. Everything about this painting by El Greco strives to give us a sense of Saint Francis's humility. He had given up a life of wealth and luxury in favor of spiritual concerns, and to found his order of monks. Here, we see him in his simple, dark robe and rope belt, in a bleak landscape, far from human company and comfort.

El Greco used subtle ways to emphasize the saint's emotional devotion to his faith. Like the darkness of the rocks behind him, the perfect backdrop to highlight his brightly-lit face, with its intent expression. And look at that sky in the background – it's full of turbulent brushstrokes that echo Christ's anguish on the cross during his crucifixion – and of the feelings in Francis's heart as he contemplates this suffering.

153 words

Visual Description:

This painting is titled *Saint Francis Venerating the Crucifix*. Domenkios

Theotokopoulos (El Greco) painted it around 1595. It is oil on canvas measuring a little more than 4 feet tall and about 3.5 feet wide.

A kneeling man bent over in prayer occupies most of this dark and roughly painted canvas. His torso faces the viewer while he gazes down at a crucifix, skull, and book resting on a stone on the right side of the canvas. A brownish grey space suggesting a rocky background in the upper top right fades to black behind the figure.

The only visible parts of the figure's body are his head and hands. His skin is ghostly pale and highly illuminated, emphasizing his gaunt cheeks, sunken dark eyes and long, thin fingers. His brownish-black, short hair is trimmed so that the crown is

much shorter than the edges. His face is sensitively composed with a soft, melancholic gaze.

A dull, grey, full-length hooded cloak envelops his body with the hood pushed down away from his head and folded around his neck. The front edges of the cloak are folded back over his shoulders revealing his hands resting crossed across his chest. A knotted rope extends down from his waist and rests on the ground.

Other details include a sprig of emerald green ivy in the top left corner of the painting. In the top right corner, above the rocky space and small patch of blue, a cloudy sky suggests it's daytime. At the bottom of the painting, the man's knees rest on a smooth solid grey stone.

Stop 466 Peter Paul Rubens, *The Tribute Money*, c. 1612, 44.11

General Analysis

NARRATOR: It's easy to find the most important figure here. The artist, Peter Paul Rubens, has singled him out with a scarlet robe, and golden light around his head. It's Christ, involved in a dramatic discussion. In the center of the painting, and the story, is Christ's hand holding a golden Roman coin. Another man points to it, staring Christ in the face, while his companions cluster around, their faces full of enquiry, drama, and emotion.

This man just asked Christ whether it's lawful for the Roman overlords to demand taxes from the Jewish people. In the Bible, Christ points to the emperor's image on a coin and replies, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God, the things that are God's". Christ's other hand, pointing up to heaven, clarifies that final point.

Rubens, who came from Antwerp in today's Belgium, was among the most celebrated and successful artists of the early 17th century. His paintings, full of dramatic light, lush color, and figures that are full of life, appealed very much to the kings and noblemen of Europe, who lined up to have him paint their portraits and decorate their palaces and churches.

197 words

Visual Description

This painting is titled *The Tribute Money*. Peter Paul Rubens painted it around 1612.

The oil on panel measures over 4.5 feet tall and over 6 feet wide.

This climactic scene is fraught with drama. A group of nine light-skinned male figures crowd together dominating the canvas and filling the space from left to right.

The largest and most prominent figure is on the far right. He is in front of the other figures and takes up most of the right third of the painting. Thin gold rays encircle his curly brown shoulder length hair suggesting that he may be Christ. He faces toward the center of the scene with his left hand pointed upward. His right hand

reaches toward the center of the painting, placing a single gold coin into a pleading man's outstretched hand. Christ is wearing a large, ruby red cloak draped across his body and over his left shoulder.

The figure accepting the coin seems to be the most important figure in the crowd of men. He has a desperate expression in his wide, almost glistening, dark eyes. He is balding, with dark, curly hair and a long beard. He wears a shiny, blue, silk gown covered by a fur wrap. He stands in profile facing Christ. To the left of this figure, a bald, older man dressed in a luxurious cloak with long tassels looks over his shoulder with a scowl.

There are six other men in the crowd wearing various garments and headpieces. Most are not fully visible but their faces are individualized and articulate. The entire scene is illuminated by a light from the left corner that shines like a spotlight on to the money being exchanged.

Stop 426 Georges de La Tour, *Old Man*, c. 1618 - 1619, 75.2.9, and *Old Woman*, c. 1618 - 1619, 75.2.10

General Analysis

NARRATOR: This elderly man, and the woman to the right, were painted around 1618 by the French artist Georges de La Tour. Living and working in a provincial part of eastern France, he specialized in picturing everyday life, often using dramatic light effects.

He's doing that here – see the way he creates a sense of tension and mystery with that bright light coming in from the left? It casts most of the man's face into deep shadow – making it hard to read his expression. But we see the woman's face clearly – and it looks as if she could be telling the man something serious. So who might they be? Their simple clothing – apart from that embroidered silk apron – places them as peasants, or townspeople. They may even be characters from popular theater – a docile husband and nagging wife. But whatever their identity, the paintings' extraordinary, intense realism draws us in to their enigmatic story.

153 words

Visual Description

The painting on the left is titled *Old Man*. This oil on canvas measures nearly 3 feet tall and almost 2 feet wide. The painting on the right is titled *Old Woman*. This oil on canvas measures 3 feet high and nearly 2 feet wide. Both works are by Georges de la Tour, who painted it between 1618 and 1619.

Starting with the painting on the left. A man stands in an empty space, filling this canvas. Centered on the canvas, he faces the viewer and hunches over, resting his crossed hands on a tall walking stick. A bright light shines from the left hand side of the canvas bouncing off of his bald head and casting a shadow across his face and body, creating an uncanny realism. He looks pensively beyond the right side of the canvas.

His body seems slightly out of proportion from his head and torso compared to his long legs and stocky shins and feet. He wears a turquoise jacket. His cherry red baggy pants are tucked into mustard yellow wrinkled stockings. His simple black-laced shoes are lightly scuffed and worn. The man's head is balding with wisps of grey hair and an unruly silver beard and mustache.

The man stands in the corner of plain and barren room that is almost one continuous shade of grey. The wall to the left is slightly darker than the wall behind the man and the floor. The differences in color are the only way we identify the architecture of the space.

In the work on the right, an elderly, light-skinned woman stands in a similar empty room. She fills the space. She faces the viewer but looks to the left of the canvas, mouth slightly agape with an incredulous expression and her hands firmly on her hips. She wears a bright white cap that covers her hair and forehead, extending around the sides of her head and nearly enveloping her face. A peacock green bodice covers her white, billowing long-sleeved blouse. A shimmery gold apron attached at the waist hides her long, purple skirt. A strong, bright light illuminates the woman from the left casting a long shadow at the bottom right corner of the painting and emphasizing the textures of her clothing. The woman's apron glistens in strong contrast to the stiff cotton blouse and wool bodice.

Stop 468 Rembrandt, *Joris de Caulerij*, 1632, 66.31

General Analysis

NARRATOR: What kind of person do you think this man might have been? ** His portrait expertly communicates various aspects of his character and social standing. First, there's the pose. He stands tall, his head turned so that he gazes directly out to catch our eye. A hand placed nonchalantly on his hip gives him an air of energy and confidence, and his other hand holds a 17th century gun called a musket – almost pushing out into our space.

Meanwhile, bright light falls on one side of his face. It's painted in extraordinary detail, giving us a wonderful sense of his character and individuality – and even the texture of his skin and hair. The metallic details of his armored collar and military garb also gleam in the light, underlining his position as a wealthy citizen – and member of a militia. Joris de Caulerij was a distinguished officer in the Dutch navy. And he got one of the finest emerging artists in the Netherlands to paint his portrait in 1632 – young Rembrandt, who was then just beginning to make his name in Amsterdam.

180 words

Visual Description

This painting is titled *Joris de Caulerij*. Rembrandt Harmens van Rijn painted it in 1632. The oil on canvas is mounted on panel and measures about 3.5 feet tall and a little less than 3 feet wide.

A man fills most of this painting standing just to the left center. He looks straight ahead, locking eyes with the viewer with a soft but serious gaze. A beam of light highlights the pale face and right shoulder of the militiaman casting a deep shadow across the rest of the empty, grey yellow background. The result is a dramatic, individualized portrait.

