

# NORTON SIMON MUSEUM

## STUDENT PREPARATORY PACKET

### SCULPTURE

#### Introduction to the Norton Simon Museum

The Norton Simon Museum is known as one of the world's most remarkable private art collections. Seven centuries of European art dating from the Renaissance to the 20th century are on permanent display, including Old Master paintings by Raphael, Rubens, Zurbarán, Rembrandt and Goya. The Museum also features a celebrated Impressionist and Post-Impressionist collection—with paintings by Manet, Monet, Degas, Van Gogh and Cézanne—as well as 20th-century works by Picasso, Matisse and Brancusi. Moreover, the Museum has one of the premier collections of South and Southeast Asian art in the country, spanning a period of 2,000 years.

#### Curriculum Materials

The following curriculum materials are intended to help prepare your students for their tour. These materials include lesson plans and vocabulary guides for a selection of artworks. You may also find it helpful to visit our [website](#), where you can find information about special exhibitions, podcasts and a collections database with information about individual works of art.

#### Lesson Overview

Each lesson provides brief background information about the artwork and artist, followed by questions that promote observation and discussion. Suggested classroom activities offer students the opportunity to explore the collection through writing and art-making projects.

#### Learning Objectives

Students are encouraged to:

- *take time to look closely*
- *describe what they see*
- *connect the visual arts with historical periods and religious traditions*
- *create original artworks focusing on themes and formal elements of art found in works from the Norton Simon Museum*

#### Curriculum Standards

The materials address content standards for California public schools in visual arts, history–social science and Common Core English-language arts for grades 5–12.

**Bodhisattva Maitreya**, 2nd–3rd century  
Pakistan: Ancient Gandhara  
Schist  
69 x 28 x 10 in. (175.3 x 71.1 x 25.4 cm)

### Bodhisattva: East Meets West

This sculpture represents **Bodhisattva Maitreya**. His status as a deity is signified by his **ushnisha**, a cranial protuberance, and his **urna**, a tuft of hair or light between his eyebrows signifying the third eye of enlightenment.

### Key Concepts

This sculpture was produced in ancient **Gandhara**, a region located in present-day northern Pakistan and Afghanistan. **Gandhara** was situated along the **Silk Road**, once the primary trade route connecting the East with the West, and as a result, Gandharan art fuses the influence of the Western Greco-Roman world with the **iconography** of Indian religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism.

Unlike images of the **Buddha**, **bodhisattvas** are typically depicted wearing jewelry and luxurious clothing because, unlike the **Buddha**, **bodhisattvas** have chosen to remain on earth until all sentient beings have attained enlightenment. This **bodhisattva** wears a draped and tasseled robe and lavish jewelry, including an armlet and a string of charm boxes that sweeps across his chest to ward off misfortune. His adornments would have been modeled after those of a king.

Around his neck, the **bodhisattva** wears a necklace with a protective amulet depicting the Greek god of the sea, Poseidon. The presence of this Greek god in a Buddhist sculpture tells us that **Gandhara** was a religiously tolerant kingdom and that Greek culture remained vibrant in the region.

### A Closer Look at *Bodhisattva Maitreya*

- The influence of the Greco-Roman world can be seen in the figure's togalike robe, sandals, wavy hair, mustache and musculature, which is far more defined and anatomically precise than the softer, more supple figures of most Buddhist and Hindu sculptures from India (see *Cosmic Vishnu*, also in this packet).
- Originally, **Maitreya's** right hand was in the **mudra**, or gesture, of reassurance, and his left hand held a **water pot**. **Maitreya's water pot** is a symbol of his future role as the **Buddha** on earth once the current **Buddha's** teachings have been forgotten. In Indian art the **water pot** represents the exchange of goods or acknowledgment that an agreement has been made. **Maitreya's water pot** signifies the transference of power from **Buddha Shakyamuni** to him.
- On the base of the sculpture is a relief of a turbaned **bodhisattva**, possibly **Maitreya**, meditating while seated on a lotus. He is surrounded by donors and worshippers. **Maitreya** is often pictured seated on a throne, waiting for the time when he will descend to earth to once again spread the teachings of the **Buddha** after they have been lost.



