The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Art Beyond Sight
Tour Manual

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Art Beyond Sight Tour Manual

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Introduction

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art is committed to accessibility and inclusion for all visitors, staff and volunteers. We welcome everyone and strive to enable all to enjoy our programs, exhibitions, and resources—at the museum, and online.

Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and Access

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art is committed to access and inclusion. Our tours are designed to create a dialogue between the works in our collection and the viewer for all visitors, regardless of race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, age or faith. The tools that can provide access to meaning in art for people who are blind or have low vision are, in essence, the same tools required by sighted viewers. Tours for both audiences include: written texts, tours, audio guides, lectures, art-making activities, and Web materials.

The diversity of the disabilities community provides an opportunity for the museum’s education department to consider a broad range of approaches when reaching out to this population. Strategies such as Universal Design, or Inclusive Design help us take into consideration the widest ranges of learning and abilities. Universal Design, also referred to as inclusive design, is a process that enables and empowers a diverse population by improving human performance, health and wellness, and social participation.¹

Our education efforts now include programs and events that are accessible and inclusive, such as tours for people who are blind or have low vision, American Sign Language interpreted tours, art making programs and discussions for people on the autism spectrum, tours for people with memory loss, etc.

This training manual will focus on working with people who are blind or have low vision. It will focus on strategies and tools to help make the art experience accessible, equitable, and meaningful.

Sincerely,
Christine Boutros, Manager, Community and Access Programs
David Figiel, Manager, Education Volunteers

¹ Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access, [www.idea.ap.buffalo.edu](http://www.idea.ap.buffalo.edu)

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Chapter One: Disability Awareness

Disability is the world’s largest minority group, a group that anyone can join at any time. According to the 2010 census, there are 56.7 million Americans with disabilities, which accounts for 19% of the population (nearly 1 in 5 people in the U.S.).

World Health Organization (WHO) – New Definition of Disability

In 2001, the World Health Organization (WHO) established a new definition of disability, which has informed the new paradigm and definition of disabilities: “Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.

Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person’s body and features of the society in which he or she lives. Overcoming the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires interventions to remove environmental and social barriers.

The disability paradigm shift includes two fundamental concepts that impact the way we approach accessibility:

1. Disability is a mainstream experience of being human.
   All of us do or will experience some change in ability, whether permanent or temporary.
2. Disability is a contextual experience.
   Disability is not a constant state. The medical condition may be constant, but the environment determines whether the person experiences the disability. Disability is the intersection between individual and environment.

The KU Research & Training Center on Independent Living best expresses the shift in defining disability and describes the differences between the medical and social models: “The medical model is an attitude and practice that regards disability as a defect or sickness that must be cured or normalized through medical intervention. People in the disability community prefer the social or independent living model, which regards disability as a neutral difference between people – and acknowledges that people with disabilities can be healthy. In the social model, problems related to disability are caused by the interaction between the individual and the environment rather than the individual’s disability itself. These problems can be remedied by changing social attitudes, physical environments, public policies, and other barriers to full participation.”

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The chart below outlines the change in perceptions. On the left, you will see how disabilities have been viewed through a medical model. This approach led to stereotyping and defining people by their disability. On the right, the social model looks at the role society and the environment has on disabling experiences, respects individual abilities and choices and takes into account the individual’s background and circumstances.

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<th>Definition of disability</th>
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<td><strong>OLD APPROACH</strong></td>
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<td>• A diagnosis</td>
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<td>• A medical “problem”</td>
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<td>• A person is limited and defined by the impairment or condition</td>
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<th>Strategies to address disability</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OLD APPROACH</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fix the individual</td>
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<td>• Correct the deficit within the individual</td>
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<td>• Provide medical, vocational, or psychological rehabilitation services</td>
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<th>Role of person with disability</th>
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<td><strong>OLD APPROACH</strong></td>
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Defining Access and Inclusion

Not everyone with a disability will identify or acknowledge that he or she has a disability which further emphasizes the importance of access and inclusion. This happens for several reasons, including:

- Changes in ability may be temporary due to illness or accidents etc.
- Changes in people’s abilities can occur slowly over time, and an individual may not be cognizant of the change or self-identify his or her limitations as a disability.

However, even if a person does not identify as having a disability, he or she can still benefit from access and inclusion. Below are definitions for each of these terms from The KU Research & Training Center on Independent Living:

**Accessible** describes the nature of accommodations for people who have a disability. Say an *accessible parking space* rather than *handicapped parking* or *disabled restroom*. **Accessible** also describes products and services for people with vision or hearing disabilities, such as when a hospital provides patient education materials in large print or a university adds captions to a recruitment video. **Handicapped** has negative connotations because it suggests that obstacles to participation are in the person rather than in the environment.

**Inclusion** is perhaps best known for its role in public school programs, though the concept has a wider significance. It means that people with disabilities are considered full citizens, with equal opportunity to participate in community life. As the largest minority in the U.S., people with disabilities should also be included in conversations about diversity.⁵

In the best of all possible worlds, accessibility should be transparent, not “special,” and part of the museum’s overall, universal design.

**People-First Language**

The use of people-first language helps create an inclusive environment. The language focuses on the individual, not on the disability. By using people-first language you are considering the whole person and not the disability as the primary, defining characteristic.

Below are examples of people-first language provided from the KU Research & Training Center on Independent Living.⁶ This is not a comprehensive list.

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⁵ “Disability Portrayal Issues/Media,” The KU Research & Training Center on Independent Living, [http://rtcil.org/products/media](http://rtcil.org/products/media)

As you can see, terms such as “handicap” and “hearing impaired” are no longer used and are considered insensitive. Instead of using the phrase “handicap parking,” use the phrase “accessible parking.” People who are Deaf or hard of hearing consider the term “hearing impaired” offensive.

Some people within the Deaf community consider themselves members of a cultural and linguistic minority. They refer to themselves as Deaf with a capital "D."

People with disabilities may use the words “disabled” and “crip” to refer to themselves. They would also be likely to say, "I am blind," or "I am a paraplegic." Such self-identifying language can be part of disability culture and is sometimes used in disability humor. **However, people without disabilities should not use this terminology.**
Keep in mind each person has his or her own preference regarding how they wish to identify. **If you do not know, ask the person his or her preference.**

Here is another great resource on inclusive language developed by Emerson College.  

**General tips when working with people with disabilities**

Here are some useful tips when interacting with people with disabilities, from the KU Research & Training Center on Independent Living:  

1. Put the person first, not his or her disability. Use *person with a disability, woman with multiple sclerosis or a child who has an intellectual disability*. This “person-first language” puts the focus on individuals, not their functional limitations. Labeling a person (for example, *an autistic*) dehumanizes him and equates a person with a condition. Think people first, too, for indicating disability groups, such as *people who have cerebral palsy*.

2. Emphasize abilities, not limitations. For example, *uses a wheelchair or uses a communication device* rather than *confined to a wheelchair or unable to speak*. In reality, wheelchairs and other assistive devices represent independence for their users, not a burden. To emphasize capabilities, avoid negative words that portray the person as passive or suggest a lack of something, such as *victim, invalid or defective*. While the term *disability* itself implies a negative, it is the most objective term we have in English.

3. Do not focus on a disability unless it is essential to a story. Avoid tear-jerking human-interest stories about incurable diseases, congenital disabilities or severe injury. Focus instead on matters that affect the quality of life for those same individuals, such as accessible housing and transportation, affordable health care, employment opportunities and discrimination. Focus on personal characteristics that are not related to disability, such as artist, professional, mother, etc.

4. Bypass condescending euphemisms. Terms such as *special, handicap able, differently abled* and *challenged* reinforce the idea that people cannot deal honestly with their disabilities. While *special* is used in the names of some educational programs and organizations, the use of *special needs* is offensive to many adults with disabilities, who want to be treated like everyone else in their community. *Special* also implies a paternalistic need to be taken care of, which is frequently not true. Just say *children with disabilities*.

5. Do not portray successful people with disabilities as heroic overachievers or long-suffering

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7 “Portrayal Issues,” The KU Research & Training Center on Independent Living,  
[http://rtcil.org/products/media/guidelines](http://rtcil.org/products/media/guidelines)
saints. Every human faces challenges in life. Even though the public may find such portrayals inspirational, these stereotypes raise false expectations for people with disabilities.

6. Avoid sensationalizing and negative labeling. Saying afflicted with, crippled with, victim of or suffers from portrays individuals with disabilities as helpless objects of pity and charity. State the facts in neutral terms, saying a person who has AIDS. Avoid emotional descriptors such as unfortunate or pitiful.

7. Do not equate disability with illness. People with disabilities can be healthy, though they may have chronic diseases such as arthritis, heart disease, or diabetes. People who had polio and experienced after-effects have post-polio syndrome; they are not currently experiencing the active phase of the virus. Also, do not imply disease if a person’s disability resulted from anatomical or physiological damage (for example, a person with spina bifida). Finally, do not refer to people with disabilities as patients unless their relationship with their doctor is under discussion, or if they are referenced in the context of a clinical setting.