His body turns toward the right hand side of the painting. Bushy, black, curly hair frames his face. The man's cheeks are flush, his nose red in contrast to his pale forehead, his eyes dark and shiny. He has a full, dark moustache and visible stubble from an unshaved jaw. His left arm rests on his left hip framing the barely visible hilt of a sword. His right arm extends straight down toward the bottom left corner of the painting holding a rifle that is only partially visible as it extends off the left and bottom sides of the canvas.

The entire painting is carefully painted and highly realistic especially the man's clothing and accessories. His leather collar gleams above the metal gilded strap of a gunpowder belt strung across his chest. His coat is a golden mustard color with chocolate brown sleeves and a velvety, suede texture. The arms and body of the coat are very full, and puffy making it difficult to determine the man's body size and stature.

Stop 432 Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *The Empire of Flora*, c. 1743, 61.44.19

General Analysis

NARRATOR: Flowers are scattered everywhere in this painting – especially around the figure in the center. That’s because she is the most important: Flora, the Roman goddess of Spring. Reclining in her golden chariot and surrounded by bright yellow drapery fluttering in the spring breeze, she receives homage from all kinds of admirers. Chubby cherubs hover nearby, and on the left, a couple of warriors lay down their shields and present flower garlands to the goddess.

It’s colorful, light-hearted, playful and elegant – like so much European art made around the middle of the 18th century. This scene is by the Venetian artist Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, who specialized in large-scale decorative paintings and frescoes that would transform your palazzo with a heavenly array of graceful gods and goddesses. His fame soon spread, and this particular painting was made for a German count.

139 words

Visual Description

This work is titled *The Empire of Flora*. Giovanni Battista Tiepolo painted it around 1743. This oil on canvas measures about 2.5 feet high and almost 3 feet wide.

So much is happening in this playful and realistically depicted landscape. Just to the right of center, an idealized nude woman with alabaster skin adorned with flowers rests in a gilded and ornate chariot pulled by three winged, rosy, nude cherubs facing the left side of the painting. A shiny bright yellow fabric appears to rise up behind the chariot fluttering in the wind. Two fair-skinned women with red cheeks are barely visible, following closely behind the chariot. One beats a drum.

In the bottom left corner, two admiring men dressed in classical bronze armor bend in deference, facing the nude woman. One fair-skinned and blond haired man stands with a blue sleeve peeking from his armor. The second man crouches beneath him in yellow and red armor. They have discarded their shields, bronze with red trim, to lay garlands of flowers on the ground. To the right of the chariot, a second semi-nude woman dances with her right arm above her head. She looks toward the ground covered with light green vegetation as her pink draped skirt blows up in the air. Behind these characters, a white stone wall opens like an entrance to an elaborate landscape. Behind the wall is a partially obscured row of classical sculptures elevated on pedestals. Behind the sculptures are several rows of skinny cypress trees placed very closely together. Toward the left-hand side and about halfway up the canvas in the distance, there is an ornate fountain and a range of mountains far away. Above the fountain is a rich blue sky dotted with clouds and with the silhouettes of nine birds soaring far in the distance.

Stop 431 Jean-Antoine Watteau, *The Foursome*, c. 1718, 1977.8

General Analysis

NARRATOR: At first, this scene looks straightforward enough – four young people sitting around a classical urn at twilight. Maybe they're about to hear a song from the man with a guitar slung over his back. But ... nothing is quite what it seems.

The men's clothing, for one thing, is decidedly theatrical. In fact, the man with the guitar is dressed as Pierrot. He's the melancholy figure who pines after a lady, in the Italian theater comedies that were so popular at this time. And the man on the left may be Mezzetin, a scheming, trouble-making character from the same theatrical tradition.

But here's where things get even more complicated. French artist Jean-Antoine Watteau, who made this painting around 1718, often portrayed the aristocracy enjoying conversation, music and flirting in a beautiful garden, with a mysterious, slightly dreamlike, atmosphere. Quite often, it's a costume party. So we may be looking at just such a delightful gathering. Or is it actually a performance, with four actors in front of painted scenery?

172 words

Visual Description

This painting is titled *The Foursome (La Partie Quarrée)*. Jean-Antoine Watteau painted it around 1713. The oil on canvas measures a little more than 1.5 feet high and almost 2 feet wide.

In the center of a lush, green garden, a man and two women sit on a bench leaning against a column facing the viewer while a fourth man stands just to the right of the figures with his back to the viewer. The figures are close together at the very center of the canvas at eye level. The top half of the painting is filled with leafy trees between small patches of dark, blue night sky; a light coming from behind the viewer brightly illuminates the four figures.

Let's start by describing the standing figure at the right with his back to the viewer. He is dressed in all white, suggesting he is the pantomime stock character known as Pierrot. He has a high, ruffled collar and white cap. Draped across his back is a brown, classical guitar with a bright red strap.

To the left of the man, seated and facing him, are two women leaning towards each other. Their pale skin and rosy cheeks glow. The woman on the right wears a shiny, light purple skirt. A red vest covers her low cut white blouse and her left hand holds up a black masquerade mask. The woman to the left wears a floor-length gold satin skirt, a delicate white, ruffled blouse with a delicate lace collar and a bright red jacket. She holds a fan in her lap.

A pale man with rosy cheeks sits to the left of the women. This man's coat, shorts, stockings, cape, hat and shoes are all a shimmery grey. A high, ruffled white collar covers his neck.

Stop 480 Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Anne, Viscountess Townsend*, 1779-1780 75.2.13

General Analysis

NARRATOR: Anybody who was anyone in late 18th century England wanted Sir Joshua Reynolds to paint his or her portrait. And looking at this elegant painting, we can see his appeal.

He's starting with great material here – this is Lady Townsend, who he'd previously portrayed with her sisters as the Three Graces – Roman goddesses of charm and beauty. As a young artist, Reynolds had traveled to Italy, immersing himself in classical art. Back in London, he became known for his portraits that enhanced one's appearance, and contained a dash of classical style, pointing flatteringly to one's knowledge of antiquity. He shows Lady Townsend in a simple gown and fashionable hairdo, with the velvet and ermine fur cloak that signifies her noble status draped nonchalantly over the pillar beside her. The carved imagery on it is very much part of the portrait. It shows the classical myth where Paris, prince of Troy, has to choose the most beautiful of three goddesses. But there are only two – because Anne herself is the living, breathing third, and Paris leans forward on the pillar, seemingly about to select her as the winner of the beauty contest!

189 words

Visual Description

This painting is titled *Anne, Viscountess Townsend, Later Marchioness Townshend*. Sir Joshua Reynolds painted it between 1779 and 1780. The oil on canvas measures nearly 8 feet tall and almost 5 feet wide.

This life-size, full body portrait realistically depicts an elegantly dressed young woman standing at the center of the canvas almost filling it from top to bottom. She looks contently outward, her wide brown eyes engaging the viewer. Her face is unusually white, as if her face, neck, and chest have all been powdered--a striking contrast to her heavily rouged cheeks. The woman's hair is piled high above her head. It looks stiff and grey and also perhaps powdered.

She wears a pale lilac gown belted with a turquoise sash at her waist. The gown has elaborate, folded sleeves and a long train that bunches up in folds around her feet revealing the tiny tip of a white satin slipper. The fabric of the dress is luxurious and substantial with dramatic shading and shadows highlighting the folds and drapes. The neckline is a deep V revealing the woman's décolletage.

To the woman's left, there is a stone column, which she rests gently against. Draped behind the woman onto the column, an equally luxurious velvety red cloak trimmed with fur is folded just beneath her right elbow. The front of the column features a classical relief of three people: A man, presumably a shepherd as indicated by his staff, holds out an apple in front of two nude, idealized women. In the space behind the woman, there are large, leafy trees, and in the upper right corner, the cloudy sky has a dusk-light illumination.

Stop 477 Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun, *Hyacinthe Gabrielle Roland, later Marchioness Wellesley*, 1791, 1991.29

General Analysis

NARRATOR: There are several unusual things about this portrait, painted in 1791. First – the way this young woman’s presented. It’s so much more informal than what you’d usually see at this time. She seems to be moving – perhaps dancing – and her hair cascades over her bare shoulders, held by a scarf tied fashionably in what was called the “Greek style”.

The woman is Hyacinthe Gabrielle Roland. Her role in society probably partly accounts for the informal and vivacious way she’s portrayed. A famously attractive young French actress, she lived with an English aristocrat and had five children with him before they eventually married. And here’s the second remarkable aspect to the portrait – it’s the work of a woman, Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun, who was known for the freshness and liveliness of her portraits. She had an extremely successful career as an artist – unusual for a woman of her day– notably, working for Queen Marie Antoinette, before the French Revolution.

