Self-Guide to The Art Institute of Chicago
Grades 4–8

MORE FACES, PLACES, AND INNER SPACES

HOW TO USE THIS SELF-GUIDE

In the classroom, prepare your students by using the images, information, and classroom applications in the Faces, Places, and Inner Spaces teacher manual. Discuss the words that make up the title of the exhibition and teacher manual: “faces” (portraits or identities), “places” (locations, physical or imaginary), and “inner spaces” (inner beliefs or thoughts, as well as hidden spaces). What do these words mean? Have students give examples of faces, places, and inner spaces in their own lives. How do the objects in the exhibition and in this manual relate to these terms? Many of these objects relate to more than one of these terms. Ask students to provide examples and explain their answers. Explore six objects from the museum’s permanent collection on your visit, discuss how they relate to the terms faces, places, and inner spaces, and draw comparisons with objects in the exhibition and teacher manual. Each object included in this self-guide references, by thumbnail image, the Faces, Places, and Inner Spaces connection. Find the gallery locations of the self-guide objects by contacting the Elizabeth Stone Robson Teacher Resource Center (see below).

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

✧ Contact the Teacher Resource Center at (312) 443-3719 or trc@artic.edu for additional ideas on preparing your students for their visit.
✧ Divide your class in advance into smaller, chaperone-led groups. Chaperones must stay with their groups while at the museum.
✧ Photocopy this self-guide for your chaperones or students and provide them with floor plans and reproductions of the transparencies from the teacher manual.

AT THE MUSEUM

✧ Remind students that food, drinks, large bags, and umbrellas are not allowed in the galleries.
✧ Remind students to look, not touch. Touching leaves oils and residues that may damage the artworks.
✧ Make sure students bring notebooks to use as writing surfaces and to use pencils only.
Remind students not to use cases, pedestals, or walls as writing surfaces.
Consult a museum floor plan, a volunteer at an information desk, or other museum staff for assistance in finding specific galleries.
For grades 4–6, it is suggested that the teacher/chaperone lead students through the galleries and facilitate the discussion and activities outlined in this self-guide.
For grades 7–8, copies of this self-guide may be given to the students, who can go through the self-guide in small, chaperone-led groups.
FURNITURE

How do you think this piece of furniture was used?
What tells you this? What do you think would have been kept inside? (What kinds of objects would an 18th century American have wanted packed away?)

How does the Desk and Bookcase compare to Snyder's Cabinet of Four Wishes? What room or building would have housed each of these pieces of furniture? Describe these locations.

- Are these places from the past or present?
- Would they have been big or small? Formal or informal? In a rural area or in the big city?
- What other types of furniture and objects would you expect in these places?
- How do these locations compare to those depicted in The Terrace and Doris Lee's Thanksgiving?

If this desk was a person, what kind of personality do you think it would have? Some possible traits are listed below. Which parts of the furniture give it its personality? Explain your answers.
Serious  Silly  Lazy  Loud
Quiet  Hardworking  Plain  Exciting
Boring  Gentle  Strong  Weak

Do you think the traits of the furniture also apply to the person who owned the furniture? What does this piece of furniture indicate about its owner's lifestyle and values? How is a piece of furniture like a portrait of the person who owns it?

This desk and bookcase would have been one of the most important and valuable pieces of furniture in a house. What has replaced the desk and bookcase in houses today as one of our most important possessions? What does this tell us about our life-

American, Boston.
Desk and Bookcase, 1750/70.
Mahogany, red oak, and white pine
(1986.414)

Desk and Bookcase

Combination desks and bookcases were considered the most sophisticated piece of furniture that a family could own in 18th-century America. A patron's wealth and taste were reflected in both its design and decoration, and it was placed prominently in the home for friends to admire. The delicately curved drawers, mirrored doors, curved pediment (triangular shape) on top, and carved pilasters (flat columns), grapes, leaves, and flowers add to the elegance of this piece. Desks and bookcases, however, were more than decorative pieces. During a time when there were no telephones or computers, they were used daily as a place to write letters or notes to friends and family and the place where a family would file and store important papers or hide valuables in secret compartments.
American, Salado culture.
_Ritual Cache Figures_, c. 1350.
Wood, stone, plant fiber, cotton, feathers, leather, pigment (1979.17.1-11)

How do you think these objects were made? What materials were used? Where do you think the Salado people obtained these materials?

The _Ritual Cache Figures_ and Nazca Vessel both depict faces. Each face and body consists of geometric shapes and flat colors. Which colors and shapes are similar? Which are different? Which aspects of these faces and bodies appear natural? Which aspects are more unnatural or abstract?

