



# Journey Stories

What do you think of when you think of a journey? A favorite trip, moving to a new city, growing up, or maybe an object, something that reminds you of a memory from an important life event? The artwork featured in this exhibition tells stories about a variety of journeys. Each section focuses on objects from diverse cultures. The first section, **Trade and Travel**, considers how objects like money and passports help make us mobile and give us the ability to travel. The second section, **Spiritual Journeys**, explores ways the afterlife is viewed in many cultures as a journey. The third, **Telling Tales**, highlights how stories are recorded and adventures are told, because often the most important part of a journey is the story that goes along with it.

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**About the UMFA** | The Utah Museum of Fine Arts (UMFA) is Utah's primary cultural resource for global visual arts. Unique in its dual role as a university and state art museum, the UMFA is Utah's only visual arts institution that collects, exhibits, interprets, and preserves a comprehensive collection of more than 5,000 years of art from around the world.

**The Traveling Museum Project** installs exhibitions in communities and schools throughout the state of Utah using objects from the Utah Museum of Fine Arts' Education Collection. With an object-centered, inquiry-based approach, the Traveling Museum Project explores the roles that art plays in people's lives across the globe. The goals of the program are to assist in the development of visual literacy, foster independent learning, and cultivate critical thinking, creativity, and curiosity.



MARCIA AND JOHN PRICE  
MUSEUM BUILDING



# TRADE AND TRAVEL

1.

## Northwestern Africa (possibly Sierra Leone, Liberia or Guinea)

### *Kissi Money*

Wood

ED 1999.1.10, ED 1999.1.11

- **What is the first thing you notice about these objects?**
- **By just looking at them, would you have guessed that they are money?**
- **How are they the same and how are they different than money used in the United States today?**
- **Can you imagine carrying this money around?**

The elongated shape of Kissi money prevents anyone from altering the value of the money by shaving off pieces of iron, a common practice in the late 1800s when this money was first minted by the Kissi, Loma, and Bandi peoples living in broad regions of northwestern Africa. If someone tried to shave off these thin, twisted iron sticks, they would break and lose their value. Kissi money's worth is determined by its length, the longer pieces having a higher value. The money was also bundled together to create larger denominations. Kissi money was used throughout Liberia alongside paper money and coins until 1964, when it was completely replaced by the U.S. dollar. Today this currency is used symbolically for various cultural celebrations, like weddings, or to decorate a grave to remember someone who has died.

**Think about:** How was the *design* of Kissi money used to solve a problem?

# TRADE AND TRAVEL

## 2. Democratic Republic of Congo

### *Katanga Cross Money*

c. 1900

Copper

ED 2006.2.71

- **What is the first thing you notice about this object? By just looking at it, would you have guessed that it's money? How is it the same and how is it different than money used in the United States today? Can you imagine carrying this money around?**

This money comes from Katanga, a rich mining region in the south-eastern area of the Democratic Republic of Congo along the Kasai River. The cross shape of Katanga money makes the currency easy to stack and handle. Notice the surface of the object. The rippled surface is created when boiling liquid copper is poured into an open X-shaped mold. Katanga cross money's worth is determined by how much metal it is made from. This object weighs over one pound! Creating money from precious metals like copper, lead, or tin allowed it to be melted down and turned into another form while keeping its value. In 1961, Katanga issued its first coin, a copper Franc. In remembrance of the money traditions of the region, the coins pictured the Katanga cross. Today, Katanga crosses are used symbolically for various cultural celebrations, like weddings or to decorate a grave to remember someone who has died.

**Think about:** Why would it be important to be able to melt down your money and turn it into something else? If you could design your own money, what would it look like? What shape would it be? How would you determine its value?

# TRADE AND TRAVEL

## 3. Middle East (possibly Turkey)

### *Evil Eye Charm*

c. 2000

Glass

ED 2008.8.5

- **How would you describe this object to someone who has never seen it before?**
- **Based on its size, what do you think its purpose is?**

The *Evil Eye Charm* is meant to protect its owner from danger or harm. Throughout the Mediterranean and the Middle East, many people believe that envious gazes or high praise from others can bring bad luck. This belief is referred to as the “evil eye.” Evil eye charms, like this one, are meant to be worn or carried everywhere. The blue eye stares back at the world to ward off evil spirits and keep the wearer safe. The color blue is commonly used due to its reflective properties, sending any harm away. Belief in the evil eye remains widespread today in countries like Egypt, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Jordan and Morocco. There, one can often find evil eye charms in cars, entrances of homes, pinned to shirts and even built into the foundations of buildings.

**Think about** the phrases “a dirty look” or “a cold stare.” Do you think these common sayings are related to the evil eye? How? Do you have a charm that you carry with you? If so, why do you carry it?

# SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS

4.

**Mexico**

*Day of the Dead Skeleton*

**Date Unknown**

Wood and pigment

ED 1999.3.3

- **What do you think of when you look at this object? How does it make you feel?**

Dia de los Muertos, or “Day of the Dead,” is a Mexican holiday celebrated throughout Mexico, in many parts of the United States, and around the world. Held on November 1 and 2, it is said that souls of the deceased return from the afterlife to visit the living. In some parts of Mexico, families leave pillows and blankets out so the dead can rest after their long journey. During the holiday, people honor the departed with various customs. Families visit cemeteries and decorate graves with flowers and candles. They build shrines, cook the deceased’s favorite foods and tell stories. Many towns hold parades where people march through the streets carrying skeletons and coffins. Skeletons are a common symbol during this holiday. People dress in skeleton costumes, decorate their homes with them, and eat sugar and chocolate skulls. These customs are not meant to be somber remembrances of death, but rather festive celebrations for the living and dead.