155 words

Visual Description

This painting is titled *Hyacinth Gabrielle Roland, Marchioness Wellesley, (formerly Countess of Mornington)*. Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun painted it in 1791. The oil on canvas measures over 3 feet tall and almost 2.5 feet wide.

This portrait of a young, light-skinned woman feels remarkably casual and active. We see only her upper body, which faces the right side of the canvas as though she just took a step. The woman looks over her right shoulder outward toward the viewer. She grasps her long, untamed hair toward her chest with her right hand.

Her ensemble is elegant, but revealing. A thin and nearly transparent white blouse is pulled down low around her chest and hangs off her shoulder. The strap of a rich, red dress is the only fabric on her upper body. The skirt of the dress is densely pleated and billows toward the left hand side of the painting, suggesting motion. A silky, black scarf wraps around her back, over her right upper arm and flows back toward the bottom left corner of the painting, also indicating motion.

The woman's face is youthful and lively with big brown eyes, soft pink cheeks, and cherry red lips. Her brown hair is un-styled and pulled back from her face by a wide white scarf. It cascades down around her neck covering her left shoulder.

The woman is painted at eye level. She occupies most of the canvas but a few details are visible in the space behind her. Beyond her is a greyish blue sky. At the very bottom right corner of the canvas, the clouds turn a soft pink, perhaps indicating a sunset.

Stop 488 John Roddam Spencer-Stanhope, *Love and the Maiden*, 1877, 2002.176

General Analysis

NARRATOR: In an enchanting spring landscape, a young woman sits up, as if she was just asleep. And who woke her? None other than Eros, the classical god of love, with his wings and magical bow. She gazes at him, intrigued. Wait though—that flowering tree placed together with Eros means something. It’s an oleander – beautiful, but also poisonous. Get it? Love can be wonderful, but also painful – even fatal.

The painting is by English late 19th century artist John Roddam Spencer-Stanhope. His love of Italian Renaissance art comes out clearly in the painting’s graceful figures and details. He even used early Renaissance-style egg tempera paint and gold leaf here, to create these bright, clear colors, and crisp, exquisite details.

119 words

Visual Description

This painting is titled *Love and the Maiden*. John Roddam Spencer Stanhope painted it in 1877. The oil and gold leaf on canvas measures more than 4.5 feet tall and almost 7 feet wide.

All the elements of the painting are depicted with the same amount of focus and detail, making the entire canvas busy but clear and crisp. A woman lounges on grass leaning against her right arm, facing out toward the viewer on the far left of the canvas. She leans back, surprised by a winged, young light-skinned boy, bow in hand leaning against a tree that fills the right hand side of the canvas. Both figures are depicted in a classical garb with loose fitting fabric covering their bodies. Their skin is so white, it is almost translucent. The woman’s white, blue, and pink dress drapes and folds around her supine body. Her red hair is wrapped in an olive fabric. Her

strong jaw tilts upward as she looks with surprise and uncertainty to the upper right-hand side of the canvas.

The winged boy wears a decorated, orange fabric draped around his waist and right side. He faces the young girl in profile, only revealing the left side of his pale body, including a bare torso, shoulder, and arm. His pink and orange wings are large, each the size of his torso. He gazes downward toward the woman as if to size her up. In his right hand he grasps a bow. The tree he leans against is covered in a vine of pink flowers.

The ground beneath the woman is filled with emerald grass dotted with blue and pink wild flowers. Beyond her is a landscape of darker green trees and grass.

Three women dressed in pink and white dance in a circle in the distance.

Stop 485 Konstantin Makovsky, *The Russian Bride's Attire*, 1889, 53161

General Analysis

NARRATOR: There is so much going on in this monumental painting set in old Russia. But the artist helps us see where to start: with the girl in a shining, white dress in the center. The ladies around her are preparing her for her wedding, but she looks down seriously at the young woman at her feet. Maybe they are sisters, sad that later in the day, they will have to part. To the left, a small boy watches the bride thoughtfully. Soon, he'll be too old to be allowed into the women's quarters. Meanwhile, at the right, an older man, perhaps the bride's father, carrying her dowry, tries to catch a glimpse of her. But he's not supposed to be there – as the woman by the door is obviously telling him.

The costumes and setting for the scene are magnificent, and incredibly detailed. Just look at those embroidered headdresses, and the little boy's boots. ** The artist, Konstantin Makovsky, was one of the leading Russian painters of the later 19th century. But here, he's giving us a lavish, romantically imaginative insight into one of the most important social and political events of sixteenth and seventeenth century Russia – a wedding uniting two noble families.

203 words

Visual Description

This painting is titled *The Russian Bride's Attire*. Konstantin Makovsky painted it in 1889. This oil on canvas measures just over 9 feet tall and over 12 feet wide.

This massive painting is carefully painted with a great deal of detail. In a wood paneled room filled with women seated along the walls, a young woman sits at the

center in a chair having her hair brushed. The painting is highly realistic and presented at eye level, as though we could walk in and be part of the scene.

The seated young woman facing to the left is the central character, presumably a bride. Her satin white gown with large, poufy shoulders accentuates her glowing white complexion. A tall, stately woman in an elaborate blue coat, red gown, and gold headdress brushes the bride's long, shiny brown hair. A young woman sits at the bride's feet leaning against her knees, grasping her left arm, and gazing upward.

The other women in this scene are dressed in similar richly colored blue, purple, and pink ensembles with gold details. They wear elaborate headdresses that rise like crowns from their heads with intricate gilded details. An elderly woman sits at the far left of the painting with a young boy. Along the back wall of the room, eleven of the women sit talking to each other and observing the scene.

In the back right corner of the room, a bearded man with a red cap and fur coat tries to enter the room while a woman with her back to the viewer blocks him. In the front right corner of the canvas, an open trunk is covered with a richly colored, embroidered cloak. Beams of light enter through a window covered by a lace curtain on the left side of the canvas.

Stop 492 Édouard Manet, *At the Milliner's*, 1881, 1957.3

General Analysis

NARRATOR: Like several artists in his circle, Édouard Manet was fascinated by the hat shops that were everywhere in Paris by the 1880s.

But the woman in this painting is something of a mystery. It's titled "At the Milliner's", so she may be a wealthy customer, trying out different hats at a shop. But her low-cut gown and shawl are more like something you'd wear at home before dressing, and the flowery wallpaper looks domestic. So she could be trying out hats sent over for her approval, at home. Either way, it's clear that Manet enjoyed painting her creamy skin against the quick, bold dashes of paint that conjure up her gauzy black shawl, and the flowered wallpaper behind. His interest in everyday – even risqué - subjects like this, and the way he painted them with these swift, unblended brushstrokes made him one of the most radical artists of his time.

150 words

Visual Description

This work is titled *At the Milliner's*. Edouard Manet painted it in 1881. The oil on canvas measures less than 3.5 feet tall and about 2.5 feet wide.

A woman stands in profile facing the left hand side of the canvas holding a hat at chest level. The work is painted with rapid brush strokes that give a quick impression of the scene. The woman fills most of the right side of the canvas. She is depicted from the waist up and wears a white patterned gown but it is almost completely covered by a textured black wrap. The gown and wrap come down off her shoulder revealing her shoulder and upper back. Her skin is a harsh, pale apricot color creating a jarring contrast to the blackness of the wrap. Only a thin red lip and slightly closed eyes accent her plain face. Her brown hair is pulled up into a bun atop her head with shorter pieces framing her face.

The black hat she holds has shapes indistinctly painted that imply a gold buckle and red ribbons hanging down. Just to the left of the hat she holds, there appears a part of another hat, cut off by the edge of the canvas.

Behind the woman, the space is filled with a decorative pattern of pink, green, and gold flora-like wallpaper. Otherwise, the space the woman stands in is largely ambiguous without many other details suggesting where she is or what she is doing.

Stop 497 Claude Monet, *Water Lilies*, 1914–1917, 1973.3

General Analysis

NARRATOR: This painting makes us feel like we're in Claude Monet's garden in northern France, standing beside him on a bridge, gazing down at the water lilies. There's no view of anything else in the garden – let alone a horizon line with sky above it, like you get in most traditional landscape paintings. But there is a sense that it's a beautiful, sunny day – the water is bright blue, and there's a cloud reflected up in the corner. It almost feels as if we're floating, like the waterlilies.