## Discussion Questions

- Compare the pose, naturalism, format, textures and adornments of this sculpture with *Cosmic Vishnu*. What do these sculptures have in common? How do they differ?
- This sculpture is distinguished by the repeating waves of his hair and the heavy beaded ropes of his necklace. What other patterns and textures do you see in the sculpture?

## Activity

- Make a **contour drawing** of the sculpture, concentrating on the variety of lines in the drapery, the hair, the jewelry and the figure itself.

## Vocabulary

- **Bodhisattva**: an enlightened being who has vowed to help others achieve enlightenment before crossing over to Buddhahood.
- **Buddha**: an enlightened being who has achieved the highest knowledge of truth and is thereby freed from the cycle of rebirth known as samsara.
- **Buddha Shakyamuni**: the Buddha of our age, founder of Buddhism; formerly Siddhartha, a prince who renounced his life as a householder to seek spiritual truth.
- **Contour drawing**: a drawing in which the artist, looking closely at the outlines of an object or person, transfers it in one continuous line to paper without looking down to see the outcome of his or her work until it is completed.
- **Gandhara**: a region in present-day northern Pakistan and Afghanistan once located along the Silk Road, and, as such, subject to both Eastern and Western influences.
- **Iconography**: conventions or symbols regarding the treatment of a subject in artistic representation.
- **Maitreya**: the Buddha of the future; known as the benevolent one, he awaits in heaven to reestablish the Dharma, or teachings.
- **Mudras**: symbolic hand gestures used in Buddhist, Hindu and Jain art.
- **Silk Road**: the primary trade route connecting the East with the West.
- **Ushnisha**: the protuberance on the crown of a bodhisattva's or Buddha's head signifying enlightenment.
- **Urna**: the tuft of hair between the eyebrows of a Buddha, frequently depicted as an inlaid gem that is believed to emit a ray of light that illuminates distant worlds.
- **Water pot**: a vessel carrying water signifying the exchange of goods or an acknowledgment that an agreement has been made.



ABOVE:

*Cosmic Vishnu (Trivikrama) with Spouses*, 11th century

India: West Bengal or Bangladesh, 1000–1099

Chlorite

57 x 28 in. (144.8 x 71.1 cm)

*Shiva as Lord of Dance (Nataraja)*, 975–1025

India: Tamil Nadu

Bronze

31¾ x 24 in. (80.6 x 61.0 cm)

## Shiva Nataraja: Lord of Dance

**Shiva**, the god of destruction, is one of the principal gods of **Hinduism**. He is frequently depicted in his form as the Lord of Dance, or **Nataraja**.

### Key Concepts

This sculpture conveys the Indian concept of the never-ending cycle of death and rebirth, or **samsara**, wherein every end leads to a new beginning, as symbolized by the circle of flames surrounding **Shiva**. As the **Hindu** god of destruction, **Shiva** enables the regeneration and continued harmony of the universe through his dance.

**Shiva's** four arms indicate his dominion over the four cardinal directions.

In two of his hands he holds the flame of destruction (outer right) and the hourglass-shaped, double-sided drum (outer left), which he uses to beat the world back into creation. The two other hands are in the mudras, or gestures, of reassurance (inner right) and refuge (inner left).

**Shiva's** third eye, or **trilocana**, symbolizes his ability to see all and destroy ignorance with his gaze. The cobra draped over his arm signifies his mastery over death. He stands triumphant in his dance atop a dwarf, signifying his victory over ignorance.



### A Closer Look at *Shiva as Lord of Dance*

- **Shiva** normally wears his dreadlocks coiled on top of his head in a bun, but during the momentous spinning of his dance, his hair is freed from its coils and flies out in all directions. During this dance, the goddess **Ganga** of the Ganges River, who is caught in **Shiva's** hair, is flung away by his dancing and brings forth the water of life on earth.
- Dance is very important in Hindu practice; ritual dance is an integral part of ceremonies in the temple, and sculptural poses are often derived from these ritual dances.
- During holy days and festivals, bearers inserted poles into the holes in the base of the sculpture to carry it from the temple and into the streets to be worshipped by devotees. Before the procession, the sculpture was dressed in clothes and jewels.