What do these figures tell us about the "inner spaces" or beliefs of the Salado people? How do their materials, colors, and patterns relate to the sky and earth? Do these objects suggest anything about the physical place where the Salado people lived? Compare and contrast the places and inner spaces of the Salado and Nazca cultures.

Imagine that you found these objects hidden in a cave while hiking in New Mexico. Write a postcard to a friend. On one side of the postcard draw these items and on the other describe your discovery and your thoughts about their meaning. What do you think their purpose was? Why do you think the Salado people may have buried these objects? What do these objects tell us about the Salado people?

*Contact the Teacher Resource Center for gallery locations.

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**Ritual Cache Figures**

A cache is a hiding place. These objects were wrapped and hidden in a remote, dry cave and left untouched for more than 500 years until they were discovered in the early 1970s. They come from the Salado culture, which flourished in New Mexico between the 14th and 15th centuries. Brilliantly colored with mineral pigments and adorned with feathers and dyed cotton string, these were religious objects that connected the Salado people to the life-giving spirits of the earth and sky. The large wooden male figure personifies the sky. His feather necklace relates to birds: the bold black and turquoise zigzag pattern refers to lightning and the black-and-white patterns around his waist may symbolize stars and constellations. The smaller figure of stone represents the earth. The yellow ochre color and triangular pattern of her skirt may refer to corn. She was found encased in the basket, much like an unhusked ear of corn. The accompanying figures are a mountain cat, the chief animal of prey, and two serpents carved from cottonwood roots, which were messengers connecting the powerful life forces of the air, land, and water. Throwing sticks for the rabbit hunt complete the ensemble.
Shiva and Ganesha are Hindu gods. The sculptures of Shiva Nataraja (pronunciation) and Dancing Ganesha both come from India. How do these figures represent faces (people), places, and inner spaces (beliefs)?

Like Dancing Ganesha, Shiva Nataraja is surrounded by attributes (objects that identify a person). Shiva is the god of destruction and creation. List the attributes that relate to this.

How do you think both fire and water can each refer to both destruction and creation? What are the connections between destruction and creation?

How does this figure convey a sense of movement and rhythm? Describe the dance Shiva performs. Why do you think Shiva and Ganesha dance?

Shiva is Ganesha's father. What type of personality do you expect Shiva to have? Do you think his is similar to or different from Ganesha? Why?

Shiva Nataraja

This bronze sculpture represents Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction and creation. With his dance, Shiva simultaneously destroys and recreates the world, which gives order to the universe. Shiva creates the universe to the beat of the drum he holds in his right hand, while the flame in his left hand sparks the fiery ring of destruction that surrounds him. The ring of fire represents the eternal cyclical nature of life—destruction and creation, death and rebirth. The fire that destroys also purifies and, as the cycle continues, offers birth. Shiva's other hands assume mudras, or symbolic hand gestures. The raised hand means "fear not," while the other, pointing downward toward his raised foot, signals release from ignorance. Shiva's other foot, planted on the back of a demon—dwarf, stomps out ignorance. Shiva's long locks of hair divided the water that flowed down the Himalayas into what is known as the seven holy rivers of India.
Chuck Close, American (b. 1940).

**Look closely at the painting.** What shapes do you see? Slowly move away from the painting. What image do these shapes form?

**Why do you think Close painted such a large portrait?** How do you feel looking at a face that is so big? Why? Complete the following sentences, using metaphors and similes, to describe this portrait of Alex:

My eyes are as ________________________ as ________________________.
My hair is like ________________________.
My skin is as ________________________ as ________________________.
My expression is like ________________________.
My ________________________ is ________________________

than ________________________.

**Usually when artists paint portraits, they include information or details about the person's life.** Did Close include information about Alex in this portrait? What was Close trying to stress if not the sitter of the portrait? Would you want to meet this man?

**Compare this painting to two other faces—Karl Wirsum's *Screamin' Jay Hawkins* and Archibald Motley's *Self-Portrait.* These three paintings all depict artists—Alex Katz and Archibald Motley, painters, and Jay Hawkins, a musician. What details does this painting of Alex include about the sitter's artwork? How is shape and color used in all three of these paintings? How do the individual styles of the paintings affect our interpretations of the people these paintings represent?