8. Respect the person. Do not use offensive words such as retard, freak, lame, subnormal, vegetable, or imbecile. If you maintain the dignity and integrity of each individual, there is no need to panic about being politically correct. When appropriate, you may ask a person how she prefers you to describe her disability. While some common phrases can be hurtful, such as blind as a bat, it’s fine to use everyday expressions like See you later.”

9. Don’t be afraid to make a mistake.

10. If someone with a disability is accompanied by another individual, address the person with a disability directly rather than speaking through the other person.

11. Expect diversity of preferences and opinions.

12. Always be very clear about what visitors can expect when you are beginning to facilitate a tour. Share information including which gallery spaces will be visited, the duration of the tour, what participants can expect to do on the tour, etc.

Tips for interacting with people who are blind or have low vision

- Identify yourself when you approach a person who is blind. If a new person approaches, introduce him or her. Not everyone recognizes voices or remembers them. Do not shout. Most blind people have normal hearing. Face the person and speak directly to him or her. Use a normal tone of voice.
- Identify yourself when entering a room and let the blind person know when you are leaving. Do not leave a blind person talking to an empty room, or standing alone in empty space.
- It is appropriate to touch the person’s arm lightly when you speak so that he or she knows you are speaking to him or her.
• Never push, pull, or grab a blind person. This can be frightening and it is often embarrassing.
• If you are offering direction, be as specific as possible, and point out obstacles in the path of travel.
• Alert people who are blind or have low vision to posted information.
• Never pet, talk to or otherwise distract a service dog unless the owner has given you permission.
• Don’t hesitate to use words like “see” and “look.”
• Don’t use hand signals or gestures.

**Multiple Disabilities**

Many of the participants who might come on tours may have multiple disabilities. Participants may have various disabilities, including the following:

- People with physical disabilities; this may include wheelchair users
- People who are Deaf/Blind
- People who are Neurodiverse*
- People with cognitive disabilities

*Neurodiversity is a concept where neurological differences are to be recognized and respected as any other human variation. These differences can include those labeled with Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyscalculia, Autistic Spectrum, Tourette Syndrome, and others.

Here are a few things to keep in mind:

**People with physical disabilities; this may include wheelchair users**

- Respect the individual’s personal space: personal space includes a person’s wheelchair, crutches, or other mobility aid. Never move someone’s crutches, walker, cane, or other mobility aid without permission.
- Do not push a person’s wheelchair or grab the arm of someone walking with difficulty without first asking if you can help.
- When speaking for more than a few minutes to a person using a wheelchair, try to find a seat for yourself so that the two of you are at eye level.
- When speaking with someone with a speech impairment, don’t pretend to understand if you do not. Ask the person to repeat what was said.
People who are Deaf/Blind

“Deafblind” doesn’t always mean totally deaf and blind. Most people may have some or very limited or poor vision. Some may be hard of hearing or profoundly deaf.

- To get a deafblind person’s attention, gently touch his or her shoulder, arm or hand. Give the deafblind person time to find where you are. Letting the person put his or her hand on yours may help. Waving hands may not help because he/she may not be able to see you. Persons may or may not respond to voice depending on the level of hearing loss. Do not grab the deaf-blind client’s arm to guide; offer to guide first.
- Always identify yourself every time! A deafblind person’s vision may be bad enough that he/she can’t see who you are easily nor read your name tag. Persistent hearing loss may prevent him or her from recognizing you by voice or spoken name. Print your name and role (“Judy – docent”) in thick marker on a card to show him/her.
- Always directly inform the deafblind person of your arrival and leaving. Don’t assume that he or she knows you are there or not.
- Don’t stand in front of a light source or window, as the person will not be able to see your face due to backlighting. Position yourself where light falls on you and not in his or her eyes.
- Some deaf-blind people are partially sighted, and it can be hard for them to focus on an object and locate it visually. When talking about an object, help them to understand what it is you’re talking about by describing it clearly, and maybe even by letting them touch the object itself.
- Deaf-blind people can be sensitive to strong body odor, so personal hygiene is important. Use unscented personal care products. Do not wear perfume/cologne; some deaf-blind individuals may be sensitive and allergic.
- If handouts or brochures are provided on the tour, inform the visitor. Do not decide for the person who is deaf-blind, but rather ask the deaf-blind visitor if he or she wants handouts or other written material, to be interpreted or read.
- A person who is deaf/blind may be accompanied by a tactile interpreter or a support service provider (SSP.) When communicating with a person who is deaf/blind, address him or her directly, not the interpreter or SSP.
People who are Neurodiverse

- People with perceptual or “sensory overload” problems may become disoriented or confused if there is too much to absorb at once. Provide information gradually and clearly. Reduce background noise if possible.
- Use concrete terms and repeat simple questions. Avoid long strings of verbal instructions. People with autism may have problems remembering sentences with sequences.
- Allow time for responses
- Give lots of praise
- Do not attempt to physically block stereotypic behaviors such as rocking or hand flapping.
- Avoid sudden transitions. Give people warning before moving to another activity.
- Remember that each individual who is neurodiverse is unique and may act differently from others.

People with cognitive disabilities

- Treat adults with cognitive disabilities as adults.
- When speaking to someone who has a cognitive disability, try to be alert to his or her responses so that you can adjust your method of communication, if necessary. For example, some people may benefit from simple, direct sentences or from supplementary visual forms of communication, such as gestures, diagrams, or demonstrations.
- Don’t pretend to understand if you do not. Ask the person to repeat what was said.
- In conversation, people with cognitive disabilities may respond slowly, so give them time.
- Avoid sudden transitions. Give people warning before moving to another activity.
Chapter Two: Defining Terms and Accommodations

People who are blind are able to understand, describe, and create artworks using visual concepts. There is a spectrum of blindness. To help us understand the range of visual functions, below are definitions of blindness.

Terms are taken from the American Foundation for the Blind:  

- **Visual impairment/visual disability** is "a term used for both people who are blind and those who have low vision. “Additional factors influencing visual impairment may be contrast sensitivity, light sensitivity, glare sensitivity, and light/dark adaptation. The term includes conditions ranging from the presence of good usable vision to low vision or the absence of any sight at all – total blindness. The most common conditions are associated with aging: glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration, and diabetic retinopathy. It is vision that cannot be fully corrected by ordinary prescription lenses, medical treatment, or surgery.

- **Legal blindness** is a level of vision loss that has been legally defined to determine eligibility for benefits. In the United States, this refers to a medically diagnosed central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the best possible correction, and/or a visual field of 20 degrees or less. Often, people who are diagnosed with legal blindness still have some usable vision.

- **Low vision** is used to refer to “a person who has measurable vision but has difficulty accomplishing or cannot accomplish visual tasks even with prescribed corrective lenses but who can enhance his or her ability to accomplish these tasks with the use of compensatory visual strategies, low vision devices, and environmental modifications” (Corn & Lusk, 2010, p. 4-5).

- **Total blindness** refers to an inability to see anything with either eye.

- **Vision loss** refers to individuals who have trouble seeing, even when wearing glasses or contact lenses, as well as to individuals who are blind or unable to see at all.”

Additionally, please note the following about the term **visually impaired**: “This is a general term that describes a wide range of visual functions, from low vision to total blindness. It is generally considered acceptable, although, like the term hearing impaired, some may object to it because it describes the condition in terms of a deficiency.”

In this manual, and in all of the Nelson-Atkins’ programming and publications, the museum opts to use “blind”, or “people who have low vision.”

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Accommodations

For those who have difficulty accessing visual information, accommodations include large print and Braille; verbal and audio description; tactile and aural experiences; and low-vision devices, such as magnifiers, CC-TV, computer screen reading software, and other assistive technologies.

During group tours or other structured programming, accommodations include:

- Adjustments in pace and content.
- Allowing extra time for transitions in activity or location.
- Keeping the group size small, and modifying light and sound levels.
Chapter Three: Mobility Awareness—Sighted Guide Technique

Sighted guide, originally developed for people who are blind, can also be helpful for people with low vision, or people who need balance or mobility support.

Basic technique: the person who is blind or has low vision holds the guide's arm lightly above the elbow and allows the guide to walk one-half step ahead. This allows him or her to feel and follow the guide's movements.

Remember:

- Don’t assume that help is needed. Always ask before providing assistance.
- Never push, pull, or grab a blind person. This can be frightening, and it’s often embarrassing.
- Don’t shout. Most blind people have normal hearing. Speak clearly and strongly if you know that an older visually impaired person also has a hearing problem.
- Introduce yourself. Not everyone recognizes voices or remembers them.
- Identify yourself when entering a room and let the blind person know when you are leaving. Don’t leave a blind person talking to an empty room.
- Don’t leave a blind person standing alone in an open space. Indicate a stationary object or wall, counter or seat as a point of reference.
- Give explicit directions to a blind person, such as “on your left,” “to the right of your plate,” “three blocks north.”
- Don’t use hand signals.