## Discussion Questions

- What elements of this sculpture indicate movement? (For example, the pose, his hair, the cord around his waist and the scarf on his arm all suggest movement.)
- This sculpture was once polished to the same golden gleam as Brancusi's *Bird in Space* (also in this packet), which was originally purchased by an Indian maharaja to be placed in a temple of meditation in India. Compare *Bird in Space* to *Shiva Nataraja*. What makes these two bronze sculptures dynamic? How do they inspire contemplation?



## Activity

- The 19th-century sculptor Auguste Rodin admired the bronze depictions of **Nataraja** from this period for their graceful forms. Compare the bronze **Nataraja** with Rodin's *The Burghers of Calais* (also in this packet). How do these sculptures tell a story? Create a figural sculpture that tells a story and shows movement through attributes and pose.



## Vocabulary

- **Ganga:** the goddess of the Ganges River, from which all life flows.
- **Hinduism:** the most widely practiced faith in India; based on the belief that the material world is illusory; there are three principal deities: Shiva, the destroyer; Vishnu, the preserver; and Brahma, the creator.
- **Nataraja:** Shiva's form as Lord of Dance.
- **Samsara:** the continuous cycle of death and rebirth that is a central belief in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.
- **Shiva:** the Hindu god of destruction; one of the principal gods of Hinduism.
- **Trilocana:** the third eye of Shiva, signifying his all-seeing nature.

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT:

*The Burghers of Calais*, 1884–95

Auguste Rodin

French, 1840–1917

Bronze, Edition of 12, Cast No. 10

82½ x 93½ x 70¾ in. (209.6 x 237.5 x 179.7 cm)

*Bird in Space*, 1931

Constantin Brancusi

Romanian, 1876–1957

Polished bronze

73 in. (185.4 cm)

*Cosmic Vishnu (Trivikrama) with Spouses*, 11th century  
India: West Bengal or Bangladesh  
Chlorite  
57 x 28 in. (144.8 x 71.1cm)

### Cosmic Vishnu: Three Great Strides

This sculpture depicts the Hindu god **Vishnu**'s victory over the greedy King Bali. King Bali was not content to rule the earth and wanted to take over the heavens as well, so **Vishnu** visited him in the guise of the beggar dwarf, **Vamana**, and asked the king for a plot of land that he could cover in three steps. As soon as the king granted his request, **Vishnu** transformed into the giant **Trivikrama** seen at the center of the sculpture. In two strides he covered the earth and the heavens, and in his last stride, he landed on Bali's head, defeating Bali and restoring order to the universe.

### Key Concepts

**Vishnu**, the preserver, is one of the principal gods of Hinduism. He saves the earth ten times in ten different avatars, or forms, including a giant boar, a turtle and a man-lion. This sculpture depicts **Vishnu** in two forms: as the giant **Trivikrama**, in the center of the sculpture, and the dwarf **Vamana**, in the lower right.



The first episode of the story is depicted on **Vishnu's (Trivikrama's)** lotus pedestal. King Bali is shown seated on his throne, while the dwarf **Vamana**, holding a parasol, stands before him. Between them, a minister pours water on their outstretched hands to seal their contract and make the gift of land official.

This sculpture, made out of chlorite, is meant to be seen from the front only, and the figures are sculpted in **relief**. Originally this sculpture would have fit into a wall in a temple, and the columns behind **Trivikrama** would have echoed the columns in the room.