As a young man, Monet and his fellow Impressionists had revolutionized European painting with their new way of capturing the world around them in paint, and their focus on modern life. But by the time Monet made this painting, he was in his late 70s. His garden had become his main inspiration – he planned its trees, flowers and ponds carefully, and painted them over and over again. Here, with the absence of anything else but the colors and forms of the lilies, the water and its reflections, it's almost abstract.

179 words

Visual Description

This work is titled *Water Lilies*. Claude Monet painted it between 1914 and 1917.

The oil on canvas measures almost 5.5 feet tall and over 4.5 feet wide.

The bright colors, elevated viewpoint, and energetic brushwork make this work feel light and vibrant. A pond with lily pads and water lilies fills this large canvas. It is painted as though it is viewed from a slightly elevated position and cropped with no details as to where this scene takes place. The paint is applied thickly with many layers making the surface of the pond and the lily pads seem blurry.

In the lower half of the canvas, light and dark green lily pads dot the surface accented by bright red flowers. There is a little space just above these lily pads and then a second flotilla of lily pads and flowers. These lily pads are the same shades of

green but the flowers are a deep fuchsia and light pink. In the very top right corner of the canvas, a white fluffy cloud reflects off of the surface of the water.

The bright, aqua blue water is accented with various shades of blue, purple, green, and white as it peeks out between the lily pads and fills the other spaces of the canvas.

Stop 306 Seneb, the Royal Scribe, 2014.45

General Analysis

NARRATOR: In ancient Egypt, you needed to be well prepared for death and the Afterlife. This wooden figure was made to be placed in a tomb – it represented the deceased man just in case something bad happened to his mummified body, his spirit would have a place to rest.

This was no ordinary Egyptian. An inscription on the base beneath the figure's feet tells us the man was named Seneb, and that he was favored by the king. Seneb was probably a court official. He could certainly afford to get this statue made by a top-notch artist. It's beautifully carved, using nine different pieces of wood, so that the grain follows the lines and curves of the body. Look carefully, and you can still see where black paint was used to define his eyes and eyebrows. Even his finger and toenails are picked out in pale paint.

147 words

Visual Description

This sculpture is titled *The Royal Scribe*. It is made of wood and measures almost 11 inches tall.

This life-like sculpture of a man wearing only a long, white skirt is stiff and formal. The man stands with perfect posture, both arms straight at his sides, his left foot slightly in front of his right, with his weight evenly distributed. His arms are so straight that you cannot see his elbows. His hands are parallel to his body with the thumbs pointing toward the viewer. The hands are flat with the fingers spread apart like he is flexing them. The man's torso, arms and feet are bare. He wears a white cloth that hangs to his mid-calf and looks like a skirt. The cloth has two sharp edges that extend from his waist downward suggesting folds in the material. The bare skin

of the man has a warm brown color and reveals the grain of the wood the sculpture was carved from.

Despite the stiff and unnatural feeling of the man's stance, his features seem very realistic and natural. The details of his bald head are carefully carved and accented with painted black eyes and eyebrows. His expression is gentle but focused. His torso is equally naturalistic with wide shoulders, defined chest muscles and a small divot where his belly button is.

Stop 201 Cycladic Figure, c. 2500 BC, 1981.42

General Analysis

NARRATOR: This marble sculpture is almost *five thousand* years old. It comes from the Cycladic islands in the Aegean Sea, south-east of Athens. Just a few pared-down forms and lines make up the figure's head and body, with its long, slender nose and folded arms. Look how the artist has indicated the body with the minimal of lines. * It could almost be a piece of modern art. And in fact, when Cycladic figures like these were first rediscovered in the early 20th century, modern artists like Picasso and Matisse were dazzled by their elegant simplicity, and inspired by their clean lines.

But would this figure originally have looked exactly like this? The answer's no – like much ancient sculpture, it would have had some painted decoration. See how the top of the head looks a little less worn? * It's the “ghost” of the painted hair that was once there – now, long gone, the paint protecting that area from weathering.

158 words

Visual Description

This statue is titled *Cycladic Figure*. Goulandris Master created it in around 2500 BCE. It is made of marble and measures a little more than 1 foot tall.

Just a few simple lines and angles combine to create this small statue of a human figure. The statue is carved from a creamy, white colored stone with strategically placed, lightly incised lines.

Let's start at the top of the statue and work our way down. A flattened oval shape represents the figure's head. There are no facial features besides a curve of a nose sticking outward from the center of the face. A gentle indentation suggests a chin. The figure's body widens at the shoulders before narrowing incrementally at the waist, knees, and ankles- all indicated by separate, straight horizontally carved lines.

Two parallel horizontal lines across the figure's torso look like arms crisscrossed on the figure's chest. The figure's feet are two small rectangles pointing straight down from the ends of the legs, with a few toes outlined with tiny vertical lines.

Stop 205 Season Sarcophagus, 54662

General Analysis

NARRATOR: Looking at the shape of this object, can you guess its original use? * It was a sarcophagus, or coffin. Made of fine marble, with elaborately carved relief decoration, it would have been extremely expensive. And in the middle of the front relief, there's a portrait of the Roman noblewoman the sarcophagus was made for. * She's shown wearing a mantle and holding a scroll, so perhaps indicating her education.

Arranged along the sarcophagus on either side of the woman's portrait are winged figures holding produce that symbolizes the seasons of the year. They, and the little figures in between them, are associated with the cult of Dionysus. He's best known as the god of wine, but was also connected with resurrection – so a key deity to assure one's rebirth. And of course the theme of the changing seasons remind us of the passing of time, death, and rebirth – the everlasting cycle of life.

153 words

Visual Description

This work is titled *Season Sarcophagus*. Romans sculpted it between 260-280 AD. It is made of marble with traces of polychrome and measures about 1.5 feet tall, about 1.5 feet wide, and almost 6 feet deep.

The sides of this shallow, milky white sarcophagus are deeply carved in a style known as bas-relief with a dense pattern of figures. The figures can be divided into sets that have two distinct sizes.

The first is a set of evenly spaced nude, winged boys that fill all sides of the sarcophagus from top to bottom. Each boy has dense curly hair and a piece of fabric draped around their shoulders and knotted at their chest. The boys all stand in a variation of the same pose: one hand holds a small basket of flowers up at their shoulder, the other hand reaches down and to the side grasping an object nearby.

Their weight is on one foot, alternating between left and right foot amongst the figures.

The second set of figures are also nude boys with curly hair but they are much smaller, about half the size of the large boys. They crowd the spaces between the larger figures and are engaged in various activities: some ride, or tame animals others to pull on ropes. Each of them face different directions.

At the very center of the sarcophagus's side, the head and torso of a woman is carved at the center of a circle. The figure is draped in cloth, holds a scroll in her right hand. She looks off to the left side.

The sarcophagus is hollow and empty on the inside and does not have a top. The top and bottom of the sides are edged in a flat narrow band.

Stop 207 Volute Krater, 2005.24a-b

General Analysis

NARRATOR: In ancient Greece, wine and water were normally mixed in vessels this shape. But this one is much too big for daily use – it was made as a tomb monument. It probably commemorated a dead warrior, since its imagery tells of heroes and battles. In fact, it's all about a key moment from the Iliad, Homer's epic account of the war between Greece and Troy.

See the downcast figure, sitting on a white couch and leaning on a white staff? * That's the Greek hero Achilles. The winged messenger of the gods is talking to him urgently – he must return to the battlefield, to rescue the body of his fallen friend, before the enemy gets there. Meanwhile, down below, there's the enemy himself – the Trojan prince Hektor - in his speedy four-horse chariot. He's racing across the plain of Troy to try to get there first. Next, Achilles will put on that white breastplate hanging behind his head, and go back into the fray, turning the whole course of the battle around.

170 words

Visual Description

This object is titled *Volute Krater*. It is attributed to the Baltimore painter who created it between 330 and 320 BC. It is made of terracotta and measures about 3.5 feet tall, almost 2 feet wide, and about 1.5 feet deep.

This vase is very large and quite elegant. Let's start by describing the shape of the vase and then the images on the surface. The vase's narrow base holds a tulip-shaped body that flutes upward into a tall neck. Two black disks with white faces perch on opposite sides of the vase's opening. Long, thin black handles extend downward from the disks. Two black loops sit at the base of each handle where it meets the body of the vase.

The vase's shiny surface is dominated by two colors: an earthy red and deep black with accents of white.