Starting Off

To begin, position yourself slightly in front of the person you are guiding. Touch the visually impaired person’s arm with your elbow on the side he or she prefers to use. He or she can then take your arm above the elbow. If someone needs extra support for walking, bend your supporting arm parallel to the ground so he or she can apply weight to your arm. Give any guiding signals only when a change in motion is needed. Signaling early creates confusion.

Guiding through narrow passages or doors

When going through a narrow door or passage, press your guiding arm backward toward the small of your back so the other person can move in single file behind you. When coming to a door, stop first, then say whether the door opens toward or away from you, and whether it opens to the right or left. The other person can then move to the appropriate side. Open the door and proceed.

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Guiding up/down stairs, curbs, or escalators

**Stairs**: come to a stop at the edge of the first step. Indicate whether the stairs go up or down and where the location of the railing is. Some people may like to know whether there are a few or many steps. The other person will follow one stair step behind, holding your arm with one hand and the handrail with the other. Pause after completing the stairs. If the person is using a guide dog, he or she may prefer to navigate the stairs with the dog and then resume with the sighted guide.

**Curbs**: pause briefly at the very edge of the curb and say whether the curb goes up or down.

**Escalators and revolving doors**: use techniques similar to those for stairs, curbs, and doors. If the person with you is uncomfortable, use stairs or regular doors. Buildings are required to have stairs or regular doors if they have escalators or revolving doors.

**Hand-Over-Hand versus Hand-Under-Hand Technique**

Our first inclination may be to help the learner by using hand-over-hand (HOH) prompting, which is certainly effective in guiding him or her through the behavior. An even better way to support the person, though, is hand-under-hand (HUH) prompting. With HUH, we guide learners by placing our hands under their hand (or just next to their hand) as we complete the desired behavior.

Both types of support are effective in helping the learner to complete the desired behavior. We prefer hand-under-hand in most instances, though.

- **It feels more respectful.** No one likes to be forced to do anything. With HUH, we’re doing it with the person, not to the person. That builds trust, the basis for all good intervention.
- **It isn’t so pushy.** It may feel quite intrusive to the learner to be physically made to do something. For some learners, that may lead to a bit of a power struggle, with them focused more on the fact that they are being ‘made’ to do something, and less on the actual behavior we are trying to teach.
- **It gives control to the learner.** Usually when we use HUH, we are inviting them to participate. Most of us prefer that kind of autonomy.


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Chapter Four: Touring Strategies

Whole-Part-Whole Learning Strategy

Nelson-Atkins tours for people who are blind or who have low vision are designed according to the Whole-Part-Whole (WPW) learning strategy. The WPW approach offers a helpful framework or “mental scaffolding” for learning. It was developed to combine theory and best practices in the design of educational programs. The model is meant to mirror the natural whole-part-whole rhythm in learning.

The steps in the WPW learning strategy are outlined in The Adult Learner by Malcolm S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton III, and Richard A. Swanson, a book that has been described as a classic in adult education and human resource development.

Learners are exposed to the first “whole,” in which they are prepared for new instruction by being presented a whole picture or an overarching idea or theme. This clear, learner-oriented introduction also serves to motivate learners and provide context for learning.

Then, learning focuses on the “parts”— what has been defined as the details of knowledge, expertise, and activity. After learners have mastered the specific, structured material, it is time to return to the “whole.” The second “whole” helps learners place their newly mastered knowledge or skills in context. In many cases, the whole cannot truly be understood (or, in the case of skills, performed) without an understanding and proficiency of the individual parts, so the return to the whole allows the learner a second chance to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the whole concept.

The WPW learning strategy is a particularly useful template for presenting difficult and complex educational content to people who are blind or who have low vision because they cannot see a visual relationship between whole to parts. The model is effective because it gives learners a cognitive overview of what they are about to learn, drills down to the specifics, and then integrates the new knowledge or skills into a broader framework.

One example of WPW strategy in the context of tours for people who are blind or visually impaired

1. Discussion of the gallery and its theme
2. Exploration of object(s)
3. Discussion the object(s) in relationship to gallery’s theme

WHOLE
Docent introduces the whole gallery by discussing the physical space of the gallery and the theme or art movement represented in the space.
PART
Once the gallery is introduced, docent focuses in on individual work(s) of art to reveal the characteristics of a particular theme.

WHOLE
Once details of the work are understood, docent then returns to the larger context of work(s) by discussing the object’s relationship to the theme of the gallery.

**A Journey of Discovery**

As other tours designed for our sighted visitors, *Art Beyond Sight* tours should be approached as a “journeys of discovery,” whenever possible. When exploring objects, don’t “tell” what can be “discovered.” When investigating objects through guided touch or verbal descriptions, for example, provide an overall description of the object but let your audience discover the details through touch and questioning strategies. Likewise, when you introduce a gallery’s theme, don’t give away characteristics of a particular style that guests can discover on their own. This concept will be further explained during tour practice.

**Group Size**

In order to create the best experience for our guests, it is important to keep group size small. Each docent should be assigned no more than three visitors.

**The Importance of Introductions**

The introduction is the starting point of any tour and, when done properly, sets the stage for the rest of the tour. It orients learners by providing them with a sense of purpose, a tone of interaction, and an awareness of who NAMA is as an institution. It also provides an opportunity to handle logistical considerations.

In alignment with the Whole-Part-Whole teaching strategy, the introduction allows the visitor to understand the “whole” of the tour, for it provides a framework and focus, and also creates a clear understanding of what the tour will be. What are the big ideas of the tour? How many galleries will you visit? What will be done in each gallery? Do visitors understand what is expected of them? Is it clear that the tour will be participatory, and that their input on the tour is desired?

**Asking Questions about Guest’s Blindness or Low Vision**

Do not be shy about asking visitors question about their vision in order to gauge their ability level. Sample questions:

- *In order to best serve your needs, may I ask a few questions about your vision?*
- *How many of you are blind? How many of you have some vision?*

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• What is your best area of vision?
• Do you have any visual memory of color or light?

Orient the Visitor during the Introduction and Use of Tactile Floorplan Diagram

IMPORTANT: In addition to your standard introduction you should:

1. Meet your group at their point of entry (Entrance from the garage, Bloch Information Desk, etc.), move to a quiet area, and situate your visitors in the space. Whenever possible, ask questions that allow visitors to “discover” the space by using their senses. Sample questions:
   • By listening to the sound here, what can you tell about the space you are in right now?
   • What are the sound levels in this space? Can you hear noise from the museum store or activity at coat check?
   • For those of you who have partial sight, how would you describe the light in this space?

2. Give a verbal description of the space you are in to help orient people. Start with a brief description of the interior architecture and then convey the materials, space, and forms of the space.

3. Sit the group down and use a tactile floorplan diagram, designed specifically for that tour, which will make clear what their journey through the museum will look like for that day. In addition to the overall floor plan, small raised dots will indicate their point of entry and the galleries they will be visiting.

Example of a tactile floorplan diagram for Modern American Art (1940’s-1970s) tour.
Traveling Through the Museum
Guide your visitors from one space to the next by Sight Guided Technique discussed above.

As you move from one gallery space to another:

- Give a brief verbal description of the spaces you pass through, even if they are not on the tour. A few words are enough and will give visitors a sense of their journey and scope of the exhibition or museum. Incorporate multisensory elements whenever possible: *Do you notice a change in acoustics as we walk down this pathway?*
- Notify guests when there is a change in the floor level: *As we walk down this pathway you will notice a sudden slant downwards.*
- Avoid an overload of different kinds of information. Keep the initial verbal description separate from information about historical context.

Individual Gallery Strategy

When entering a new gallery, think **Whole-Part-Whole:**

**WHOLE**—Docent introduces whole gallery

**PART**—Once the gallery is introduced, docent focuses in on individual work(s) of art.

**WHOLE**—Once details of the work are understood, docent then returns to the larger context of work and the theme of all the works in the gallery.
Chapter Five: Accessibility Tools for People who are Blind or who have Low Vision

People who are blind or who have low vision can use a variety of tools and strategies to access meaning in art. Below is a list of tools and strategies utilized on Art Beyond Sight tours.

Guided Touch

For many people who are blind or who have low vision, touch is the primary way to access information about a work of art and to help create a mental image of an object. On Art Beyond Sight tours at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, touching one to two works is at the center of each tour experience.

In addition to touching original works of art, tactile experiences include: replicas, props, and tactile diagrams. These alternatives will be discussed below.

Facilitating a Guided Touch Experience

When leading a guided touch experience, think **Whole-Part-Whole:**

WHOLE—Docent reads general information off the label and then gives an overall description of the object.

PART—Visitors touch object and discover and discuss the individual parts of the object. Docent paraphrases comments of visitors, asks questions, and scaffolds in information when appropriate.

WHOLE—Docent and visitors discuss the larger context and meaning of the object and then relate it to the theme of the whole gallery.