### A Closer Look at Cosmic Vishnu

- **Vishnu** as **Trivikrama** carries **Vishnu's attributes**: the conch shell, representing the sound of victory over chaos; the chakra, a disc-shaped weapon symbolizing **Vishnu's** ability to cut through ignorance; the mace, a clubbed weapon representing his power to impose universal law; and a lotus flower, symbolizing divine purity.
- **Trivikrama** is flanked on the left by **Lakshmi** and on the right by **Sarasvati**.
- Along the base of the sculpture sit four figures, from left to right: two adoring donors; **Garuda**, **Vishnu's** mount; and **Bhudevi**, the earth goddess, offering a water pot.

### Discussion Questions

- How did the sculptor create a sense of drama in this sculpture? Do you notice any advantages to sculpting in **relief** as opposed to creating a freestanding sculpture?
- There are many figures and details in this sculpture. How did the artist direct your attention to the most important elements in the story despite all the visual components?

## Activity

- Create a relief or drawing depicting two or more scenes from your favorite adventure story. How do you make your characters recognizable and differentiate between scenes? (For example, using **hierarchical scale**, positioning within the composition, etc.)

## Vocabulary

- **Attribute:** an object that helps identify a figure or character (for example, a crown is an attribute of a king).
- **Bhudevi:** goddess of the earth, a form of Lakshmi.
- **Chlorite:** a type of stone ranging in color from light gray to dark green.
- **Garuda:** the half-bird mount of Vishnu; an enemy of snakes.
- **Hierarchical scale:** the manipulation of size and space in an image to emphasize the importance of a person or object in relation to the people or objects around them.
- **Relief:** a sculpture in which objects project outward from a flat supporting background.
- **Lakshmi:** Vishnu's spouse; the goddess of wealth, beauty, fortune and creation; the lotus is her attribute.
- **Sarasvati:** Brahma's spouse; the goddess of knowledge, music, arts and science.
- **Trivikrama:** the god of three strides; an avatar of Vishnu.
- **Vamana:** a dwarf; the fifth avatar of Vishnu.
- **Vishnu:** known as the preserver; one of the three principal Hindu gods; he came to earth ten times in ten different forms, or avatars, to save the world.

*Beauregard Madonna*, c. 1455

Desiderio da Settignano

Italian, 1429–1464

White Carrara marble

20 x 16 in. (50.8 x 40.6 cm)

### Desiderio: Making Figures Emerge from Stone

Desiderio da Settignano was a master carver who lived and worked in Florence. The artist is known for his delicate **busts** of children and domestic devotional reliefs, and he is particularly admired for his ability to imbue conventional religious subjects with striking tenderness and humanity.

### Key Concepts

The **Renaissance** brought about a revival of classical Greek and Roman arts, and this sculpture shows the influence of classical sculpture in its material (marble), its format (a half-length **bust**) and its **naturalism**.

The sculpture marks the early **Renaissance** transition from stylized, flat forms to more naturalistic, fully formed figures. The subject of the Madonna and Child had long been depicted, but rarely with this level of immediacy and humanity.

This sculpture was meant to be embedded into a wall, and as such, it was sculpted in relief so that the figures seem to emerge from the wall. The parts of the sculpture that project the most are called **high relief**, while the more shallow carving in the **background** is called **low relief**.

### A Closer Look at the *Beauregard Madonna*

- The **carrara marble** was polished to a high gleam so that it appears to almost glow from within.
- The sculpture is carved from a single material, marble, and yet Desiderio managed to make the stone look like smooth flesh, draped fabric and a soft pillow indented by the pressure of a baby's toes.
- Both figures' eyes are downcast, and their forms are **foreshortened** so that they appear to be looking down at the viewer. From certain angles the figures seem flat and distorted. Given this distortion, it seems likely that the sculpture was meant for a specific location in which the viewing angle was limited.



## Discussion Questions

- How does this depiction of the Madonna and Child differ from depictions in paintings like those of [Giovanni di Paolo](#) and [Raphael](#)? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the two mediums?
- How does this religious relief sculpture differ from the sculpture *Cosmic Vishnu*?



## Activity

- Create a site-specific work of art that is particularly suited to a specific position and place. Then write about its intended location and why the work is suited to be placed there.