**Alex**

Chuck Close makes large paintings of the faces of his friends and fellow artists. Alex is a portrait of the artist Alex Katz (b. 1927). Unlike conventional portraits, this painting does not provide information about Katz’s personality, nor does it give any indication that he is an artist. Rather, Close’s technique seems to be more important than his subject. Close takes a large photograph of the subject and draws a grid over the picture. Next, he makes a grid with the same number of squares on a large canvas and then paints each square one after another until the painting is complete. Instead of painting the contents of each original square exactly, he abstracts the image by using several different shapes. Amazingly, when we look at the picture from a distance, the shapes blend and portray the image of his friend’s face, and appears as a photographic likeness which appears in and out of focus.
CONTAINERS

What objects are in this box? What materials were used to create this box and its contents? Which objects are loose in the box and could move about if shaken?

What do these objects remind you of? How do the objects relate to each other? What types of places do these objects suggest? Why do you think Cornell placed these objects in a box? What special meaning do you think they held for him?

Compare Cornell's box to Richard Snyder's Cabinet of Four Wishes. How are these containers similar? How are they different? How are these objects both examples of “inner spaces”? According to Snyder, the Cabinet of Four Wishes has the power to grant wishes. Do you think that Cornell created this box as a container of wishes? If so, what might Cornell's wishes be? How do these objects represent his wishes?

Can the Cabinet of Four Wishes or Soap Bubble Set also be considered portraits? Why or why not? Who do they represent?

Soap Bubble Set, 1948.
Mixed media (1982.1861)

Soap Bubble Set

This box contains seemingly unrelated objects: a clay pipe; a small glass containing newspaper, driftwood, and coral; a white ball; and blue marbles. The interior walls are covered with dark blue velvet and pieces of a Spanish newspaper. Cornell grouped everyday objects in unique and surprising combinations. Through these groupings, the objects take on new meanings. For example, the ball and marbles are children's toys. Yet when placed in the box with the other objects, they appear to be floating above the pipe like soap bubbles. The ball and marbles when placed in front of the dark blue velvet background, also resemble planets and the moon in the night sky.

Cornell searched flea markets, thrift shops, and dime stores for objects to use in his boxes. He transformed these ordinary objects into personal symbols and treated them as if they were treasures. His boxes contain objects often related to childhood, travel, and exploration. He lived his entire life in New York and never traveled, but his boxes reveal a desire to explore the earth, sea, and outer space. The contents of his boxes seem to express the inner thoughts and dreams of the artist himself.
Vincent van Gogh, Dutch (1853–1890). *The Bedroom*, 1889. Oil on canvas (1926.417)

Describe the colors van Gogh selected for his bedroom. What kind of mood do they create? Discuss how the geographical location of the bedroom in the south of France may have influenced the colors van Gogh selected.

What do you like about this bedroom? Would you want to spend time in this room? How would it feel to stand in this room?

Compare this room to the outdoor scene of *The Terrace* and the kitchen in Doris Lee’s *Thanksgiving*. Compare the moods created in each of these places. How do the objects and colors in the paintings affect the mood?

Consider how a physical place can also be a portrait. This painting is often considered a self-portrait of van Gogh. Think of several adjectives to describe this room. Can these words also be used to describe van Gogh’s personality?

Compare this painting to Archibald Motley’s *Self-Portrait*. How do the colors and styles of these two self-portraits convey information about the artists’ personalities and their relationships to their art?

Compare this painting to *Vincent van Gogh’s Self-Portrait (1887)* in gallery _______. How does this painting compare with your image of van Gogh as represented by his bedroom?

Why do we show off our bedrooms to friends visiting our houses? How is your room decorated? What does your bedroom reveal about you, your interests, your values?

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Vincent van Gogh moved from Paris to Arles, in the southern part of France, in 1888 and hoped that other artists would join him there. In anticipation of the arrival of his friend and fellow artist Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), van Gogh created this painting to decorate his home and studio. Van Gogh considered his bedroom one of the most important rooms in the house, a place where he kept the few treasured objects in his possession. The furnishings are few and simple, and the walls were decorated with several landscape paintings and portraits of friends. These objects suggest that he valued art and friendship more than material possessions.

Although there are no people in the room, this painting conveys an overwhelming sense of the artist’s presence, communicated in large part through the artist’s thick paint application (impasto) and choice of vibrant colors. In a letter to his brother, van Gogh described the scene as a symbol of relaxation and peace. Yet the vivid colors, dramatic perspective, and dynamic brushwork hardly express the relaxation of which van Gogh wrote to his brother. Pictures tilt off the wall. A blood-red quilt covers the looming bed. From the setting and expressive painting technique, we get a sense of van Gogh’s personality even though he is not pictured in the room.