

Classroom Connections

SCHOOL TOUR | *Through the Eyes of Picasso*

Grade Levels: 6th—12th

The
Nelson-Atkins
Museum
of Art



Pablo Picasso, Spanish (1881-1973). *Male Bust (study for "Les Femmes d'Alger")*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 22 1/16 x 18 5/16 inches. Musée national Picasso Paris, MP14. © 2017 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Image © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY. Photo: René-Gabriel Ojéda. *Anthropomorphic Mask*, Ivory Coast, Dan culture, before 1966. Wood, 9 7/8 x 6 1/8 x 3 5/16 inches. Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, Paris. Inv. 73.1966.3.10. Image © musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac. Photo: Claude Germain.

CURRICULUM AREAS ADDRESSED IN THIS TOUR:

Visual Arts Standards (KS)

- Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Visual Art Standards (MO)

- Investigate the nature of art and discuss responses to artworks.
- Analyze and evaluate art using art vocabulary.
- Explain the connections between Visual Art and Communication Arts, Math, Science or Social Studies.
- Compare and contrast artworks from different historical time periods and/or cultures.

History, Government, and Social Studies Standards (KS)

- The student will recognize and evaluate significant beliefs, contributions, and ideas of the many diverse peoples and groups and their impact on individuals, communities, states, and nations.

Social Studies Standards (MO)

- Explain connections between historical context and peoples' perspectives at the time in world history.
- Analyze the technological, artistic, and literary achievements of the modern era to determine how society reflects and challenges the status quo.

TOUR DESCRIPTION:

In the exhibition *Through the Eyes of Picasso*, students will explore works by Pablo Picasso, one of the most significant artists of the 20th century, alongside examples of the non-European art that fascinated him over the course of his long and active career. In making connections between Picasso and the art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, students will recognize that artists can be influenced by a variety of individual, historical, and cultural factors.

TOUR OBJECTIVES:

Learners will:

- Identify connections between the works of Pablo Picasso and the art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas that was a lasting presence in his creative life.
- Recognize that artists' work is shaped by multiple influences
- Appreciate the work of Pablo Picasso and artists from Africa, Oceania, and the Americas.

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To schedule a tour:
nelson-atkins.org/educators/school-tours/

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

Practice Looking

Throughout their tour, students will be asked to compare and contrast formal elements used in works by Pablo Picasso and works by artists from Africa, Oceania, and the Americas. Practice this process with students:

- Look carefully at Picasso's *Large Still Life on a Table* (view online at <https://goo.gl/ikdkDm>). What types of lines has Picasso used? What kinds of shapes? Where do you see patterns or repetition? Does the composition seem balanced? Why or why not?
- Look next at the *Bark Cloth* from Papua New Guinea (view online at <https://goo.gl/qxUttV>). What do you notice about the lines and shapes used here? Where do you see patterns or repetition? How has the artist created balance in the composition? What is similar and different between this work and Picasso's?

Discuss

As he worked in his studio, Picasso surrounded himself with examples of African, Oceanic, and indigenous American art. Can you think of artists working today (including visual artists, musicians, fashion designers, etc.) who look to sources from around the world for ideas, inspiration, or creative energy? What about you—where do **you** turn?

Dig In

Many culture groups from around the world are represented in this exhibition. Using resources found online or in your library, see what you can discover about the art and culture of:

- The Baga peoples of Guinea
- The Benin Kingdom of Nigeria
- The Otomi culture of Mexico
- The Kota people of Gabon

AFTER YOUR VISIT

Connect

Picasso's visit to the Trocadero Museum in Paris was a powerful experience that changed the way he thought about art. He came to understand art as a powerful force that could do more than simply represent the world around us. Think of an experience in your own life that dramatically changed your thinking. Compose a piece of writing that describes that event and its effect on your life.

Reflect

Discuss as a class: Picasso, like many Europeans of his time, did not fully understand the meanings and functions of the global art that he saw and collected. Can someone appreciate art without understanding its cultural context? What might be the danger of making assumptions about art from another culture?

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

<i>Art & Life in Africa</i>	Website hosted by the University of Iowa Museum of Art. africa.uima.uiowa.edu
<i>Through the Eyes of Picasso</i>	Catalog for the exhibition, edited by Yves Le Fur. Available in the ERC.
<i>How to Read Oceanic Art</i>	Guide published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Available in the ERC.
<i>Who Was Pablo Picasso?</i>	Student-friendly biography by True Kelley. Lexile: 700L. Available in the ERC.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THE EXHIBITION

Abstract: Art that is abstract does not attempt to replicate visual reality. Instead of depicting the physical world as it actually appears or presenting imaginary subjects in visually realistic ways, abstract art uses such elements as line, shape, form, and color to create a desired effect. Abstract can refer to works of art that have their basis in objective reality (images of people, places, or things, for example) but have been simplified, stylized, or otherwise visually manipulated for artistic effect.

Academic: This term describes art that reflected the ideals taught at European art academies beginning in the Renaissance and continuing through the 19th century. Academies, particularly the Royal Academy in England and the *Academie des Beaux-Arts* in France, exerted their influence on artists by organizing group exhibitions and providing teaching. The academic art that represented their ideals was characterized by rationality and high-mindedness (as opposed to sensuality or intense emotion) and idealized naturalism (as opposed to gritty realism or abstraction).