## Vocabulary

- **Background:** the part of a scene or picture that is farthest from the viewer.
- **Bust:** a sculpted representation of the upper part of the human figure including the head, shoulders, and chest.
- **Carrara marble:** a type of white or blue-gray marble popular for sculpture; quarried in the Italian city of Carrara in northern Tuscany.
- **Foreshorten:** the shortening of certain dimensions of an object in order to give the appearance of a correct spatial relationship. As they get farther from the viewer, objects seem increasingly smaller, and artists foreshorten an object so that it looks proportional rather than distorted.
- **High relief:** sculpture in which objects project far enough outward from a flat ground to be considered in some part independent of their background.
- **Low relief:** sculpture in which objects project only slightly from a flat ground.
- **Naturalism:** the depiction of a subject closely imitating nature in appearance.
- **Renaissance:** a cultural and artistic movement reviving classical art and literature that spanned from the 14th century through the 17th century, beginning in Italy and then spreading to the rest of Europe.

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT:

*Branchini Madonna*, 1427

Giovanni di Paolo

Italian, 1403–1482

Tempera and gold leaf on panel

72 x 39 in. (182.9 x 99.1 cm)

*Cosmic Vishnu (Trivikrama) with Spouses*, 11th century

India: West Bengal or Bangladesh

Chlorite

57 x 28 in. (144.8 x 71.1 cm)

*Madonna and Child with Book*, c. 1502–3

Raffaello Sanzio, called Raphael

Italian, 1483–1520

Oil on panel

21 3/4 x 15 3/4 in. (55.2 x 40 cm)

*Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen*, 1878–81

Edgar Degas

French, 1834–1917

Bronze

37<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 13<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (95.6 x 33.5 x 25.2 cm)

## Degas: Documenting Dancers

The Impressionist Edgar Degas is famous for his paintings of modern life, focusing on the ballet, horse races and the workforce; however, his sculptures are less known. With the exception of his original version of [\*Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen\*](#), which is now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., these sculptures were never exhibited during his lifetime, and instead served primarily as studies of movement in preparation for his painted or drawn works.

## Key Concepts

The original *Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen* was made of beeswax and dressed with real silk ballet shoes, a cotton bodice, a tulle tutu and a silk ribbon tied around a wig made from real hair.

The sculpture caused an uproar at the Sixth Impressionist Exhibition in 1881, as it expressed Degas's brilliant ability to capture the contrasting nature of the dancer: lifelike and caricaturish, confident and haughty, pretty and ugly, real and ironic. Nothing was **idealized**.

Degas made wax sculptures throughout his lifetime to create figure studies for his paintings and drawings, but none were **cast in bronze**, like the sculpture in the Norton Simon Museum, until after his death.

## A Closer Look at *Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen*

- Notice the detail of the hair, bodice and tutu, and the way the dancer's tights slightly bunch at her knees. Realistic texture, especially that of the tutu, was very important to Degas, and the bronze preserves this attention to surface.
- Degas's model, Marie von Goethem, was a student of the Ballet de l'Opera, where Degas often sketched classes and rehearsals.
- Rather than portraying her in the act of dancing, Degas depicted her in a pose that dance students assume during a moment of rest in class or between movements in a ballet. Her eyes are half closed, and yet she seems at attention, ready to begin dancing again when called upon.

## Discussion Questions

- Are you surprised to learn that this sculpture upset many of Degas's contemporaries? Why or why not?
- Compare this sculpture with another [picture](#) or [sculpture](#) of dancers by Degas at the Museum. How do the similarities and differences between the works inform the way you look at *Little Dancer, Aged Fourteen*?



## Activity

- Degas was among the first of a long line of painters to explore sculpture, and Pablo Picasso followed in his footsteps with [sculptures](#) made from unconventional materials. Looking closely at the variety of textures Degas achieved in this sculpture, create your own sculpture with unconventional materials that add textural interest.