Let's examine what is painted on the vase. There are two major vase sections, the lower portion and the neck. Each space has a specific scene painted on it and decorative geometric patterns separate the spaces.

The very bottom of the vase features two red figures in a chariot pulled by four horses toward the left side of the vase. Above the chariot a red frowning man sits on a white couch leaning on a white staff. To this man's right, the figure with wings leans toward him, whispering. Additional red figures fill the remainder of the bottom space.

On the vase's neck, a dense pattern of plants and flowers swirl around a red, winged woman on a white cow.

Stop 208 Asklepios, 1981.41

General Analysis

NARRATOR: Even though this Greek statue is missing its head, and other important body parts, we know who it is. How? By his long walking stick, or staff at the right side of his body. * See that twisting, coiling form further down the staff? * It's a snake, which tells us that the figure represents Asklepios, god of healing and medicine, and patron of physicians. His snake-entwined staff is his symbol.

The drapery gives the sculptor the opportunity to explore a sense of movement and realism. He depicts Asklepios leaning heavily on his staff, his torso curved over and slightly twisted toward it, his robe falling in a mass of deep folds as a result. Originally, this statue would have been painted, giving it an even greater liveliness – it must have looked as though Asklepios could almost have stepped off his plinth at any moment.

145 words

Visual Description

This sculpture is titled *Asklepios*. The Greeks created it during the Hellenistic period in the 2nd century BCE. It is made of pentelic marble and measures 3 feet tall, more than a foot wide, and nine inches deep.

Chips in the surface and an absent head, arms, and right leg indicate significant damage to this classical male statue. Carved from marble, all that is left of this almost life-size sculpture is a man's body casually draped in a toga that reveals a muscular torso and his left foot.

The details that remain are very naturalistic. The body forms a gentle S curve from left to right as if the figure leans on his now-partially missing long walking stick by his right side. Soft lines indicate muscles in the man's shoulder, chest, and abdomen. The folds and drapes of the figure's toga gently cling to the man's legs suggesting the lines of the thighs, knees, and calves beneath.

The sculpture's surface is a rough, creamy white color, with large chunks missing and scratches in various places.

Stop 209 Anthropoid Coffin of Iret-hor-irou, 2002.2a-b

General Analysis

NARRATOR: Why were ancient Egyptian coffins made in the image of a human body? Of course, it made them ideally shaped to hold a mummified corpse. But more than that, a coffin was meant to act as a substitute for the body inside it, if necessary. The Egyptians believed that after death, they would continue to exist as long as their body was preserved, and their spirit had a home to return to. So, in case some misfortune befell the mummy, the human-shaped coffin itself could provide a resting place for the deceased person's soul.

This one would have been extremely costly – it's made of cedar wood imported from Lebanon, and is beautifully carved and decorated. Coffins, as the outer layer covering the mummified body inside, were the perfect place to have inscriptions - magical texts that protected the deceased, and helped him or her on the journey to the afterlife. The inscriptions here were originally decorated with colored inlays that have now faded to white.

165 words

Visual Analysis

This work is titled *Anthropoid Coffin of Iret-hor-irou*. It dates to Dynasty 30, 380-343 BC. It is made of cedar with traces of polychrome and measures 2 feet tall, 6.5 feet wide, and about 1.5 feet deep.

The dimensions and shape of this large, wooden object almost exactly mimic that of a human body. Imagine you laid on a large piece of paper with your arms by your side, and someone roughly traced the space around your body. That is the shape this large wooden coffin takes. It was designed to fit an adult human mummy.

The exterior of the coffin gives a clue to what lies inside. The top of the coffin features a simply carved head. The face bears a blank expression with a simple nose and mouth and thick black lines emphasizing the almond eyes. The figure's ears stick out from a smooth, undetailed headdress that covers the subject's head and flares down around the neck.

Unlike the face and head, the body section of the object does not have any human details. The only feature on the smooth surface is nine rows of carved hieroglyphics that fill most of the center of the coffin's front top. The rows connect to form a large rectangle that extends from the body's chest to where the ankles would be.

The color of the coffin is a rich cedar brown. Some of the hieroglyphics are white like they have been painted. There are also dents and scratches on the object's surface that appear to be very old.

Stop 210 Torso of a God, 54661

General Analysis

NARRATOR: This magnificent statue was made in Egypt in the fourteenth century BC. It represents a god – although we're not certain which one, as the inscription is missing. You can see he would have been almost life-size, and the details show he was made by an extremely skilled sculptor. Beneath the little bit of his beard that remains, he's wearing a decorated collar, and the even pleats of his skirt are beautifully depicted. He's holding a scepter against his chest, which signified power over land and peoples. And in his other hand, he grasps an ankh, the Egyptian symbol of life.

He's also made from highly valued "black stone". Because its color resembled the fertile black soil that reappeared annually after the river Nile flooded, black represented renewal. It was especially relevant to this statue - one of many created for Pharaoh Amenhotep the Third later in his reign, to symbolize the rejuvenation of his royal rule.

156 words

Visual Description

This work is titled *Torso of a God*. It was created during the New Kingdom, Dynasty 18, between 1363-1352, the last decade of the reign of Amenhotep III. It is made of granodiorite and measures a little more than 3 feet tall, about 1.5 feet wide, and a little more than 1 foot deep.

Despite the significant damage this object has encountered, it is still an impressive nearly life size sculpture of a male figure. The man's left arm is missing and a rough gash at the top of the figure indicates where the head, neck, and right shoulder have been broken off. The statue is cut off just below the man's thighs. All over the rest of the statue there are tiny dents of a lighter color indicating surface damage.

There are many details that remain intact though. The sculpture's rich black surface has been polished to shine with gentle curves indicating the shape of the man's torso, waist and arms. The figure's right arm extends straight down his side. His left hand rests at the center of his waist holding a scepter. There are additional details carved lightly into the surface that appear as a light brown color, a strong contrast against the black. He wears a skirt indicated by a horizontal band around the waist and evenly spaced vertical lines descending downward. Remnants of the figure's hair and beard are also detailed around the upper portion of the statue.

Stop 214 Winged Genius, 1995.47

General Analysis

NARRATOR: This winged “genius”, or guardian divinity, once decorated the palace of the great Assyrian king Ashurnasipal II. Dating from the ninth century BC, he’s almost three thousand years old. At that time, the Assyrian monarchs ruled over a growing empire. And their capital city, Nimrud, in what is now northern Iraq, was full of splendid buildings that trumpeted their power and might.

In Assyrian culture, guardian figures like these were important elements of palace wall decoration. Carved in pairs, facing one another, they would have flanked an image of the king between them. This figure originally held a bucket and perhaps a fir cone – probably to anoint the king by purifying him with liquid. Together, each pair of guardians symbolically protected him from sickness, bad fortune and death.

As well as having great strength and magical powers, the guardian is presented as a beautiful creature. Details of his sweeping wing feathers and jewelry is carefully picked out, and his hair and beard are styled with elaborate rows of curls – giving us an insight into contemporary fashion at Ashurnasipal’s court!

179 words

Visual Description

This object is titled *Winged Genius*. The Assyrians created it between 885 and 856 BCE. It is made of bituminous limestone and measures 2.5 feet tall and almost 3.5 feet wide.

The upper body of a winged bearded man fills this rectangular stone relief sculpture. The figure’s body faces the viewer, but he looks to the right side of the stone, his face in profile. Behind his right shoulder, a large feathered wing extends upward to the top left corner of the stone. The entire surface is a light brown color and marked with dents and scratches. A large crack cuts through the far left side of the stone, bisecting the wing.

The man's hair is indicated by squiggly parallel lines that extend over the crown of his head and taper at the nape of his neck in rows of swirls. His beard features similar swirls around his cheeks and chin that extend downward toward his chest. His eye is abnormally large and emphasized by a large eyebrow and raised lines around the eye. It is difficult to read an expression on his face as the pupil of the eye has been chipped away. The rest of his face lacks any emotive details.

The only additional clues to who this man is can be found in his accessories. Floral disks accent a headband around his forehead and a bracelet on his wrist; a long earring hangs from his right ear; and a thin necklace wraps tightly around his neck.

Stop 215 Ivory Plaques from Nimrud (group stop)

General Analysis

NARRATOR: Every one of these little ivory plaques is a masterpiece. Imagine what skill you'd have needed to have to carve these detailed designs – winged figures, animals, flowers and twisting vines – at this scale. * They were all found in a royal palace in Nimrud – that's in today's Iraq. Around the ninth to the seventh century BC, when they were made, Nimrud was the capital of the mighty Assyrian Empire, filled with splendid buildings.

