



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.

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

Iron

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

Kuba and Warega Passport Masks

Wood

ED 2006.2.54, ED 2006.2.55

- **Are these masks meant to be worn? If so, where on the body would you wear them?**

Passport masks are used to identify a person's tribe or country of origin when traveling from region to region. The masks would be worn by the travelers on their arms or waists so that people could identify where they are from. Passport masks were also hung on fences in central Africa to tell travelers what country or tribal lands they were entering. Many passport masks are painted with tribal colors or contain specific symbols belonging to that tribe. Additionally, each mask is created specifically for the wearer, not only identifying their tribe, but also including individual facial features of the wearer and personal traits including interests or profession. Can you find the mask that has depictions of scarification? (scarification is a permanent mark made on the skin like a tattoo.)

Think about: What is the purpose of a passport? How are passport masks similar to other types of passports? If you were to create a passport mask, how would it identify you as an individual, and with what group would you be affiliated?

TRADE AND TRAVEL

3. Middle East (possibly Turkey)

Evil Eye Charm

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.

China

Guan Yin

Ceramic

ED 2010.6.4

- **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?

SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS

5. Mexico

Day of the Dead Skeleton

Wood and pigment

ED 1999.3.2

- **What do you think 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 about death to the people who celebrate this holiday?

SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS

6. Egypt

Ushabti

Faience

ED 2003.3.5

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

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 the work of 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?

TELLING TALES

7.

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. Hercules is often identified by wearing a lion skin. Can you identify Hercules on this olpe? What is he doing? Who do you think he is fighting?

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

8.

Australia

Aboriginal Painting

Acrylic on canvas

ED 2006.2.95

- **What strikes you about this painting?**
- **What do you think it illustrates? What do you see that helps you read the artwork?**
- **How might this tell a story of a journey?**

Dot paintings consist of a repeated dotting technique with a paint brush or sticks that cover a surface creating a raised, textured mark. Dot paintings are believed to have evolved from a long standing Australian Aboriginal tradition of sand drawings made using lines and dots, many inspired by the central Australian landscape, described as dotted with stones, plants, and flowers. Similarly, dot paintings are created to tell important stories for Australian Aboriginal people, many with themes of hunting, walkabouts, and travels through dreams. These paintings, however, are not intended to be seen or understood by people outside the culture. Initially, the permanence of acrylic paint led to concern about revealing sacred cultural information. Subsequently the practice of *overdotting* served to obscure the classified information beneath, so that only those who understood the imagery would be able to read the painting, simultaneously revealing and concealing the image and its meaning.

Think about: Why would stories told through the medium of sand drawings not pose a threat to revealing secrets? Why do you think artists moved from working in sand to paint if they were worried about their stories being discovered by other cultures? Why do you think Australian Aboriginal cultures want to keep their stories a secret? Have you ever had a story that only certain people could know about? Why is that?

TELLING TALES

9. ▶ Indonesia (Bali)

Stringed Instrument

Wood, metal, leather

ED 1995.6.20

- **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?**

Music is an essential component to the culture of storytelling in Balinese society, often referencing journeys and adventures. The musical traditions are not only accompaniments of temple ceremonies, shadow puppet performances, dances, and theatre, but also an important medium of storytelling and cultural celebration. Balinese music is characterized as vibrant, loud, rhythmic, and swift, often mimicking the sound of monkeys swinging in the trees. The traditional orchestra, known as a gamelan, is composed of various forms of percussion, string, and woodwind instruments, ranging from a few to several dozen. Most of the musicians play various kinds of metallophones, gongs, and xylophones. The strumming of stringed instruments, like this one, allows for a consistency of beat as the cacophony of percussion erupts into a complex composition of sound.

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?