LACMA SELF-GUIDE
FOR SCHOOL GROUPS

WELCOME TO LACMA

These materials provide information and suggested activities to facilitate a self-guided school visit.

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) is the largest encyclopedic museum in the western United States with more than 100,000 works of art. Through its far-reaching collections, the museum is both a resource to and a reflection of the many cultural communities and heritages in Southern California. The collection includes artworks from various cultures from ancient times to the present.

Questions for Viewing and Discussing Works of Art
There are multiple approaches to exploring works of art. The following teaching prompts encourage students to make observations about artworks and create personal connections.

• What is going on in this work of art?
• What do you notice about this work of art?
• What else do you see? What more can you find?

After describing what they see, additional questions can be used to deepen students’ experiences with works of art.

• What do you see that makes you say that?
• How can you tell?
• We noticed that there are many . . . (i.e. colors, lines, shapes, textures, symbols). How would you describe the . . . (colors, lines, shapes, textures, symbols)?
• What choices did the artist make to . . . (i.e. create mood, setting)?
• How does the artist use . . . (i.e. colors, lines, shapes, textures, or materials) to . . . (i.e. create mood, setting)?
• What would happen if . . . ? What would change if . . . ? Imagine that . . .
• Compare / Contrast: How is this artwork similar to . . . (i.e. other artworks, students’ artwork, photographs, books, short stories)? In what ways?
MUSEUM ENTRY
Please divide your students into groups no larger than 10 with 1 to 2 adult chaperones. One adult is required for every 10 students. To prevent over-crowding in the galleries each group should begin their visit at different locations within the museum. Please decide where each chaperone will begin before starting your tour. One person from your group should present your tour confirmation at the box office to receive your complementary tickets. This person should then distribute them to the group. Each member of your group is required to have a ticket for entry into the galleries.

MUSEUM RULES
When visiting LACMA, for the protection of the artworks and your own safety, please do not come closer than 24 inches to any artworks; touching of artworks is not allowed. Eating, drinking, smoking, gum-chewing, excess noise, or running is also not permitted in the galleries. Please leave backpacks, umbrellas, pens, food, and water in your cars or on the school bus. Teachers and chaperones must stay with the students at all times and are responsible for student behavior.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
LACMA Collections Online
Digital reproductions and background information about many works of art in LACMA’s permanent collection are available at www.lacma.org/art/CollectionsOverview.aspx

Multimedia Tour
Multimedia tours have been created for different collection areas of LACMA’s permanent collection. Information about different artworks can be viewed in the interactive map at www.lacma.org/visit/Maps.aspx

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Museum Entrance

Comprised of 202 cast-iron lampposts collected and restored by Los Angeles artist Chris Burden, Urban Light invites viewers to walk through and around the installation. Burden spent many years collecting the lampposts, which came from different neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles. There are seventeen different styles of lights in this sculpture, each style reflecting a different neighborhood. At night, the lampposts illuminate the entrance to the museum.

- In what ways might this work be different if you experienced it during the day versus at night, when the lamps are illuminated?

- If you were to collect objects from LA history, what would you collect? Why? Where and how would you display your collection?
Almost thirteen feet tall, seventy feet long, and weighing two hundred tons, this massive steel sculpture curves gracefully through the gallery. Look carefully at the sculpture’s walls and notice the surface texture, the subtle color changes, and the seams where the immense pieces fit together.

The artist Richard Serra spent nearly two-and-a-half years developing and engineering this artwork and has said that he is more interested in shaping space than in making objects.

He also encourages each viewer to experience the sculpture in his or her own way.

- Walk in and around this artwork to see the entire work. What does it make you think about as you move around it? What images or words come to mind?
Ahmanson Building, Lobby

A large-scale sculpture by American artist Tony Smith greets visitors to the Ahmanson Building. Titled Smoke, the geometric structure appears to rise and swell with the viewer’s movement through the work. The geometric shapes, openness, and expansive growth of the sculpture reflect the artist’s lifelong exploration of patterns found in nature. Smoke was erected only once before as a plywood mock-up in a 1967 exhibition in Washington D.C. View the construction of this aluminum sculpture at LACMA at www.lacma.org/art/ScreeningRoom.aspx.

- In what ways does this sculpture represent the element of smoke? Consider line, shape, color, texture, and scale.