Guidelines for Facilitating a Guided Touch Experience

- IMPORTANT: Only designated objects in the tour document may be touched.
- Visitors must wear gloves at all times when touching object. Gloves can be found in the Volunteer Work Room.
- When you are about to touch an object, guide individuals hands to the object to be explored. Use the hand-under-hand technique discussed above, whenever possible.
- When necessary, give specific directions: *When you touch this object please do not pull down on it.*
- While visitors explore a work, encourage dialogue and ask questions to deepen the exploration. See example below.
- While one or two people are exploring by touch, give background verbally to others waiting.
- Be aware of the pedestal height and the object scale relative to the viewer.
- It is ideal if visitors can reach all parts of the object. If not, provide verbal description to fully enable visitors to understand the rest of the work. Tactile diagrams (see below) may also be used to “complete” the description of the object.
- IMPORTANT: In a guided touch tour, like a verbal-description tour, you must allow additional time for all visitors to process tactile experiences. Do not rush the experience!

Example of a Guided Touch Experience conversation.¹³

DOCENT: Ok, here we are and we are in front of another sculpture by the artist Giacometti. This one is called Spoon Woman, and it’s another bronze sculpture. It was made in 1926 to 1927. Again, it’s on a museum base that’s about two feet high. And then the sculpture itself is about 56 inches high. And it is an abstracted figure.

DOCENT: Let’s have Dennis start right in the center, and I think we can all touch it at the same time, Doris at the back of it, Dennis is at the front, and Ann on the side. What is your first impression?

DORIS: I feel like I’d like to roll up inside the middle.

DOCENT: Seems very inviting?

DORIS: Yes, a very attractive shape.

DOCENT: What about the texture of this compared to the texture of the dog that we saw?

DENNIS: Well, this is a smooth texture. And if this is the head, you mentioned that there’s an Egyptian eye up here, the whole thing reminds me kind of an African carving.

DOCENT: And in fact Giacometti and many other sculptors who were working in the pre-World War I time and they were very interested in Africa and Oceanic Art.

Other Tactile Tools in your Toolbox

In addition to the touching of actual objects in the Nelson-Atkins collection, we also encourage you to use other tactile materials to bring objects to life.

Replicas, Facsimiles, and Props

Use three-dimensional props and replicas of the objects depicted in a work of art to make it accessible to visitors who are blind or visually impaired.

Use sample boards/canvases to replicate materials or painted texture found in objects.

Examples of a capital facsimile from the *Art as Architecture* tour.

**Tactile Diagrams**

Tactile diagrams translate images into a tactile language. They are **not** exact relief reproductions of visual images. Tactile diagrams allow people access to the visual information in works of art, maps, architectural and other diagrams, and three-dimensional objects and spaces. In most cases, the tactile diagram is a simplified reproduction of the original.

As previously discussed, use a Tactile Floorplan Diagram, designed specifically for that tour to orient visitors in the space, for that diagram will make clear what their journey through the museum will look like for that day.

Use tactile drawings of a painting and other art works during verbal descriptions and guided touch experiences. See below for more details.

Example of a tactile diagram from *Modern American Art (1940’s-1970s)* tour
How are Tactile Diagram Reproductions made?
The easiest method of reproduction is to use microcapsule paper and a Tactile Image Enhancer. The photocopied image on microcapsule paper passes through the Tactile Image Enhancer, which heats the paper, causing the black lines and patterns to rise. Only the black areas will rise because these areas attract the most heat. The untreated areas of the page remain flat and smooth.

Practical Considerations for Using Tactile Diagrams

- IMPORTANT: Make sure all participants get a diagram of their own. Remember to provide a hard surface, such as a clipboard or piece of cardboard, for each member of the tour.
- Tactile diagrams should always be used with narratives that guide the user through the diagram in a logical and orderly manner. In addition, the narrative provides art-historical information and a detailed description of the actual work, which give meaning to the tactile translation of the object in the diagram.
- In general, a narrative should follow this Whole-Part-Whole teaching strategy:
  1. Convey the standard information including artist, title, date, mediums, dimensions, and the custodian or location of the work.
  2. Give a general description of the subject matter and color or qualities of the medium.
  3. Cue the user that the tactile narrative is about to begin.
  4. At this point, you may begin guiding the user’s hands through the diagram. Always start at the diagram’s outer edges, not with an object in the center. In a representation of a two-dimensional work, start with the background and move forward toward the foreground, or vice versa, but do not start in the middle. In a representation of a sculpture, begin with the figure’s head, and move down, or begin at the figure’s feet, and move up. In representations of architecture, begin with the informational icons. After exploring the compass point and the human-scale indicator, move to the entrance arrow and doorway. Then enter the building.
  5. The narrative should guide the user through the diagram in an inch-by-inch path. Always move from one area to an adjacent area. Do not jump from one point to another without accounting for the diagram’s intervening areas. Explore the elements in a way that encourages an understanding of the whole.
  6. Make sure to paraphrase all visitor responses and ask follow-up questions to deepen the conversation.

7. After you have explored all the elements in the diagram, you can talk about the work in the same way that you would talk with a sighted viewer. Among the subjects you

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can introduce are the work’s formal features, iconography, significance, theoretical premise, patterns of intention, or any other relevant items. Finally, summarize the image and explain its historical importance.

- On tours, tactile diagrams can complement a guided touch experience. For example, a tactile diagram of a whole object can be used when a sculpture is too large for a visitor to access completely through touch.

**Verbal Description of Objects**

**What is Verbal Description?**

Verbal description uses non-visual language to convey the visual world. It can navigate a visitor through a museum, orient a listener to a work of art, or provide access to the visual aspects of a performance.

**Facilitating a Verbal Description Experience**

When doing verbal descriptions think, Whole-Part-Whole:

**WHOLE**

Docent reads general information off the label and then gives an overall description of the object.

**PART**

Docent discusses details about the work, incorporating questions and input from visitors.

**WHOLE**

Docent and visitors discuss the larger context and meaning of the object and how relates it to the theme of the whole gallery.

**Engaging your Audience and Keeping the Conversation Audience-Centered**

- During the verbal description, elicit audience responses by asking questions and including your audience in the verbal description process.
- After the description of the work, ask your audience if any adjustments need to be made.
- Continue to elicit feedback throughout your discussion, and modify tour description to the needs and interests of your audience.
For Groups with Sighted and Blind Individuals

- Give verbal description first to create equal opportunity for further interpretation and discussion.
- Include everyone in the verbal description process. Elicit responses from visitors with sight by using open-ended and directed questioning. This creates an engaging atmosphere. At the end of each description, paraphrase and summarize responses.

Verbal Descriptions Step-by-Step

1. General Overview
   - Open with the following information: artist, nationality, date, mediums, collection or owner. This provides the same information available to sighted viewers and places the work in historical context.
   - Provide the following visual information in a sequence.
   - First, give general overview of the work. Describe what is being represented in the work.
   - Next, describe the composition and give the overall impression of the work. Include mood or atmosphere, if appropriate. IMPORTANT: Be objective and avoid imposing your subjective feelings about a work of art.
   - Orient the viewer with directions. Use positions of the numbers on a clock.

   **General Overview Example**

   In this portrait of Philip IV, we see the full figure of the king when he was about twenty-three years old. His body is more than 6 feet tall and he dominates the frame, standing almost directly in the center, with a strong light on his face and body. The interior setting shown in the painting is mostly in shadow and contains few objects.


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2. Provide Vivid Details
   - After giving an overview of the work, the description should become more vivid and particularized.
   - Focus on important details. Give them in sequence.
   - Allow visitors to have their own opinions and to come to their own conclusions.

3. Focus on Style
   - Describe features that identify the style of a particular audience, school movement, period or region. Mention brushwork, tone and color, choice of motifs, and subject treatment.
   - Discuss how these components contribute to the whole.
4. Describe the Importance of Technique
   - Describe the relationship between the elicited context and the medium, if applicable.
   - Help your audience understand the relationship between the style/meaning and the choice of media.
   - Assess audience interest in the technical information. **Do not lose your audience in too much detail!!**

5. Explain Concepts and Terms
   - Explain art terms and pictorial conventions such as perspective, focal point, picture foreground, and background.
   - Avoid ambiguous or figurative expression that will have little meaning or will be taken literally by people without sight. Example: *Light falls on the figure.*
6. **Refer to the Other Senses as Analogues for Vision**
   - Try to translate a visual experience into another sense. Example: *The robe is painted a very bright, happy yellow like the warmth of the sun on your skin.*
   - Refer to the sense of touch when describing a surface of a sculpture or material. Example: *The Brancusi sculpture has a glass-like surface.*
   - These components may be an integral part of the work’s formal values, as well as of its meaning.

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7. **Explain Intangible Concerts with Analogies**
• To construct a helpful analogy, choose concepts from everyone’s common experience. Example: This figure is painted by Picasso in the Cubist style and looks like a bottle that has just been shattered.
• Use analogies to explain visual phenomenon, such as clouds and shadows. Example: The clouds in this painting appear to be light and airy like a soft, clean, fluffy cotton ball.