## Vocabulary

- **Bronze casting:** a process in which a ceramic cast is made from a wax model. The mold is baked, the wax melts out of the mold, and heated liquid bronze is poured into it. When the bronze cools and hardens, the mold is broken away and the bronze is filed down and polished.
- **Idealized:** something that is depicted as perfect or better than reality.

PAGE 9:

*Dancers in the Wings*, c. 1876–1878

Edgar Degas

French, 1834–1917

Pastel, gouache, distemper, and “essence” on paper, mounted on board

27¼ x 19¾ in. (69.2 x 50.2 cm)

*The Burghers of Calais*, 1884–95

Auguste Rodin

French, 1840–1917

Bronze, edition of 12, cast no. 10

82½ x 93½ x 70¾ in. (209.6 x 237.5 x 179.7 cm)

### Rodin: Emotions on a Monumental Scale

This sculpture is a monument commissioned by the French city of Calais to honor the heroic sacrifices of its citizens. It commemorates an episode from the **Hundred Years' War**. In 1347, after Calais had been under siege for eleven months and food and water had become scarce, six prominent citizens, or burghers, from Calais offered their lives to the English king, Edward III, in return for his promise to spare the city. Upon hearing of their bravery, the English queen, Philippa, interceded and obtained their release, making them heroes to the city.



### Key Concepts

Rodin rejected the established conventions of public sculpture and portrayed the men not as glorious heroes, but as troubled and isolated individuals united by their anguish and common purpose.

Rodin's work focuses on **formal qualities** rather than **narrative structure**. His decision to retain the marks of the sculptural process on his finished works was revolutionary for the time.

Rodin created a number of large-scale public sculptures in which he emphasized the relationship between the figures and the viewer.

### A Closer Look at *The Burghers of Calais*

- Rather than strong and brave, Rodin depicted the burghers as emaciated and tormented, dressed in tattered **sackcloth** with nooses, which King Edward III had ordered them to wear, as they depart to surrender themselves and the keys to the city to the English army.
- The men's features and proportions are distorted to intensify their expressiveness. Their hands and feet are disproportionately large, causing the figures to appear weighed down, and their faces and posture are marked by fear, indecision and anguish.
- No one figure is singled out above the rest; they are all treated equally, and each has his own unique pose and emotional expression. This individuality is reinforced by the fact that the figures face different directions, prompting the viewer to walk around the sculpture and look at each figure rather than merely seeing the work from a single vantage point.

## Discussion Questions

- Describe the men in this sculpture. How does this portrayal of heroism differ from other [artworks](#) depicting heroes? The city of Calais initially rejected the sculpture for its lack of glory, but eventually Rodin prevailed. Do you think this sculpture is successful in depicting the heroism of the burghers? Why or why not?
- Like other sculptors of his era, Rodin hoped to make as many versions of his works as possible to feed demand and pay for the high costs of sculpture production. Each version is considered original as long as it was produced under the supervision of the artist or his estate, but many were sculpted by assistants copying his clay models. Does it change your opinion of this sculpture to know that it is one of several? How does learning this change the way you think about work created by an artist?



## Activity

- Write a short story from the point of view of one of the burghers. How would you feel at this moment in the story? What would you want to say to your families and friends? How would you present yourself to the English army?

## Vocabulary

- **Formal qualities:** design elements such as balance, composition, color, line, scale, shading, texture and volume.
- **Hundred Years' War:** a series of battles from 1337 to 1453 between England and France for control of the French throne.
- **Narrative structure:** the order and manner in which a narrative is presented; the structural framework of a story.
- **Sackcloth:** a garment made of coarsely woven fabric, worn as a sign of mourning or submission.

ABOVE:

*David Slaying Goliath*, c. 1616

Peter Paul Rubens

Flemish, 1577–1640

Oil on canvas

48⅞ x 39 in. (122.9 x 99.1 cm)

*Bird in Space*, 1931  
Constantin Brancusi  
Romanian, 1876–1957  
Polished bronze  
73 in. (185.4 cm)

## Brancusi: Sculpting Abstraction

Constantin Brancusi was a Romanian-born sculptor and a member of the **School of Paris** who experimented with the extreme simplification of forms. He believed that “what is real is not the external form, but the essence of things,” and his mission was to strip his subjects to their core and sculpt them in their essential form.