Colonialism: In the context of this exhibition, colonialism can be understood as a form of political and economic domination in which one state erects an apparatus of control over another state. Many European nations pursued colonialist agendas from the 16th century onward, claiming territories in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas. Often, colonialism went hand-in-hand with an attitude of cultural distinctness and superiority, where the colonizing culture saw itself as a civilizing agent. Picasso's ability to see artworks from these regions of the world in Parisian museums can be attributed in part to French colonialism.

Cubism: One of the most influential art styles of the 20th century, cubism involves breaking forms into component pieces and then rearranging those shapes on the picture plane in a way that suggests multiple viewpoints at once. Picasso and fellow artist Georges Braque created cubism between 1907 and 1914, with Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (1907) serving as a defining moment in their departure from traditional modes of visual representation. Picasso may have been influenced by his encounters with global art when developing cubism, but *Through the Eyes of Picasso* primarily features his non-cubist works.

D'mba: Taking the form of a large wooden headdress, D'mba is seen by the Baga peoples of Guinea as the embodiment of ideal womanhood. Her physical features represent her virtuous traits, with prominent breasts indicating she has nursed many children and a small mouth suggesting she refrains from gossip. D'mba plays an important role in Baga society; she appears in masquerade performances that accompany marriages, funerals, and other life events, where she inspires community members to behave in socially constructive ways. Picasso created a bronze bust with D'mba-like features shortly after acquiring one of these headdresses for his collection.

Iberian: The Iberians inhabited ancient Spain and Portugal prior to the Roman conquest of the Iberian peninsula. They traded extensively with other Mediterranean cultures, including the Greeks and the Phoenicians, and their art reflects the influence of these nearby civilizations. Picasso collected numerous small-scale Iberian sculptures, whose mask-like faces and stylized bodies may have appealed to him.

Line & Form: Line and form are two of the fundamental elements that visual artists use to create images. They serve important functions in the works of Picasso and of artists from Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, in that they are often manipulated to show humans or animals in abstract or unrealistic ways.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THE EXHIBITION

Lithograph: This type of print is made by drawing or painting an image in greasy ink onto the surface of a stone. The whole surface is then wetted, so that areas with no grease will repel any oil that comes in contact with them. An oil-based ink is then rolled over the stone; the ink adheres only to the greasy image, leaving the wet areas of the surface clean. When paper is pressed against the stone, the inked image is transferred to the paper. Picasso's series of *Bull* prints was made by reworking one lithography surface to produce increasingly stylized images of the same animal.

Masquerade: In many parts of Africa, masquerades play an important role in the spiritual and social life of a community. Masquerades are performances that unite dance, music, and the wearing of masks. Their purpose may be to mark important community events, to educate and entertain, to reinforce social norms, or to conduct rituals associated with ancestors or spirit beings. Many of the African masks and headdresses included in *Through the Eyes of Picasso* were made for masquerades.

Oceania: This term describes a geographic region comprised of island nations in the central and south Pacific Ocean, including Australia, New Zealand, Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia.

Primitive: Now generally avoided due to its negative, ethnocentric connotations, primitive was used by Europeans of Picasso's time to describe the traditional arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas. Primitive suggests crudeness and a lack of sophistication and training, when none of those designations are accurate. The artistic traditions of peoples across the globe are highly complex and sophisticated in forms, meanings, and contexts.

Studio: An artist's studio is a workspace used for creating art. In the studio, artists may surround themselves with objects or images that fuel their creativity. From the early 1900s on, Picasso's many studios were filled with works of African, Oceanic, and indigenous American art that he had acquired throughout his lifetime.

Trocadero: This ethnographic museum (officially titled *Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro*) existed in Paris between 1878 and 1935. It displayed cultural artifacts from around the globe, many of them attained by French explorers. Picasso's encounter with global art at the Trocadero in 1907 proved to be a transformative experience that shaped his ideas about art.



EDUCATOR RESOURCE CENTER

The ERC can help you expand your pre- and post-visit activities to connect students' museum experience with your classroom curriculum. The ERC offers:

- Curriculum consultations
- Circulating resources
- Professional development workshops

Visit nelson-atkins.org/educators/resources for info.

The exhibition was conceived by musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac in partnership with Musée national Picasso-Paris and adapted by The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts/ Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal.

Major funding provided by Shirley and Barnett C. Helzberg Jr., Hall Family Foundation, Bank of America, American Life, Inc., Paul DeBruce and Linda Woodsmall-DeBruce, Donald J. Hall, Muriel McBrien Kauffman Foundation, Marcelo and Jordan Claire/Sprint, Morton and Estelle Sosland/Sosland Foundation, The Donald J. Hall Initiative, Bloch Fund for Special Exhibitions, The Richard Stern Foundation for the Arts, G. Kenneth and Ann Baum, Marion and Henry Bloch Family Foundation, Bill and Christy Gautreaux, Trudy and John Jacobson, Atterbury Family Foundation, Barton P. and Mary D. Cohen Charitable Trust, Dr. Mary Davidson – Trustee, Dick Belger and Evelyn Craft Belger, Nancy and Rick Green, The Neil D. Karbank Foundation, The Karbank Family Fund, Sara and Bill Morgan, Kent Sunderland, the Committee of 100, Inspiration Circle, and our Honorary Committee. (As of October 2, 2017)