8. **Provide Historical and Social Context**
   • After you have exhausted the discussion using verbal description, talk about the larger context in which the work was created. This could include political meaning, social function, ritual or religious function, and art historical influences.
   • Describe the painting in the context of the whole gallery. This may reveal importance about the painting’s meaning, as well as its relationship to other works in the gallery or exhibition.

9. **Practicing Your Verbal Descriptions**
   • To refine your verbal descriptions, record yourself and play it back. Did you follow the Whole-Part-Whole model? How could it be improved?
   • Practice in front of a small group of docents who are blindfolded. Get feedback and revise language, word choice, metaphors, and similes.
Other Non-Touch Tools to Consider

Encourage Understanding through Re-enactment and Kinesthetic Movement

Examples of ways to include re-enactment and kinesthetic movement:

- Instruct visitors to mimic a pose. This allows visitors directly to perceive formal characteristics such as symmetry and asymmetry, open or closed forms, implied action or rest, smooth or angular lines, or degree of engagement with the viewer.
- Have visitors mimic the brushstroke that it took to make a painting. Have visitors recreate a form found in modern art using their arms and bodies.
- IMPORTANT: Some re-enactments and movement activities may require that more than one docent be present.

Example of re-enactment.
Sound and Drama

Sound can enrich the sensory experience of art and aid in conveying concepts to individuals who are blind or who have low vision.

Use of Music in the Galleries

Period music in galleries can evoke specific ages and regions. For example, Renaissance or Baroque music, African drums, or medieval church bells can provide a sensory understanding of a work of art and its context.

Sound Images

Art Beyond Sight’s Art History Through Touch and Sound Encyclopedia contains interpretive sound compositions called Sound Images. They combine sounds, music, and narration to create aural equivalents of a particular artwork or an artistic style.

Example of Sound Images, in manuscript form, found on the Art Beyond Sight website: http://www.artbeyondsight.org/handbook/acs-sounddrama.shtml

ABS THEME MUSIC PLAYS

In the next few minutes, we will give you a surreal experience in sound.

OCEAN WAVES LAPPING

Ahhh. the beach. Waves gently lapping. The sun hangs high in the sky...

In surrealism, objects are both very realistic, and very fantastic, meaning unreal and imaginary. For instance, these ocean waves. They look like... I'll just reach down...

SLURPING LIQUID

Mmmm. Red wine. So...a red wine ocean. That's surreal.

WAVES CONTINUE

TICKING clock FADES IN

And wait a second. The sun. It's really the round face of clock. And it's ticking.

TICKING IS LOUDER

DOORBELL AND KNOCK ON DOOR AT LEFT

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There's a door over there on the beach.

Another characteristic of surrealism is the absurd juxtaposition of objects, which means putting things next to each other that don't normally go together.

Like a door on a beach.

**DOORBELL AND KNOCK ON DOOR AGAIN.**

Excuse me. I guess I better open it.

**DOOR OPENS**

**ELEPHANT TRUMPETS**

**DOOR SLAMS SHUT**

Whoa! in a surreal world, when there’s a knock on the door, something unexpected and impossible is probably on the other side.

**BABY LAUGHING AT RIGHT**

Ahh. There’s a baby playing in the sand.

But in surrealism realistic objects transform into things that cannot exist in reality. For example, the wonderful laugh of this baby. It seems to be transforming even as I speak.

**BABY SLOWLY MORPHS INTO GROWL**

Whew. Scary baby. And surreal. Surrealism presents images of terrible beauty, images that both attract us and shock us.

**ALL SOUNDS FADE OUT**

In painting or in sound, surrealists create compositions that combine all these characteristics. The result is an experience for the audience that does not make sense, literally. But that’s the goal of surrealism... to work on the level of dreams or the subconscious mind.

**Examples of Other Sound Images**

You can find Sound Image compositions in volumes of Art Beyond Sight’s *Art History through Touch and Sound Encyclopedia* (http://www.artbeyonsight.org/ahtts/). Some compositions are about specific works of art, others convey the aesthetic properties of a style of art.

Examples of compositions.

- In *The Building Blocks of Art* - "Building Blocks"
IMPORTANT: Music and drama will not be appropriate or possible for every work of art. Also, remember that people who are blind or visually impaired enjoy, study, and professionally perform arts such as drama and music.

Use of Poetry

Consider using poetry or creative verbal descriptions when interpreting of works. Groupthink poems can add variety to a tour and allow the group to build meaning together.

Example: Your group is touching Noguchi’s Six Foot Energy Void. All visitors have touched the sculpture and have contributed comments. To wrap up the conversation, go around the group and ask each participant to speak one word or phrase that best sums up the work of art. Write down poem, if desired, and read back to visitors.

Use of Hand Magnifier or CCTV Camera/Magnifier

If you have people with some vision on your tours, consider using a hand-held magnifying glass or the CCTV Camera/Magnifier in the galleries on your tours.

About the camera/magnifier: High definition allows your guests to experience vivid colors and contrast, giving them an enlarged, clear picture. Its small footprint and lightweight design provide easy portability on a cart into the galleries. A 13.3” display offers a large field of view. The camera is battery-operated with six hours of continuous usage.

Considerations for CCTV Camera/magnifier Usage

- While the camera is easy to use, prior training is mandatory.
- Most tours involving the camera, should have two docents. One docent should lead the discussion, while the second docent operates the camera.
- Incorporate the use of the camera into your touch tour and verbal description experiences. Weave observations made by sighted visitors into the conversation.
- IMPORTANT: The camera must be at least three feet away from a work of art when in use.
• The camera is currently stored in David’s office. It must be charged before use. If using a camera on a tour, please contact David two days before the date of the tour and he will charge it for you.
Chapter Six: Self-Reflection and Tour Evaluation Form

Because this tour has been completely redesigned, it is imperative that we get your feedback after you lead one of these new tours. Please use the Art Beyond Sight Tour Feedback Form found in a folder on David’s door. Once completed, return to the same folder. Thank you and enjoy the tour!
Chapter Seven: Seven Art Beyond Sight Tour Outlines

IMPORTANT: The seven Art Beyond Sight tour outlines below are rough drafts and will need to be tested out and rewrote in the months to come.

Tour 1: The Human Figure in Ancient Western Art

Galleries: Egypt (P1), Mesopotamia (P3), Greece (P3)

Time: 75 minutes

Docent(s): One or two depending on use of CC-TV camera

Materials:
- Tactile diagram of floorplan
- Gloves
- Copy of story, tactile diagrams, and incense for Mesopotamian stop.
- CC-TV camera, if more than one docent

Big Idea: In the ancient world of the West, the portrayal of the human figure is reflective of individual belief systems and values.

Outcome: Visitors will explore the representation of the human body in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome and will gain a better understanding of how the portrayal of the human figure is directly related to a culture's belief system and values.

Objects on Tour:

Egypt (P1)

1. Torso of Archibios
   Mendes, Egypt
   Ptolemaic Period
   2nd century B.C.E.
   Gray granite
Activities:
- Touch object.
- Have guests strike the pose of the sculpture to “complete” the sculpture.
  Example: Have guests stand straight up, hands clinched at their sides, left leg forward, etc.

Label copy:
One of the most powerful officials of his time, Archibios was the equivalent of Egypt’s prime minister. He dedicated this statue of himself to stand in eternal prayer in a sanctuary before the Great God of Mendes.

Mesopotamia (P3)

2. *Winged Genie Fertilizing a Date Tree*

Nimrud (Assyrian), 884-860 B.C.E.
Limestone

Activities:
- Tell story of a person coming to palace, with use of incense, to recreate setting. Then do verbal description with a tactile diagram.
- Compare and contrast with Egyptian figure.
- Use CC-TV camera, when two docents are present.

Story (needs to be shortened):
*It is now twelve days that you have been traveling. Twelve days of hot sun, endless sand, and*
the constant swish-swishing of the donkey’s tail as he trudges beside you, his back piled with offerings for the king. As the sun begins to set beyond the river, you notice a sudden gleam in the distance – it is the capital! You have reached your destination at last!

You come upon the city walls as darkness settles over the land. The mud brick walls tower above you, taller than any structure in your village. As you climb the hill toward the palace complex, you pass by gardens filled with flowering plants and unusual animals you have never seen before, all brought here for the enjoyment of the king and his court.

Entering the palace itself, you are overwhelmed by its vast size. You cross courtyard after courtyard, huge archways yawning above you while grim guards look on warily, their spear-tips glimmering in the torch light. You pass through a doorway flanked by fearsome stone beasts as tall as trees, and suddenly you are in the king’s throne room. Colorful tiles and carvings line the walls, all illustrating the king’s many victories in battle and successful hunting expeditions. The smell of incense hangs heavy in the air.