## Key Concepts

Brancusi was one of the 20th century’s most influential sculptors, and he dealt with the abstraction of three-dimensional objects.

The fully simplified forms created in the mature phase of Brancusi’s career evoke the essence of things rather than the things themselves—here the soaring, polished form of *Bird in Space* suggests flight.

Brancusi introduced the idea of utilizing a sculpture’s surroundings (whether room, gallery or landscape) as part of the actual work of art.

## A Closer Look at *Bird in Space*

- *Bird in Space* is **sculpture in the round**. It has neither a front nor a back; it is meant to be seen from all angles, and thus invites viewers to move around it.
- The sculpture is so highly polished that it reflects everything around it, and thus viewers’ changing reflections become part of the work itself.
- *Bird in Space* is very narrow at its base and slightly off center, making it less grounded than a piece with a wider or heavier base and giving it a sense of instability that implies the potential for motion.

## Discussion Questions

- How did Brancusi communicate a sense of flight in his sculpture?
- Brancusi created many versions of this sculpture in different sizes and materials, always paying meticulous attention to **finish**. In this case, the bronze was deliberately polished to produce its gleaming, reflective surface. Compare *Bird in Space* to Giacometti’s [Tall Figure IV](#), which is also made of bronze. What differences do you notice in terms of color and texture? How does the sculpture’s **finish** contribute to the overall effect of a bird in flight?

## Activity

- Try to represent a favorite activity in a drawing or sculpture, giving just enough information to communicate the feeling of that activity in your artwork.



## Vocabulary

- **Finish:** the characteristics of a surface; the exterior texture of a sculpture.
- **School of Paris:** a loosely affiliated group of foreign-born artists working together in the Montparnasse area of Paris, including Picasso, Miró, de Chirico, Modigliani, Chagall and Brancusi.
- **Sculpture in the round:** a freestanding sculpture, not attached to any surface other than its base, that one can move around and view from all angles.

PAGE 13:

*Tall Figure IV*, 1960

Alberto Giacometti

Swiss, 1901–1966

Bronze, Edition of 6, Cast No. 1

106½ x 12 x 22 in. (270.5 x 30.5 x 55.9 cm)

*Two-Piece Reclining Figure No. 9*, 1968  
Henry Moore  
English, 1898–1986  
Bronze, edition of 7, cast no. 2  
56½ x 96 x 52 in. (143.5 x 243.8 x 132.1 cm)

### Moore: Communicating through Abstraction

Primarily known for his monumental outdoor works, Henry Moore was driven by the belief that **abstract** forms, as opposed to **representational** forms, could possess great spiritual vitality. In his words, more **abstract** forms “present the human psychological content of my work with the greatest directness and intensity.”



### Key Concepts

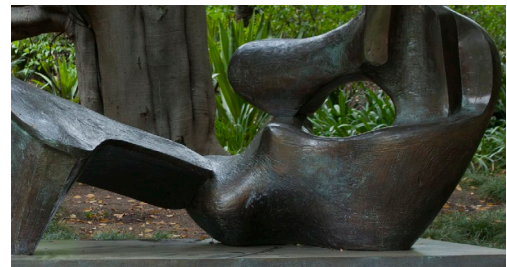
Moore favored simplified **biomorphic**, **humanoid** shapes. He felt that the simple shapes of his sculptures expressed a universal truth beyond the physical world. He wanted viewers to see the “intrinsic emotional significance of shapes instead of seeing mainly representational value.”

Moore was conscious of carrying on the English landscape tradition. His semiabstract works are drawn from landscapes and female figures, evoking the contours of the Yorkshire hills of his childhood home, caves in hillsides and cliffs as well as Mother Nature.

Moore’s mature style emerged during the 1930s while he was a young member of the **Surrealist** circle in England. The influence of **Surrealism** can be seen in his simplified, flowing forms, which are meant to be universal and appeal to the subconscious.