- View this sculpture from multiple vantage points. Stand below it, look through its many spaces, climb the stairs and look at it from the top. Does your impression of the sculpture change depending on your point of view? Sketch what you see, capturing the positive and negative spaces from multiple vantage points.
Ahmanson Building, Floor 2
Modern Art

This image of a crying woman is part of a series painted by the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso about seventy years ago. The series was made during and after the time Picasso painted Guernica, his epic mural provoked by the devastation of the Civil War taking place in Spain. The woman’s face conveys agony and despair. She holds one hand up to her heart as tears course down her face. On her head, she wears a traditional Spanish head covering called a mantilla. Picasso’s depictions of people, like this one of the weeping woman, often distorted physical reality by exaggerating shapes and emphasizing the deep emotions of human experiences.

- Describe the lines and colors Picasso used in this painting. What shapes did Picasso include? What shapes repeat?

- In what ways is this a recognizable portrait? In what ways did Picasso abstract the image using geometric and organic shapes?
Ahmanson Building, Floor 4
Islamic Art

This lamp is made from blown glass decorated with brilliantly colored enamel and gilt or thin layers of gold. When this lamp was lit the glowing flame on the inside would have illuminated the Arabic inscriptions and designs that decorate the surface. Lamps like this were used to light mosques (Muslim places of worship) and other public spaces. The lamp was suspended from handles (the loops visible on the lower part of the lamp) on long chains from the ceiling of the mosque. The base of the lamp was filled with water and a floating container that held the oil and wick.

- Imagine a space lit by the light of dozens and dozens of lamps like this one. Describe what that space might look like.
- Compare this lamp to lamps you have at home. How are the lamps similar or different? Consider the decorative and functional qualities.
Ahmanson Building, Floor 4
South and Southeast Asian Art

This bronze sculpture was created over 1,000 years ago for a Hindu temple. It depicts Shiva, the Hindu deity who is the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe. Shiva is shown in action. Balanced on one foot, he spins around like a top, leg thrown forward, with his hair flung out in a fan shape. Hindus believe that Shiva's dance created the world. Shiva is surrounded by the symbols that tell his story. Shiva images like these were carried in processions and still are today. This sculpture, like those of many Hindu deities, was originally covered in fine clothes and flower garlands.

- Strike a pose! Take the pose of this sculpture or others around it.
- Figures in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain sculptures often make meaningful gestures with their hands. Take a close look at Shiva's lower right hand which makes the gesture of reassurance. Can you make the gesture of reassurance with your hand? Look at other sculptures around this one and identify and mimic their hand gestures.
David Hockney portrays a part of Los Angeles as filtered through his own imagination. This is a view of the drive he made each day between his home and art studio along a winding road called Mulholland Drive in Southern California. The San Fernando Valley, represented by the grid-like map in the background, is contrasted with the lush, colorful landscape in the foreground. He has exaggerated the colors, making them bright and bold, and abstracted the forms he saw on his journey. On the subject of bright colors, Hockney once said, "I like it and surround myself with it because I think, frankly, it makes life a bit more joyful."

- Find Mulholland Drive in the painting and make a list of all of the different kinds of things that the artist may have passed on in his daily journey.
- Describe a road that you travel every day: what do see, hear, or smell during your trip?
Angel's Flight provides a view of downtown Los Angeles during the Great Depression showing us crowded Bunker Hill. Sheets omitted the famous cable railway known as Angel's Flight and chose to view the scene looking north toward the stairway. By using a bird's eye view and changing the stairs, which were actually straight, the artist exaggerated the sense of verticality to emphasize the steepness of the neighborhood hills.

The patterns and bright colors—common in his views of both the country and the city—emphasize the vibrant rhythms of this dense neighborhood creating a poetic and colorful representation of city life.

- Imagine yourself as one of the figures in this scene. Is there a particular figure you would choose to be and why? What might you see, hear, smell, taste or touch?
Art of the Americas Building, Floor 3
American Art

Mary Cassatt was an American artist living in Paris who painted in the French impressionist style. Impressionists depicted fleeting moments in time—like a cropped snapshot—of the modernized world, nature, and domestic scenes they observed. They used only a few details and short, quick, brushstrokes that sometimes look blurry. They also used an overall pastel-toned palette to capture the effects of light. Impressionists created a flattened and shallow sense of space, a stylistic influence from Japanese prints: notice how the bowl appears to be flat and tipped toward us, showing the pattern inside. The subject of mother and child was Cassatt’s most frequent.

- Where can you see the broken brushstrokes, typical of Cassatt’s style, in the painting? Describe the colors Cassatt used in the painting? How would the painting’s mood be different if Cassatt had chosen other colors—for example, bright, bold colors?
- What do you think happened just before this moment? What will happen next?
Within the village of Nayarit, as in other remote regions of western Mexico, artists produced direct and personal representations of their lives. The Nayarit left no written history or monumental architecture; instead, our knowledge of their culture derives from the artworks found buried in tombs. The art often depicts houses like this, illustrates people playing a special ball game, or shows people alone or in pairs. In this sculpture, we see a house with a steep, sloping roof with parrots and ravens perched upon it, and a porch that wraps around it on three sides. Seated throughout are people both young and old who are cooking, eating, and playing.