These little plaques were made to decorate furniture like beds, couches and chairs. And even though ivory was a very precious material to the Assyrian kings, the artists did not leave their surfaces plain, as we see them now. They were once covered with gilding, and sometimes even inlaid with brightly colored semiprecious stones. You can still see some of this inlay in the ivory falcon-headed figure.

140 words

Visual Description

This stop features five ivory plaques from Nimrud. They were created between the 8th and 7th century BCE by the Syro-Phoenician people. They are made of Ivory with Egyptian Blue Inlay. Each object is a little different in size, but averages about 4 inches tall and about 1.5 inches wide.

The objects are a milky white and a deep, dark blue stone accents some of them. Each shows a figure or fantastical imaginary animals in profile. Some face right, some face left. Each figure has a wide, almond shaped eye and other more individualized features. The surfaces are smooth, except for details carved lightly into the surface. These details are usually decorative patterns with repeating lines and shapes like triangles or parallel lines.

The ivories do have signs of wear with scratches and cracks, and some have large chunks missing.

Stop 340 Ceiling from the Palacio de Altamira, 46.16

General Analysis

NARRATOR: Look up. ** This magnificent gilded wooden ceiling was made in the late fifteenth century, for a tower in a nobleman's palace in Toledo, in central Spain. Its design helps tell the fascinating story of Spanish cultural history at that time.

Let's start with the central dome. Those flowing, interlocking geometric patterns are heavily inspired by Islamic art. Which isn't surprising – for many centuries up until this point, Christians, Jews and Muslims had lived fairly peacefully side by side in Spain. But in 1492, right around the time the ceiling was made, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella finally expelled the last Muslims from the country, and Spain became a staunch Catholic stronghold.

The Palace of Altamira belonged to the Cardenas family – their armorial shields appear on each wall panel. * They were Catholics, and important members of Queen Isabella's court, so the ceiling contains Christian motifs as well as Islamic-inspired designs. Between the shields and the dome runs a border of little, gilded scallop shells, symbolizing St James the Apostle. * The palace stood near a pilgrim route to St James's shrine in the city of Santiago de Compostela. So the ceiling manages to signal the family's religious piety, as well as their love of decorative, Islamic splendor.

208 words

Visual Description

This object is a titled *Ceiling from the Palacio de Altamira*. It was created between 1482 and 1503 by an anonymous artisan. It is made of painted, gilded, and composed wood. It measures nearly 19 feet in diameter.

This elaborately decorated ceiling has been installed on the ceiling of this modern building but is as it would have been originally encountered, above the viewer. The

ceiling is nearly a perfect square and heavily gilded in decorative geometric patterns. The panels are put together to recess and create depth, almost like a dome. In its very center, eight panels connect and recess into the ceiling forming an octagonal recessed space. Let's start at the center of this octagon and work our way outward.

At the very center of the octagon, there is a gilded circular decoration surrounded by interlocking geometric gilded and grey shapes. These interlocking shapes connect to form a small octagon around the center circular decoration. An even larger octagon of gilded and grey shapes surrounds this small octagon. This larger octagon is about 10 times bigger than the small, central one. Eight lines extend from the central octagon's points forming the edges of the intersecting angled panels from the shape of the central octagon. Each panel is decorated with lines of alternating gilded flowers and stars outlined by intersecting lines that form star patterns. A solid gold band forms a border around the very outside edge of the octagon.

Now, let's talk about the edges of the ceiling. Each corner features a wavy, shell-like pattern that fans upward toward the central octagon. These fans are gilded and accented with rows of parallel lines that emphasize the undulating curves. Between the four fans are additional ornamentation including four red shields with gold details hanging down from the ceiling's surface.

**Stop 330 Benvenuto Cellini, Cosimo I de' Medici,
75.2.16**

General Analysis

NARRATOR: At first glance, you'd be forgiven for thinking this was a Roman emperor. With his head turned commandingly, and cloak folded back to reveal a breastplate decorated with lion and eagle heads, he projects a sense of imperial authority.

But actually, this is a sixteenth century Italian Grand Duke Cosimo de' Medici, who ruled the powerful Italian city-state of Florence. He commissioned this portrait bust from the celebrated sculptor Benvenuto Cellini. While presenting the Duke as a Roman leader, with all the connotations of strength that implied, Cellini also individualized the portrait. The Duke wears the emblem of the prestigious chivalric Order of the Golden Fleece – it's the little hanging sheep just below the center of his breastplate. * Cellini also paid attention to his client's physical appearance, recording even his facial moles and slightly misaligned eyes. Perhaps this was a little too much realism for the Duke – the bust was never finished, and in fact if you look at the left side of his face, you can see little holes in his cheek made by the sculptor's caliper, or measuring instrument, which were never filled in.

187 words

Visual Description

This object is titled *Portrait Bust of Cosimo I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany.*

Attributed to Benvenuto Cellini, the sculpture was created between 1549 and 1572.

It is made of Pentelic Marble and measures just more than 3 feet tall, more than 2 feet wide and a little more than 1 foot deep.

This carefully carved bust shows a serious man dressed in heavily decorated classical armor. The sculpture appears carved from a solid piece of stone and has a smooth creamy colored surface without signs of damage or wear.

The man faces the viewer but looks off to the viewer's left. His short hair and beard are carved in gentle curves and ringlets. His face is individualized, with wide-open eyes and thin lip. He bears a serious, contemplative expression. Though only the man's chest, neck, and head are presented, it is clear his back is straight and is postured at attention. A cape just barely folds over his left shoulder, across his back, and sweeps back in front of where his right arm would be and under his chest.

The breastplate of his armor is decorated with intricate details. Centered on the chest of the armor a bodiless head looks outward with wings floating above the head. Hanging below the head is very small sheep. To the left and right of the head are two eagles surrounded by swirls and lines that create mirror images of each other. Extending downward from each shoulder are straps. At the end of each strap are bearded heads with stern expressions. On the man's right shoulder, to the viewers left, an open-mouthed lion roars.

The bottom of the bust rests on a circular pedestal either carved from the same piece of stone or one that is very similar.

Stop 331 Panel with a Vase of Flowers, 2005.93

General Analysis

NARRATOR: Every detail in this panel, down to the delicate petals of its tulips and roses, was made with the exacting Italian technique of *pietra dura*, meaning “hard stone”. Each different colored form in the design was painstakingly cut and inlaid into the background of black marble. The stones used in this panel were chosen for their value as well as their rich colors. The gold-colored handles and decorations on the green vase are made from golden chalcedony. Among them, you’ll see small, orange and blue forms meant to resemble gemstones. * These are made from translucent carnelian backed with foil to make them glow, and from precious blue lapis lazuli.

In the city of Florence, the ruling Medici family, who were tremendous patrons of the arts, established a workshop that specialized in *pietra dura* work – it still exists today. This panel was made there in the early seventeenth century, for the chapel of a Medici royal villa outside Florence.

159 words

Visual Description

This work is titled *Panel with a Vase of Flowers*. It is attributed to Matteo Nigetti from the Opificio della Pietre Dure (Granducal Hardstone Workshops) of Florence and Urbano Ferrucci. It dates to between 1600 and 1650. It is made from hardstones of dark blue, purple, green, brown, light blue, and orange, and various colored marbles of green, red, white, and alabaster, set into black Belgian marble. The panel measures more than 4 feet tall and more than 2 feet wide.

In the center of this tall, narrow panel, a stylized arrangement of multicolored flowers rises from a green vase. Each detail is actually a separate piece of stone carefully inlaid into rich black marble to suggest dimension and form.

There are about nine individual tulip-shaped, yellowish/orange flowers extending up and outward from the vase on green stems. The flowers are evenly spaced and separated to form a symmetrical pattern. A central orange flower extends upward

and outward toward the viewer. On either side of the orange flower, three flowers at various heights on the right point toward the right side of the work and three flowers at the same heights on the left side point toward the left. The green marble vase has a tulip-shaped body and a narrow neck and base. It is accented by decorative golden yellow chalcedony handles and accented by orange and blue details of translucent carnelian backed with foil and blue lapis lazuli that look like gemstones. Resting on a small pedestal, the vase and flowers fill an elongated octagonal space surrounded by a pattern of rectangles made from green, rose, black and white, and orange Sicilian jasper marbles, and flowers made from amethyst, and alabaster.