### A Closer Look at *Two-Piece Reclining Figure No. 9*

- Moore used the figure to explore concave and convex shapes, as well as **negative space**, and the result leads the viewer’s eye around and in and out of the sculpture.
- Moore felt that breaking a figure into a two-piece composition had the advantage of creating more unexpected perspectives and enabling the viewer to look at the piece as a figure and as a landscape, with more potential for surprise. In his words: “The front view doesn’t enable one to foresee the back view. As you move around it, the two parts overlap or they open up and there’s space between. Sculpture is like a journey. You have a different view as you return.”
- Moore used bronze increasingly as he began to do more works of art for public places because bronze is durable and a bronze cast is more practical for a large sculpture, as opposed to direct carving.



### Discussion Questions

- What do you see when you look at this work? How does your perspective change when you consider the title?
- In your opinion, what about this sculpture makes it particularly suited to the outdoors (for example, its size, material and its allusions to landscape)?

### Activity

- Write a description of the sculpture in your own words, expressing how it makes you feel and how you would interact with it.

### Vocabulary

- **Abstract art:** art in which only some of the visual elements resemble subjects taken from the natural world, and artworks that fall only partially, if at all, into what is commonly understood to be representational.
- **Biomorphic:** something resembling or suggesting the forms of living organisms.
- **Humanoid:** something that resembles a human being.
- **Negative space:** the space around and in between the subject or sculpture.
- **Representational art:** art that depicts something easily recognizable.
- **Surrealism:** an artistic movement that began in the late 1910s and sought to release the unbridled imagination of the subconscious, uncensored by reason, often combining unrelated images in a dreamlike way.

*Assembly of Sea Forms*, 1972

Barbara Hepworth

English, 1903–1975

White marble, mounted on stainless-steel base

42½ x 72 in. (108.0 x 182.9 cm)

## Hepworth: Utilizing Space

Barbara Hepworth was one of the most important British sculptors of the 20th century. Working in the semiabstract tradition of Constantin Brancusi, Hepworth focused on **organic shapes**. She was one of the first artists to consider the space around her sculptures as a significant part of the works themselves.



## Key Concepts

Although the sculpture is abstract, it is inspired by nature. For Hepworth these forms were a “translation of what one feels about man and nature... conveyed by mass, rhythm, scale in relation to [the viewer] and the quality of surface.”

Hepworth’s forms are basic and universal, expressing a sense of timelessness.

For the tallest form in the sculpture, Hepworth burst through two closed masses of marble, creating holes at their centers. This penetration of the material for purely abstract purposes established a new category of sculpture, for which space, or **negative space**, was just as important as form in understanding the artwork.



## A Closer Look at *Assembly of Sea Forms*

- Hepworth was deeply interested in materials and the physical reactions they provoke. Here she chose white marble polished to a serene smoothness, suggesting the effect of stone worn by the elements.
- The relationships among the forms are as important as the forms themselves. There is tension between the figures, and they are positioned in relation to each other, signifying human relationships and the relationship between people and landscapes.
- The Sea Forms are individually titled: back row: “Sea Mother” and “Sea King”; center row: “Shell,” “Sea Form and Young” and “Rolled Sea Form”; front row: “Embryo” and “Sea Bird.”

## Discussion Questions

- What do the shapes in this sculpture suggest to you?
- Hepworth most often assigned a title to a sculpture after she completed it. Only then could she look at it and recognize its inspiration. How does this sculpture communicate a sense of the sea or an assembly? As you look at the sculpture, what do these words signify to you?

## Activity

- Hepworth was greatly influenced by her time living by the sea, observing waves, stone formations and caves pierced by the sea. Think of a place you love or where you’ve spent a lot of time and then create a sculpture that communicates how you feel about that place through abstract forms.

## Vocabulary

- **Negative space:** the space around and between an object that is not taken up by the object itself.
- **Organic shapes:** irregular and curved shapes inspired by nature.