Suddenly a bearded court official appears. “Ah, good,” he says. “You have brought offerings from the temple of Inanna. Follow me, the king is preparing a ritual as we speak.” After winding through a series of darkened rooms, you finally reach a massive wooden door. It slowly creaks open, and your eyes come to rest on the colorful stone carvings that cover the walls, lit by the reddish glow of burning coals in a bronze fire basket.

Label copy:
This relief comes from one of the largest kingdoms of the ancient Near East, the Assyrian Empire. Along with many other reliefs, it lined the brick walls of the palace of Ashurnasirpal II (Ash-ur-NAS-ir-pal) in Nimrud, the 9th-century B.C.E. capital of Assyria. The relief depicts a winged genie fertilizing a highly stylized date tree; dates were prized as a nutritious and easily preserved fruit. Although the process of artificially fertilizing date trees was commonly practiced, the relief indicates that the bearing of fruit was regarded as an awesome manifestation of the power of divine forces. The exaggerated muscles of the genie’s legs and arms express this power, and the disproportionately large size of his raised right hand draws attention to his labors. The finely detailed patterning of his wings, hair and garment is typical of Near Eastern art. A cuneiform inscription across the relief records Ashurnasirpal’s many conquests, all accomplished with divine support.

Greece (P3)

3. Torso of Satyr
   Probably found in Italy
   1\textsuperscript{st} or 2\textsuperscript{nd}-century C.E. Roman copy of a 3rd or 2nd-century B.C.E. Greek sculpture
   Marble
Activities:
- Touch object.
- Compare and contrast to Egyptian and Assyrian sculptures.

Label copy:
The tail on the back of the torso reveals that this is a satyr, a carousing follower of the god of wine, Dionysos. A precise reconstruction of the figure is difficult. The evidence indicates that he was dancing as he snapped his fingers in the air and kept rhythm with a clapper under his right foot. Apparently, a nymph was seated near him preparing to join him in a dance.

4. Portrait of Roman Youth
   From Italy
   Mid-2nd century C.E.
   Marble

Activities:
- Do verbal description.
- Have guests strike pose of the figure and compare and contrast to early figures.

Label copy:
This second-century C.E. Roman portrait of a youth has many characteristics of fifth- and fourth-century B.C.E. Greek sculpture such as the shift of the boy’s weight and the idealized character of his entire body. The relatively realistic style of the head is, however, Roman. Thus the sculpture combines Greek and Roman styles. A quiver to the boy’s right suggests that he is
being identified with the god Apollo, who was often shown carrying a bow and arrows. Because in Roman Imperial times the deceased were sometimes sculpted as deities to indicate that they had become immortal, this boy’s sculpture was probably carved after his death. The ancient marble base upon which the statue stands is from Italy but was meant for another sculpture.
Tour 2: Modern American Art (1940’s-1970s)

Galleries: Abstract Expressionism (L2), Pop Art (L3), Minimalism (L4)

Time: 75 minutes

Docent(s): One docent

Materials:
- Tactile diagram of floorplan
- Gloves
- Tactile diagram of Turin
- 3D props for Still Life No. 24: Fabric curtains, plastic corn, and shade pull
- Optional: Play music on your smart phone or iPad from the periods presented: Jazz in Abstract Expressionism, popular commercial jingles in Pop art, Steve Reich in Minimalism

Big Idea: American art from the 1940s to the 1970s reflects the time and place in which it was made.

Outcome: Visitors will explore three American art movements from the 1940s to the 1970s (Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, and Minimalism) and better understand that art reflects the time and place in which it was made.

Objects on Tour:

Abstract Expressionism (L2)

1. Wagon III
David Smith
1964
Welded and Cast Steel

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Activities:
- Touch object.
- After the object has been thoroughly explored, have groups create a poem about the piece. Instructions: Go around the group and have each person say one word or phrase that best sums up the work. Comments may be written down and sent home with the group.

Label copy:
In welding steel, David Smith was a master calligrapher. *Wagon III* is a frieze of "drawn" iron signs supported by a horizontal bar half twisted in three places. At one end is a crescent moon, at the other a full circle, or sun-like shape. Between, are a six-pointed star and a diamond. The linear, celestial imagery is unique in character and theme in Smith's mature work.

Careful observation of the linear elements reveals the artist's potent yet infinitely nuanced style, which charges the entire form with a sense of personality and presence.

2. *Turin*
Franz Kline
1960
Oil on canvas

Activities:
- Verbally describe with tactile diagram.
- Have guests make gesture that mimics how the artist painted the canvas.

Label copy:
The sweeping gestural brushstrokes and dramatic black and white contrasts seen in *Turin* characterize Franz Kline's mature work. His goal was to create a dynamic equilibrium through asymmetry and the interaction of black and white. Close looking reveals that upon a white ground, black and white paint have been applied to the surface with equal importance. Kline used commercial house paints and brushes as large as five inches wide to create these emphatic gestures.

Named after a city in northern Italy, *Turin* evokes both architectural structures such as bridges and girders and the surging energy of the metropolis.
Pop Art (L3)

3. Life No. 24
Tom Wesselmann
1962
Acrylic polymer on board, fabric curtain

Activities:
- Do verbal description with use of 3D objects in the painting: Fabric curtains, plastic corn, and shade pull.

Label copy:
Pop artist Tom Wesselmann's *Still Life No. 24* affirms the American dream and the prosperity of the 1960s middle class. The variety, size and quantity of the fresh, canned and packaged convenience foods give evidence of agricultural abundance, factory productivity, and a thriving consumer economy. Television, with its myriad product advertisements, became a central force of cultural change.

*Still Life No. 24* is an assemblage composed of two-dimensional imagery and three-dimensional objects. Wesselmann cut images of foodstuffs and kitchen items from subway posters and other large advertisements. The plastic ear of corn is an advertising prop, acquired by the artist from a vendor on Coney Island who sold corn on the cob.

The blue curtain is of the type pictured in magazines such as Ladies' Home Journal, which promoted interior design to the middle class. Through the window, a sailboat glides along, further suggesting the good life of the American dream.

Minimalism (L4)

4. Large Stack
Donald Judd
1968
Stainless steel and amber plexiglass
Activities:
  • Touch Object

Label copy:
Donald Judd is internationally recognized as one of the most important innovators of minimal art. Minimalist sculpture is characterized by its reduced number and variety of forms and by its elimination of expressive, artistic emotion.

*Large Stack* is made up of units whose rational, geometric simplicity and systematic spatial relationships make them indistinguishable from each other. Judd uses industrial materials, in this case prefabricated stainless steel and Plexiglas sheets, as a conscious rejection of craftsmanship. There are 32 versions of Judd's stacks, representing his deliberate attempt to demystify the work of art as a unique, precious object.

**AND/OR**

*Aluminum and Magnesium Plain*
Carl Andre
1969
Aluminum and Magnesium, 36 plates

Activities:
  • Do verbal description while visitors walk on object.

Label copy:
Composed of two elemental materials in a grid, *Aluminum and Magnesium Plain* is a quintessentially Minimalist object. It is neither representative nor symbolic—it simply is what it is. Like many of Carl Andre’s works, Aluminum and Magnesium Plain is a floor piece. He denies
the sculpture the privileged place of a pedestal and invites us to walk upon the tiles. In this way, the artist brings art low and humbles it.
Tour 3: Architecture as Art

Galleries: Bloch Building, plaza entrance to Bloch Building, and Nelson-Atkins Building with Kirkwood Hall

Time: 75 minutes

Docent(s): One or two depending on use of CC-TV camera

Materials:
- Tactile diagram of floorplan
- Gloves
- Corinthian and Ionic capital props
- CC-TV camera, if more than one docent

Big Idea: The Bloch Building and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art buildings are works of art. Within these two buildings, various architectural objects are showcased.

Outcome: Visitors will explore the Bloch Building, the Nelson-Atkins building, and architectural fragments found within these buildings and understand they are works of art in their own right.

Objects on Tour:

Bloch Building and Plaza Level Entrance

1. Bloch Building with Corner and Door
   Steven Holl
   2007
   Double-glazed channel glass and other materials

Activities:
- Have guests touch walls and hand rails on the way to the first stop to get a sense of the sculptural forms of the building.
• Have guests touch the corner and door, near the Plaza Level entrance, to get a sense of the different materials used in the building.

*Text description of the Bloch Building provided by the architects:*
The expansion of The Nelson Atkins Museum of Art fuses architecture with landscape to create an experiential architecture that unfolds for visitors as it is perceived through each individual's movement through space and time. The new addition, named the Bloch Building, engages the existing sculpture garden, transforming the entire Museum site into the precinct of the visitor's experience. The new addition extends along the eastern edge of the campus, and is distinguished by five glass lenses, traversing from the existing building through the Sculpture Park to form new spaces and angles of vision. The innovative merging of landscape, architecture and art was executed through close collaboration with museum curators and artists, to achieve a dynamic and supportive relationship between art and architecture. As visitors move through the new addition, they will experience a flow between light, art, architecture and landscape, with views from one level to another, from inside to outside.