This object is richly and vibrantly colored, with deep contrasts. The result is a panel that almost vibrates with color and detail.

Stop 318 Pierre Gole, Cabinet on Stand, 47.20.2a-b

General Analysis

NARRATOR: This sumptuously decorated cabinet was almost certainly created for the French royal household. It was made by Pierre Gole, cabinetmaker to the French monarchy, and dates from around 1650, when the great king Louis XIV had just begun his reign, determined to make his court the most radiant and splendid that Europe had ever seen.

The cabinet, designed to hold precious items such as jewelry, small artworks and documents, is made from costly, imported ebony wood. Its surface is covered with finely carved biblical scenes from the Old Testament – if you look carefully, you can find David with the head of the giant Goliath at his feet. * There are also scenes of the Queen of Sheba’s visit to King Solomon, and along the top frieze, Moses leading the Israelites across the Red Sea. * Such instances of leadership were carefully chosen to reflect and underline the power and virtue of the French monarchy in whose palace the cabinet was designed to be seen. And when the central doors were opened, a further display of magnificence appeared, in the form of an intricate classical space decorated with gilt bronze figures, acting the role of the Judgment of Solomon.

198 words

Visual Description

This object is titled *Cabinet on Stand*. It is currently attributed to Pierre Gole and formerly attributed to Jean Macé. It dates to around 1650. It is made of ebony, wood inlay, tinted ivory, colored hardstones and gilt bronze figures. It measures 7.5 feet tall and a little more than 2 feet deep.

This massive dark black wood cabinet is intricately carved with incredible details. The base of the cabinet features three evenly spaced column sections that frame two empty shelf spaces that are recessed slightly. The columned sections are made up of two swirling columns flanking a third column the top half of which is the torso of a figure draped with a cloth and one arm across his chest. At the very bottom of

the cabinet, three pairs of lions hold up the column sections. The top and bottom edges of the base are decorated in a detailed pattern running the width of the bottom portion of the cabinet. A smooth line of molding divides the bottom section from the top.

The top half of the cabinet is even more ornately carved. There are three evenly spaced sets of columns and female figures framing two large panels. In each panel there are biblical scenes. On the right Queen of Sheba visits the throne room of King Solomon. On the left, David stands amidst a mass of people with Goliath at his feet.

Below these two reliefs runs a frieze filled with figures of various shapes and sizes crowded together. It depicts Moses leading the Israelites across the Red Sea.

The wood and all the surfaces are highly polished with a rich dark black glow.

Stop 450 Nymphenburg House Altar, 2013.30

General Analysis

NARRATOR: In the center of this group of porcelain figures is Christ on the cross. Both he and the two mourning figures of St John and the Virgin Mary are beautifully modeled, with a great sense of energy and theatricality. The mourners' twisting bodies and swirling drapery seems to echo the turbulent grief they feel as they look up at Christ. The figures are by Franz Anton Bustelli, one of the finest porcelain modelers in mid-18th century Europe. They were produced at the royal Nymphenburg porcelain factory, outside Munich, Germany.

The figures are part of a house altar, made for private worship within a home, or perhaps an archbishop's residence. The cabinet, which was specially designed for the purpose, has doors which open on its top surface to reveal an altar stone for the communion host and chalices to be placed. And the frieze below the bottom drawer pulls out to become a kneeler for prayer.

155 words

Visual Description

This object is titled *Nymphenburg House Altar*. Franz Anton Bustelli for the Nymphenburg Factory created it around 1760. The figures are made of porcelain and the cabinet is made of painted and gilded wood. The work measures almost 7.5 feet tall, almost 3.5 feet wide, and 2 feet deep.

From the outside, this object appears as a matte, white cabinet and set of drawers adorned with gilded details. But, when the cabinet doors are opened, it reveals a simple, functional altar.

The exterior of this structure is a solid white wood with lower and upper sections. The rectangular bottom is a set of three drawers, outlined by gilded flowing accents. The upper section is set back from the base with two doors and curved at the very top.

The doors of the cabinet open to an interior painted a solid burnt red color. Hanging inside the cabinet is a crucifix flanked beneath by the Virgin Mary on the right and John the Baptist on the left. Christ and the two figures are glowing, white porcelain and the cross is gilded in gold. The figures rest on a narrow, gilded pedestal jutting out of the wall and are surrounded by a leaf pattern that is also gilded. Below the pedestal, there is an icon of skull and crossbones. The flat surface of the cabinet's base is also open, but parallel to the ground to create extra surface space that is the same width as the open cabinet. At the center of the opened top, there is a square stone inlaid into the surface.

Stop 250 Vincennes Tureen and Stand, 2016.4a-c

General Analysis

NARRATOR: Picture an enormously long dining table in the elegant dining room of a French palace or nobleman's chateau in the 18th century. On it, you might find arranged a huge porcelain service of dishes of all kinds – which might include a supremely elegant tureen like this one.

At this time, it was the custom to serve dinner “à la Française”, or “in the French style”. This meant that the whole meal was presented at once, with the table covered with dishes containing hors d'oeuvres, soup, fish, meat, vegetables, so that guests could help themselves to whatever they pleased.

Since one's whole porcelain dinner service was out on display, its pieces were intended to delight and impress. This tureen and its stand were made at the Vincennes porcelain manufactory, set up in 1740 in a disused royal palace just outside Paris. Much of its wares were created for the court, and the decorative scheme of little bunches of flowers were the factory's most common pattern up to the time of the French Revolution in 1789.

174 words

Visual Description

This work is titled *Tureen and Stand*. It was designed by Jean-Claude Duplessis pere and made by the Vincennes Factory between 1754 and 1755. It is made of soft paste porcelain, enamels, and gilding. The tureen measures about 9 inches tall by 10 inches wide and the plate about 15 inches in diameter.

This work includes two separate objects: a plate and a deep covered dish which usually serves soup, often called a tureen. The white porcelain of both objects shines, accented with delicate pink, orange, and purple flowers spaced throughout the surface. The outermost rim of the plate and edges of the tureen are accented with a thin, gilded gold line.

Let's start by talking about the plate, which is called a stand. The lip of the plate is about two inches deep and includes delicate flowers of various sizes in between a feathery, almost brushstroke pattern of gold and blue. The lip is raised up slightly from the central portion of the plate. Additional flowers of various sizes, some arranged in bunches are spaced out in the center of the plate.

Now, let's describe the tureen. The tureen's base is raised from the ground by 4 small feet with scroll details. The edges of the tureen's two curved handles mimic the gold and blue-feathered pattern found on the plate's rim. The tureen has a lid that separates from the base. It forms a small, semi-spherical dome on top of the tureen. At its center, a tiny, but very realistic orange complete with leaves and blossoms rests on the top as a handle. The mostly white surface of the tureen and lid are decorated like the plate with similar flowers of variously sized bunches.

Stop 361 Martin Carlin Commode, 1931.145

General Analysis

NARRATOR: This splendid commode is a fusion of the highest quality European and Asian artistry and craftsmanship. Made in Paris in the late 18th century by the master cabinetmaker Martin Carlin, the commode has intricate gilt-bronze decorations in the classical style then very fashionable. They frame lacquer panels imported from Japan, showing scenes of beautiful landscapes and little pavilions from which the dramatic trees and mountains could be enjoyed. Such panels would have been extremely rare in Europe at this time, since Japan was then closed to almost all western contact and trade.

Such a rare and extremely costly piece of furniture must have been commissioned for a very special client. And indeed, Carlin's work was greatly sought-after by the French royal family and also by Madame du Barry, King Louis XV's powerful and influential mistress. This commode may possibly have been made for her splendid apartments.

147 words

Visual Description

This work is titled *Commode*. Martin Carlin created it around 1773. It is made of Japanese lacquer on oak carcass, ebony veneers, gilt-bronze mounts and has a cararra marble top. The object measures less than 3 feet tall, almost 4 feet wide, and about 1.5 feet deep.

The deep velvety black surface of this object contrasts with the gilded decorative elements, making this piece of furniture appear to glow.

This work is called a commode, and the modern piece of furniture it most resembles would be a dining room sideboard. It is wider than it is tall, rises off the ground on four short legs and is divided into sections, each with its own paneled door. The center section is a perfect square and off set from the smaller rectangular sections that flank it with several details. It is bigger, the corners have elaborate gilded scroll

details, and at the center, the door has a large circular space. Each door panel features a separate Asian-style scene painted in gold and blue. The panel on the far left shows a building nestled into a dramatic hillside to its left. The panel on the far right presents a similar building with a mountain to its right, almost a mirror image. The center circular panel features two figures relaxing on an outdoor pavilion surrounded by nature.