**Think about:** Why do you think the symbol of the skeleton during Dia de los Muertos is seen as a sign of celebration rather than fear and death? What does this say about the attitudes or beliefs of death for the people who celebrate this holiday?

# SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS

5.

## Egypt

Ushabti

Date Unknown

Faience

ED 2009.2.3

- **Where might this object have been displayed before it came to the Museum? Why do you think it would have been displayed there?**
- **Can you find writing on it?**
- **What questions do you have about this object?**

Ushabti figurines were placed in the tombs of the ancient Egyptians. Known as “servants of the afterlife,” it was believed that a Ushabti would travel with the dead to the afterlife to perform work for the deceased. Each Ushabti figurine bears its owners name inscribed in hieroglyphs, as well as a phrase that summons it to work.

**Think about:** If you were leaving on a journey, what would you take with you? Would you take practical necessities or maybe something you care about? If you could only take one thing with you, what would you take?

# SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS

6.

China

*Guan Yin*

Twentieth Century

Ceramic

ED 2010.1.2

- **Spend some time looking at this object. Who is this figure? What is her mood?**
- **If you could ask her one question, what would it be?**
- **Can you find the following objects: a lotus flower, a vase, a willow branch, a crown, a necklace? What do you think these symbols mean?**

Guan Yin (sometimes called Kuan Yin) is the Buddhist bodhisattva of compassion and kindness. A bodhisattva is someone who has attained enlightenment (Nirvana) but chooses to stay on Earth to assist other people seeking it. Guan Yin travels the world to help people in need. She can take any form in order to help people feel close to her and listen to her teachings and comfort. The objects in her hands symbolize healing. In her left hand she holds a vase of purified water that can remove suffering and lengthen life. In her right, she holds a willow branch that is used to heal people's illnesses or fulfill requests. Because she has taken the journey to enlightenment, she dedicates herself to facilitating that journey in others.

**Think about:** What does the word 'compassion' mean to you? How would you define it?

# TELLING TALES

7.

Peru

*Appliqué*

c. 1986

Textile

ED 2006.2.182

- **What strikes you about this textile?**
- **Describe some of the textures you see.**
- **What journey stories can you imagine from this work of art?**

An appliqué is a three-dimensional quilted textile in which details and patterns are created by attaching smaller pieces of fabric to a larger one by using a needle and thread. Known as an arpillera, this style of appliqué is found throughout Chile, Venezuela, Columbia and Peru and tell stories of everyday life through vivid colors and shapes, often depicting farms, city scenes, and village life. However, this art form began not as a way of depicting beautiful landscapes, but rather as a form of protest in Chile in the 1970s. Commenting on political problems throughout the government, women would create arpilleras that contained secret messages hidden in the landscape scenes to communicate and help spread information from one town or village to another when other forms of communication, like letters or photographs, were not allowed.

**Think about:** Why do you think a textile like this would not be considered a threat for spreading information? What sort of secret messages do you think the women hid in the images of the arpilleras? If you were going to put a secret message in a work of art, what would your message be? To whom would you send it?



# TELLING TALES

8.

Greece

*Black Figure, Olpe, Hercules (replica)*

c. 1960

Ceramic

ED 2006.2.129

- **What is your favorite detail or design on this object?**
- **If you could step into this scene, what would the air feel like on your cheek? What sounds would you hear? What smells?**

The ancient Greeks commonly painted on the surface of everyday objects, like this olpe, or container, in order to tell stories about their popular culture and beliefs. This olpe depicts the mythological hero Hercules on one of his many adventures that took him throughout the Greco-Roman world. This scene depicts Hercules entering Olympus and becoming a god. Look at the four figures depicted on this olpe. Which one do you think is Hercules? What visual clues does the artist give you to tell which figure Hercules is? What are the figures doing?

**Think about:** How do you tell stories of your adventures? Do you write them down, tell someone, take a photograph, paint, draw, or put them on social media? Why is it important to record stories?

# TELLING TALES

## 9. ▶ Indonesia (New Guinea)

### *Asmat Flute*

Date Unknown

Wood

ED 1998.2.2

- **Imagine this instrument being played. What does it sound like? What kind of music is it playing? Is it loud or soft? Bright or dull?**

Musical instruments such as flutes, drums, mouth harps, and horns are important parts of Asmat life. Traditionally they were used as part of warfare and in various religious and cultural ceremonies. Today they continue to be essential components to the Asmat's rich tradition of oral storytelling, often referencing journeys and adventures, both past and present. Called *durifos*, Asmat flutes are usually made from bamboo or wood. Historically, the player would create their own instrument, searching for the appropriate tree, hollowing out the instrument and carving decorative designs into the surface of the flute. Although the drum is considered the most sacred of instruments to the Asmat, the flute adds interest and musical texture to the steady beat of the drum.

**Think about:** What is your favorite song? Why do you like it? What does it say to you? Teach you? How does it make you feel? What does it tell you about the time and place in which it was made?