The threaded movement between the light-gathering lenses of the new addition weaves the new building with the landscape in a fluid dynamism based on a sensitive relationship to its context. Rather than an addition of a mass, the new elements exist in complementary contrast with the original 1933 classical "Temple to Art.”

2. Gates of Paradise
Lorenzo Ghiberti
1425-1452
Bronze cast with guilded gold

![Gates of Paradise](image)

Activities:
• Touch bottom two panels of doors.
• CC-TV camera, if more than one docent.

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iPad Description
The Italian sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti’s monumental Gates of Paradise are a revered icon within art history. Generations of visitors, artists, and art historians have praised these gilded bronze doors for their realistic portrayal of the human figure and convincing display of receding space. Ghiberti (1378–1455) created the doors as the second of his two commissions for the Florence Baptistery. He began working on the Gates of Paradise in 1425. It took him 27 years to complete—12 years to model and cast the main reliefs and another 15 to chase, gild, and refine them. The doors were finally installed in the Baptistery’s east portal in 1452.

For more detailed information, see IPad text.

Entranceway into Nelson-Atkins Building from Bloch Lobby

3. Bronze Doors – South and East Doors
The doors depict scenes from the epic poem Song of Hiawatha by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The doors were a joint design by Thomas Wight, the building architect, and Charles Keck, designer of exterior murals. Keck primarily modeled the panels and Wight created the framing and other decoration.
1933
Bronze

Activities:
- Touch lower panels on one of the outer doors. Do not use central doors.

Label copy
Coming soon!

Nelson-Atkins Building and Kirkwood Hall

4. Kirkwood Hall Columns
Architects of Nelson-Atkins Building: Thomas and William Wight
Manufacturers of columns unknown
1933
Marble
Activities:

- If taking main stairway in Nelson-Atkins Building, have guests touch marble stairway on the way to Kirkwood Hall.
- Have guests touch base and columns.
- Use Corinthian and Ionic capital props.

Label copy:
Coming soon!
Tour 4: Life and the Afterlife in China

**Galleries:** Chinese Furniture (202), Main Chinese (229) and Temple (230), Gallery 231

**Time:** 75 minutes

**Docent (s):** One or two depending on use of CC-TV camera

**Materials:**
- Tactile diagram of floorplan
- Gloves
- Tactile diagram of Ritual Disc (Bi)
- CC-TV camera, if more than one docent

**Big Idea:** Throughout history, the Chinese created beautiful and highly crafted objects for use in life and in the afterlife.

**Outcome:** Visitors will explore and appreciate beautiful and highly crafted Chinese objects made for use in life and in the afterlife.

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**Objects on Tour:**

**Chinese Furniture (202)**

1. **Stool**
   - Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)
   - Huanghuali wood and marble seat

![Stool Image]

**Activities:**
- Touch object and verbally describe scene illustrated on marble seat.
Label copy:
This openwork wood stool imitates stools that were originally constructed out of ovals of cane bound together. Sitting on stools was considered good for posture, as the cat in this painting clearly understood.

Temple Room (230)

2. Guanyin of the Seven Seas
Liao (907-1125) or Jin Dynasty (1115-1234)
Wood with multiple layers of paint

Activities:
- Verbal description

Label copy:
Bodhisattvas are deities who, unlike Buddhas, forgo Nirvana until that time when all sentient beings shall have attained enlightenment. Of these, Guanyin became the most popular as the deity of mercy and compassion, answering prayers and protecting the faithful from catastrophe. Guanyin sits in the position of Royal Ease on a mossy rockery representing Potalaka, an island in the southern sea that is the deity's home. Originally the rockery probably continued up and around the image creating a grotto by the sea.

This image epitomizes the new humanism that begins to imbue Buddhist sculpture during the 11th and 12th centuries. The figure is majestic, yet it also exudes a benign calm and warmth that make it more approachable and emotionally appealing than earlier images.

Apart from the right forearm, the figure and base were carved from the trunk of a single tree. The paint and gessoed designs date from the 16th century, and recent scientific examination of the piece has revealed that the original surface of the face, chest and hands was flesh-colored.
3. *Chimera Tomb Guardians*
   
   Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220 C.E.)
   
   Limestone

Activities:
- Touch guardians

Label copy:
These magnificent winged felines were originally stationed on either side of a spirit road leading to an important tomb. They were probably oriented perpendicular to the lines of approach, so that their dynamic striding profiles could have been seen to full advantage by the approaching viewer. (Try looking at them from the side.) The iconographic identity of these creatures in Chinese culture is not certain; it is possible that they represent *bixie*, a supernatural creature mentioned in ancient Chinese texts as “averting evil.” The combination of wings with a feline form, however, may be non-Chinese in origin, since similar figures have a longer history in Western Asian art.

Gallery 231

4. *Ritual Disc with Dragon Motifs (Bi)*
   
   Eastern Zhou Dynasty (771-256 B.C.E.)
   
   Jade (nephrite)
Activities:
- Doerbal description of Bi with tactile diagram.
- CC-TV camera, if more than one docent

Label copy:
This disc, one of the most famous Chinese jade carvings in existence, is said to have come from royal tombs in the vicinity of the Zhou capital at Luoyang. The piece is astonishingly thinly sliced, yet the dragons possesses a three-dimensionality and vitality that belie the intractable material from which they were carved. Perforated discs known as bi were said to have been used in the worship of heaven, but it is likely that this piece was valued as much for its beauty as for any ritual role it possessed.
Tour 5: Renaissance Art and Mannerism

Galleries: Renaissance (P8) and High Renaissance/ Mannerism (P11)

Time: 75 minutes

Docent(s): One or two depending on use of CC-TV camera

Materials:
- Tactile diagram of floorplan
- Gloves
- Tactile drawing of Madonna and Child
- Tactile drawing of The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian
- CC-TV camera, if more than one docent

Big Idea: European Renaissance and Mannerist art reflects the time and place in which it was made.

Outcome: Visitors will explore 15th and 16th-century European art and gain a better understanding of how it reflects the time and place in which it was made.

Objects on Tour:

Renaissance Art (P8)

1. Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist
   Giuliano Bugiardini
   1510/1512
   Oil with traces of tempera, transferred to Masonite from wood panel

Activities:
- Do verbal description with tactile diagram.

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• CC-TV camera, if more than one docent

Label copy:
The compact, triangular arrangement of the figures in this painting is typical of the classical taste of the Italian Renaissance in the early 16th century. The circular tondo format was more commonly found in sculpture. The landscape, rather detached from the foreground figures, is rendered with calm clarity. On the right is the stall where Christ was born with Joseph depicted outside. Coming down the road are Tobias and the Archangel Raphael, possibly included because Bugiardini’s patron was a member of a confraternity devoted to the Archangel.

High Renaissance/Mannerism (P11)

2. The Flagellation of Christ
   Vincenzo Danti
   ca. 1559
   Marble

Activities:
• Touch object.

Label copy:
This is one of the finest works in the sculpture collection, and is executed in very low relief—almost like a drawing. The influence of the great 16th-century Italian artist Michelangelo (1475-1564) is evident in the flat, broad torsos of Christ and his tormentors. The small heads are in marked contrast to the muscular bodies, typical of the Italian Mannerist taste for the unexpected and inconsistent. Danti worked chiefly in Florence for the ruling dynasty, the Medici family, who were major patrons of the arts.

3. Saint Barbara
   Attributed to Germain Pilon
   ca. 1580-1585
   Marble
Activities:
- Touch Object.
- Have visitors imitate pose of Saint Barbara

Label copy:
Saint Barbara was a virgin martyr whose father sequestered her in a tower to discourage suitors. Here she is shown next to the tower, holding the hilt of a sword, the instrument of her martyrdom. The missing blade was probably made of silver. Pilon, the sculptor, is linked to the so-called School of Fontainebleau, named after the palace of Fontainebleau, a royal residence decorated by Italian artists who brought to France the elegance and refinement of Italian Mannerism. Something of this is apparent in the graceful turn of Saint Barbara's pose. The back is flat, indicating she was meant to be seen only from the front and placed against a wall or pillar or in a niche.

4. *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*
   Joachim Anthonisz Wtewael
   1600
   Oil on canvas

Activities:
- Do verbal description of object with tactile diagram.
- Have visitors imitate pose of St. Sebastian.
- Compare and contrast to Saint Barbara
- CC-TV camera, if more than one docent
Label copy:
This painting is by one of the leading Netherlandish Mannerists of the late 16th century. Typical of the Mannerist obsession with virtuosity and complexity are the twisting poses, the high finish and the obsession with detail in the rendering of the muscles. Saint Sebastian was a Roman legionary martyred for his Christian beliefs. Since he was pierced with arrows, he became the patron saint of archers. It has been suggested that this painting may have been commissioned not for a church but for a company of militia, that is, part-time gentlemen soldiers.
Tour 6: A Walk in the Park—20th Century Sculpture

Galleries: The Donald J. Hall Sculpture Park

Time: 75 minutes

Docent(s): One

Materials:
- Tactile diagram of museum and park
- Gloves
- Copy of the Parable of the Prodigal Son for Lipchitz stop (see below)
- Real shuttlecock prop for Oldenburg stop

Big Idea: The Donald J. Hall Sculpture Park contains a remarkable collection of sculptures by many of the finest modern and contemporary artists, all working in very different styles.