Gilded gold details accent the top and side edges of the commode. The object is completed with a thick, white marble top.

Stop 370 Pierre Langlois, Strawberry Hill Commode, 1985.58a-b

General Analysis

NARRATOR: The story of this commode, made in the mid eighteenth century, has several fascinating threads. Created in London by a French furniture-maker, it has exuberant, flame-like ormolu or gilt-bronze leaves curling up its outer edges that are a perfect example of the Rococo style then fashionable in England and France. Its elegant front panels traveled much further. Cut from a Chinese lacquered screen, they were heated and molded to conform to the commode's curved form. Asian art was much admired in England at this time. And since Europeans had not managed to replicate the complex lacquer-making process, they often reused imported Asian pieces in this way.

The final and most flamboyant strand of our story is Horace Walpole, for whom the commode was made. An English politician, connoisseur of art and antiquities, and author of the first-ever spine-chilling Gothic novel, Walpole commissioned the commode for his house, Strawberry Hill. Among its eccentric glories was a gallery designed in the gothic style, lavishly decorated with gold-framed portraits, rich red wallcovering and eclectic furnishings including this commode, with French and Italian vases displayed on its top.

180 words

Visual Description

This work is titled *Commode*. Pierre Langlois created it in 1763. It is made of Chinese lacquer, English Japanned oak, brass mounts, and a verde antico marble veneer top. It measures less than 3 feet tall, about 6 feet wide, and almost 2 feet deep.

The gently curving edges of this black, gold, and brown commode give it a romantic, light quality. But, the details of the object almost feel like this object is the combination of two very different cultures. The commode itself appears very European. It has two large, evenly sized panel doors at the center. It rests on four claw footed legs that are decorated with non-symmetrical scroll pattern that starts

at the feet and rises up to the commode's top at each of the four corners. The surface of the commode is covered by a marble surface of green and white.

In contrast, the brown and black panels on the curved doors of the commode are distinctly Asian. They depict a continuous scene as if from above. Toward the left side of the scene, a group of women stand clustered holding and playing instruments. They stand on what appears as a street running diagonally between 2 structures. To the left of the women is a small porch, cut off by the edge of the panel door. To the right of the women and filling the right panel entirely is a building and tree. The background of these doors is black and the women, buildings, and other details various shades of a honey brown.

Stop 455 Meissen, Baluster Vase and Cover, 2015.66a-b

General Analysis

NARRATOR: This graceful vase was made in Germany in the early eighteenth century – a key moment in the history of porcelain. Invented and raised to an artform in China, it was an incredibly expensive and sought-after commodity in the west, its manufacture cloaked in a veil of mystery.

From the seventeenth century, Asian porcelain became all the rage in Europe, where craftsmen tried – and failed – to make it themselves. Finally, in 1709, a German alchemist named Boettger discovered the secret. His patron, King Augustus “The Strong” of Saxony and Poland, established a royal porcelain manufactory at Meissen, near Dresden, where this vase was made.

Meissen wares were soon sought-after across Europe. Meissen pieces often featured Asian-inspired designs, like those we see on this vase. And King Augustus built a little “Japanese Palace” for himself, which he filled with porcelain from China and Japan, and pieces from his own Meissen factory, such as this important vase, made for him and decorated in imitation of Asian pieces.

164 words

Visual Description

This work is titled *Baluster Vase and Cover*. The Meissen Factory created it between 1725 and 1730. It is made of hard-paste porcelain with a blue underglaze decoration. It measures just more than 16 inches tall and around 8 inches wide.

Vines and flowers rendered in delicate shades of blue are smoothly painted onto the surface of this medium sized white, porcelain vase.

The vase’s shape begins with a narrow base that curves gently outward along the body before narrowing inward at a 90-degree angle and rising straight upward. A top

covers where the opening at the neck's vase would be. The lid is shaped like a half-sphere with a narrow lip and a tiny egg shaped handle.

The decorations on the vase are intricate and all in rich shades of blue. At the vase's base, a planter rests on a shallow stand. From the planter, leaves, vines, and flowers extend upward and butterflies float around them. The portion of the vase that curves sharply inward lacks any decorative details. But the very top of the vase's neck features a decorative pattern of interlocking geometric shapes. The vase's top echoes the forms found on the vase's base with much smaller flowers and a narrow geometric pattern around the rim.

Stop 380 Fabergé Tea Table and Tea Set

General Analysis

NARRATOR: Imagine the elegance of a tea party around this table! Both the table and its glamorous silver-gilt tea set are the work of the celebrated Peter Carl Fabergé, favorite luxury manufacturer of the Russian imperial family. This set was owned by the Grand Duke and Duchess Kirill, cousins of the Tsar who fled the Revolution, and lived in exile in France, taking the tea table with them.

The table and tea set date from around the turn of the twentieth century, when the Russian royal family lived in considerable luxury. Made from Russian Karelian birch, known for its rich, burlled natural patterning, the table is finished with little silver gilt decorations in the Empire style. At this time, it was fashionable for ladies to serve tea to their family or guests themselves – once it had been set up by a servant, of course. So we can picture the Grand Duchess pouring water from the kettle, with its little spirit lamp heater, into the teapot to the left, and passing the sugar bowl with its graceful swan handles that match the other accessories.

182 words

Visual Description

This work is titled *Kettle with Spirit Lamp and Stand*. Julius Aleksandrovich Rappoport at the manufacturer Peter Carl Fabergé made the objects around 1900. They are made of silver gilt and ivory.

An elegant full tea service is laid out on a honey-hued wood table with silver decorative details.

There are a number of stunning, shiny silver objects that cover the surface of the table. The most prominent is a large teapot with simple silver decorative details and an ivory handle. The handle curves upward gently, then forms a 90 degree angle inward toward the pot and then another 90 degree angle downward into the pot. It

rests on top of a complicated silver base that would have been used to heat the water in the teapot. A smaller, less decorated teapot sits nearby and also has a similarly shaped handle. Vessels for sugar and cream, and a small bowl are also included, but with less dramatic, swanlike silver handles. A tea strainer and sugar tongs rest on the tabletop, and on the shelf below rests a large silver tray with similar silver swan handles.

The table has an oval top with the edge ringed like a fence by a row of mini silver columns. The table has four evenly spaced square legs that rest on silver claw-footed feet. About a foot off the ground, a smaller oval shelf is suspended under the table between the four legs. A silver fence-like ring also rims it. Additional small silver decorative details accent where the suspended shelf meets the legs and the legs meet the tabletop. A flourished silver detail accents each of the four sides of the tabletop's edges.

Stop 305 Auguste Rodin, *The Three Shades*

General Analysis

NARRATOR: A terrible pressure bears down on these three figures – which are, in fact, a single figure repeated three times and gathered into a group. Their heads and shoulders, incredibly expressive, form an almost horizontal line, and their bodies curve inward, conveying a sense of utter hopelessness.

The French sculptor Auguste Rodin meant the figures to represent shades, or souls of the damned. The figures were intended to stand at the top of a monumental doorway for a museum in Paris. He called the doorway the Gates of Hell, and worked on its design for more than twenty years. It was inspired by the Italian Renaissance poet Dante's vision of the underworld, and the Three Shades represented Dante's figures who point to an inscription at the entry to hell, reading "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here". Some of Rodin's finest, freely imagined, and most emotional work belonged to this project. For the last seventeen years of his life, he began remaking figures from the Gates of Hell as much larger, freestanding sculptures, such as this group, and "The Thinker" that you may have seen in the front courtyard here at the museum.

192 words

Visual Description

This object is titled *The Three Shades*. Auguste Rodin created it in 1886. It is made of bronze and measures more 6 feet tall, 6 feet wide, and almost 3.5 feet deep.

This highly polished bronze sculpture features three muscular, nude men hunched over and standing in a semi-circle facing each other.

All three men strike a similar pose. From their perspective, their weight is in their left legs; their right legs are slightly bent. Their right hands are held at their sides, with the thumb pressed to their index finger like they are holding something. Their left arms extend with their fists outward at waist level into the center of the circle

touching their hands together gently. Each figure's head tilts toward his left shoulder and he gazes down and to the left. Their faces have somber expressions.

The men's bodies are carefully sculpted with each muscle, joint, and curve individually articulated. However, the feet are unfinished, making the sculpture appear to be rising out of the ground.