- How is this house like the place where you live?  
  How is it different? What can you learn about the Nayarit and where they lived by looking at the House Group?

- What kind of sculpture would you make to illustrate for others what your life, home, or community is like?
Diego Rivera
(Mexico, 1886–1957)

Flower Day (Día de Flores), 1925
Oil on canvas, 58 x 47 1/2 in.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles County Fund (25.7.1)
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Art of the Americas Building, Floor 4
Latin American Art

Diego Rivera honored the everyday life of Mexican people as well as Mexican culture and its connection to nature in his art. This is one of his earliest depictions of a flower vendor. We see the seller, with his head bowed, carrying an enormous bundle of calla lilies. Rivera’s stylistic influences for this painting range from Pre-Columbian art to modern art movements such as Cubism with its block-like forms and multiple perspectives—for example, notice how the flowers are seen from above. The flower vendor, together with the two women kneeling at his feet, creates a triangle which makes a stable composition in the painting.

- Besides triangles, what other shapes and colors repeat? How do these repeating shapes and colors combine to create a stable, unified composition?
This painting is characteristic of Matta’s work produced in the 1950s and 1960s as he became increasingly aware of the atrocities of war, racial discrimination, and man’s destructive potential. *Burn, Baby. Burn* was inspired by the connections Matta saw between the Vietnam War and the Watts riots. Through symbols, Matta conveys a sense of speed and dislocation: imploding satellites to the left, suggesting the velocity with which news travel; a bolting vehicle at the top speeding across a freeway; and a group of black heads in a vertiginous vortex to the right.

The phosphorescent green at the bottom right of the composition suggests hope, a verdant future.

- Describe aspects of the painting that you think address destruction and peace.
- If you were to create a painting portraying contemporary political issues, what would you choose to include? What colors, shapes, and symbols would you use?
BYEON SANGYEOK
(Korea, 1725–1775)

Portrait of Scholar-Official Yun Bonggu (1681–1767) in his Seventieth Year
Joseon dynasty (1392–1910), dated 1750
Hanging scroll, ink, and color on silk, Image: 47 x 35 ½ in.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, purchased with Museum Funds (M.2000.15.17)

Hammer Building, Floor 2
Korean Art

[Please note: portrait paintings in these galleries rotate, and a different portrait painting may be on view when you visit LACMA.]

The formal portrait depicts a scholar and government official named Yun Bonggu at the age of 70 seated on the floor. Painted on a hanging scroll, portraits like this were made to hang in a public space, or brought out on special occasions to honor the person and his or her accomplishments. The artist, who was a well-known Korean court painter, drew the scholar’s face in great detail, showing the wrinkles in his brow and the whiskers of his moustache. Because of the important function of the portrait as a record of the subject’s life, great care was taken to portray the individual accurately.

• What type of person do you think Yun Bonggu was? Why do you think this?

• This portrait is similar to a modern day photograph. How do we incorporate photographs into our lives and for what function?
This ceramic jar was made between two and three hundred years ago in Korea. Made of porcelain and a cobalt blue underglaze, the glassy milk-white surface is decorated with a dragon journeying through the clouds. The dragon wraps around the surface of the jar with finely rendered details and patterns that reveal big friendly eyes, sharp teeth, and a lively mane. Throughout East Asia, the dragon is considered to be a sign of good things to come and is a symbol of royalty and prosperity. Jars of this fine quality were probably used by the upper classes or court for ceremonial purposes.

- What are some functional objects that you own, that symbolize something meaningful or special?
- If you were decorating an object like this, what subject would you pick to symbolize good luck?
This is a wooden sculpture of Jizō, a bodhisattva in the Buddhist religion who works to help others along the path to enlightenment. Made about one thousand years ago, it is one of the most popular bodhisattvas in Japan. The figure is apparently deep in thought, with eyes almost closed and a calm, tranquil facial expression. The graceful curving lines of the drapery form repeating arcs that move gently down the front of the body. He stands on a lotus flower base with a jewel “third eye” on his forehead, which are both symbols of his enlightened state. Jizō is known as a special protector of children who deeply cares for all living creatures and helps others.

- Based on how the artist has depicted the Jizō, what type of person do you think he is? How has the artist communicated this?
- A bodhisattva assists others on their journey to becoming enlightened. What are some ways that you help others?

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