Outcome: Visitors will investigate works from the 20th century and gain an understanding and appreciation four major artists working in very different, personal styles.

Objects on Tour:

The Donald J. Hall Sculpture Park

1. The Large Bather
   Pierre-Auguste Renoir
   1917
   Bronze
Activities:
- Touch object.

Label copy:
Coming soon.

2. Return of the Prodigal Son
Jacques Lipchitz
1931
Bronze

Activities:
- Tell the Parable of the Prodigal Son found below.
- Touch object.

Label Copy:
Jacques Lipchitz's Return of the Prodigal Son retains a disciplined angularity derived from his early investigation of Cubism. It dates, however, from a later phase in his career, when he was occupied with organic forms and themes related to the human condition. Return of the Prodigal Son was Lipchitz's first interpretation of a biblical subject.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son
Luke 15:11-32 MUST BE SHORTENED!

There was a very rich person. He had two sons. The first son was hard working. He always obeyed his father. He was very good and nice person. But the second son was totally different from the first son. He was lazy. He did not work in his father’s field. He was disobedient to his father. He wanted to lead a gay and free life.

One day, the younger son said to his father. “Father, give me my share of property.” The father felt very sad. He divided the property. The second son took his share of property. He left home with his share. He went to a distant land. There he made a lot of friends. He spent his property lavishly on his friends, foods and drinks. He had many bad habits too. He wasted all the money. Soon he was left with no money. His friends saw this. They all deserted him one by one.
At that time, there was a famine in that land. He could not get any job. None of his friends gave him food or money. He was forced to take up a very mean job. His job was to feed the pigs. Very often he ate the food kept for the pigs. He was very sad about his present conditions. He soon began to think of his father and his brother. He said to himself, “In my father’s house, even the servants have enough food. They get good shelter too. But here, I am struggling for food and shelter. I will go back to my father. I will beg him to take me as his servant.”

So decided, the prodigal son set out for his father’s house. In the meantime, his father was always thinking of his second son. He would sit near the windows. He would look out at the road, expecting his son to return home.

One day his father saw his son coming at a distance. He ran out of his house in great joy. He met his son on the way. His son knelt down. He said, “Father, I am not fit to be your son. Take me as your servant.”

His father lifted his lovingly. He embraced him. He turned to his servants. He said, “Bring the best robe. Put it on my son. Put a ring on his fingers and shoes on his feet. Kill the fatted calf. Prepare a feast. Let us eat and enjoy. My son was lost. Now he is found.”

The elder son was returning from his work. He heard the sound of the music and dancing from his house. He asked one of his servants about it. His servant told his, “Your brother has come. Your father is rejoicing at his return. A fatted calf has been killed to prepare for a delicious feast and the celebration.”

The first son was angry. He refused to enter his house. The father came out. He begged his elder son to come in for rejoicing. The elder son said, “I have obeyed you all these years. I have done all your works. But you never gave me even a kid to enjoy with my friends. This son wasted all your money and property. And you order a fatted calf for him!”

His father replied, “My dear son, you are always with me. All my property is yours. Your younger brother was dead. Now he is alive. He was lost. Now he is found. Therefore should we not rejoice?”

The elder son understood the love behind the words of his father. He forgot everything about his younger brother. He decided to take part in the celebration. He was happy.
http://www.english-for-students.com/The-Story-of-The-Prodigal-Son.html
3. *Reclining Figure: Hand*

Henry Moore
1979
Bronze

Activities:
- Touch object

Label Copy:
Henry Moore’s sculptures reflect his affinity for natural forms such as rocks, bones, mountains and the human figure. In *Reclining Figure: Hand* he simplifies the form of a reclining female figure, allowing her sensuous curves to echo those of a landscape. Moore preferred to see his work sited outdoors against the backdrop of sky and earth, in order to underscore its relationship to nature.

4. *Shuttlecocks*

Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen
Fabricator: Merrifield-Roberts, Inc.
1994
Aluminum, fiberglass-reinforced plastic, paint

Activities:
- Touch real shuttlecock prop
- Touch object
Label copy:
The husband and wife team of Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen were commissioned in 1994 to design a sculpture for The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. They responded to the formality of the original neoclassical building and the green expanse of its lawn by imagining the Museum as a badminton net and the lawn as a playing field. The pair designed four birdies or shuttlecocks that were placed as though they had just landed on opposite sides of the net. Each shuttlecock weighs 5,500 pounds, stands nearly 18 feet tall and has a diameter of some 16 feet.
Tour 7: Noguchi

Galleries: Noguchi (L12)

Time: 75 minutes

Docent(s): One

Materials:
- Tactile diagram of floorplan
- Gloves
- Large pebble props for use with Fountain

Big Idea: Noguchi was one of the most innovative artists of the 20th century. The underlying thread in all his work is his devotion to nature. In the four works discussed, Noguchi explores the world, life-giving water, and the cosmos.

Outcome: Through the investigation of four works by Noguchi, visitors will explore and better understand the artist’s poetic contemplations about the world and its relationship to the cosmos.

Noguchi Court (L12)

1. Fountain
   Isamu Noguchi
   1987
   Basalt

Activity:
- Do verbal description while touching large pebble props.

Label copy:
Fountain is composed of two, asymmetrically sculpted basalt stones similar in size but differing in subtle configurations of form. The top surface of one stone is concave, while that of the other is convex. Water flows gently over the tops and sides of Fountain, reflecting light,
deepening the stones' color and creating a meditative sound as it reaches the bed of river rocks below.

This sculpture was inspired by tsukubai, small, stone water basins originating centuries ago and found at Japanese temples, shrines and gardens. Tsukubai were used by worshipers to ritually wash their hands before entering a sacred site. Noguchi’s *Fountain* poetically and artistically recalls the humble simplicity of tsukubai.

2. *Six-Foot Energy Void*
Isamu Noguchi
1971-1985
Swedish granite

Activities:
- Verbally describe object. Have guests create shape of sculpture with their hands and arms to better understand the whole work. Make sure visitors mimic the slight torque of the sculpture.
- Touch object.

Label copy:
During the 1970s and 1980s, Isamu Noguchi often explored the subject of the void, saying it was "like some inevitable question that I cannot answer." Regarding this work in particular, he wrote: "At the heart of the energy there must be a terrific void.... Energy and nothingness come together." The concept of the void, or the space permeating a block of stone, is important to both modern Western sculpture and Japanese philosophy. A Buddhist sutra states: "Form is emptiness and emptiness is form." In *Six-foot Energy Void*, the void defines the sculpture as much as its mass of stone. The slight torque of the sculpture's form is evidence of Noguchi's extraordinary skill as a master stone carver. *Six-foot Energy Void* is carved from a single piece of granite, and rests upon a rectangular slab of the same material.
3. *Ends*
Isamu Noguchi
1985
Swedish granite

Activities:
- Touch object.

Label copy:
*Ends* is made of nine pieces of granite arranged to form a cubic structure. Its richly textured surface, including cylindrical drill-bit voids and smooth pegs, reveals Isamu Noguchi's deep understanding of stone and sculpting techniques. On one of the four sides Noguchi used a traditional Japanese technique. He inserted bamboo into a hole and filled it with water. The expanding bamboo split the massive stone.

Noguchi explained the title: "The black cube is composed of end pieces that are cut away to get at the core of a piece of stone." However, Ends has deeper meaning. Finished three years before Noguchi's death, it is a meditation on mortality. Ends is also a fusion of the geometric, man-made form of a cube with the primal stone of nature.

4. *Mountain Landscape (Bench)*
Isamu Noguchi
1981
Basalt
Activities:

- Touch object.
- After the object has been thoroughly explored, have groups create a poem about the piece. Instructions: Go around the group and have each person say one word or phrase that best sums up the work. Comments may be written down and sent home with the group.

Label copy:

*Mountain Landscape (Bench)* reveals Noguchi's outstanding ability to combine refined carving and roughly chiseled surfaces within one work. The massive, horizontal bench was carved from a single piece of stone and rests on two stone feet.

The flat-topped form on the sculpture's upper surface suggests a great mesa or mound rising from a primal landscape. These forms relate to Noguchi's lifelong study of ancient pyramids and burial mounds, which he explored on his world travels.

Like a distinctive rock that has been carefully placed in a traditional Japanese garden, *Mountain Landscape (Bench)* also served as an aid to meditation. At Noguchi's studio in Mure, Japan, he and others rested on the bench and observed other sculptures. But here, because we must preserve art for future generations, we ask you not to sit on the sculpture.